retranslating

the bible and the qur'an

historical approaches

and current debates

pieter boulogne, marijke h. de lang
and joseph verheyden (eds)

Retranslating the Bible and the Qur'an

Historical Approaches and Current Debates

Translation, Interpreting and Mediation

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Retranslating the Bible and the Qur'an

Historical Approaches and Current Debates

Edited by
Pieter Boulogne, Marijke H. de Lang & Joseph Verheyden

Typesetting: Crius Group
Cover: Daniel Benneworth-Gray

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Johanna Pink is professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Freiburg, Germany. She taught at Freie Universität Berlin and the University of Tübingen. Her main fields of interest are the transregional history of *tafsīr* in the modern period and Qur'an translations, with a particular focus on transregional dynamics. She is the Principal Investigator of the research project "GloQur – The Global Qur'an" and general editor of the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān Online*. Her most recent monograph is entitled *Muslim Qur'ānic Interpretation Today* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2019).

Richard Pleijel obtained his PhD in Hebrew Bible exegesis in 2018 at Uppsala University, Sweden. Since 2022, he is a Research Fellow at the Institute for Interpreting and Translation Studies, Stockholm University. He is interested in the role and function of biblical translation(s) in contemporary cultural contexts, with a focus on the Scandinavian/Nordic region. His articles have appeared in various international journals. As a member of the Swedish Network for Translation Studies, he recently co-edited the volume *Paratexts in Translation: Nordic Perspectives* (Frank & Timme, 2022).

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Note on transliteration

The transliteration of Arabic terms and names follows either Hans Wehr's or al-Masāq's system. The definite article is always written as /al-/ regardless of consonant ("sun" and "moon" letters) or vowel (waṣla) assimilation. Tā' marbūṭa is /-a/ or /-ah/ and /-at/ (in an iḍāfa compound). Personal names and toponyms are transliterated between brackets when they are used for the first time. Thereafter the most common notation in Latin script is used. Arabic loanwords are written according to English spelling. Words and phrases transliterated from the Russian Cyrillic script are rendered in accordance with the ALA-LC (American Library Association and Library of Congress) romanization table. Unless otherwise specified, Hebrew and Greek are transliterated in accordance with the Society of Biblical Literature Handbook of Style (academic style).

Introduction

Pieter Boulogne, Marijke H. de Lang and Joseph Verheyden

The present volume contains the proceedings of an international online conference (21-23 March 2022) on "Retranslating the Bible and the Qur'an: Tensions between Authoritative Translations and Retranslations in Theory and in Practice", organized by members of the Centre for Translation Studies (CETRA) at KU Leuven and the United Bible Societies. The aim of this conference was to gather Translation Studies scholars and translators working with sacred writings, in particular, the Bible and the Qur'an, to promote dialogue between theory and practice. Most of the papers appearing in this volume were presented at the colloquium, but some were solicited afterwards.

Over the past two decades, research on retranslation, broadly defined as new translations in the same language of an already translated text (Gambier 1994, 413), has been flourishing. One of the reasons is the popularity of the so-called "Retranslation Hypothesis" (Chesterman 2000), based on the alleged argument of Berman (1990) that retranslations always tend to be more source-text oriented than previous translations. The view that translating is a process of constant improvement, from one translation to the next, coming closer and closer to the source text, has repeatedly been criticized (Paloposki & Koskinen 2004). Most recently it has been shown that Chesterman had, in fact, misunderstood Berman's position in his seminal paper in the fourth issue of *Palimpsestes* (see Peeters and Van Poucke 2023, pp. 4-8). Such criticism, however, does not weaken the importance of retranslation studies, which has established itself as a vital subfield in Translation Studies.

So far, research on retranslation has mainly focused on translations of literary texts that have obtained a "canonized" or "canonical" status (think of the work of Shakespeare, Joyce or Dostoevsky). Retranslation of "canonized" or "canonical" writings in the literal sense of the word – "sacred writings" – has not yet received the same degree of scholarly attention. Of course, some Translation Studies scholars have pointed out that retranslation plays an important role in the way in which sacred texts are framed or reframed. Venuti (2004, 26), for instance, argued that retranslations can maintain and strengthen the authority of a social institution by reaffirming the institutional interpretation of a canonical text, as illustrated from the

King James Bible, which "consolidated the authority of the Anglican Church during the early seventeenth century by drawing on the Protestant versions of previous English translators, such as William Tyndale and Richard Taverner." Alternatively, retranslations can also undermine that interpretation: "[B]efore the Reformation in England[,] Tyndale's translations were considered heretical and subversive by the Roman Catholic Church because they ran counter to the Vulgate by introducing interpretations grounded in Protestant theology" (idem). Naudé (2005, 27) has shown how earlier translations of the Bible into Afrikaans contributed to sanctioning apartheid in response to "the Afrikaner's conviction of being God's chosen people and thereby merging their own national identity with that of the Old Testament Israel." Building on Naudé, Baker (2006, 34) has argued that public narratives are adapted within the same culture in response to evolving reconfigurations of the political and social space.

