

### TRANSLITERATION ONCE MORE

DR. DUNLAP makes an important point<sup>1</sup> when he calls attention to one source of confusion in the transliteration of words from languages not written in the Latin alphabet. The bad habit in question consists in taking over transliterations bodily from such languages as French or German even when these transliterations are no longer appropriate in English. For example, one might thus take over the French transliteration of the Arabic word for mountain, namely, *Djebel*. As Dr. Dunlap remarks, "Of course the *D* is essential in French but redundant in English, since the English *J* has the sound which can be written in French only by *Dj*."

It is important to call attention, however, to one important exception to the rule that foreign transliterations should not be taken over into English. It is a principle adopted by the United States Geographic Board that when the Latin alphabet is "habitually or alternatively" used in a "country, dominion, colony, protectorate, or possession" local official usage should be followed except where there is a different conventional English form. Even in the latter case the better practise is to follow the local form. This makes for simplicity in international usage. It is confusing when Polish speakers write *Waszyngton* for *Washington* and on the same principle it is better for us to write *Djibouti* (French Somaliland) rather than *Jibuti*, although this involves precisely the peculiarity of transliteration to which Dr. Dunlap objects.

Again, Dr. Dunlap errs when he implies that a transliteration such as the Chinese *Tao* is due to slipshod borrowing from a system of transliteration conventional in some other language. *Tao* is a spelling which follows the standard Wade system of transliteration—or Romanization as it is generally called in this connection. Sir Thomas Francis Wade (1818–1895) was a British diplomat who spent many years in China and was afterwards professor of Chinese at Cambridge. His system of Romanization is followed by the vast majority of American and English Sinologists, and attempts to alter it are looked on with disfavor. There is good reason for this; for *Tao* is not "sounded *Dow*" as Dr. Dunlap says. The initial consonant is a devoiced *d*, therefore approximately half way between our English *d* and *t* except that it is unaspirated. The diphthong actually glides from a variety of *a*-sound to a variety of *o*-sound. To write *Dow* instead of *Tao* would not be an unquestionable improvement.

The moral of all this is simple. For every language written with a non-Roman alphabet there exists a system of transliteration which is accepted as more or

less standard by specialists in the field, such as the Wade system for Chinese or the Hepburn system for Japanese. In addition, geographical names have special principles governing their use. The careful writer will take the trouble to familiarize himself with these systems or else consult experts to learn the correct usage in a particular case. A respect for scientific accuracy demands this if confusion is to be avoided.

PAUL HANLY FURFELY

THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF AMERICA

### SUGGESTED CHANGE IN DESIGNATION OF "RENIN-ACTIVATOR" (HYPERTENSINOGEN) TO RENIN-SUBSTRATE (α<sub>2</sub> GLOBULIN)

LELOIR, Muñoz, Taquini, Braun-Menendez and Fasciolo<sup>1</sup> have suggested that the term "renin-activator" should be dropped. In discarding it, we believe that the considerations which have influenced our using and retaining the word should be presented as well as those which now prompt us to propose a new term for the same entity.

When Kohlstaedt, Helmer and Page<sup>2</sup> found that renin was not a vasoconstrictor (or pressor) substance except in the presence of another protein present in blood, they identified this other protein as "renin-activator" for the simple reason that in its absence renin was not active. Without any further implication, this observation led to discovery of the pressor substance called "angiotonin" by the North American investigators, Page and Helmer,<sup>3</sup> and "hypertensine" by the workers of South America, Braun-Menendez, Fasciolo, Leloir and Muñoz.<sup>4</sup> In the course of studies on the formation of angiotonin (hypertensine) from the mixture of renin and "renin-activator," evidence was obtained both in this country<sup>5</sup> and in South America<sup>6</sup> which indicated that the interaction was enzymatic and that the so-called "activator" was in fact the substrate. The Argentine group then proposed the use of the terms "hypertensinogen" or "hypertensine precursor" for the substance until that time known as "renin-activator." These terms they developed from the fact that the substance in question gives rise to the pressor substance "hypertensine." However, as has been pointed out editorially in the

<sup>1</sup> L. F. Leloir, J. M. Muñoz, A. C. Taquini, E. Braun-Menendez and F. S. Fasciolo, *Rev. Argent. Cardiol.*, 9: 269, 1942.

<sup>2</sup> K. G. Kohlstaedt, O. M. Helmer and I. H. Page, *Proc. Soc. Exp. Biol. Med.*, 39: 214, 1938.

<sup>3</sup> I. H. Page and O. M. Helmer, *Proc. Cent. Soc. Clin. Res.*, 12: 17, 1939.

<sup>4</sup> E. Braun-Menendez, J. C. Fasciolo, L. F. Leloir and J. M. Muñoz, *Rev. Soc. Argent. Biol.*, 15, 420, 1939.

<sup>5</sup> I. H. Page and O. M. Helmer, *Jour. Exp. Med.*, 71: 29, 1940.

<sup>6</sup> E. Braun-Menendez, L. F. Leloir, J. M. Muñoz and J. C. Fasciolo, *Rev. Asoc. bioquim. Argent.*, 5: 17, 1940.

<sup>1</sup> SCIENCE, 97: 400-1, April 30, 1943.