The topic of this article is the Malay gospel of Mark of 1629-1630 recently discovered in the library of Lincoln Cathedral in England, a gospel translated by Albert Corneliszoon Ruyl, employee of the East-Indies Company (VOC). Ruyl's gospels of Matthew and Mark are the earliest attested Bible translations in Malay. The article discusses the question why the VOC financed Bible translations in the East, what kind of Malay Ruyl used in Mark and what kind of translation Ruyl made. Ruyl was a very pragmatic translator using Malay religious terminology from Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic and Catholic traditions, including the term Allah for God. Finally, the article discusses the academic and societal importance of the first Malay gospels of Ruyl which after many centuries became newly relevant to Indonesian and Malaysian faith communities in the context of religious, legal and political conflicts about the ownership of the word Allah.
Response to second revision

I have accepted all proposed changes of the second round of revision and worked them into the revised version.
Iang Evangelivm Ul-kadus menjurat kapada Marcum: the first Malay Gospel of Mark (1629-1630) and the Agama Kumpeni
Iang Evangelivm Ul-kadus menjurat kapada Marcum: the first Malay Gospel of Mark (1629-1630) and the *Agama Kumpeni*

**Abstract**

The topic of this article is the Malay gospel of Mark of 1629-1630 recently discovered in the library of Lincoln Cathedral in England, a gospel translated by Albert Corneliszoon Ruyl, employee of the East-Indies Company (VOC). Ruyl's gospels of Matthew and Mark are the earliest attested Bible translations in Malay. The article discusses the question why the VOC financed the printing of translations of the Bible and other religious literature in the East, what kind of Malay Ruyl used in Mark and what kind of translation Ruyl made. Ruyl was a very pragmatic translator using Malay religious terminology from Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic and Catholic traditions, including the term *Allah* for God. Finally, the article discusses the academic and societal importance of the first Malay gospels of Ruyl which after many centuries became newly relevant to Indonesian and Malaysian faith communities in the context of religious, legal and political conflicts about the ownership of the word *Allah*.

**Keywords**

Bible translation, Malay translation history, Allah, VOC, Ruyl, Church Malay

**1. Introduction**

The gospels of Matthew and Mark translated by the Dutchman Ruyl in the first half of the 17th century are the earliest attested translations of Bible books in Malay, and in South East and South Asian languages in general (Soesilo 2007). There were earlier efforts to translate the Bible into South East and South Asian languages. For example, the Jesuit missionary Franciscus Xaverius translated religious texts that included Bible verses into Malay in the 16th...

The bibliography of Dutch hymns Fontes hymnodiae neerlandicae impressi 1539-1700 mentions a Malay translation of the gospel of St. Mark by Albert Cornelissoon Ruyl, published in 1629 and kept in the Lincoln Cathedral Library in Lincoln, United Kingdom (Höweler and Matter 1985). The existence of three copies of Ruyl’s Matthew of 1629 was known since the late 1980s but the Lincoln Matthew and Mark had escaped scholarly attention. The Lincoln Matthew is the same as the Matthew copies in Stuttgart, Utrecht and London (De Vries 2005). But the Lincoln Mark is the only known copy of the first edition of the gospel of Mark.

The article is organized as follows. First, the historical context of the Lincoln Mark is described. Then we zoom in on the Lincoln Mark, as a book (section 3) and as a translation (section 4). Finally, we discuss the academic and societal relevance of these first Malay gospels which after many centuries attracted renewed attention in the context of the debate and conflicts surrounding the use of the word Allah and other religious terms of Arabic origin in the Bibles of Malaysian and Indonesian Christians (section 5).

2. The first Malay gospels and the Agama Kumpeni

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1 I thank Mathieu Knops, of the Royal Dutch National Library at The Hague, for alerting me to the reference in Höweler and Matter 1985 that led me to the Lincoln Mark. I also thank Mrs. J. Taylor of the Lincoln Cathedral Library for the many ways in which she helped me with my research in the magnificent ambience of the Lincoln Cathedral Library. Christian Gossweiler was of great help in comparing the Lincoln and Stuttgart Mark copies, and in dating the Lincoln Mark.

2 Until 1989 when Dr. Daud Soesilo (Indonesian Bible Society) found a copy of Ruyl’s Matthew in the Landesbibliothek of Stuttgart (Soesilo 2013: 174) scholars such as Swellengrebel (1974) thought that there were no remaining copies of the first Malay gospel of Matthew of 1629 (Gossweiler 2014a: 21). In 1911 the Historical catalogue of the printed editions of the Holy Scripture in the library of the British and Foreign Bible Society, edited by H.T. Darlow and Horace F. Moule Vol. 2-2, mentioned Ruyl’s Bible translation into High Malay (published in 1629) by no. 6486 (Gossweiler 2014a: 20).
The Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, 1602-1795), called Kumpeni by Malay contemporaries, financed all Malay and Portuguese Bible translations and other religious writings until its bankruptcy in 1795 (De Vries 2009, 2015). The Church Council (Kerkenraad) of the Reformed Church of Batavia was consulted for approval of these versions. For example, the minutes of the meeting of August 24, 1648, report that Rev. Heurnius had requested the VOC Board to finance the printing of “first book of Moses translated into Malay by Mr. van Hasel” (Mooij 1929: 91). And the minutes of the meeting of Wednesday November 16th of 1667 contam the decision of the Council of the Batavia Church to accept the New Testament translation of the Rev. Daniel Brouwerius, the first Malay New Testament, for publication (by the VOC). They added the condition that he would revise certain gospel books “to make the style of the whole New Testament one and the same”. The minutes of that meeting also describe the primary goal of the Malay translation as “to serve the churches in the Indies”. The final sentence of the minutes instructs the Rev. Brouwerius to go to the VOC to finance the printing.

It is important to understand from the outset that the VOC had a firm grip on the Calvinist churches in the areas that they controlled (Niemeijer, Van den End and Schutte 2015: 2). The VOC financed all church activities in the East Indies, all the pastors and translators were VOC employees, the VOC had the right to approve or reject appointments in church offices, controlled the allocation of pastors, had a representative in the church council meetings with the title commissaris-politiek and monitored church correspondence (Niemeijer, Van den End and Schutte 2015: 4). The name of the Company and its Board, and not the name of the

3 “het eerste boek Mosis in ‘t Maleisch overgeset door S’ van Hasel”. All English translations of material from Dutch sources in the article are mine unless otherwise indicated.

4 The minutes of the Batavia Church Council (as far as they had been preserved in the Church archives in Batavia (Jakarta)) were published along with other source materials by J. Mooij in three volumes in 1927, 1929 and 1931. The minutes of 16 November 1667 can be found in Mooij (1927: 76). I could not find references to an approval by the Batavia Church Council of Ruyl’s gospels probably because the minutes of the relevant meetings have not been preserved.

5 “om daer door het gansche nieu Testament van een en deselve stijl te doen wesen”.

6 “ten dienste van de kercken in Indien”.

7 ‘tot koste vande Comp’ sal laeten drucken”.

3
4
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6
7
(Batavia) Church or Church Council, were prominently displayed either on the title page or the first page of these Bibles and Bible books. The prefaces started with a very prominent reference to the Bevinthebberen or Board of the VOC, who were eloquently praised in the dedication.

The Resolutien (minutes containing their decisions and a summary of the grounds for these decisions) of the VOC Board published by Mooij (1927: 1-80) explicitly refer to the almost absolute control of the VOC. The minutes of the Board meeting of 10 January 1654 acknowledge that the instructions sent to the governor-general and his council in Batavia on 10 September 1650 relating to the churches “gave the political government very wide and absolute power over the church council and the church personnel” adding that this absolute power was not put into practice. Since letters from Batavia requesting instruction or letters from the Dutch Republic giving instructions were sent with the VOC ships on their long and very perilous journeys, in practice the VOC Board indeed faced difficulties in exercising their power. The same minutes report that the VOC Board had instructed the Company Lawyer to write a draft Church Order with respect to the appointment of pastors to be sent to the governor-general in Batavia for advice and comments.

The VOC was the first company in the world that gave out shares to finance its operations. Investing in VOC ships and their precious spice cargo was a great risk, with potentially huge awards. This raises the question why a company of early modern capitalists would finance the translation, printing, shipment and distribution of Bible translations (De Vries 2005). The answer lies in the way Dutch 17th century Calvinism understood the relationship between the Republic and the Dutch Reformed Church. Article 36 of the Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis (Dutch Confession of Faith) claimed that the State was obliged “to protect the holy worship of

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8 “Dat wel waer is dat de meergemelte missive aen de politijcque Overheijt seer ample en absolute macht geeft over de kerckelijke regieringe, en de Ecclesiatiijcquen maer dat die in dier voegen niet is noch wert gepractiseert” (Mooij 1927: 39).
the Church and to suppress and destroy all idolatry and false religion". This implied that the
Republic financed the Dutch Reformed churches in the Low Countries, including the salaries
of the pastors, and had a lot of influence in church matters. The faith of the Calvinist Church
was the public faith. All other forms of religion (including Catholicism and Anabaptism, both
labelled as false religion and idolatry) could not be present in the public domain. Privately,
people of other convictions could keep their religion, including worship services in private
homes or other non-public meeting places.

The Dutch Republic gave charters (octrooi) to the VOC that entitled the VOC to a trade and
shipping monopoly in the East, excluding other Dutch traders (Schutte 2002). The first
octrooi was signed on March 20, 1602. The octrooi also delegated key public duties and
rights to the VOC because the VOC operated in areas far beyond the control of the Republic:
the right to build fortifications, to administer justice in the name of the Republic, the right to
employ soldiers and engage in warfare and the right to appoint governors (Schutte 2002: 50).

One of the public duties mentioned in the octrooi of 1623 was the protection and
maintaining the public faith (De Vries 2005: 16-17). It implied that the VOC had the duty to
facilitate and finance the Dutch Reformed congregations and schools in the rather small part
of the archipelago under their territorial control. The VOC was interested in trade and gain,
not in expanding its territorial control per se. Koolen (1993: 23) points out that the reference
to the protection of the public faith in the charter of 1623 (and subsequent charters) is placed
in the considerans section, the introductory section and not in the instruction section in which
the legally binding right and duties of the VOC were stipulated. By doing so, the Staten-
Generaal (States General, the highest authority of the Republic) made clear that it considered
the duty to protect the public Reformed Faith as an obvious, completely self-evident moral
and religious duty for the VOC in all areas under their jurisdiction, and this included all VOC

9 “de heilige dienst van de kerk te beschermen en om te weren en uit te roeien alle afgoderij en valschen
godsdienst”.

fortified trade posts in the Far East, for example Ceylon and Formosa where the VOC
financed the translation of Bible( порtions) and catechisms (Adelaar 2011).

In the archipelago the VOC-sponsored Bible translations were limited to Malay and
Portuguese because those two were the main contact and trade languages in the archipelago,
also used in the ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous congregations of the Dutch
Reformed Churches in the East. The VOC never financed Bible translations in indigenous
languages of the archipelago, some of them with many millions of speakers (for example,
Javanese), languages that the intended audiences in the 17th century archipelago would have
understood far better than Malay and Portuguese. Indeed, indigenous languages only became
targets of Bible translation of the mission societies that were founded towards the end of the
18th century and in the first decades of the 19th century in Europe and America. In fact,
Javanese was the first language targeted for Bible translation by the Netherlands Bible Society
in the early 19th century (Swellengrebel 1974).

Some pastors in areas where Malay was not widely known translated religious materials into
indigenous languages. For example, the bibliography of Niemeijer and Van den End (2015:
153) lists translations in the indigenous languages of Saparua by Heurnius and Sangir by Van
der Leeuw. The latter translated Mark and wrote a short catechism in Sangirese. His work was
not printed because the Church Council of Batavia stuck to the language policy of using the
common languages Malay and Portuguese (Niemeijer and Van den End 2015: 154).

The VOC related churches in Ambon, Ternate, Batavia and other places were multi ethnic
and multi lingual. The people supposed to go to church were Europeans employed by the
VOC, formerly Catholic locals, some Chinese and Japanese, Mardijkers (descendants of
migrants from India) and slaves with various backgrounds (Niemeijer, Van den End and
Schutte 2015: 5). The Europeans employed by the VOC came from various nations, speaking
different languages, especially German, but also Portuguese, French and English. Malay and
Portuguese had a key role as lingua franca in these highly diverse VOC and VOC dependent communities. The VOC employees with church related tasks had as their first task the pastoral care for the multi ethnic VOC employees of European and Asian descent, and the Malay and Portuguese Bible translations commissioned by the VOC primarily functioned as a tool for that task, using the two contact languages Malay and Portuguese known to various degrees as a second language by the majority of the attendants of Reformed church services, whether European or Asian. The second function was to expand the Calvinist religion as the public faith in areas under direct VOC jurisdiction, including formerly Catholic areas. Both functions of the Malay and Portuguese VOC translations followed from the duties of the VOC mentioned in the charters with the Republic.

Portuguese continued to be an important lingua franca, in and outside the church, long after the Portuguese left, till around 1800 (Swellengrebel 1974: 9). Swellengrebel (1974: 9) observes that slaves employed in Dutch households used Portuguese when communicating with family members and that many Dutch children knew the lingua franca variety of Batavian Portuguese better than Dutch. The Portuguese pastor d’Almeida, a pastor of the Reformed Church in Batavia, translated the New Testament into Portuguese. The Portuguese New Testament of d’Almeida was printed in Amsterdam at the cost of the VOC in 1681. The complete Bible in Portuguese appeared much later, in 1748. This VOC Bible is the first Bible in Portuguese and has been globally used in Portuguese speaking parts of the world, especially Brazil, with a revision of 1959 still bearing the name of ’d Almeida (Swellengrebel 1974: 10; De Vries 2005: 17).

The VOC context of the first Malay Bible translations also explains why the translations were designed and printed as solid and expensive Bibles, in rather small quantities, not cheap editions for small purses as would be distributed much later by missionaries and evangelists in
the 19th century. The Board of Seventeen that governed the VOC decided on August 21, 1629
to let Palensteyn in Enkhuizen print 480 copies of the first Malay gospel of Matthew.

Ruyl writes in the preface to his first gospels, addressing the Board of Governors of the
VOC, that he wants to translate the whole New Testament into Malay for “the expansion of
our Public Christian Religion[…] to the salvation of many, simple souls who in due time will
be brought safely to the lap of the Church under the protection of Your Excellences”.
Ruyl phrases his missiological intentions with the standard terms of Dutch Calvinism of the
Republic to describe the Calvinistic Church as the privileged, public religion under the wings
of the government, represented in Batavia by the governor-general of the VOC.

The VOC did not spend much money on the protection of the public Reformed faith in the
East. The funds spent on church and school work, including Bible translation, were a minor
part of the total VOC operation. For example, according to Schutte (2002: 50) the VOC
employed 14,800 persons in the Dutch East-Indies in 1688. Only 108 were employed in
church and church-related ministries including 23 schoolmasters, less than 1%. However,
only European employees are counted in these statistics, not the many indigenous guru
‘teacher’ involved in the schools. Trade surely was the primary goal of the VOC, based on
establishing and maintaining trade monopolies with military means.

The Heidelberg Catechism of the Dutch Reformed Church contained the teaching that the
Catholic Eucharist was “vervloeekte afgodery” (“cursed idolatry”). Therefore, it was
important for the pastorsto bring Catholic Christians into the fold of the Dutch Reformed
Church in areas under VOC control where the Portuguese (Moluccas, North Celebes) or
Spaniards (Sangir-Talaud islands) had been in the 16th century (Niemeijer, Van den End and
Schutte 2015: 3; de Vries 2015). The VOC government no doubt hoped that Protestantisation
would make the local population more inclined to accept their rule. The Catholic villages of

10 “tot voortplantinghe van onze Alghemeyne Christelijcke Religie […]ter zalichheyt van vele arme,
eenvoudighe zielen, die mettertijt gerustelijcken in de schoot der Kercke, onder U.E.A. bescherminghe gebracht
sullen werden”
these areas came under the direct authority of the VOC and they numbered around 16,000 souls after the surrender of the Portuguese, with an additional 30,000 after the withdrawal of the Spaniards (Niemeijer, Van den End and Schutte 2015: 3).

Since the Gereformeerde Kerk (Reformed Church) was the only form of religion tolerated in the public domain in the areas under VOC control, all of a sudden there was a Dutch Reformed Church with many congregations and with thousands of formerly Catholic believers that needed catechisms, liturgical texts and Bibles in Malay, essential tools for the protestantization and pacification of these regions (De Vries 2015). There was a system of fines to punish people who did not go to church (Niemeijer 2002a:129-130). It is understandable that a common Malay name of this Public Christian Religion was Agama Kumpeni (the Company Religion) (Niemeijer 2002:147-176). The villages that had converted to Islam in the areas under the jurisdiction of the Sultanates of Tidore, Ternate and Batjan remained under the Sultans and could practice their religion unhindered (Niemeijer, Van den End and Schutte 2015: 3).