The present volume further explores the theoretical and practical implications of the tension that exists between translations and retranslations of sacred writings in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic traditions. Contributors were asked to focus on the motives that lie behind the efforts to retranslate the Bible and the Qur'an, the retranslation strategies that are used (for instance to counter, undermine or strengthen the existing narratives), and the impact of the responses of the audiences on the way retranslations are received (as readers too can influence the status of a translated sacred text).

The editors pondered long on how best to organize the material and finally decided for what they think is a rather subtle but helpful arrangement into four parts, along two axes, allowing for combining (and contrasting) different approaches, as well as for a focused examination of retranslations within specific textual traditions. The first and most important axis juxtaposes "historical approaches" with "contemporary debates". However, contributions labelled as "historical" may also touch upon contemporary issues, while others categorized as "current debates" also discuss past developments – the attribution to this or that category was made in accordance with the author's focus. The second axis juxtaposes the Bible (Jewish or Christian) and the Qur'an.

The first two parts deal with topics taken from the history of Bible respectively Qur'an translation. **Marijke H. de Lang** discusses Bible retranslation in the age of Humanism and Reformation, when, after a millennium of supremacy, the Bible of the Western Church, the Latin Vulgate, saw its first serious rivals. The rediscovery of the Hebrew and Greek source texts, initially thought to enhance only the study of the established Latin translation of the Bible, gradually led to alternative translations, the end of the Vulgate's

hegemony, and ultimately to an awareness of the fluidity of the biblical text itself. **Alexey Somov** surveys the long history of Bible translation in Russia. He sketches the histories of the authoritative Church Slavonic Bible and of the nineteenth century Russian Synodal Bible, the first translation of the Bible into modern Russian. Somov argues that new translation and retranslations into modern Russian will only be accepted when they consider seriously the existing translation tradition that is shaped by the Church Slavonic and Russian Synodal Bible, and carefully negotiate between respecting these authoritative texts on the one hand while attempting to provide an acceptable and understandable Russian translation on the other. **Sameh Hanna** approaches the topic of retranslation from a sociological perspective and uses the example of the nineteenth-century Arabic Van Dyck translation to argue that the authority of any given Bible translation is often a perceived or constructed authority, the outcome of particular social, ideological and cultural processes. Retranslation, therefore, needs to go beyond linguistics and textuality to understand the processes that shape, canonize, or marginalize (re)translations. The author, using Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of cultural production, explores the complex socio-historical dynamics of Bible (re)translation and the construction of 'authority.' **Naima Afif** discusses the eighteenth-century Hebrew retranslation of the Qur'an by the Dutch translator Jacob van Dort. For missionary purposes, Van Dort, a Jewish convert to Christianity who lived in the Dutch Indies, combined Muslim interpretations with both Judaizing and Christianizing elements in his translation, making it into a product in which multiple strata of hybridity, among them biographical, cultural, and religious are reflected. **Elvira Kulieva** discusses the posthumously published Russian Qur'an translation the Soviet Arabist Ignatiĭ Krachkovskiĭ (1963). His highly literal translation, which was originally geared toward an academic readership, regained popularity after the fall of the Soviet Union and became a model for new Muslim, especially Salafi, Qur'an translations. Kulieva demonstrates how, despite an initially negative reception by Muslim audiences, Krachkovskiĭ's translation not only became foundational for Muslim Qur'an translations into the various languages in the former Soviet Union and beyond, but also contributed to the vocabulary used in modern intra-Muslim polemics in the region. **Johanna Pink** traces the history of the innovative and rationalistic Ahmadiyya Qur'an translation into English by Muhammed Ali (1917). His translation quickly gained popularity, and its text, notes, style and layout became a source for other translations around the world. When after the Second World War, the Ahmadiyya movement was increasingly marginalized and vilified, editors began purifying Muhammad Ali's translation of

ostensibly Ahmadi elements. However, several of these remained unnoticed and exerted an influence on later, non-Ahmadiyya Qur'an renderings. Even though Muhammed Ali's influence is not acknowledged, because of the generally negative status of the Ahmadiyya movement in the Islamic world, it is no doubt still visible in the wider context of Qur'an translation.