The VOC schools were an extension of the church, and the curriculum focused almost entirely on religious instruction. The schools also functioned as a tool of pacification (Koolen 1993). The Malay and Portuguese Bible translations and catechisms played an important role in the VOC sponsored schools. The instructional and liturgical functions are reflected in the supplementary texts that went with the Malay gospels of Ruyl: the liturgical section contained a few hymns and psalms, the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Prayer before the Sermon, the Prayer after the Sermon, the Songs of Zechariah, Mary, the Angel and Simeon from the birth narrative in Luke and the Apostolic Creed, all key elements of Dutch Reformed church services. Pupils in the Malay VOC schools had to memorize the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments and the Apostolic Creed (Koolen 1993).
The gospels of Matthew and Mark by Ruyl in 1629-1630 were followed by the gospels of Luke and John in 1646 and Fifty Psalms in 1648 by Jan van Hasel and Justus Heurnius. The Four Gospels and Acts were published in 1651. The complete Psalter by Van Hasel and Heurnius appeared in 1652. The year 1668 saw the publication of the New Testament by Brouwerius who had published a Genesis translation in 1662. Finally in 1733 the complete Bible by Leijdecker was published. The VOC financed all these books. There was however also an edition of the Four Gospels and Acts by van Hasel and Heurnius printed in Oxford for Henry Clements, with a preface by Thomas Marshall.\textsuperscript{11}

The Malay Bible translations were part of a wider VOC program to provide the churches and schools with educational and religious materials, and to provide translators and interpreters with grammatical and lexical information on the Malay language. The list of Malay printed writings of the VOC period in Niemeyer and Van den End (2015: 127-169) contains translations of catechisms, ABC booklets, grammatical treatises, lexica and sermons. Some VOC merchants or pastors became Malay specialists, for example Ruyl, Leijdecker and Werndly. They laid the linguistic foundation (vocabularies, grammars, study of Malay literature) and translated religious literature for church and school.

\textit{The changing place of missionary translation towards the end of the VOC era}

Enlightenment ideas would give religion, mission and Bible translation a radically different place in society in the course of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century (Van Rooden 1996; Van Eijnatten 2003). The place of the Christian religion shifted from its public, confessional, state-controlled position to a conviction in the heart and conscience of individual citizens. These individual citizens had the right to organize themselves independent of the state and the state church. This independent organization took the form of societies, legal bodies in the new middle ground of

\textsuperscript{11} I extracted the information on Malay translations from Niemeyer and Van den End 2015: 127-169 and from Mamahit (ed.) 2014: 89 who uses the data provided by Christian Gossweiler.
civil society. Missionary and Bible societies were formed with the aim to win the souls of heathens, wherever they were. Since 1800 Bible Societies (rather than authorities of the state or the state-church) became the dominant player in the translation, printing and distribution of (non-confessional) Bibles, especially in Protestant countries and their colonies (De Vries 2016).

The organizational independence of Bible Societies does not mean that the state had no influence on their policies in the colonies. The Boards of the Netherlands Bible Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society had influential members that were high ranking (former) civil servants in the colonies. The Right Honorable Lord Teignmouth, first President of the British and Foreign Bible Society and its president for 30 years, was a former governor general of the British East India Company. The Dutchman Baud was until 1819 General Secretary of the Dutch government in Batavia (Jakarta), and an influential member of the Board of the Netherlands Bible Society branch in The Hague (De Vries 2016).

Baud wrote a policy paper entitled Consideratien over de vertaling en verspreiding van de Heilige Schriften (Considerations about the translation and distribution of the Holy Scriptures). Baud emphasizes that the Netherlands Bible Society must send the message to the colonial government that they will stay away from any proselytizing and also will keep proselytizing missions at a safe distance because, he says, the colonial government will only tolerate Bible society activities in the East in as far as "the stability of beautiful and rich Java, the important source of our East-Indian finances, is not being threatened". ¹²

Bible translation policies for the colonies were grounded in the colonial Enlightenment discourse of the Bible as a force of civilization. Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp, the most influential and powerful Dutch politician of his day and president of the Netherlands Bible Society branch of the Hague, addresses the Board of the Netherlands Bible Society in 1816 to

¹² "De rust van het schone en rijke Java, de voorname hulpbron van onze Indische financien, niet wordt in de waagschaal gesteld". Baud is quoted in J.L. Swellengrebel, In Leiidekers Voetspoor, deel 1, Haarlem, Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap, 1974, p. 27.
formulate policy goals of these translations in the languages of the East. They should not aim at proselytizing, not even have a hidden aim to do so. The Bibles to be translated and distributed in the East should aim at Civilization: "'Europe'- Napoleon said (...) – became civilized because of Christianity'. Everyone knows to what extent the Heathens are backward in terms of civilization. Also for the operation of the State therefore it can be seen as important to distribute a means of civilization" (De Vries 2016).

On the contrary, the early VOC translators such as Ruyl and Van Hasel were not missionaries in the sense of people sent abroad by missionary societies to win the souls of heathens, as an activity independent of the state and independent of the state-backed confessional churches (Van Rooden 1996). Rather, they were VOC employees carrying out the duty of the octrooi to protect the public Calvinist religion. Ruyl was a junior merchant of the VOC when he translated the gospels of Matthew and Mark (Werndly 1736). This does not imply that they or later VOC pastors who did translation work had no missionary zeal or that they never went to places outside VOC control to proselytize. Leydecker was the first pastor to receive an official commission and dedicated time for his translation work. Before his time, the translators did their work on their own initiative in their spare time, showing missionary zeal, and then presented their work to the VOC to be printed and distributed. But the overall institutional context of the religious translation work in this period is shaped by the notion of the Protestant faith as the public religion under the wings of the VOC.

3. The Lincoln Mark as a book

The Lincoln Cathedral Library has a copy of Ruyl’s Malay Matthew of 1629, shelf mark Qq. 4.7, and a copy of Ruyl’s translation of Mark, shelf mark Qq. 4.8, originally bound together in one volume, with one title page. The title page has this text:

Het NIEUWE TESTAMENT. Dat is: het Nieuwe verbont onſes heeren Jesu Chriſtī in Nederduyts Ende Malays/na der Griekſcher waerheijt overgeſet.14

Iang TESTAMENTUM BAHARV. Arti-n’ja: Iang d’jand’ji baharû dari Tûhan-kû Iefû Chriſti: berfalim kapada baffa Hûlanda daan baffa Malajû ſepterti jang Adillan baffa Gregû

Gedruckt t’Enckhuysen/ by Jan Jacobsz Palensteyn/opt Suyd-eynde inde druckery/1629.

Ber-pra-tʃiap ka Nagri Enkhûfên, pada Iûhan Iacûb, Menaûn ka ſudjûŋ ŕalatan dalam kedey bar-pra. 1629.15

The Lincoln Mark is in quarto format, with two columns on each page (folio). The book has 120 folia, with katernen A-P, subdivided in four (A, Aij, Aiiij, Aiiij etc.). Folium 1 has a title above the left column Het H. Evangelivm Beschreuen door Marcum and the Malay title Iang Evangelivm Vlkadus, Menjurat kapada Marcum above the right column of folium 1 (see figure 1). At the end, on folium 120, below the Dutch column, it says Eynde des Evangeliums Marci and below the Malay column Südahan Evangelium Marcum. The left column has the Dutch Deux-Aes translation of Mark, in Gothic script and the right column has the Malay translation, in Roman script (see figure 1), just as the translation of Matthew (Soesilo 2001a: 46-47). The Deux-Aes Bible of 1562 was the most used Dutch translation of Protestants before 1637 when the Dutch Authorized Version, the Staten Vertaling, was published. The paratext of the Lincoln Mark follows that of the Deux-Aes version of the left column, with

14 “The New Testament. That is the new covenant of our Lord Jesus Christ translated into Dutch and Malay after the Greek truth”.
15 “Printed in the town of Enkhuizen, by Jan Jacobsz, residing at the South End in the Printshop”.

13
pericope titles above each chapter. The chapter number is mentioned in the left top part of the page and the page number on the top right part. Under each column we find a signature mark and a catchword (see figure 1). The Lincoln copy of Mark is one of the first books printed in Malay.

**Figure 1**

The Mark copy in Lincoln is different from the Mark copy of the 1638 edition kept in Stuttgart. The Lincoln Mark is unique: it is the only extant copy of Ruyl’s first Malay Mark in its first edition. Text, spelling, lay-out and typographical details of the Lincoln Mark (1629/1630) and the Stuttgart Mark (1638) are different. For example, the decorated initial capital letter I of Mark 1:1 (see figure 1) is different in the two Mark editions of Lincoln and Stuttgart (Gossweiler, p.c.). The Lincoln Mark uses the tilde sign over vowels to indicate nasals where the Stuttgart Mark uses the letters m, ng and n. For example, in the Lincoln Mark 1:40 we find saurãg ‘a person’, daã ‘and’ and hãba ‘hamba’ versus Stuttgart Mark saurang, daan and hamba. But the Lincoln Mark also sometimes writes daan. The spelling of Ruyl and other VOC translators is very inconsistent from a modern perspective. However, the spelling of Dutch in the 17th century was also inconsistent and not yet fully standardized in the young Republic. Ruyl and other VOC translators followed spelling practices of Dutch and Portuguese in writing Malay (Swellengrebel 1974).

The spelling idiosyncrasies, typography and lay-out connect the Lincoln Mark very clearly to the Matthew of 1629 and indicate that Ruyl’s Lincoln Mark was printed either in 1629 or shortly after 1629 when Palensteyn printed Matthew (Gossweiler 2014a). In the preface to what he thought would become his New Testament, Ruyl refers to his Malay grammar and word list *Spieghel van de Maleyshe Tale* published in 1612 to explain the vowel system of
Malay, especially what Ruyl calls the *diphtonghe o.u.* that he spells with an *u* that has a small circular sign on top: ǚ (see figure 1). This ǚ is peculiarity of the early Ruyl. We find it only in his first Matthew and Mark, not in Stuttgart Mark edition of 1638 nor in any other Malay publication by Ruyl or anyone else, before or after 1629 (Gossweiler, p.c). Another significant spelling idiosyncrasy shared by the copies of Matthew (1629) and the Lincoln Mark, but not found in the Mark of 1638 is the Dutch *trema* or vowel separation sign used on the letter *a* when it follows an *i*, for example *tiäda, liätla* (Gossweiler, p.c.). Ruyl writes in his preface that he had finished Matthew in 1612 and since he planned to translate the whole New Testament, he will have proceeded with the second book of the New Testament after 1612.

Both manuscripts must have been ready for printing in 1629.

The VOC was in fact a conglomerate of six local trading companies in the major ports of the Republic. These local companies united under the umbrella of the VOC under considerable political pressure of the *Staten-Generaal* of the Republic (Schutte 2002: 50). The local companies were called *kamers* (chambers) and Enkhuizen was one of these VOC chambers (Schutte 2002: 50).

Palensteyn, the printer mentioned on the title page, had a theatre in Enkhuizen in which plays were performed. The audience in his theatre could follow the play by buying the script of the play printed in his print shop (A.A. den Hollander, p.c.). But Palensteyn did not have the expertise and skills needed to print books in non-European languages that was available in Amsterdam. This is because there are numerous printing errors in the first edition that forced Ruyl to include a long list of *Letter fauliten* (printing errors). The list of errors begins with the title page that contains the printing mistake *bersalim* which should be *bersalin*. Later editions of his gospels corrected those errors (Gossweiler, p.c).

The letter M is handwritten in the top left corner of the Lincoln title page that preceded the gospel translations. It is the signature of the owner, Michael (M) Honywood (1597-1681) who
became Dean of Lincoln Cathedral in 1660. He was an avid book collector and signed his books with M (Taylor, p.c.). It is very likely that he bought the Malay books of Matthew and Mark in the Dutch Republic, because Honywood went to Utrecht in 1642 and stayed there for a couple of years, during the Protectorate (Venables 1885). The Malay gospels that Honywood bought ended up in the Cathedral Library after his appointment as Dean of the Lincoln Cathedral in 1660. He collected Bibles in various languages but was also interested in many other subjects, as is clear from the magnificent collection in the Lincoln Cathedral Library.

The Malay gospels that he purchased must have had earlier Dutch owners and must have been used in the East because on an empty page that follows the Malay translation of the Lord’s Prayer on folium 38 we find these hand written notes in the Lincoln Matthew:

_text den 9 Julij 1639_

_psalm 130_

_djikalou tuanco mau bilang dosa_

_siappa bole tingal badiri_

_adapan tuan_16_

_den 23 Julij 1639 tekst Jone i-??i-2_

_itou bacattahan deos jadij_

_capada Jona (Yang Annac Amithai) babounji begitou_

_badirila dan bedjalan dalam_

_Yang bandar besar ninive_

_Lagi adjarkan di dalam_

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_16 If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? (English Standard Version)._
Carna dia orang pounja dosa
Souda naic capada Aco

30 dito tekst matt 4 vers 17

Touwarkan hatij camou, carna
Jang alam surga souda ampir

Most likely a Dutch VOC pastor or schoolmaster wrote down the verses from Scripture that
he wanted to preach or teach about in 1639 on July 3 (Psalm 150), July 23 (Matthew 1: 2) and
July 30 (Matthew 4: 17). The Malay Scripture verses from Matthew 4: 17, handwritten on
folium 38 of the Lincoln Matthew in the liturgical folia after the gospel translation, do not
come from Ruyl’s Matthew because Ruyl translated this verse as Berbaiki badan mu karna
hokkum-sorga-ni ampir datang.

4. The Lincoln Mark as a translation

Malay but which Malay?

In 1612, fifteen years after the first Dutch ships reached Java, Albert Corneliszoon Ruyl,
finished the manuscript of his Malay translation of the gospel of Matthew. The year before he
had published his Malay translation of a short catechism that summarized the doctrines of the
Dutch Reformed Church (Kort Begrip van Marnix van St. Aldegonde) (van Boetzelaar 1941:
30). Ruyl had learned Malay in Patani where Malay was an indigenous language and had
been exposed to literary and court Malay that he also tried to use in his translation (Werndly

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17 Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and call out against it, for their evil has come up before me.”(English Standard Version).
18 Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.(English Standard Version).
19 Literally “Make good your body (=yourself) because the heavenly jurisdiction (=Kingdom of Heavens) almost comes”.

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1736, Swellengrebel 1974). The Malay that Ruyl uses in his translation is in fact a form of (emergent) *Kerck Maleis*, the Church Malay variety that arose in the context of multi ethnic and multi lingual Protestant VOC communities in religious genres such as catechisms, Bible translations, sermons, a kind of Malay also shaped by the first languages of its users and by features of the Dutch religious texts that were translated.

The interference from Dutch in Ruyl’s Malay is hardly lexical. There are almost no words of Dutch origin in his Malay gospels, and this is generally true for the VOC translators (see Collins 2002 for Brouwerius). Since he translates the Dutch text rather literally, there is considerable interference from Dutch grammatical patterns. For example, Ruyl often uses the marker of relative clauses *yang* to render the Dutch definite articles *de* and *het* in his Dutch base text, for example in the noun phrase *Iang Evangelium Ul-kadus menjurat kapada Marcum* ‘the Holy gospel written by Mark’ in the title of Mark and in Mark 1: 15 *jang waktu jadi pûtûs, daan jang Radjat Allahi ampir datang* ‘the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has almost come’.

Most VOC translators, including Ruyl, backed by the VOC leadership, wanted to use higher varieties of Malay as found in Malay literary traditions, varieties less bound to regional spoken Malays but very difficult to understand for the vast majority of the intended users.

Ruyl, in his preface, refers to this debate and to the support he received from the VOC Board in Amsterdam to use what Ruyl called *Hoofs Malys* ‘Court Malay’ of the variety he found in the literary tradition of Malay: a high form of Malay used in courts and in written texts of the high type (religious treatises, court chronicles, poetry).

Ruyl mentions in his preface to the Lincoln gospels that some critics found his Malay “al te Hoofs Malys” (Malay as used in courts) and he criticizes the Matthew translation of Van Hasel “hem ontbreeckende het lezen en schrijven van de Malayse boecken” (him lacking the reading and writing of Malay books). Van Hasel’s Malay Matthew was never printed because
the VOC Board sided with Ruyl. Van Hasel was a junior VOC merchant just like Ruyl. He had arrived in the East Indies in 1613. Although his Malay Matthew did not see print, his translations of Luke and Acts, lightly revised by the Rev. Heurnius, were printed together with Ruyl’s gospels in 1651 (Swellengrebel 1974).

The Malay translations of Ruyl must have been very difficult to understand in most, if not all parts of the archipelago. Many people in and around the VOC stations only spoke restricted, low Malay varieties used in trade and interethnic contact situations, if they spoke Malay at all. Such Melayu Pasar varieties functioned in a limited number of contexts, with a limited vocabulary and strongly reduced verbal morphology.

When in the course of the 17th century children in the Christian villages of Ambon grew up with local varieties of Malay and this local Ambonese Malay became the first language of more and more people, Ambonese Malay developed into a relatively stable language with its own grammar and lexis, a language still spoken today (Collins 2002). Seeing that these Ambonese Christians did not understand the Malay of Ruyl, van Hasel and Brouwer, pastor Valentijn began to translate the Bible into a Malay variety much closer to Ambonese Malay in grammar and lexis. His work was not accepted for printing by the Batavia Church Council but fragments of his translation have survived as quoted Scripture in a book titled Ichtisaar, printed in 1725, a catechism written by Dutch pastors and translated into Malay by Valentijn.20 Pastor Valentijn wrote a passionate response to his critics in the form of a pamphlet printed in 1698, defending his choice of Ambonese Malay on the grounds of understandability.21

Unfortunately, even the few people who could read or understand the High Malay of the literary traditions, both religious and secular, would find the Church Malay used in VOC

20 These fragments of Valentijns Scripture translation can be found in Niemeijer and Van den End 2015: 165-169.
21 The brochure titled Deure der Waerhijd (Door of Truth) was published in Niemeijer and Van den End (2015: 149-187).
translations hard to follow because Ruyl and other VOC translators did not (and probably could not) write in the style of Malay literary traditions. Instead, Ruyl wrote Church Malay, with its interference from the syntax of their Dutch sources, with neologisms, with mistakes in the use of the all-important verbal affixation of Malay, and with a specific and unfamiliar lexis to denote theological concepts.

The letter from the Church Council of Ambon to the Church Council in Batavia of 18 September 1690 shows that sixty years after Ruyl’s first gospels were printed, understandability and the kind of Malay to be used, were still very much unsolved issues.22

The letter complains about the many problems and shortcomings of the congregations in and around Ambon, and sums up the causes of that deplorable situation. There are too few pastors, there are not enough Malay Bible books and even if there are Malay translations they are not very effective. The letter explains: “One should not think that the Malay language is a general language here. Many natives, especially on the outer islands, do not know Malay at all. Most of them understand just so much as they need for daily life”. 23

The letter goes on to observe that even the few who know Malay at the level of the literary traditions do not understand the kind of Church Malay of the Bible translations. That Malay, although it has been taken “uyt de eygene boeken der regte Maleyers” (from the own books of the proper/true Malay people), has been modified “tot ‘t gebruyk van onse Christelijke Theologie” (to the use of our Christian Theology). About this Kerck Maleis (Church Malay) the letter states: “it would be desirable if they could understand that language; we mean the

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22 The letter can be found as document 253 in Niemeijer and Van den End (2015: 1). The handwriting of this letter is attributed by Niemeijer and Van den End (2015: 1) to Rev. Petrus van der Vorm, one of the language specialists of the Church.

23 “Men moet niet meenen dat de Maleis+e taal hier een algemeene taal is. Veel Inlanders zijn er, voornamelijk op de buiteneylanden, die gants geen Maleis kennen. De meeste onder haar verstaan maar soveel als se tot haar dagelijkse ommevang van nooden hebben.”
Christians. The Muslims are not much better, although some of their scholars know the proper
Malay, and also Arabic, or at least they should know given their so called religion”.

Around the turn of the century Malay specialists such as ds. Melchior Leydecker and ds.
Petrus van der Vorm looked back at the results of the work of the pioneers Ruyl, Van Hasel, 
Heurnius and Brouwer and realized the shortcomings of their work. In a letter of the Batavia
Church Council of 15 November 1697, the writer (probably Leydecker, see Niemijer and Van
den End 2015: 135) points to many mistakes in the older versions and writes “that sir Ruyl
and sir Hasel, uneducated persons, have gone astray in this respect is no wonder but that first
D. Heurnius and afterwards D. Brouwerius and the Englishman Thomas Marshall did not see
this is remarkable”. He does not blame the VOC merchants Ruyl and van Hasel for their
mistakes because they were after all people without higher learning. This strengthens the
likelihood of the idea that Ruyl did not translate from a Greek source text, although the title
page that preceded Ruyl’s gospels claims that the Malay translation is based on the Greek text
of the New Testament (seperti jang Adillan baffa Gregû). His translation of Matthew and
Mark follows where possible the Dutch text of the Deux-Aes translation found in the left
column of his diglot gospel translations, and not the Greek text. The claim that the translation
is based on the Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic is found on the title pages of most Protestant
translations of the 16th and 17th centuries to signal that it is a Protestant Bible, not based on the
Latin Vulgate (Gossweiler 2014b: 75).

To substantiate his harsh judgments the writer of the critical letter of the Batavia Church
Council of 15 November 1697 presents various kinds of evidence. For example, he points to
the Malay translation of the herbal plant munte (mint) by derham ‘money’in Brouwerius New

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24 “Maar ’t was te wenssen dat d’Inlander dese taal verstont; we spreken van de christenen. De mooren zijn niet
veel beter, hoewel er buyten twijffel onder die enige van haar geleerden zijn die de regte Maleiſte taal, ook wel
d’Arabische, kennen, ofteminste behoeorden te kennen, ten opsigt van haare soogenaamde godsdienst”.
25 “Dat de heeren Hasel en Ruyl, ongestudeerde persoonen, hierin hebben gedwaalt is geen wonder, maar dat
eerst D. Heurnius […]en naderhand D. Brouwerius, alsook den Engelsman Thomas Marshall, dit niet hebben
gesen […] is te verwonderen” (Niemijer and Van den End 2015: 142).
Testament in Matthew 23: 23 where Brouwerius had followed Ruyl. (New Revised Standard Version: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith”.)

Indeed, Ruyl (and Brouwerius) use the Malay loan draham (based on the plural form of the Arab derham (draham-in) in this verse. The Dutch word for the garden plant munte ‘mint’ has a homonym munte ‘coin; money’. And Ruyl mistranslated munte according to the meaning of the Dutch homonym (‘money; coinage’) with the noun draham ‘money’ that entered Malay with Arab traders who in their turn borrowed it from Greek drachme (as the learned writer of the critical letter of the Batavia Church Council observes). Had Ruyl translated from the Greek, he could not have made this mistake. Ruyl could only make that mistake because the Dutch version with the homonym ‘munte’ was his source, and he clearly did not understand even the Dutch version where three types of herbal plants are mentioned. The writer of the letter wonders why the more learned revisors of Ruyl (the pastors Heurnius and Brouwerius who were supposed to read Greek) did not catch such obvious mistakes.

Daring translation strategies

Ruyl permits himself a number of striking liberties that a Calvinistic Bible translator at home in the Dutch Republic did not have. First of all, the frequent use of Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic and Catholic religious terminology, even for key terms such as God or the Holy Spirit.

Second, the use of cultural substitutes and third, neologisms. These three features follow from his pragmatism, a pragmatism he shared with many other VOC men who had to adjust to conditions and circumstances very different from their home countries in Europe.

Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic and Catholic religious terminology
In order to find Malay terms for religious concepts such as God, priest and sacrifice, baptism, holiness, but also for concepts of the biblical worlds unfamiliar to most Malay speakers (snow, desert, winter, summer, various animals, plants and trees), Ruyl had to use the full resources of the Malay language in creative ways, using neologisms and Malay loans from other languages.

Since Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic and Catholic notions had entered the Malay speaking world before Protestantism, Malay had borrowed religious terms from the holy texts in the languages associated with these religions: Indic languages, Arabic and Portuguese. All VOC translators used words like pandita (modern Malay pendeta ‘pastor’) and dewa ‘deity’ (used to refer to ‘false’ gods in VOC translations) from Sanskrit, words like Allah ‘God’, imam ‘priest’, nabi ‘prophet’ from Arabic and words such as Deos ‘God’, Bactista ‘Baptist’ and Spirito ‘Spirit’ from Portuguese. VOC translators applied such Malay words originating in the languages of what they saw as ‘false religions’ in different ways, sometimes even using both a Portuguese and an Arabic Malay loan for the same Hebrew or Greek term, for example Alla ‘God’ and Deos ‘God’ in the translation of Hebrew Elohim in Genesis 1 of Brouwerius (1662) where the Hebrew has only Elohim ‘God’ in Genesis 1 (De Vries 2005).

Ruyl seems to prefer Arabic-based Malay religious terms over Portuguese-based or Sanskrit-based ones in his Malay translation, for example he uses Allah rather than Deos for God, and Ruah rather than Spirito for Spirit. Had he learned Malay in Ambon, he probably would have used more Portuguese loans since Ambonese Malay had many words of Portuguese origin. We find Allah in the very first verse of the Lincoln Mark (figure 1). Ruyl is the first to write the word Allah in roman script in Malay literature.

‘Itūla jang mūlahan Evangeliūm Iesu Christi, jang anak Allah’

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (King James Version)
Some other Arabic-based religious terms used to denote biblical notions in the Lincoln Mark are: ülkadûs ‘holy’, Beitul Allah ‘temple’ (=House of God), Rûah-ûlkadûs ‘Holy Spirit’), nabi ‘prophet’ and the plural nabbinî ‘prophets’, mumin ‘blessed’ (as a translation of Dutch salich), rahmad, ‘mercy’, haramzada ‘sinner’, umat ‘congregation; religious community’’, malaikut ‘angel’; korban ‘sacrifice’. This does not mean that Ruyl always avoids Portuguese-based Malay words. He seems to use them especially when seeing no alternative for the Portuguese word, for example in Mark 10: 21 he chooses the Portuguese loan krus ‘cross’ where the Dutch in the left column has cruycye ‘cross’ and in Mark 5:12 he uses sinagugo ‘synagogue’. Ruyl uses a Malay neologism mandihan in Iûannes mandihan ‘John the Baptist’ in Mark rather than using the Portuguese loan babtista that he used in his translation of Matthew (where he used both Iûannes mandihan and Iûannes babtista to translate the phrase John the Baptist).

Cultural substitutes

The second pragmatic characteristic feature of Ruyl’s translation is his use of cultural substitutes for biblical realia that were unknown or unfamiliar to Malay speaking audiences and for which he assumed there was no Malay equivalent. The sandy, dry deserts of Palestine are rendered by Ruyl as utan ‘forest’ or rimba ‘jungle’. The snow of Mark 9: 3 is rendered with the cultural substitute umbun ‘white vapour, steam, dew’. The winter mentioned in 13: 18 becomes musim udjan ‘monsoon, rain season’ and the summer of Mark 13: 28 is musim kamarauw ‘dry season’.

In Mark 2: 23 it is narrated how the disciples of Jesus began plucking ears of grain while travelling on a Sabbath. Ruyl uses a cultural substitute padi ‘rice’ for the wheat (or barley) mentioned in the Greek (and in the Dutch translation), turning the fields of wheat into rice.
fields. To use a cultural substitute in what was seen as a historical narrative was a daring form
of pragmatism from a Calvinist perspective because it changed the ‘truth’: Jesus and his
disciples walked in the rice fields in Ruyl’s version. The fact that the Malay translation is part
of a diglot with the authoritative Deux-Aes text in the left column made it easier to use such
daring translation strategies. The Malay column is not presented as a stand-alone text, but as a
dependent text, a parallel text, perhaps even as an explanatory translation.

Neologisms

The third pragmatic feature characteristic of Ruyl is his use of neologisms. For example, the
biblical genre of parables, ghelijkenisse in the Dutch text in the left column, is rendered
sometimes by sepertihan, a calque from the Dutch term (seperti=ghelijck (like, as, same),
-an=enisse (-ness) and in other verses as artijan, a neologism based on the Malay root arti
‘meaning, interpretation’ and the derivational suffix –an. Ruyl continues the strategy of
neologisms that he already introduced in his translation of Matthew (Soesilo 2014: 65). For
example in Mark 1: 4 (see figure 2), Ruyl uses the neologism ber-balik badan ‘to turn the
body’, a neologism based on bekeeringe ‘turn’ in the Deux-Aes.

Gossweiler (2014b: 78) points out that the choice of the neologism ber-balik badan ‘to turn
the body’ for the Greek metanoia ‘conversion’ as used in Mark 1: 4 was connected to one of
the main themes of dispute between Catholics and Protestants in the era of the Reformation,
the issue of the basis for salvation and forgiveness of sins. Dutch translations made by
Catholics and approved by the Bishops followed the Vulgate and used the Dutch loan
penitencie ‘penitence’ for example in the Leuvense Bijbel, based on the Vulgate rendering of
the Greek metanoia ‘conversion’ as paenitentia. Calvinist translations avoid penitencie
because it was too closely associated with the presumed Catholic notion of atonement for sins
by acts of penitence on the part of the believer: only Jesus could atone for our sins by his

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death on the cross. Therefore Protestant translations use *bekeeringe* (literally a turning around) for the Greek *metanoia*. Ruyl’s neologism *balik badan* ‘turn around’ (literally ‘turn (your) body around’), a calque of *bekeeringe* was revised by Heurnius (who knew Greek) and became *berbalik hati* ‘turn the heart’ (e.g. Matthew 3: 8), closer to the Greek. Heurnius revised the gospels of Ruyl (Matthew, Mark) and van Hasel (Luke, John) to integrate them in his Malay edition of the four gospels and Acts of 1651 (Gossweiler 2014: 78).

*Figure 2*

**Relationship of Lincoln Mark to Ruyl’s earlier work**

As is clear from the second page of the Dutch preface to the Matthew Gospel, Ruyl had already produced a manuscript with the Malay translation of Matthew in 1612 that was criticized by some as containing ‘al te Hoofs Malays’, that is the Malay style and lexis of the courts. Other first fruits of Ruyl’s translation efforts in the domain of religious literature were liturgical texts related to baptism and marriage, a catechism by Marnix van Sint Aldegonde and an *AB Boeckto* to be used in the VOC schools to teach children to write, all published in the first decennium of the 17th century. The printing of these texts were financed by the VOC, as Ruyl writes in his preface to the *Spiegel van de Maleysche Tale* published in 1612. The *Spieghel* contained didactic and uplifting material in the form of childrens’ dialogues, a Dutch-Malay wordlist but also Malay translations of the Apostolic Creed and two texts from the Bible which played a key role in the liturgy of the church services, the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer. The *Spieghel* is a diglot edition with the Dutch texts and wordlist in the left column and the Malay version in the right column.
Let us first have a look at the relationship between the Lincoln Mark and the few short Bible fragments found in the list *Spieghel van de Maleysche Tale* and then look at the relation between Ruyl’s Mark and Matthew.

Unfortunately, the Lord’s Prayer is only found in Matthew and Luke, not in Mark, and the Ten Commandments is found in Exodus 20. This makes a comparison between the Malay of the Lincoln Mark with the Malay of the *Spieghel* problematic. Mark 10.19 where Jesus mentions sections of the Ten Commandments has been rendered by Ruyl as:

Angkau tiada batsiumbo (seventh commandment); angkau tiada memunoh (sixth commandment); angkau tiada mantsjur (eight commandment); angkau tiada beri sakxi dusta (ninth commandment); angkau tiada beri sajang akan barang-urang (tenth commandment); angkau beri hormad akã Bappa daan ibumu (fifth commandment)

The version of some of the Ten Commandments found in the *Spieghel*:

Kamu memberi hormad akan bappa daan ibumu (fifth commandment)

D’jang-an angkou memunoh ourang (sixth commandment)

D’jang-an angkou bersondel (seventh commandment)

D’jang-an angkou mantsuri (eight commandment)

D’jang-an angkou bersakxi dusta de hadapan amsaja-mu (ninth commandment)

D’jang-an angkou berhendak Ruma amsaja mu (tenth commandment)

Inasfar as we can say anything on the basis of these few and partially corresponding texts from the *Spieghel* and Mark, the earlier renderings in the *Spieghel* seem to be somewhat closer to formal and written Malay. The Ten Commandments in Ruyl’s Mark seem to show
some efforts to accommodate the criticism that his Malay was ‘too high’. For example, the
prohibitions in the Spieghel have the standard written prohibitive Malay construction with the
negative imperative adverb jangan, in contrast with the more colloquial spoken form with
tiada in Mark. Lexically, the register of beri sajang akan in Mark is lower than berhendak
and sajang occurs with higher frequency in contexts of desire and longing.