The third and fourth part comprise essays on contemporary (re)translation issues. **Hilla Karas** tackles the topic of intralingual translation and discusses four Modern Hebrew Bible translations, which were published between 1955 and 2015 for a variety of Jewish audiences, ranging from secular to ultra-orthodox. Since the authoritative Hebrew text is principally perceived as untranslatable, retranslations into Modern Hebrew have only hesitantly presented themselves as translations and certainly never as a substitute for the authoritative text. Karas shows how the four translations have dealt with the term "translation" as label for the publication, and how each publication has dealt with its layout to emphasize the ancillary function of the translation in relation to the authoritative text. **Richard Pleijel** focuses on how a retranslation is received, in this case the text of the Lord's Prayer in the Swedish Bible translation of 1977. The old version had remained almost unaltered since its first translation in the fifteenth century and the prayer had gained canonical status in liturgy and personal devotion. The new version was met with harsh criticism in public media and was seen as a loss of both religious and linguistic tradition. Pleijel argues that responses like these show a significant divergence in expectations between translators and audiences and call for a continued exploration of how non-experts perceive and read religious texts. **Andy Warren-Rothlin** discusses the challenges that present themselves when Qur'anic terms and phrases are used in Bible translations produced for Muslim audiences. These challenges often surface where Muslim-idiom translations are in fact retranslations, competing with an earlier translation that has gained canonical status among the Christian community. Tensions may be experienced by that secondary (Christian) audience, which considers itself the custodian of the Biblical text. In the second part of the chapter, case studies in Hausa, Chadian Arabic and Pashto are presented, which reveal how local contexts and constraints lead to distinctive features in each of these translations. Drawing upon recent theories on retranslation advanced by scholars like Antoine Berman and Kaisa Koskinen, **Rim Hassen** presents a study of four retranslations of the Qur'an into English by Muslim women from various religious backgrounds (Sunni, Shia and Sufi). She investigates their motives, strategies, and relationship with previous versions, with an important emphasis on how gender can influence translation choices

and introduce woman-sensitive readings. **Sohaib Saeed** makes a case for moving past the trope of the "untranslatability" of the Qur'an and argues for a more active probing of the tradition, which presents a host of interpretations and solutions that can be used for translation, but which so far has been overlooked by translators of the Qur'an. Based on The Chapter of Josef (Q 12), Saeed shows how both the exegetical genre of *tafsīr* and the variant reading traditions of the *qirāʾāt* can inform translators on how to render exegetically challenging passages in the Qur'an. Arguing against the existence of "universal" reasons behind retranslation, **Yazid Haroun** shows how contextual factors and evolving political climates, in this case in the relationship between the Saudi state and the Wahhabi movement, have influenced Qur'an translation. He spotlights the strategic use of Qur'an translation for the purpose of solidifying the bond between Wahhabism and the state and does this by discussing the ideologies behind the initial and newer versions of the *Noble Qur'an* by al-Hilali and Khan. **Marija Zlatnar Moe and Christian Moe** discuss four recent retranslations of the Qur'an in Slovenia and the strategies used for balancing between different regional languages and the mixed readership of Muslims and non-Muslims. They explore the reasons behind each translation, their translation policies, such as the choice for a domesticating or foreignizing approach, and the translation's reception by the intended readerships. The authors suggest that in the presence of an immigrant Muslim community with its own translation history, both the definition of retranslation and the meaning of source- and target-oriented state of retranslation are complicated by religious and linguistic center–periphery relations. **Helge Daniëls** explores the unconventional Dutch translation of the Qur'an by the Iranian-Dutch writer Kader Abdolah. Instead of arranging verses according to the Uthmanic codex of the Qur'an, Abdolah arranges the verses chronologically and adds a 115th sura. He also includes contextualizing introductory remarks to the verses and small visual tokens, which most would recognize as "cultural icons of the Netherlands"(the cow, the tulip, the windmill, the raincloud and the wooden clog). Drawing on Bakhtin's distinction between the epic and the novel, Daniëls argues that Abdolah's idiosyncratic interventions establish a 'novelizing dynamic,' creating a literary translation that is 'novelizing' in a Bakhtinian sense. The chapter also focuses on the ambiguities generated by the subtitle "een vertaling" (a translation).