A comparison of the Lincoln Mark with Ruyl’s Matthew shows that Ruyl tries to be a more
consistent translator in Mark than he had been in Matthew (De Vries 2002, 2009), especially
where it concerns terms with theological significance. For example, in Matthew Ruyl uses
four nouns to render the word for kingdom (Coninckrijck in his Deux-Aes base text, basileia
in Greek, a noun derived from basileus ‘king’): radjat, hokkuman, sultanu and makuta (De
Vries 2002: 5). Since the notion of the Kingdom of Heavens is a theological Leitmotiv in the
gospel of St. Matthew, as is the Kingdom of God in St. Mark, Ruyl’s variation in renderings
of the phrase Kingdom of Heavens in Matthew is striking. He uses radjat surga (kingdom of
heaven), radjat surgani (heavenly kingdom), hokkuman surgani/hokum-surgani (heavenly
jurisdiction), sultanu surga (sultanate of heaven), sultanu surgani (heavenly sultanate),
makuta sultani ‘heavenly (territory of) the crown’ (Soesilo 2013).

The translation of Kingdom (of heaven, of God) divided Catholic and Protestant translations
in 16th and 17th century (Gossweiler 2014b: 76). Catholic translations into Dutch followed the
Vulgate regnum and translated that with rijck (e.g. Leuvense Bijbel) but Protestant
translations such as the Deux-Aes (that Ruyl followed) translated with Coninckrijck
(=Coninck-rijck, King-dom) because the Greek has basileia, referring to the notion of king
(Protestant ad fontes: (back) to the sources).

It could well be that Ruyl received criticism in relation to his inconsistencies in Matthew, or
that he gained in experience (or both) since he consistently uses Radjat Allahi ‘godly
Kingdom’ in his Malay gospel of Mark. And when Rev. Heurnius revised Ruyl’s Matthew in
1651 to integrate it in the edition of the Four gospels and Acts, he used radjat Allah and radjat Allah consistently with a rare exception in Matthew 3: 2 where we still find sultanu sorga (Gossweiler 2014b: 77).

Although the internal consistency (within the Lincoln Mark) improved to a certain degree in his second gospel, Ruyl’s Mark is remarkably inconsistent with his translation of Matthew, even in parallel passages. For example, Matthew 24: 32 and Mark 13: 28 are (almost) the same in his Dutch base text (Deux-Aes) and in the Greek but Ruyl translates the parallel passages in two very different ways in Matthew and Mark. For example, the Dutch Deux-Aes left column in Ruyl’s Matthew has in Matthew 24: 32:

‘Leert van den vijgeboom een gelijckenisse: als nu zijne tacken teer worden, en de bladeren uytspryten dan weet ghy dat de somer by is.’

(Learn from the fig tree a parable: when its branches become tender, and leaves come forth, you know that the summer is near).

Ruyl’s Malay Matthew has this in the right column:

‘Aid’jerla dari půhoon pisang sawatů sapertihan: manakala dahan nja lůmbůt, daan daun’ja bertūbûh, makka taumů mûnsim angat mampir.’

(Learn from the banana tree a parable: when its branches become tender, and its leaves grow, then you know that the warm season is close).

And in Mark 13: 28

Deux-Aes left column in Ruyl’s Mark:

‘Leert een gelijckenisse van den vijgeboom: als zijn tacken sappich werden, ende dat hy bladeren ghewint, so weet ghy dat de somer naby is.’
(Learn a parable of the fig tree: when its branches become juicy, and he gains leaves, then you
know that the summer is near.)

Ruyl’s Malay Mark in the right column:

‘Aid’jerla sawatû sepertihan dari pohon kassema: tatkala tjiabang nja menjadi lombot, daan
jang daun ija kaluar, makka tau kamû jang munsim kemarauw pûn mampir.’

(Learn a parable from the diospyros kaki tree: when its branches become soft, and its leaves
come out, then you know the dry season is close.)

The lexical differences between the parallel verses in Matthew 24: 32 and Mark 13: 28 are
striking. Ruyl uses the banana tree as a cultural substitute for the fig tree in Matthew but the
kassema tree (=Diospyros kaki, with sweet fruits) in the parallel passage of Mark. The
rendering of summer also varies: warm season in Matthew, dry season in Mark. The branches
are dahan and they bertubuh (grow) in Matthew. The branches are tsjiabang in Mark where
they kaluar (come out). Also in terms of spelling and function words we see the strong
tendency of variation and inconsistency, both within books and between books.

When Ruyl’s Matthew and Mark were integrated with Van Hasel’s Luke and John in the
1651 VOC edition of the gospels and Acts, the differences between the Malay gospels of Ruyl
and Van Hasel are striking. Heurnius, the editor of the 1651 edition did not as a rule
harmonize the translations of Ruyl and Van Hasel. We will give two examples..

Where Ruyl translated God with Allah, van Hasel uses Allah-t’alla (with various spellings)
‘Allah the Exalted’ where t’alla reflects one of the most frequent honorific epithets of Allah in
Arabic. Van Hasel uses this phrase also in combinations such as Radjat Allah-t’alla (often in
variation with Radjat Alhatalla) ‘Kingdom of God’.

5. The contested heritage of Ruyl

Ruyl’s pioneering translation work does not have just scholarly relevance for linguistics, history and translation studies. Ruyl’s translations still have societal relevance and impact. This is because the first Malay gospels of Ruyl contain numerous translational choices that would shape the discourse of Malay speaking Christians for centuries to come. They also play an important role in current legal, political and religious battles concerning the use of the word *Allah* and other religious terms in Indonesian and Malaysian Bibles.

The study of the Malay gospels of Ruyl gained considerable societal relevance and a much wider public became interested in Ruyl’s work when the use of *Allah* by adherents of other religions to denote their God(s) became the topic of a prolonged religious, legal and political battle. When the Malaysian government in 2007 prohibited the use of *Allah* for the Christian God in the Catholic newspaper The Herald, The Herald went to court and on December 31, 2009 the High Court of Malaysia ruled that the government decree had been illegal. Not satisfied with this ruling, radical Muslims started riots and churches were set on fire. There was also an attack on a Sikh temple in Kuala Lumpur because the Sikhs have been using *Allah* in their prayers and Scriptures for centuries. In 2013 another Malaysian court ruled in favor of Muslims who wanted to outlaw non-Islamic use of *Allah* in other faith communities present in Malaysia, not just Christians.

These legal and social struggles around the use of the word *Allah* in Malaysia attracted international attention since *Allah* has also been used for many centuries by Jewish and
Christian minorities in Arab-speaking countries to denote their God, and by the Catholic majority of Malta, Maltese being a Semitic language just like Arabic and Hebrew, and the Maltese-speaking Church being as old as the Church in Rome and using *Allah* centuries before the birth of Islam.

A complication in the polemic surrounding the use of *Allah* in Indonesian and Malaysian religious discourse is that *Allah* in Arabic functions as the name of God, grammatically a proper noun (Thomas 2001: 301). In the Hebrew Bible *El/Eloh(im)*, the Semitic cognate of Arabic *Allah*, is primarily a common noun and not the proper name of the Hebrew God. The Hebrew Supreme Being has a proper name *JHWH*. Of course, since there is only one God in Jewish religion, *Elohim* also has name-like usages in some contexts but its primary function is as a common noun meaning God (or god(s)).

It was Ruyl who introduced *Allah* into the first Malay Bible translations of Greek gospels. He used the word *Allah* to render the Greek *theos* in Matthew and Mark. *Theos* is a common noun meaning ‘deity’ and it is not a proper noun. Ruyl’s use of *Allah* as a common noun implied that *Allah* received the syntactic possibilities of a Malay common noun, for example it could be possessed (*Allahku* ‘my God’), modified by adjectives or relative clauses and so on. Speakers of Malay with a Muslim background who use *Allah* as a Malay proper name, in line with its usage in the Quran, will not use it with the modification possibilities that *Allah* has in the usage of Malay Christian communities. Some find it even offensive to say or write *Allahku* or other modification of the name of God.\(^{26}\)

Although God has a proper name in the Hebrew Bible, *JHWH*, the New Testament writers avoid the proper name of God. He is referred to with *theos* (‘God’ translated by *Allah*) or *kurios* ‘Lord’ (translated as *Tuhan* or *tuân* by Ruyl) or *pater* ‘Father’. Brouwerius’ translation of the Old Testament of 1662 uses both *Alla* and *Deos* for the Hebrew common noun

\(^{26}\) The only exception in Malay Bible translation history is the translation of Shellabear and Sulaiman (1910) who, conscious of the Muslim usage of *Allah* as proper noun, decided to translate the Hebrew name of God, *JHWH*, with the Arabic name of God, *Allah*. 

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El(ohim) ‘God’, for example in Genesis 1 (where only Elohim occurs) both Deos and Alla are used to render Elohim. The proper name JHWH is rendered by Brouwerius with Alla ThAlla. Brouwerius was not the only Christian translator choosing Alla to render Hebrew Elohim in a language with a majority of speakers being Muslim: in Africa, the Middle East and Asia this was a standard practice (Thomas 2001: 301). Jews or Christians who translated the Old Testament into Arabic used either the Arabic transliteration Yahwah as a proper name of God or rabb ‘Lord’, following the Jewish tradition not to utter the holy name of JHWH but say Lord or the Name when the written text has JHWH (Thomas 2001: 302). This Jewish distinction between the qetiv (what is written, JHWH in the consonantal text) and what is spoken when the holy text is read aloud (qere, Adonai ‘Lord’ or other substitutes such as ‘the Name’) is also the basis for the choice of modern standard Malay/Indonesian Bible translations to render the name of God in the Old Testament not with a transliteration of JHWH but as TUHAN (Lord), in capital letters.

It was not uncommon for Muslim writers in the 9th century who quoted New Testament passages in Arabic, to use Allah in their quotations of the New Testament (for example Ibn Qutayba al-Dinawari of Baghdad quotes Matthew 6: 24 where he has Jesus saying: ‘You cannot serve both Allah and Mammon’ (Thomas 2001: 302).

When the presence of Allah in non-Islamic religious texts and discourse was contested in Malaysia in the second half of the 20th century, Christian and Sikh faith communities in Malaysia after more than three centuries had to defend their use of Allah ‘God’ in the religious texts and discourse of their communities. The Christians put forth several arguments, and one of their arguments was that Allah was part of their heritage of many generations going back all the way to the Bible translation work of Ruyl in the beginning of the 17th century (Soesilo 2001b: 418). The social and political upheaval surrounding religious discourse and the ownership of religious words thus contributed to renewed interest of
Malaysian and Indonesian Christians in the work of Ruyl, and more generally in the earliest
history of Malay-speaking churches and in the ways they talked and wrote in Malay about
God and religious issues.

Against this background of renewed scholarly and public interest the Indonesian Bible
Society published a volume with articles on Malay Bibles that included a CD with high
quality facsimile editions of all major Malay Bible versions (Mamahit (ed.) 2014). It included
facsimile translations by Ruyl (1629) (Matthew, facsimile of the Utrecht University copy),
Ruyl (1638) (Matthew and Mark, Stuttgart copy), of Ruyl, van Hasel and Heurnius (1651)
four Gospels and Acts, Utrecht), Brouwerius (1662, Genesis, Utrecht) and Brouwerius (1668,
New Testament, Utrecht) and Leijdecker, van der Vorm, Werndly and Seruys (1733,
facsimile of copy of Indonesian Bible Society in Jakarta). The title of the volume was 385
Tahun Injil Matius Terjemahan A.C. Ruyl (385 years of the gospel of Matthew translated by
A.C. Ruyl). The 400th birthday of Ruyl’s first Malay gospel of Matthew was celebrated
elaborately in both Malaysia and Indonesia. The combinations of the search terms Ruyl and
terjemahan and Allah gives thousands of hits, revealing popular interest in social media,
forums, and other web environments.

The legal, social and political situation in Indonesia with respect to the (inter)religious use
of Allah (and other religious terms of Arabic origin) is different in Indonesia from that in
Malaysia. The differences follow from the different social, cultural and political place of
Malaysian and Indonesian in the two nation-states (Samuel 2010).

Bahasa Indonesia was from the very beginning of the nationalist independence movement
in the first decennia of the 19th century a key tool of nation-state building, a tool of unification
and a symbol of national unity, a unity in the rich religious, linguistic and cultural diversity.
That diversity was a potential (and often real) threat to the very existence of the nation-state
of the Republic of Indonesia. The Pancasila constitution was about inclusion and unity, to
keep Indonesia intact as a nation-state and to prevent religious diversity from degenerating into religious conflicts and ‘holy’ civil wars. The Republic saw language policy very much as a state affair and this included government institutions concerned with standardization and unification of pronunciations, spelling and meanings of words e.g. the Pusat Bahasa in Jakarta.

A typical example is the inclusivist definition of the lemma *Allah* in the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia published by the Pusat Bahasa or Language Center (Soesilo 2001b: 416):

> ‘Allah: Nama Tuhan dalam bahasa Arab, pencipta alam semesta yang mahasempurna; Tuhan yang Maha Esa yang disembah oleh orang yang beriman.’

(*Allah*: the name of the Lord in Arabic, the Creator of the universe who is allperfect; the Only Lord who is worshipped by people of faith.)

In Indonesia there was never a legal prohibition to use the word *Allah* in Christian Bibles and “*Allah* is accepted as referring to the Supreme Being for all people” according to Soesilo (2001b: 416). The place of Malay in Malaysia was (and is) very different: it is strongly associated with the Malay ethnic group, a majority group with Islam as its religion (Samuel 2010). From the perspective of this majority group in Malaysia, *Allah* is primarily and, for some exclusively, an Islamic term, a proper noun, the name of the Most High. This exclusivist perspective is very different from the inclusivist perspective on the word *Allah* in Indonesia as a term that can be used in interreligious dialogue where shared religious terminology is part of the national language that unites people of different faiths, customs and cultures.

This does not mean that everyone in Indonesia shares the inclusivist perspective (just as many Malaysian Muslims do not share the exclusive perspective). For example, there are radical Christians in Indonesia who object to the use of *Allah* in Christian Bibles because
Allah is seen as a pagan god of the Muslims (Soesilo 2001b: 419). They produced an Indonesian Bible called Kitab Suci: Torat dan Injil with the text of Terjemahan Baru but without Allah: all occurrences of Allah had been replaced by the Hebrew word Eloim, also in the New Testament as a translation of the Greek word theos ‘God/god’ (Soesilo 2001b: 419).

6. Concluding remarks

Thanks to a learned and book loving 17th century dean of Lincoln Cathedral, Michael Honywood, we have one copy left of the first Malay gospel of Mark. The VOC financed the Mark translation as a consequence of the charters it had with the Dutch Republic. In areas under direct VOC authority the VOC was expected to protect the public religion and push ‘false’ religions out of the public domain. This was especially an urgent task in formerly Portuguese areas where Catholic priests such as Franciscus Xaverius had been active as missionaries. The VOC translations played a key role in this Protestantization agenda. Given this historical and political context the term Agama Kumpeni ‘VOC religion’ was a rather appropriate contemporary name for this religion.

Ruyl was not a learned scholar but a remarkably pragmatic VOC merchant who employed neologisms, cultural substitutes and the full richness of Malay as a lingua franca, a language that reflected (and still reflects) the astonishing diversity of the cultural, religious and economic practices of its millions of speakers in the course of its long history.

Ruyl’s translation decisions and strategies laid the foundation for the translation tradition and religious discourse of Malay Christendom up till today, with Allah, imam, korban, doa, Roh Kudus, nabi and many other terms originating in Arabic. The Malay and Indonesian translations have hundreds of daughter translations in other languages of the archipelago that also use Allah and other religious terminology of the Malay and Indonesian Bibles, often

27 New Translation, published by the Indonesian Bible Society in 1974. This version of the Terjemahan Baru without Allah was published without the permission of the copyright holder.
phonologically adapted to the host languages. Even when there is no Bible translation, these
terms have often found their way into the languages of minority languages spoken by
Christian communities in Asia. For example, when I learned the Papuan language Kombai in
the early 1980s, their term for God was *Tuanala*, a compound of *Tuhan* ‘Lord’ and *Allah*.

The place of Indonesian within the Indonesian nation-state is different from that of Malay in
Malaysia because of the different histories of the two countries. This explains the striking
differences in perception and acceptance of shared religious terminology including the word
*Allah*, first introduced into Christian Scripture translation by Albert Corneliszoon Ruyl, junior
merchant of the VOC in the beginning of the 17th century.

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Gunung Mulia.