The editors are conscious that many more topics could have been addressed and that the present book would have benefited from contributors from a wider geographical range. However, we offer this volume as a first step towards a more systematic comparative study of retranslating sacred

writings in various traditions. The primary intention has not been to gain new insights into the translation of the Bible and the Qur'an as such, but rather to fuel discussions on the complex triangular relationship between a given sacred source text, its previous translations and new translations. In this respect, this book may perhaps also be of use to those looking at the retranslation of other kinds of "sensitive texts" (Simms 1997).

The editors wish to thank the contributors for the pleasant spirit of collaboration and the reviewers for their constructive reports, as well as all those who participated in what proved to be a most stimulating and fruitful conference. A special word of gratitude goes to Helge Daniels, who was kind enough to verify and correct the transliteration of Arabic terms and names in this volume.

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Part 1

HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO RETRANSLATING THE BIBLE

Revision and retranslation in the Early Reformation

Marijke H. de Lang

Abstract

The retranslation of the Latin Bible, especially of the New Testament, was pursued in Western Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The Latin Vulgate, the fourth-century translation by the church father Augustine, had acquired a status as the only holy and authoritative text of the Western Church. Yet it began to lose this status with the rediscovery of its Hebrew and Greek source texts and their promotion by humanist scholars. The Reformation accelerated this process. Slowly the Church had to face the fact that its sacred text was something other than the source text, more fleeting and unstable, even though in the ensuing history of Bible translation countless attempts would be made to raise other translations to the status of "original text."'

Introduction

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, in the age of Humanism and the Reformation, the Church in Western Europe witnessed a major change in the study of the Bible and the perception of its Latin translation, the Vulgate.[1] Three important developments took place at the same time, which I will mention here in growing order of importance for the topic at hand. First, Greek sources of texts which for centuries had been known only in Latin became available in the West, which led to the development of the new field of scholarly activity, classical philology, that is, the study of classical Greek and Latin texts and their authors. Second, the availability of Greek source texts, including those of the New Testament, gave scholars the opportunity to compare them with known Latin translations of them. The text of the Vulgate was no longer an object of study for its theological content alone, but also for its use of the Latin language and its translation decisions. This

raised a concern among more conservative spirits in the Church, and not without reason. Because, third, translation itself became a topic of scholarly activity and discussion, and translation and retranslation became the most important instruments by which the Holy Writ was disseminated in Western Europe. This meant that the Church had to come to terms with the fact that it no longer had as its sacred text an infallible 'original,' but provisional representations of the original in translation.

The topic of Latin translation in the sixteenth century has been discussed elsewhere in far greater detail.[2] In this contribution, the focus will principally be on how translation, retranslation and revision of the Bible became fixed elements of the tradition in the Western Church and permanently changed the status of its Sacred Scriptures. To understand what was at stake, though, the history of the Vulgate and how it became the Bible of the Western Church must first be described.

The status of the Vulgate translation

The translation of St. Jerome (354–430), later known as the Vulgate, had become the most widely used version in the Church since the early Middle Ages. Jerome's was not the oldest Latin translation, the oldest was the *Vetus Latina*, which was not a single, uniform text, but rather a collection of early Latin translations of the Bible[3] which were full of conflicting readings. To put an end to this situation, Pope Damasus, who was pope from 366 until his death in 384, commissioned Jerome to revise the text of the Gospels of the *Vetus Latina* based on the Greek text.[4] Jerome completed this work in the years 382–85. In the preface he emphatically states that his text was a revision and improvement of the existing translation, and that he had therefore limited the changes he wanted to make.[5] On several occasions Jerome calls himself the translator of the entire New Testament, but it is nearly certain that he worked only on the Gospels and that the rest of the New Testament was revised by others. From about 387 to 402 Jerome worked on the translation of the Old Testament, in which he allowed himself more freedom to deviate from the *Vetus Latina* than in his revision of the Gospels. Jerome's translation of the Bible was not immediately accepted, and for a long period the *Vetus Latina* and Jerome's text existed alongside each other. In many places, churches kept using the text of the *Vetus Latina* in the liturgy (Stotz 2011, 27; Linde 2012, 36). Moreover, a complete version of the Vulgate never existed. Jerome's translation was initially copied and disseminated either in separate codices or in smaller collections of biblical

books that showed no homogeneity. By the time these smaller collections were brought together into full Bibles, the confusion only grew: books in Jerome's translation were supplemented by books in the *Vetus Latina*, creating a mixture of both translations, not only at book level but even in individual readings. Beyond this conflation of *Vetus Latina* and Vulgate traditions, the manuscripts were riddled with scribal errors.

At certain points during the Middle Ages, scholars attempted at least to consolidate the text of the Vulgate. Alcuin of York (ca. 730–804), for example, made such an attempt during the Carolingian Renaissance,[6] but his work was probably limited to correcting grammatical errors and making orthographic changes. Attempts to clean the Vulgate's text from errors were usually limited to the collation of Latin manuscripts. Now and then, however, the source texts were also consulted. During the Medieval Renaissance of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, for example, there was growing interest in the original languages of the Bible, resulting in more serious Greek and Hebrew studies. The Latin text of the Vulgate was improved not simply by collating Latin manuscripts, but by comparing the Latin of the Vulgate with the source text. In rare cases, new translations were produced (Linde 2012, 156, 246). However, the efforts to provide the Church with a unified and clean text of the Latin Bible never resulted in a standard Latin text. On the contrary, quite often the process of editing led to even more errors because there was no awareness yet of the variation between *Vetus Latina* and Vulgate readings, nor any notion of the different stages the Latin language had gone through (see, for example, Stotz 2011, 29).

Despite this textual disarray and confusion, the status of both Jerome as a saint of the Church and his translation as the Church's Sacred Scripture grew, especially from the thirteenth century onwards.[7] Medieval theologians like George of Trebizond (1395–1472) and Giovanni d'Andrea (1271–1348) emphasized the divine inspiration of Jerome's translation. Its Latin was seen as beyond reproach, transcending the rules of normal Latin grammar and style. And so, although the Church knew that its Bible was originally written in other languages, Jerome's Latin translation was perceived as possessing divine sanction (Celenza 2012, 368), even though it would not be appointed as the authorized and approved text of the Church until much later, at the council of Trent in 1546. Therefore, suggesting changes and improvements to the text of the Vulgate became a sensitive enterprise, for which one could suffer persecution by the authorities of the Church. With the birth of the humanist movement, however, which was supported by the new invention of the book press, a new, philological approach to the Vulgate's text was introduced, one that would bring a fundamental challenge to its authority.

The rediscovery of the Greek language

Since the decline of the Roman Empire and the growing gap between the Eastern and Western Churches, Greek had gradually disappeared from Western Europe. In the Middle Ages several attempts were made to revive the knowledge of the Greek language, for example by Robert Grosseteste (ca. 1168–1254) or Roger Bacon (ca. 1214–1294). In 1311, the Council of Vienne prescribed the teaching of Greek, Hebrew and Arabic at universities, but the idea was never realized. Moreover, the goal of teaching these languages was not so much the advancement of biblical studies, but had the more practical purpose of training missionaries to the Holy Land in view (Bainton 1969, 65; Burnett 1996, 103). Most of the attempts to advance the study of Hebrew or Greek remained isolated and without lasting results. The Middle Ages remained largely oriented toward the available Latin sources, reading them for allegorical and spiritual, rather than for philological, purposes. This changed dramatically in the fourteenth century, when the humanist movement in Italy focused their attention on the study of classical antiquity. Humanists not only advanced the study of classical Latin sources, but also permanently established the study of Greek. played by the Florentine chancellor Coluccio Salutati (1331–1406) played an important role in this, in 1396 he invited the Byzantine scholar and diplomat Manuel Chrysoloras (ca. 1350–1415) to Florence to teach Greek. Chrysoloras' teaching formed the foundation for further development of Greek studies in Western Europe. Soon after Chrysoloras, other Byzantine scholars moved to Italy and found employment as teachers, authors of Greek grammars, or as copyists of Greek manuscripts. At the end of the fourteenth century, the study of Greek was introduced at the university in Florence, an example that was soon followed in universities throughout the rest of Europe.

New Greek manuscripts were imported from the Byzantine Empire.[8] Among the earliest to do so was Giovanni Aurispa (ca. 1376–1459), who, in 1423, brought an impressive collection of more than two hundred manuscripts from Constantinople to Venice (Schreiner 1994, 625).[9] The fall of Constantinople in 1453 increased the influx of Byzantine scholars and Greek manuscripts to the West even further, and the study of Latin and Greek literary texts developed permanently into a new scholarly field, that of classical philology. Ancient sources were no longer subordinated to Christian theology or philosophy, as was customary in the Middle Ages, but were studied solely for the purpose of gaining knowledge of ancient culture and literature. This approach was soon also applied to the study of the Bible. For the study of the New Testament, this meant that the object of study did

not become its theology, but rather its language, textual transmission and historical sense. The obvious target of the humanists' scrutiny was the New Testament's Latin text in the Vulgate and its relation to the original Greek text.