IANG EVANGELIUM VLA-
kadus, Menjurus kapada
MARCVM.
Bahagi bermula.
4. Jesus men-rewajat daan memandu dalam
utan, 7. berjulu di Jefus, 7. daan memandu
akan dia, 12. kyunndun kejai ber-ijaka dari
Seitan, 14. ber-rewajat jang Evangeluna
dalam Galila. 16. ber-pangil akan jang
wang memakat, 22. ber-j Ambob akan Sei-
nam, 29. daan iwuwa Perri, 32. daan ber-
bagi legi, 42. daan ber-jAmbob akan fahzi-
kedel.
1. Tula jang mula-
han Evangelum
Jefu Christi, jang
anak Allah.
2. Seperti jadi men-jurat kapa-
da Nabbinni: liada aku menjuruh
pen-juruh di dapan muka-mu,
liapa ada ber-adir d’jalan-mu di-
hadapan niu.
3. Sjaranja liapa ber-pangil da-
لام utan (jadi) beradir-la yang
Raja rahan, ber-rata akan la-
jan-nja.
4. Tuanus menduduk dalam
utan memandu, daan me-rewajat,
mandihan akan ber-balik badan
kapada ma-af dosia.
5. Makka kaluak kapada dea se-
gala Nangr Iahudi, daan deanjia
A dari
Figure 1 The first page of the Lincoln Mark

Figure 2 Mark 1: 3-4 in the Lincoln Mark
Iang Evangelivm Ul-kadus menjurat kapada Marcum: the first Malay Gospel of Mark (1629-1630) and the *Agama Kumpeni*

**Abstract**

The topic of this article is the Malay gospel of Mark of 1629-1630 recently discovered in the library of Lincoln Cathedral in England, a gospel translated by Albert Corneliszoon Ruyl, employee of the East-Indies Company (VOC). Ruyl’s gospels of Matthew and Mark are the earliest attested Bible translations in Malay. The article discusses the question why the VOC financed the printing of translations of the Bible and other religious literature in the East, what kind of Malay Ruyl used in Mark and what kind of translation Ruyl made. Ruyl was a very pragmatic translator using Malay religious terminology from Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic and Catholic traditions, including the term *Allah* for God. Finally, the article discusses the academic and societal importance of the first Malay gospels of Ruyl which after many centuries became newly relevant to Indonesian and Malaysian faith communities in the context of religious, legal and political conflicts about the ownership of the word *Allah*.

**Keywords**

Bible translation, Malay translation history, Allah, VOC, Ruyl, Church Malay

**1. Introduction**

The gospels of Matthew and Mark translated by the Dutchman Ruyl in the first half of the 17th century are the earliest attested translations of Bible books in Malay, and in South East and South Asian languages in general (Soesilo 2007). There were earlier efforts to translate the Bible into South East and South Asian languages. For example, the Jesuit missionary Franciscus Xaverius translated religious texts that included Bible verses into Malay in the 16th
Mongolian Bible. But no copies of these translations remain.

The bibliography of Dutch hymns *Fontes hymnodiae neerlandicae impressi 1539-1700*
mentions a Malay translation of the gospel of St. Mark by Albert Cornelisoon Ruyl,
published in 1629 and kept in the Lincoln Cathedral Library in Lincoln, United Kingdom
(Höweler and Matter 1985). The existence of three copies of Ruyl’s Matthew of 1629 was
known since the late 1980s but the Lincoln Matthew and Mark had escaped scholarly
attention. The Lincoln Matthew is the same as the Matthew copies in Stuttgart, Utrecht and
London (De Vries 2005). But the Lincoln Mark is the only known copy of the first edition of
the gospel of Mark.

The article is organized as follows. First, the historical context of the Lincoln Mark is
described. Then we zoom in on the Lincoln Mark, as a book (section 3) and as a translation
(section 4). Finally, we discuss the academic and societal relevance of these first Malay
gospels which after many centuries attracted renewed attention in the context of the debate
and conflicts surrounding the use of the word *Allah* and other religious terms of Arabic origin
in the Bibles of Malaysian and Indonesian Christians (section 5).

2. The first Malay gospels and the *Agama Kumpeni*

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1 thank Mathieu Knops, of the Royal Dutch National Library at The Hague, for alerting me to the reference in
Höweler and Matter 1985 that led me to the Lincoln Mark. I also thank Mrs. J. Taylor of the Lincoln Cathedral
Library for the many ways in which she helped me with my research in the magnificent ambience of the Lincoln
Cathedral Library. Christian Gossweiler was of great help in comparing the Lincoln and Stuttgart Mark copies,
and in dating the Lincoln Mark.

2 Until 1989 when Dr. Daud Soesilo (Indonesian Bible Society) found a copy of Ruyl’s Matthew in the
_Landesbibliothek_ of Stuttgart (Soesilo 2013: 174) scholars such as Swellengrebel (1974) thought that there
were no remaining copies of the first Malay gospel of Matthew of 1629 (Gossweiler 2014a: 21). In 1911 the
_Historical catalogue of the printed editions of the Holy Scripture in the library of the British and Foreign Bible Society_,
edited by H.T. Darlow and Horace F. Moule Vol. 2-2, mentioned Ruyl’s Bible translation into High
Malay (published in 1629) by no. 6486 (Gossweiler 2014a: 20).
The Vereenigde Oost-Indische Compagnie (VOC, 1602-1795), called Kumpeni by Malay contemporaries, financed all Malay and Portuguese Bible translations and other religious writings until its bankruptcy in 1795 (De Vries 2009, 2015). The Church Council (Kerkenraad) of the Reformed Church of Batavia was consulted for approval of these versions. For example, the minutes of the meeting of August 24, 1648, report that Rev. Heurnius had requested the VOC Board to finance the printing of “first book of Moses translated into Malay by Mr. van Hasel” (Mooij 1929: 91). And the minutes of the meeting of Wednesday November 16th of 1667 contain the decision of the Council of the Batavia Church to accept the New Testament translation of the Rev. Daniel Brouwerius, the first Malay New Testament, for publication (by the VOC). They added the condition that he would revise certain gospel books “to make the style of the whole New Testament one and the same”. The minutes of that meeting also describe the primary goal of the Malay translation as “to serve the churches in the Indies”. The final sentence of the minutes instructs the Rev. Brouwerius to go to the VOC to finance the printing.

It is important to understand from the outset that the VOC had a firm grip on the Calvinist churches in the areas that they controlled (Niemeijer, Van den End and Schutte 2015: 2). The VOC financed all church activities in the East Indies, all the pastors and translators were VOC employees, the VOC had the right to approve or reject appointments in church offices, controlled the allocation of pastors, had a representative in the church council meetings with the title commissaris-politiek and monitored church correspondence (Niemeijer, Van den End and Schutte 2015: 4). The name of the Company and its Board, and not the name of the

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3 “het eerste boek Mosis in ‘t Maleisch overgeset door Sr van Hasel”. All English translations of material from Dutch sources in the article are mine unless otherwise indicated.
4 The minutes of the Batavia Church Council (as far as they had been preserved in the Church archives in Batavia (Jakarta)) were published along with other source materials by J. Mooij in three volumes in 1927, 1929 and 1931. The minutes of 16 November 1667 can be found in Mooij (1927: 76). I could not find references to an approval by the Batavia Church Council of Ruyls gospels probably because the minutes of the relevant meetings have not been preserved.
5 “om daer door het gansche nieu Testament van een en deselve stijl te doen wesen”.
6 “ten dienste van de kercken in Indien”.
7 “tot koste vande Comp” sal laeten drucken”.

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(Batavia) Church or Church Council, were prominently displayed either on the title page or the first page of these Bibles and Bible books. The prefaces started with a very prominent reference to the Bevinthebberen or Board of the VOC, who were eloquently praised in the dedication.

The Resolutien (minutes containing their decisions and a summary of the grounds for these decisions) of the VOC Board published by Mooij (1927: 1-80) explicitly refer to the almost absolute control of the VOC. The minutes of the Board meeting of 10 January 1654 acknowledge that the instructions sent to the governor-general and his council in Batavia on 10 September 1650 relating to the churches “gave the political government very wide and absolute power over the church council and the church personnel” adding that this absolute power was not put into practice. Since letters from Batavia requesting instruction or letters from the Dutch Republic giving instructions were sent with the VOC ships on their long and very perilous journeys, in practice the VOC Board indeed faced difficulties in exercising their power. The same minutes report that the VOC Board had instructed the Company Lawyer to write a draft Church Order with respect to the appointment of pastors to be sent to the governor-general in Batavia for advice and comments.

The VOC was the first company in the world that gave out shares to finance its operations. Investing in VOC ships and their precious spice cargo was a great risk, with potentially huge awards. This raises the question why a company of early modern capitalists would finance the translation, printing, shipment and distribution of Bible translations (De Vries 2005). The answer lies in the way Dutch 17th century Calvinism understood the relationship between the Republic and the Dutch Reformed Church. Article 36 of the Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis (Dutch Confession of Faith) claimed that the State was obliged “to protect the holy worship of

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8 “Dat wel waer is dat de meergemelte missive aen de politijcque Overheijt seer ample en absolute macht geeft over de kerckelijke regieringe, en de Ecclesiatiijcquen maer dat die in dier voegen niet is noch wert gepractiseert” (Mooij 1927: 39).
the Church and to suppress and destroy all idolatry and false religion”. This implied that the Republic financed the Dutch Reformed churches in the Low Countries, including the salaries of the pastors, and had a lot of influence in church matters. The faith of the Calvinist Church was the public faith. All other forms of religion (including Catholicism and Anabaptism, both labelled as false religion and idolatry) could not be present in the public domain. Privately, people of other convictions could keep their religion, including worship services in private homes or other non-public meeting places.

The Dutch Republic gave charters (*octrooi*) to the VOC that entitled the VOC to a trade and shipping monopoly in the East, excluding other Dutch traders (Schutte 2002). The first *octrooi* was signed on March 20, 1602. The *octrooi* also delegated key public duties and rights to the VOC because the VOC operated in areas far beyond the control of the Republic: the right to build fortifications, to administer justice in the name of the Republic, the right to employ soldiers and engage in warfare and the right to appoint governors (Schutte 2002: 50).

One of the public duties mentioned in the *octrooi* of 1623 was the protection and maintaining the public faith (De Vries 2005: 16-17). It implied that the VOC had the duty to facilitate and finance the Dutch Reformed congregations and schools in the rather small part of the archipelago under their territorial control. The VOC was interested in trade and gain, not in expanding its territorial control *per se*. Koolen (1993: 23) points out that the reference to the protection of the public faith in the charter of 1623 (and subsequent charters) is placed in the *considerans* section, the introductory section and not in the instruction section in which the legally binding right and duties of the VOC were stipulated. By doing so, the *Staten-Generaal* (States General, the highest authority of the Republic) made clear that it considered the duty to protect the public Reformed Faith as an obvious, completely self-evident moral and religious duty for the VOC in all areas under their jurisdiction, and this included all VOC

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9 “de heilige dienst van de kerk te beschermen en om te weren en uít te roeien alle afgoderij en valschen godsdienst”.
fortified trade posts in the Far East, for example Ceylon and Formosa where the VOC financed the translation of Bible(portsions) and catechisms (Adelaar 2011).

In the archipelago the VOC-sponsored Bible translations were limited to Malay and Portuguese because those two were the main contact and trade languages in the archipelago, also used in the ethnically and linguistically heterogeneous congregations of the Dutch Reformed Churches in the East. The VOC never financed Bible translations in indigenous languages of the archipelago, some of them with many millions of speakers (for example, Javanese), languages that the intended audiences in the 17th century archipelago would have understood far better than Malay and Portuguese. Indeed, indigenous languages only became targets of Bible translation of the mission societies that were founded towards the end of the 18th century and in the first decades of the 19th century in Europe and America. In fact, Javanese was the first language targeted for Bible translation by the Netherlands Bible Society in the early 19th century (Swellengrebel 1974).

Some pastors in areas where Malay was not widely known translated religious materials into indigenous languages. For example, the bibliography of Niemeijer and Van den End (2015: 153) lists translations in the indigenous languages of Saparuaby Heurnius and Sangir by Van der Leeuw. The latter translated Mark and wrote a short catechism in Sangirese. His work was not printed because the Church Council of Batavia stuck to the language policy of using the common languages Malay and Portuguese (Niemeijer and Van den End 2015: 154).

The VOC related churches in Ambon, Ternate, Batavia and other places were multi ethnic and multi lingual. The people supposed to go to church were Europeans employed by the VOC, formerly Catholic locals, some Chinese and Japanese, Mardijkers (descendants of migrants from India) and slaves with various backgrounds (Niemeijer, Van den End and Schutte 2015: 5). The Europeans employed by the VOC came from various nations, speaking different languages, especially German, but also Portuguese, French and English. Malay and
Portuguese had a key role as lingua franca in these highly diverse VOC and VOC dependent communities. The VOC employees with church related tasks had as their first task the pastoral care for the multi ethnic VOC employees of European and Asian descent, and the Malay and Portuguese Bible translations commissioned by the VOC primarily functioned as a tool for that task, using the two contact languages Malay and Portuguese known to various degrees as a second language by the majority of the attendants of Reformed church services, whether European or Asian. The second function was to expand the Calvinist religion as the public faith in areas under direct VOC jurisdiction, including formerly Catholic areas. Both functions of the Malay and Portuguese VOC translations followed from the duties of the VOC mentioned in the charters with the Republic.

Portuguese continued to be an important lingua franca, in and outside the church, long after the Portuguese left, till around 1800 (Swellengrebel 1974: 9). Swellengrebel (1974: 9) observes that slaves employed in Dutch households used Portuguese when communicating with family members and that many Dutch children knew the lingua franca variety of Batavian Portuguese better than Dutch. The Portuguese pastor d'Almeida, a pastor of the Reformed Church in Batavia, translated the New Testament into Portuguese. The Portuguese New Testament of d'Almeida was printed in Amsterdam at the cost of the VOC in 1681. The complete Bible in Portuguese appeared much later, in 1748. This VOC Bible is the first Bible in Portuguese and has been globally used in Portuguese speaking parts of the world, especially Brazil, with a revision of 1959 still bearing the name of ’d Almeida (Swellengrebel 1974: 10; De Vries 2005: 17).

The VOC context of the first Malay Bible translations also explains why the translations were designed and printed as solid and expensive Bibles, in rather small quantities, not cheap editions for small purses as would be distributed much later by missionaries and evangelists in
the 19th century. The Board of Seventeen that governed the VOC decided on August 21, 1629
to let Palensteyn in Enkhuizen print 480 copies of the first Malay gospel of Matthew.

Ruyl writes in the preface to his first gospels, addressing the Board of Governors of the
VOC, that he wants to translate the whole New Testament into Malay for “the expansion of
our Public Christian Religion[…] to the salvation of many, simple souls who in due time will
be brought safely to the lap of the Church under the protection of Your Excellences”. Ruyl
phrases his missiological intentions with the standard terms of Dutch Calvinism of the
Republic to describe the Calvinistic Church as the privileged, public religion under the wings
of the government, represented in Batavia by the governor-general of the VOC.

The VOC did not spend much money on the protection of the public Reformed faith in the
East. The funds spent on church and school work, including Bible translation, were a minor
part of the total VOC operation. For example, according to Schutte (2002: 50) the VOC
employed 14,800 persons in the Dutch East-Indies in 1688. Only 108 were employed in
church and church-related ministries including 23 schoolmasters, less than 1%. However,
only European employees are counted in these statistics, not the many indigenous guru
‘teacher’ involved in the schools. Trade surely was the primary goal of the VOC, based on
establishing and maintaining trade monopolies with military means.

The Heidelberg Catechism of the Dutch Reformed Church contained the teaching that the
Catholic Eucharist was “vervloeekte afgodery” (“cursed idolatry”). Therefore, it was
important for the pastorsto bring Catholic Christians into the fold of the Dutch Reformed
Church in areas under VOC control where the Portuguese (Moluccas, North Celebes) or
Spaniards (Sangir-Talaud islands) had been in the 16th century (Niemeijer, Van den End and
Schutte 2015: 3; de Vries 2015). The VOC government no doubt hoped that Protestantisation
would make the local population more inclined to accept their rule. The Catholic villages of

10 “tot voortplantinghe van onze Alghemeyne Christelijcke Religie […]ter zalichheyt van vele arme,
eenvoudighe zielen, die mettertijt gerustelijcken in de schoot der Kerck, onder U.E.A. bescherminghe gebracht
sullen worden”
these areas came under the direct authority of the VOC and they numbered around 16,000
souls after the surrender of the Portuguese, with an additional 30,000 after the withdrawal of
the Spaniards (Niemeijer, Van den End and Schutte 2015: 3).

Since the Gereformeerde Kerk (Reformed Church) was the only form of religion tolerated in
the public domain in the areas under VOC control, all of a sudden there was a Dutch
Reformed Church with many congregations and with thousands of formerly Catholic
believers that needed catechisms, liturgical texts and Bibles in Malay, essential tools for the
protestantization and pacification of these regions (De Vries 2015). There was a system of
fines to punish people who did not go to church (Niemeijer 2002a:129-130). It is
understandable that a common Malay name of this Public Christian Religion was Agama
Kumpeni (the Company Religion) (Niemeijer 2002:147-176). The villages that had converted
to Islam in the areas under the jurisdiction of the Sultanates of Tidore, Ternate and Batjan
remained under the Sultans and could practice their religion unhindered (Niemeijer, Van den
End and Schutte 2015: 3).

The VOC schools were an extension of the church, and the curriculum focused almost
entirely on religious instruction. The schools also functioned as a tool of pacification (Koolen
1993). The Malay and Portuguese Bible translations and catechisms played an important role
in the VOC sponsored schools. The instructional and liturgical functions are reflected in the
supplementary texts that went with the Malay gospels of Ruyl: the liturgical section contained
a few hymns and psalms, the Lord’s Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the Prayer before the
Sermon, the Prayer after the Sermon, the Songs of Zechariah, Mary, the Angel and Simeon
from the birth narrative in Luke and the Apostolic Creed, all key elements of Dutch Reformed
church services. Pupils in the Malay VOC schools had to memorize the Lord’s Prayer, the
Ten Commandments and the Apostolic Creed (Koolen 1993).
The gospels of Matthew and Mark by Ruyl in 1629-1630 were followed by the gospels of Luke and John in 1646 and Fifty Psalms in 1648 by Jan van Hasel and Justus Heurnius. The Four Gospels and Acts were published in 1651. The complete Psalter by Van Hasel and Heurnius appeared in 1652. The year 1668 saw the publication of the New Testament by Brouwerius who had published a Genesis translation in 1662. Finally in 1733 the complete Bible by Leijdecker was published. The VOC financed all these books. There was however also an edition of the Four Gospels and Acts by van Hasel and Heurnius printed in Oxford for Henry Clements, with a preface by Thomas Marshall.\textsuperscript{11}

The Malay Bible translations were part of a wider VOC program to provide the churches and schools with educational and religious materials, and to provide translators and interpreters with grammatical and lexical information on the Malay language. The list of Malay printed writings of the VOC period in Niemeyer and Van den End (2015: 127-169) contains translations of catechisms, ABC booklets, grammatical treatises, lexica and sermons. Some VOC merchants or pastors became Malay specialists, for example Ruyl, Leijdecker and Werndly. They laid the linguistic foundation (vocabularies, grammars, study of Malay literature) and translated religious literature for church and school.

\textit{The changing place of missionary translation towards the end of the VOC era}

Enlightenment ideas would give religion, mission and Bible translation a radically different place in society in the course of the 18\textsuperscript{th} century (Van Rooden 1996; Van Eijnatten 2003). The place of the Christian religion shifted from its public, confessional, state-controlled position to a conviction in the heart and conscience of individual citizens. These individual citizens had the right to organize themselves independent of the state and the state church. This independent organization took the form of societies, legal bodies in the new middle ground of

\textsuperscript{11} I extracted the information on Malay translations from Niemeyer and Van den End 2015: 127-169 and from Mamahit (ed.) 2014: 89 who uses the data provided by Christian Gossweiler.
civil society. Missionary and Bible societies were formed with the aim to win the souls of
heathens, wherever they were. Since 1800 Bible Societies (rather than authorities of the state
or the state-church) became the dominant player in the translation, printing and distribution
of (non-confessional) Bibles, especially in Protestant countries and their colonies (De Vries
2016).

The organizational independence of Bible Societies does not mean that the state had no
influence on their policies in the colonies. The Boards of the Netherlands Bible Society and
the British and Foreign Bible Society had influential members that were high ranking (former)
civil servants in the colonies. The Right Honorable Lord Teignmouth, first President of the
British and Foreign Bible Society and its president for 30 years, was a former governor
general of the British East India Company. The Dutchman Baud was until 1819 General
Secretary of the Dutch government in Batavia (Jakarta), and an influential member of the
Board of the Netherlands Bible Society branch in The Hague (De Vries 2016).

Baud wrote a policy paper entitled Consideratien over de vertaling en verspreiding van de
Heilige Schriften (Considerations about the translation and distribution of the Holy
Scriptures). Baud emphasizes that the Netherlands Bible Society must send the message to the
colonial government that they will stay away from any proselytizing and also will keep
proselytizing missions at a safe distance because, he says, the colonial government will only
tolerate Bible society activities in the East in as far as "the stability of beautiful and rich Java,
the important source of our East-Indian finances, is not being threatened".12

Bible translation policies for the colonies were grounded in the colonial Enlightenment
discourse of the Bible as a force of civilization. Gijsbert Karel van Hogendorp, the most
influential and powerful Dutch politician of his day and president of the Netherlands Bible
Society branch of the Hague, addresses the Board of the Netherlands Bible Society in 1816 to

12 "De rust van het schone en rijke Java, de voormane hulpbron van onze Indische financiën, niet wordt in de
waagschaal gesteld". Baud is quoted in J.L. Swellengrebel, In Leijdeckers Voetspoor, deel 1, Haarlem,
Nederlands Bijbelgenootschap, 1974, p. 27.

11
formulate policy goals of these translations in the languages of the East. They should *not* aim at proselytizing, not even have a hidden aim to do so. The Bibles to be translated and distributed in the East should aim at Civilization: "'Europe'- Napoleon said (...) – became civilized because of Christianity'. Everyone knows to what extent the Heathens are backward in terms of civilization. Also for the operation of the State therefore it can be seen as important to distribute a means of civilization" (De Vries 2016).13

On the contrary, the early VOC translators such as Ruyl and Van Hasel were not missionaries in the sense of people sent abroad by missionary societies to win the souls of heathens, as an activity independent of the state and independent of the state-backed confessional churches (Van Rooden 1996). Rather, they were VOC employees carrying out the duty of the *octrooi* to protect the public Calvinist religion. Ruyl was a junior merchant of the VOC when he translated the gospels of Matthew and Mark (Werndly 1736). This does not imply that they or later VOC pastors who did translation work had no missionary zeal or that they never went to places outside VOC control to proselytize. Leydecker was the first pastor to receive an official commission and dedicated time for his translation work. Before his time, the translators did their work on their own initiative in their spare time, showing missionary zeal, and then presented their work to the VOC to be printed and distributed. But the overall institutional context of the religious translation work in this period is shaped by the notion of the Protestant faith as the public religion under the wings of the VOC.

3. The Lincoln Mark as a book

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The Lincoln Cathedral Library has a copy of Ruyl’s Malay Matthew of 1629, shelf mark Qq. 4.7, and a copy of Ruyl’s translation of Mark, shelf mark Qq. 4.8, originally bound together in one volume, with one title page. The title page has this text:

Het NIEUWE TESTAMENT. Dat is: het Nieuwe verbont onſes heeren Jesu Chrifti in Nederduyts Ende Malays/na der Griekſcher waerheijt overgeſet.\(^{14}\)

Iang TESTAMENTUM BAHARV. Arti-n’ja: Iang d’jand’ji baharû dari Tůhan-kû Iefû Chrifti: berfalim kapada baffa Hůlanda daan baffa Malajû ſeperti jang Adillan baffa Gregû

Gedruckt t’Enckhuyſen/ by Jan Jacobsz Palensteyn/opt Suyd-eynde inde druckery/1629.

Ber-pra-tʃiap ka Nagri Enkhůſen, pada Iůhan Iacûb, Menaůn ka ſalatan dalam kedey bar-pra. 1629.\(^{15}\)

The Lincoln Mark is in quarto format, with two columns on each page (folium). The book has 120 folia, with katernen A-P, subdivided in four (A, Aij, Aiij, Aiiij etc.). Folium 1 has a title above the left column Het H. Evangelivm Beschreuen door Marcum and the Malay title Iang Evangelivm Vlkadus, Menjurat kapada Marcum above the right column of folium 1 (see figure 1). At the end, on folium 120, below the Dutch column, it says Eynde des Evangeliums Marci and below the Malay column Südahan Evangelium Marcum. The left column has the Dutch Deux-Aes translation of Mark, in Gothic script and the right column has the Malay translation, in Roman script (see figure 1), just as the translation of Matthew (Soesilo 2001a: 46-47). The Deux-Aes Bible of 1562 was the most used Dutch translation of Protestants before 1637 when the Dutch Authorized Version, the Staten Vertaling, was published. The paratext of the Lincoln Mark follows that of the Deux-Aes version of the left column, with

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\(^{14}\) “The New Testament. That is the new covenant of our Lord Jesus Christ translated into Dutch and Malay after the Greek truth”.

\(^{15}\) “Printed in the town of Enkhuizen, by Jan Jacobsz, residing at the South End in the Printshop”.

13
pericope titles above each chapter. The chapter number is mentioned in the left top part of the page and the page number on the top right part. Under each column we find a signature mark and a catchword (see figure 1). The Lincoln copy of Mark is one of the first books printed in Malay.

Figure 1

The Mark copy in Lincoln is different from the Mark copy of the 1638 edition kept in Stuttgart. The Lincoln Mark is unique: it is the only extant copy of Ruyl’s first Malay Mark in its first edition. Text, spelling, lay-out and typographical details of the Lincoln Mark (1629/1630) and the Stuttgart Mark (1638) are different. For example, the decorated initial capital letter I of Mark 1:1 (see figure 1) is different in the two Mark editions of Lincoln and Stuttgart (Gossweiler, p.c.). The Lincoln Mark uses the tilde sign over vowels to indicate nasals where the Stuttgart Mark uses the letters m, ng and n. For example, in the Lincoln Mark 1:40 we find saurāg ‘a person’, daā ‘and’ and hāba ‘hamba’ versus Stuttgart Mark saurang, daan and hamba. But the Lincoln Mark also sometimes writes daan. The spelling of Ruyl and other VOC translators is very inconsistent from a modern perspective. However, the spelling of Dutch in the 17th century was also inconsistent and not yet fully standardized in the young Republic. Ruyl and other VOC translators followed spelling practices of Dutch and Portuguese in writing Malay (Swellengrebel 1974).

The spelling idiosyncrasies, typography and lay-out connect the Lincoln Mark very clearly to the Matthew of 1629 and indicate that Ruyl’s Lincoln Mark was printed either in 1629 or shortly after 1629 when Palensteyn printed Matthew (Gossweiler 2014a). In the preface to what he thought would become his New Testament, Ruyl refers to his Malay grammar and word list Spieghel van de Maleyshe Tale published in 1612 to explain the vowel system of
Malay, especially what Ruyl calls the *diphtonghe o.u.* that he spells with an *u* that has a small circular sign on top: ु (see figure 1). This ु is peculiarity of the early Ruyl. We find it only in his first Matthew and Mark, not in Stuttgart Mark edition of 1638 nor in any other Malay publication by Ruyl or anyone else, before or after 1629 (Gossweiler, p.c). Another significant spelling idiosyncrasy shared by the copies of Matthew (1629) and the Lincoln Mark, but not found in the Mark of 1638 is the Dutch *trema* or vowel separation sign used on the letter *a* when it follows an *i*, for example *tiäda, liätla* (Gossweiler, p.c.). Ruyl writes in his preface that he had finished Matthew in 1612 and since he planned to translate the whole New Testament, he will have proceeded with the second book of the New Testament after 1612. Both manuscripts must have been ready for printing in 1629.

The VOC was in fact a conglomerate of six local trading companies in the major ports of the Republic. These local companies united under the umbrella of the VOC under considerable political pressure of the *Staten-Generaal* of the Republic (Schutte 2002: 50). The local companies were called *kamers* (chambers) and Enkhuizen was one of these VOC chambers (Schutte 2002: 50).

Palensteyn, the printer mentioned on the title page, had a theatre in Enkhuizen in which plays were performed. The audience in his theatre could follow the play by buying the script of the play printed in his print shop (A.A. den Hollander, p.c.). But Palensteyn did not have the expertise and skills needed to print books in non-European languages that was available in Amsterdam. This is because there are numerous printing errors in the first edition that forced Ruyl to include a long list of *Letter faulten* (printing errors). The list of errors begins with the title page that contains the printing mistake *bersalim* which should be *bersalin*. Later editions of his gospels corrected those errors (Gossweiler, p.c).

The letter M is handwritten in the top left corner of the Lincoln title page that preceded the gospel translations. It is the signature of the owner, Michael (M) Honywood (1597-1681) who
became Dean of Lincoln Cathedral in 1660. He was an avid book collector and signed his books with M (Taylor, p.c.). It is very likely that he bought the Malay books of Matthew and Mark in the Dutch Republic, because Honywood went to Utrecht in 1642 and stayed there for a couple of years, during the Protectorate (Venables 1885). The Malay gospels that Honywood bought ended up in the Cathedral Library after his appointment as Dean of the Lincoln Cathedral in 1660. He collected Bibles in various languages but was also interested in many other subjects, as is clear from the magnificent collection in the Lincoln Cathedral Library.

The Malay gospels that he purchased must have had earlier Dutch owners and must have been used in the East because on an empty page that follows the Malay translation of the Lord’s Prayer on folium 38 we find these hand written notes in the Lincoln Matthew:

*tekst den 9 Julij 1639*

*psalm 130*

djikalou tuanco mau bilang dosa

siappa bole tingal badiri

adapan tuan

*den 23 Julij 1639 tekst Jone i-??i-2*

itou bacattahan deos jadij

capada Jona (Yang Annac Amithai) babounji begitou

badirila dan bedjalan dalam

Yang bandar besar ninive

Lagi adjarkan di dalam

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16 If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? (English Standard Version).
Most likely a Dutch VOC pastor or schoolmaster wrote down the verses from Scripture that he wanted to preach or teach about in 1639 on July 3 (Psalm 150), July 23 (Matthew 1: 2) and July 30 (Matthew 4: 17). The Malay Scripture verses from Matthew 4: 17, handwritten on folium 38 of the Lincoln Matthew in the liturgical folia after the gospel translation, do not come from Ruyl’s Matthew because Ruyl translated this verse as *Berbaiki badan mu karna hokkum-sorga-ni ampir datang*.19

### 4. The Lincoln Mark as a translation

**Malay but which Malay?**

In 1612, fifteen years after the first Dutch ships reached Java, Albert Corneliszoon Ruyl, finished the manuscript of his Malay translation of the gospel of Matthew. The year before he had published his Malay translation of a short catechism that summarized the doctrines of the Dutch Reformed Church (*Kort Begrip van Marnix van St. Aldegonde*) (van Boetzelaar 1941: 30). Ruyl had learned Malay in Patani where Malay was an indigenous language and had been exposed to literary and court Malay that he also tried to use in his translation (Werndly...
The Malay that Ruyl uses in his translation is in fact a form of (emergent) Kerck Maleis, the Church Malay variety that arose in the context of multi ethnic and multi lingual Protestant VOC communities in religious genres such as catechisms, Bible translations, sermons, a kind of Malay also shaped by the first languages of its users and by features of the Dutch religious texts that were translated.

The interference from Dutch in Ruyl’s Malay is hardly lexical. There are almost no words of Dutch origin in his Malay gospels, and this is generally true for the VOC translators (see Collins 2002 for Brouwerius). Since he translates the Dutch text rather literally, there is considerable interference from Dutch grammatical patterns. For example, Ruyl often uses the marker of relative clauses yang to render the Dutch definite articles de and het in his Dutch base text, for example in the noun phrase Iang Evangelium Ul-kadus menjurat kapada Marcum ‘the Holy gospel written by Mark’ in the title of Mark and in Mark 1: 15 jang waktu jadi putus, daan jang Radjat Allahi ampir datang ‘the time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God has almost come’.

Most VOC translators, including Ruyl, backed by the VOC leadership, wanted to use higher varieties of Malay as found in Malay literary traditions, varieties less bound to regional spoken Malays but very difficult to understand for the vast majority of the intended users. Ruyl, in his preface, refers to this debate and to the support he received from the VOC Board in Amsterdam to use what Ruyl called Hoofs Malays ‘Court Malay’ of the variety he found in the literary tradition of Malay: a high form of Malay used in courts and in written texts of the high type (religious treatises, court chronicles, poetry).

Ruyl mentions in his preface to the Lincoln gospels that some critics found his Malay “al te Hoofs Malays” (Malay as used in courts) and he criticizes the Matthew translation of Van Hasel “hem ontbreeckende het lezen en schrijven van de Malayse boecken” (him lacking the reading and writing of Malay books). Van Hasel’s Malay Matthew was never printed because
the VOC Board sided with Ruyl. Van Hasel was a junior VOC merchant just like Ruyl. He
had arrived in the East Indies in 1613. Although his Malay Matthew did not see print, his
translations of Luke and Acts, lightly revised by the Rev. Heurnius, were printed together
with Ruyl’s gospels in 1651 (Swellengrebel 1974).

The Malay translations of Ruyl must have been very difficult to understand in most, if not
all parts of the archipelago. Many people in and around the VOC stations only spoke
restricted, low Malay varieties used in trade and interethnic contact situations, if they spoke
Malay at all. Such *Melayu Pasar* varieties functioned in a limited number of contexts, with a
limited vocabulary and strongly reduced verbal morphology.

When in the course of the 17th century children in the Christian villages of Ambon grew up
with local varieties of Malay and this local Ambonese Malay became the first language of
more and more people, Ambonese Malay developed into a relatively stable language with its
own grammar and lexis, a language still spoken today (Collins 2002). Seeing that these
Ambonese Christians did not understand the Malay of Ruyl, van Hasel and Brouwer, pastor
Valentijn began to translate the Bible into a Malay variety much closer to Ambonese Malay in
grammar and lexis. His work was not accepted for printing by the Batavia Church Council but
fragments of his translation have survived as quoted Scripture in a book titled *Ichtisaar*,
printed in 1725, a catechism written by Dutch pastors and translated into Malay by
Valentijn.20 Pastor Valentijn wrote a passionate response to his critics in the form of a
pamphlet printed in 1698, defending his choice of Ambonese Malay on the grounds of
understandability.21

Unfortunately, even the few people who could read or understand the High Malay of the
literary traditions, both religious and secular, would find the Church Malay used in VOC

\[20\] These fragments of Valentijn’s Scripture translation can be found in Niemeijer and Van den End 2015: 165-
169.

\[21\] The brochure titled *Deure der Waerhijd* (Door of Truth) was published in Niemeijer and Van den End (2015:
149-187).
translations hard to follow because Ruyl and other VOC translators did not (and probably could not) write in the style of Malay literary traditions. Instead, Ruyl wrote Church Malay, with its interference from the syntax of their Dutch sources, with neologisms, with mistakes in the use of the all-important verbal affixation of Malay, and with a specific and unfamiliar lexis to denote theological concepts.

The letter from the Church Council of Ambon to the Church Council in Batavia of 18 September 1690 shows that sixty years after Ruyl’s first gospels were printed, understandability and the kind of Malay to be used, were still very much unsolved issues.\(^{22}\)

The letter complains about the many problems and shortcomings of the congregations in and around Ambon, and sums up the causes of that deplorable situation. There are too few pastors, there are not enough Malay Bible books and even if there are Malay translations they are not very effective. The letter explains: “One should not think that the Malay language is a general language here. Many natives, especially on the outer islands, do not know Malay at all. Most of them understand just so much as they need for daily life”. \(^{23}\)

The letter goes on to observe that even the few who know Malay at the level of the literary traditions do not understand the kind of Church Malay of the Bible translations. That Malay, although it has been taken “uyt de eygene boeken der regte Maleyers” (from the own books of the proper/true Malay people), has been modified “tot ‘t gebruyk van onse Christelijke Theologie” (to the use of our Christian Theology). About this Kerck Maleis (Church Malay) the letter states: “it would be desirable if they could understand that language; we mean the

\(^{22}\) The letter can be found as document 253 in Niemeijer and Van den End (2015: 1). The handwriting of this letter is attributed by Niemeijer and Van den End (2015: 1) to Rev. Petrus van der Vorm, one of the language specialists of the Church.

\(^{23}\) “Men moet niet meenen dat de Maleitse taal hier een algemeene taal is. Veel Inlanders zijn er, voornamelijk op de buiteneylanden, die gants geen Maleits kennen. De meeste onder haar verstaan maar soveel als se tot haar dagelijkse omme gang van nooden hebben.”
Christians. The Muslims are not much better, although some of their scholars know the proper Malay, and also Arabic, or at least they should know given their so called religion”.24

Around the turn of the century Malay specialists such as ds. Melchior Leydecker and ds. Petrus van der Vorm looked back at the results of the work of the pioneers Ruyl, Van Hasel, Heurnius and Brouwer and realized the shortcomings of their work. In a letter of the Batavia Church Council of 15 November 1697, the writer (probably Leydecker, see Niemijer and Van den End 2015: 135) points to many mistakes in the older versions and writes “that sir Ruyl and sir Hasel, uneducated persons, have gone astray in this respect is no wonder but that first D. Heurnius and afterwards D. Brouwerius and the Englishman Thomas Marshall did not see this is remarkable”.25 He does not blame the VOC merchants Ruyl and van Hasel for their mistakes because they were after all people without higher learning. This strengthens the likelihood of the idea that Ruyl did not translate from a Greek source text, although the title page that preceded Ruyl’s gospels claims that the Malay translation is based on the Greek text of the New Testament (seperti jang Adillan bafja Gregû). His translation of Matthew and Mark follows where possible the Dutch text of the Deux-Aes translation found in the left column of his diglot gospel translations, and not the Greek text. The claim that the translation is based on the Hebrew, Greek or Aramaic is found on the title pages of most Protestant translations of the 16th and 17th centuries to signal that it is a Protestant Bible, not based on the Latin Vulgate (Gossweiler 2014b: 75).

To substantiate his harsh judgments the writer of the critical letter of the Batavia Church Council of 15 November 1697 presents various kinds of evidence. For example, he points to the Malay translation of the herbal plant munte (mint) by derham ‘money’in Brouwerius New

24 “Maar ’t was te wenssen dat d’Inlander dese taal verstont; we spreken van de christenen. De mooren zijn niet veel beter, hoewel er buyten twijffel onder die enige van haar geleerden zijn die de regte Maleitse taal, ook wel d’Arabische, kennen, of tenminste behooren te kennen, ten opsigt van haare soogenaamde godsdienst”.

Testament in Matthew 23: 23 where Brouwerius had followed Ruyl. (New Revised Standard Version: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint, dill, and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith”.)

Indeed, Ruyl (and Brouwerius) use the Malay loan *draham* (based on the plural form of the Arab *derham* (*draham-in*)) in this verse. The Dutch word for the garden plant *munte* ‘mint’ has a homonym *munte* ‘coin; money’. And Ruyl mistranslated *munte* according to the meaning of the Dutch homonym (‘money; coinage’) with the noun *draham* ‘money’ that entered Malay with Arab traders who in their turn borrowed it from Greek *drachme* (as the learned writer of the critical letter of the Batavia Church Council observes). Had Ruyl translated from the Greek, he could not have made this mistake. Ruyl could only make that mistake because the Dutch version with the homonym ‘munte’ was his source, and he clearly did not understand even the Dutch version where three types of herbal plants are mentioned. The writer of the letter wonders why the more learned revisors of Ruyl (the pastors Heurnius and Brouwerius who were supposed to read Greek) did not catch such obvious mistakes.

*Daring translation strategies*

Ruyl permits himself a number of striking liberties that a Calvinistic Bible translator at home in the Dutch Republic did not have. First of all, the frequent use of Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic and Catholic religious terminology, even for key terms such as God or the Holy Spirit.

Second, the use of cultural substitutes and third, neologisms. These three features follow from his pragmatism, a pragmatism he shared with many other VOC men who had to adjust to conditions and circumstances very different from their home countries in Europe.

*Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic and Catholic religious terminology*
In order to find Malay terms for religious concepts such as God, priest and sacrifice, baptism, holiness, but also for concepts of the biblical worlds unfamiliar to most Malay speakers (snow, desert, winter, summer, various animals, plants and trees), Ruyl had to use the full resources of the Malay language in creative ways, using neologisms and Malay loans from other languages.

Since Hindu-Buddhist, Islamic and Catholic notions had entered the Malay speaking world before Protestantism, Malay had borrowed religious terms from the holy texts in the languages associated with these religions: Indic languages, Arabic and Portuguese. All VOC translators used words like pandita (modern Malay pendeta ‘pastor’) and dewa ‘deity’ (used to refer to ‘false’ gods in VOC translations) from Sanskrit, words like Allah ‘God’, imam ‘priest’, nabi ‘prophet’ from Arabic and words such as Deos ‘God’, Baptista ‘Baptist’ and Spirito ‘Spirit’ from Portuguese. VOC translators applied such Malay words originating in the languages of what they saw as ‘false religions’ in different ways, sometimes even using both a Portuguese and an Arabic Malay loan for the same Hebrew or Greek term, for example Alla ‘God’ and Deos ‘God’ in the translation of Hebrew Elohim in Genesis 1 of Brouwerius (1662) where the Hebrew has only Elohim ‘God’ in Genesis 1 (De Vries 2005).

Ruyl seems to prefer Arabic-based Malay religious terms over Portuguese-based or Sanskrit-based ones in his Malay translation, for example he uses Allah rather than Deos for God, and Ruah rather than Spirito for Spirit. Had he learned Malay in Ambon, he probably would have used more Portuguese loans since Ambonese Malay had many words of Portuguese origin. We find Allah in the very first verse of the Lincoln Mark (figure 1). Ruyl is the first to write the word Allah in roman script in Malay literature.

‘Itûla jang mûlahan Evangeliûm Iesu Christi, jang anak Allah’

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God (King James Version)
Some other Arabic-based religious terms used to denote biblical notions in the Lincoln Mark
are: ʿulkadūs ‘holy’, Beitul Allah ‘temple’ (=House of God), Rūah-ʿulkadūs ‘Holy Spirit’),
nabi ‘prophet’ and the plural nabbini ‘prophets’, mumin ‘blessed’ (as a translation of Dutch
salich), rahmad, ‘mercy’, haramzada ‘sinner’, umat ‘congregation; religious community’,
maalikat ‘angel’; korban ‘sacrifice’. This does not mean that Ruyl always avoids Portuguese-
based Malay words. He seems to use them especially when seeing no alternative for the
Portuguese word, for example in Mark 10: 21 he chooses the Portuguese loan krus ‘cross’
where the Dutch in the left column has cruycze ‘cross’ and in Mark 5:12 he uses sinagugo
‘synagogue’. Ruyl uses a Malay neologism mandihan in Iūannes mandihan ‘John the Baptist’
in Mark rather than using the Portuguese loan babtista that he used in his translation of
Matthew (where he used both Iūannes mandihan and Iūannes babtista to translate the phrase
John the Baptist).

Cultural substitutes

The second pragmatic characteristic feature of Ruyl’s translation is his use of cultural
substitutes for biblical realia that were unknown or unfamiliar to Malay speaking audiences
and for which he assumed there was no Malay equivalent. The sandy, dry deserts of Palestine
are rendered by Ruyl asutan ‘forest’ or rimba ‘jungle’. The snow of Mark 9: 3 is rendered
with the cultural substitute umbun ‘white vapour, steam, dew’. The winter mentioned in 13:
18 becomes musim udjan ‘monsoon, rain season’ and the summer of Mark 13: 28 is musim
kamarauw ‘dry season’.

In Mark 2: 23 it is narrated how the disciples of Jesus began plucking ears of grain while
travelling on a Sabbath. Ruyl uses a cultural substitute padi ‘rice’ for the wheat (or barley)
mentioned in the Greek (and in the Dutch translation), turning the fields of wheat into rice
fields. To use a cultural substitute in what was seen as a historical narrative was a daring form of pragmatism from a Calvinist perspective because it changed the ‘truth’: Jesus and his disciples walked in the rice fields in Ruyl’s version. The fact that the Malay translation is part of a diglot with the authoritative Deux-Aes text in the left column made it easier to use such daring translation strategies. The Malay column is not presented as a stand-alone text, but as a dependent text, a parallel text, perhaps even as an explanatory translation.

**Neologisms**

The third pragmatic feature characteristic of Ruyl is his use of neologisms. For example, the biblical genre of parables, *ghelijkenisse* in the Dutch text in the left column, is rendered sometimes by *sepertihan*, a calque from the Dutch term (*seperi*=*ghelijck* (like, as, same), -*an=enisse* (-ness) and in other verses as *artijan*, a neologism based on the Malay root *arti* ‘meaning, interpretation’ and the derivational suffix –*an*. Ruyl continues the strategy of neologisms that he already introduced in his translation of Matthew (Soesilo 2014: 65). For example in Mark 1: 4 (see figure 2), Ruyl uses the neologism *ber-balik badan* ‘to turn the body’, a neologism based on *bekeeringe* ‘turn’ in the Deux-Aes.

Gossweiler (2014b: 78) points out that the choice of the neologism *ber-balik badan* ‘to turn the body’ for the Greek *metanoia* ‘conversion’ as used in Mark 1: 4 was connected to one of the main themes of dispute between Catholics and Protestants in the era of the Reformation, the issue of the basis for salvation and forgiveness of sins. Dutch translations made by Catholics and approved by the Bishops followed the Vulgate and used the Dutch loan *penitencie* ‘penitence’ for example in the Leuvense Bijbel, based on the Vulgate rendering of the Greek *metanoia* ‘conversion’ as *paenitentia*. Calvinist translations avoid *penitencie* because it was too closely associated with the presumed Catholic notion of atonement for sins by acts of penitence on the part of the believer: only Jesus could atone for our sins by his
death on the cross. Therefore Protestant translations use *bekeeringe* (literally a turning around) for the Greek *metanoia*. Ruyl’s neologism *balik badan* ‘turn around’ (literally ‘turn (your) body around’), a calque of *bekeeringe* was revised by Heurnius (who knew Greek) and became *berbalik hati* ‘turn the heart’ (e.g. Matthew 3: 8), closer to the Greek. Heurnius revised the gospels of Ruyl (Matthew, Mark) and van Hasel (Luke, John) to integrate them in his Malay edition of the four gospels and Acts of 1651 (Gossweiler 2014: 78).

**Figure 2**

*Relationship of Lincoln Mark to Ruyl’s earlier work*

As is clear from the second page of the Dutch preface to the Matthew Gospel, Ruyl had already produced a manuscript with the Malay translation of Matthew in 1612 that was criticized by some as containing ‘al te Hoofs Malays’, that is the Malay style and lexis of the courts. Other first fruits of Ruyl’s translation efforts in the domain of religious literature were liturgical texts related to baptism and marriage, a catechism by Marnix van Sint Aldegonde and an *AB Boeckto* to be used in the VOC schools to teach children to write, all published in the first decennium of the 17th century. The printing of these texts were financed by the VOC, as Ruyl writes in his preface to the *Spiegel van de Maleysche Tale* published in 1612. The *Spieghel* contained didactic and uplifting material in the form of childrens’ dialogues, a Dutch-Malay wordlist but also Malay translations of the Apostolic Creed and two texts from the Bible which played a key role in the liturgy of the church services, the Ten Commandments and the Lord’s Prayer. The *Spieghel* is a diglot edition with the Dutch texts and wordlist in the left column and the Malay version in the right column.
Let us first have a look at the relationship between the Lincoln Mark and the few short Bible fragments found in the list *Spieghel van de Maleysche Tale* and then look at the relation between Ruyl’s Mark and Matthew.

Unfortunately, the Lord’s Prayer is only found in Matthew and Luke, not in Mark, and the Ten Commandments is found in Exodus 20. This makes a comparison between the Malay of the Lincoln Mark with the Malay of the *Spieghel* problematic. Mark 10.19 where Jesus mentions sections of the Ten Commandments has been rendered by Ruyl as:

Angkau tiada batsiumbo (seventh commandment); angkau tiada memunoh (sixth commandment); angkau tiada mantsjuri (eight commandment); angkau tiada beri sakxi dusta (ninth commandment); angkau tiada beri sajang akan barang-urang (tenth commandment); angkau beri hormad akâ Bappa daan ibumu (fifth commandment)

The version of some of the Ten Commandments found in the *Spieghel*:

Kamu memberi hormad akan bappa daan ibumu (fifth commandment)
D’jang-an angkou memunoh ourang (sixth commandment)
D’jang-an angkou bersondel (seventh commandment)
D’jang-an angkou mantsuri (eight commandment)
D’jang-an angkou bersakxi dusta de hadapan amsaja-mu (ninth commandment)
D’jang-an angkou berhendak Ruma amsaja mu (tenth commandment)

Inasfar as we can say anything on the basis of these few and partially corresponding texts from the *Spieghel* and Mark, the earlier renderings in the *Spieghel* seem to be somewhat closer to formal and written Malay. The Ten Commandments in Ruyl’s Mark seem to show
some efforts to accommodate the criticism that his Malay was ‘too high’. For example, the
prohibitions in the Spieghel have the standard written prohibitive Malay construction with the
negative imperative adverb jangan, in contrast with the more colloquial spoken form with
tiada in Mark. Lexically, the register of beri sajiang akan in Mark is lower than berhendak
and sajiang occurs with higher frequency in contexts of desire and longing.

A comparison of the Lincoln Mark with Ruyl’s Matthew shows that Ruyl tries to be a more
consistent translator in Mark than he had been in Matthew (De Vries 2002, 2009), especially
where it concerns terms with theological significance. For example, in Matthew Ruyl uses
four nouns to render the word for kingdom (Coninckrijck in his Deux-Aes base text, basileia
in Greek, a noun derived from basileus ‘king’): radjat, hokkuman, sultanu and makuta (De
Vries 2002: 5). Since the notion of the Kingdom of Heavens is a theological Leitmotif in the
gospel of St. Matthew, as is the Kingdom of God in St. Mark, Ruyl’s variation in renderings
of the phrase Kingdom of Heavens in Matthew is striking. He uses radjat surgai (kingdom of
heaven), radjat surgani (heavenly kingdom), hokkuman surgani/hokum-surgani (heavenly
jurisdiction), sultanu surga (sultanate of heaven), sultanu surgani (heavenly sultanate),
makuta sultani ‘heavenly (territory of) the crown’ (Soesilo 2013).

The translation of Kingdom (of heaven, of God) divided Catholic and Protestant translations
in 16th and 17th century (Gossweiler 2014b: 76). Catholic translations into Dutch followed the
Vulgate regnum and translated that with rijck (e.g. Leuvense Bijbel) but Protestant
translations such as the Deux-Aes (that Ruyl followed) translated with Coninckrijck
(=Coninck-rijck, King-dom) because the Greek has basileia, referring to the notion of king
(Protestant ad fontes: (back) to the sources).

It could well be that Ruyl received criticism in relation to his inconsistencies in Matthew, or
that he gained in experience (or both) since he consistently uses Radjat Allahi ‘godly
Kingdom’ in his Malay gospel of Mark. And when Rev. Heurnius revised Ruyl’s Matthew in
1651 to integrate it in the edition of the Four gospels and Acts, he used *radjat Allah* and *radjat Allah* consistently with a rare exception in Matthew 3: 2 where we still find *sultanu sorga* (Gossweiler 2014b: 77).

Although the internal consistency (within the Lincoln Mark) improved to a certain degree in his second gospel, Ruyl’s Mark is remarkably inconsistent with his translation of Matthew, even in parallel passages. For example, Matthew 24: 32 and Mark 13: 28 are (almost) the same in his Dutch base text (*Deux-Aes*) and in the Greek but Ruyl translates the parallel passages in two very different ways in Matthew and Mark. For example, the Dutch *Deux-Aes* left column in Ruyl’s Matthew has in Matthew 24: 32:

‘Leert van den vijgeboom een gelijkenisse: als nu zijne tacken teer worden, en de bladeren uytspryuten dan weet ghy dat de somer by is.’

(Learn from the fig tree a parable: when its branches become tender, and leaves come forth, you know that the summer is near).

Ruil’s Malay Matthew has this in the right column:

‘*Aid’jerla dari půhoon pisang sawatů sapertiñâ: manakala dahan nja lůmbůt, daan daun’ja bertůbůh, makka taumů munism angat mampir.*’

(Learn from the banana tree a parable: when its branches become tender, and its leaves grow, then you know that the warm season is close).

And in Mark 13: 28

*Deux-Aes* left column in Ruyl’s Mark:

‘Leert een gelijkenisse van den vijgeboom: als zijn tacken sappich werden, ende dat hy bladeren ghewint, so weet ghy dat de somer naby is.’
(Learn a parable of the fig tree: when its branches become juicy, and he gains leaves, then you know that the summer is near.)

Ruyl’s Malay Mark in the right column:

‘Aid’jerla sawatů sepertihan dari pohon kassema: tatkala tsiabang nja menjadi lombot, daan jang daun ija kaluar, makka tau kamů jang munsim kemarauw půn mampir.’

(Learn a parable from the *diospyros kaki* tree: when its branches become soft, and its leaves come out, then you know the dry season is close.)

The lexical differences between the parallel verses in Matthew 24: 32 and Mark 13: 28 are striking. Ruyl uses the banana tree as a cultural substitute for the fig tree in Matthew but the *kassema* tree (= *Diospyros kaki*, with sweet fruits) in the parallel passage of Mark. The rendering of summer also varies: warm season in Matthew, dry season in Mark. The branches are *dahan* and they *bertubuh* (grow) in Matthew. The branches are *tsjiabang* in Mark where they *kaluar* (come out). Also in terms of spelling and function words we see the strong tendency of variation and inconsistency, both within books and between books.

When Ruyl’s Matthew and Mark were integrated with Van Hasel’s Luke and John in the 1651 VOC edition of the gospels and Acts, the differences between the Malay gospels of Ruyl and Van Hasel are striking. Heurnius, the editor of the 1651 edition did not as a rule harmonize the translations of Ruyl and Van Hasel. We will give twoexamples..

Where Ruyl translated God with *Allah*, van Hasel uses *Allah-t’alla* (with various spellings) ‘Allah the Exalted’ where *t’alla* reflects one of the most frequent honorific epithets of *Allah* in Arabic. Van Hasel uses this phrase also in combinations such as *Radjat Allah-t’alla* (often in variation with *Radjat Alhatalla*) ‘Kingdom of God’.

5. The contested heritage of Ruyl

Ruyl’s pioneering translation work does not have just scholarly relevance for linguistics, history and translation studies. Ruyl’s translations still have societal relevance and impact. This is because the first Malay gospels of Ruyl contain numerous translational choices that would shape the discourse of Malay speaking Christians for centuries to come. They also play an important role in current legal, political and religious battles concerning the use of the word Allah and other religious terms in Indonesian and Malaysian Bibles.

The study of the Malay gospels of Ruyl gained considerable societal relevance and a much wider public became interested in Ruyl’s work when the use of Allah by adherents of other religions to denote their God(s) became the topic of a prolonged religious, legal and political battle. When the Malaysian government in 2007 prohibited the use of Allah for the Christian God in the Catholic newspaper The Herald, The Herald went to court and on December 31, 2009 the High Court of Malaysia ruled that the government decree had been illegal. Not satisfied with this ruling, radical Muslims started riots and churches were set on fire. There was also an attack on a Sikh temple in Kuala Lumpur because the Sikhs have been using Allah in their prayers and Scriptures for centuries. In 2013 another Malaysian court ruled in favor of Muslims who wanted to outlaw non-Islamic use of Allah in other faith communities present in Malaysia, not just Christians.

These legal and social struggles around the use of the word Allah in Malaysia attracted international attention since Allah has also been used for many centuries by Jewish and
Christian minorities in Arab-speaking countries to denote their God, and by the Catholic majority of Malta, Maltese being a Semitic language just like Arabic and Hebrew, and the Maltese-speaking Church being as old as the Church in Rome and using *Allah* centuries before the birth of Islam.

A complication in the polemic surrounding the use of *Allah* in Indonesian and Malaysian religious discourse is that *Allah* in Arabic functions as the name of God, grammatically a proper noun (Thomas 2001: 301). In the Hebrew Bible *El/Elohim*, the Semitic cognate of Arabic *Allah*, is primarily a common noun and not the proper name of the Hebrew God. The Hebrew Supreme Being has a proper name *JHWH*. Of course, since there is only one God in Jewish religion, *Elohim* also has name-like usages in some contexts but its primary function is as a common noun meaning God (or god(s)).

It was Ruyl who introduced *Allah* into the first Malay Bible translations of Greek gospels. He used the word *Allah* to render the Greek *theos* in Matthew and Mark. *Theos* is a common noun meaning ‘deity’ and it is not a proper noun. Ruyl’s use of *Allah* as a common noun implied that *Allah* received the syntactic possibilities of a Malay common noun, for example it could be possessed (*Allahku* ‘my God’), modified by adjectives or relative clauses and so on. Speakers of Malay with a Muslim background who use Allah as a Malay proper name, in line with its usage in the Quran, will not use it with the modification possibilities that Allah has in the usage of Malay Christian communities. Some find it even offensive to say or write *Allahku* or other modification of the name of God.26

Although God has a proper name in the Hebrew Bible, *JHWH*, the New Testament writers avoid the proper name of God. He is referred to with *theos* (‘God’ translated by *Allah*) or *kurios* ‘Lord’ (translated as *Tuhan* or *tuan* by Ruyl) or *pater* ‘Father’. Brouwerius’ translation of the Old Testament of 1662 uses both *Alla* and *Deos* for the Hebrew common noun

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26 The only exception in Malay Bible translation history is the translation of Shellabear and Sulaiman (1910) who, conscious of the Muslim usage of Allah as proper noun, decided to translate the Hebrew name of God, *JHWH*, with the Arabic name of God, *Allah*. 
El(ohim) ‘God’, for example in Genesis 1 (where only Elohim occurs) both Deos and Alla are used to render Elohim. The proper name JHWH is rendered by Brouwerius with Alla ThAlla.

Brouwerius was not the only Christian translator choosing Alla to render Hebrew Elohim in a language with a majority of speakers being Muslim: in Africa, the Middle East and Asia this was a standard practice (Thomas 2001: 301). Jews or Christians who translated the Old Testament into Arabic used either the Arabic transliteration Yahwah as a proper name of God or rabb ‘Lord’, following the Jewish tradition not to utter the holy name of JHWH but say Lord or the Name when the written text has JHWH (Thomas 2001: 302). This Jewish distinction between the qetiv (what is written, JHWH in the consonantal text) and what is spoken when the holy text is read aloud (qere, Adonai ‘Lord’ or other substitutes such as ‘the Name’) is also the basis for the choice of modern standard Malay/Indonesian Bible translations to render the name of God in the Old Testament not with a transliteration of JHWH but as TUHAN (Lord), in capital letters.

It was not uncommon for Muslim writers in the 9th century who quoted New Testament passages in Arabic, to use Allah in their quotations of the New Testament (for example Ibn Qutayba al-Dinawari of Baghdad quotes Matthew 6: 24 where he has Jesus saying: ‘You cannot serve both Allah and Mammon’ (Thomas 2001: 302).

When the presence of Allah in non-Islamic religious texts and discourse was contested in Malaysia in the second half of the 20th century, Christian and Sikh faith communities in Malaysia after more than three centuries had to defend their use of Allah ‘God’ in the religious texts and discourse of their communities. The Christians put forth several arguments, and one of their arguments was that Allah was part of their heritage of many generations going back all the way to the Bible translation work of Ruyl in the beginning of the 17th century (Soesilo 2001b: 418). The social and political upheaval surrounding religious discourse and the ownership of religious words thus contributed to renewed interest of
Malaysian and Indonesian Christians in the work of Ruyl, and more generally in the earliest
history of Malay-speaking churches and in the ways they talked and wrote in Malay about
God and religious issues.

Against this background of renewed scholarly and public interest the Indonesian Bible
Society published a volume with articles on Malay Bibles that included a CD with high
quality facsimile editions of all major Malay Bible versions (Mamahit ed. 2014). It included
facsimile translations by Ruyl (1629) (Matthew, facsimile of the Utrecht University copy),
Ruyl (1638) (Matthew and Mark, Stuttgart copy), of Ruyl, van Hasel and Heurnius (1651)
four Gospels and Acts, Utrecht), Brouwerius (1662, Genesis, Utrecht) and Brouwerius (1668,
New Testament, Utrecht) and Leijdecker, van der Vorm, Werndly and Seruys (1733,
facsimile of copy of Indonesian Bible Society in Jakarta). The title of the volume was 385
_Tahun Injil Matius Terjemahan A.C. Ruyl_ (385 years of the gospel of Matthew translated by
A.C. Ruyl). The 400th birthday of Ruyl’s first Malay gospel of Matthew was celebrated
elaborately in both Malaysia and Indonesia. The combinations of the search terms _Ruyl and
terjemahan_ and _Allah_ gives thousands of hits, revealing popular interest in social media,
forums, and other web environments.

The legal, social and political situation in Indonesia with respect to the (inter)religious use
of _Allah_ (and other religious terms of Arabic origin) is different in Indonesia from that in
Malaysia. The differences follow from the different social, cultural and political place of
Malaysian and Indonesian in the two nation-states (Samuel 2010).

_Bahasa Indonesia_ was from the very beginning of the nationalist independence movement
in the first decennia of the 19th century a key tool of nation-state building, a tool of unification
and a symbol of national unity, a unity in the rich religious, linguistic and cultural diversity.
That diversity was a potential (and often real) threat to the very existence of the nation-state
of the Republic of Indonesia. The _Pancasila_ constitution was about inclusion and unity, to
keep Indonesia intact as a nation-state and to prevent religious diversity from degenerating into religious conflicts and ‘holy’ civil wars. The Republic saw language policy very much as a state affair and this included government institutions concerned with standardization and unification of pronunciation, spelling and meanings of words e.g. the Pusat Bahasa in Jakarta. A typical example is the inclusivist definition of the lemma *Allah* in the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* published by the Pusat Bahasa or Language Center (Soesilo 2001b: 416):

> ‘*Allah*: Nama Tuhan dalam bahasa Arab, pencipta alam semesta yang mahasempurna; Tuhan yang Maha Esa yang disembah oleh orang yang beriman.’

(*Allah*: the name of the Lord in Arabic, the Creator of the universe who is allperfect; the Only Lord who is worshipped by people of faith.)

In Indonesia there was never a legal prohibition to use the word *Allah* in Christian Bibles and “*Allah* is accepted as referring to the Supreme Being for all people” according to Soesilo (2001b: 416). The place of Malay in Malaysia was (and is) very different: it is strongly associated with the Malay ethnic group, a majority group with Islam as its religion (Samuel 2010). From the perspective of this majority group in Malaysia, *Allah* is primarily and, for some exclusively, an Islamic term, a proper noun, the name of the Most High. This exclusivist perspective is very different from the inclusivist perspective on the word *Allah* in Indonesia as a term that can be used in interreligious dialogue where shared religious terminology is part of the national language that unites people of different faiths, customs and cultures.

This does not mean that everyone in Indonesia shares the inclusivist perspective (just as many Malaysian Muslims do not share the exclusive perspective). For example, there are radical Christians in Indonesia who object to the use of *Allah* in Christian Bibles because
"Allah is seen as a pagan god of the Muslims (Soesilo 2001b: 419). They produced an
Indonesian Bible called Kitab Suci: Torat dan Injil with the text of Terjemahan Baru but
without Allah: all occurrences of Allah had been replaced by the Hebrew word Eloim, also in
the New Testament as a translation of the Greek word theos ‘God/god’ (Soesilo 2001b: 419).

6. Concluding remarks

Thanks to a learned and book loving 17th century dean of Lincoln Cathedral, Michael
Honywood, we have one copy left of the first Malay gospel of Mark. The VOC financed the
Mark translation as a consequence of the charters it had with the Dutch Republic. In areas
under direct VOC authority the VOC was expected to protect the public religion and push
‘false’ religions out of the public domain. This was especially an urgent task in formerly
Portuguese areas where Catholic priests such as Franciscus Xaverius had been active as
missionaries. The VOC translations played a key role in this Protestantization agenda. Given
this historical and political context the term Agama Kumpeni ‘VOC religion’ was a rather
appropriate contemporary name for this religion.

Ruyl was not a learned scholar but a remarkably pragmatic VOC merchant who employed
neologisms, cultural substitutes and the full richness of Malay as a lingua franca, a language
that reflected (and still reflects) the astonishing diversity of the cultural, religious and
economic practices of its millions of speakers in the course of its long history.

Ruyl’s translation decisions and strategies laid the foundation for the translation tradition
and religious discourse of Malay Christendom up till today, with Allah, imam, korban, doa,
Roh Kudus, nabi and many other terms originating in Arabic. The Malay and Indonesian
translations have hundreds of daughter translations in other languages of the archipelago that
also use Allah and other religious terminology of the Malay and Indonesian Bibles, often

27 New Translation, published by the Indonesian Bible Society in 1974. This version of the Terjemahan Baru
without Allah was published without the permission of the copyright holder.
phonologically adapted to the host languages. Even when there is no Bible translation, these terms have often found their way into the languages of minority languages spoken by Christian communities in Asia. For example, when I learned the Papuan language Kombai in the early 1980s, their term for God was *Tuanala*, a compound of *Tuhan* ‘Lord’ and *Allah*.

The place of Indonesian within the Indonesian nation-state is different from that of Malay in Malaysia because of the different histories of the two countries. This explains the striking differences in perception and acceptance of shared religious terminology including the word *Allah*, first introduced into Christian Scripture translation by Albert Corneliszoom Ruyl, junior merchant of the VOC in the beginning of the 17th century.

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