A return to the original languages

The humanists set out to do two things. First, they wanted to improve the Latin text of the Vulgate on the basis of its Greek source text. Second, their aim was to raise the Vulgate's Latin to the standards of classical Latin, which was considered to be the better alternative to the ecclesiastical Latin used in the medieval universities and the Church.[10] Compared to the standards of classical Latin, the language of the Vulgate lacked what the humanists called *perspicuitas*, *latinitas* and *elegantia*, that is clarity, good grammar, and style. But the idea that the language of the Holy Scripture was imperfect and had to be improved and adapted to the standards set by profane authors of the classical period was obviously something that was not welcomed by conservative minds in the Church.

Lorenzo Valla (ca. 1406–1457) was the first to produce a commentary in which he suggested changes to the Latin Vulgate based on the Greek source text. Valla, who was also the author of a handbook on the correct use of the Latin language, the *Elegantiae Linguae Latinae* (1449) – a book that would become a best-seller in the decades following its publication, applied the rules of classical Latin to the text of the Vulgate. He treated the New Testament largely as any other ancient text, comparing source with target and giving priority to the source when in his eyes something was amiss with the target. Valla collected his observations or notes in several editions, of which two survived, a first edition known as the *Collatio Novi Testamenti* (1442–1443) and a second edition known as the *Annotationes in Novi Testamenti* (1453–1457). He suggested changes where he thought the Latin Vulgate had not rendered the Greek correctly, either because the original was misunderstood or because the wrong Latin term or phrase was chosen for the translation. Valla also argued that the translator of the Vulgate had made choices that had led to wrong theological implications (Bentley 1983, 56–57), and criticized the Vulgate for its unnecessary variation in renderings of the same Greek term. Because Valla denied Jerome's authorship, it was easier for him to suggest improvements of the Vulgate's text: after all, his comments regarded the work of later correctors of the text, not that of the revered church father himself.[11] Even so, Valla never published his notes, most likely because the publication of his *Elegantiae*, in

which he had taken his examples of stylistically incorrect Latin also from the Vulgate, had already brought him into a public controversy with Poggio Bracciolini (1380–1459), who spent his life working for the papal court.[12] Poggio, who was himself a humanist, rejected Valla's application of philology to the Bible, that is, of giving priority to the *Graeca veritas* over the Latin text of the Vulgate. Though he admitted he had not seen a copy of Valla's notes, he raised his concern about Valla disrespecting Jerome and undermining the authority of the Sacred Scriptures – accusations that could have damaged the support that Valla enjoyed from people such as Nicholas V (1397–1455) and Cardinal Bessarion (1403–1472). That Valla, however, ultimately did not fall out of favor was a sign that the Vatican court did not entirely reject the humanist approach to biblical studies (Den Haan 2016, 24).

In Spain, one of the first to advance humanist studies was Elio Antonio de Nebrija (1444–1522). Nebrija, who had become acquainted with humanist ideas during his studies in Bologna, saw it as his task to lead Spain into the new era of humanism and to "declare war on the barbarians" who refused to see the merit of studying biblical writings in their original languages (see Valle Rodríguez 2008, 57). Nebrija, too, wanted to clean the Vulgate's text of errors based on the Greek source text and suggested alternative renderings. In his correspondence, he even expressed his hope to be able one day to revise the Vulgate's text (Valle Rodríguez 2008, 68). But he also understood that suggesting changes to the Vulgate was equal to admitting that Jerome's text was not perfect. Nebrija purposefully attempted to keep his proposals for changes within particular limits,[13] but nonetheless he was reprimanded by the Church. The Inquisition in Spain, disturbed by Nebrija's scholarship, confiscated his works, among others the *Quinquagena*,[14] Nebrija's critical notes on fifty passages from the Old and New Testament (Valle Rodríguez 2008, 62–63). Nebrija responded with his *Apologia* (1508), in which he ardently defended the *Hebraica* and *Graeca veritas* against those who tried to silence him. He pointed to the early church fathers Jerome and Augustine who had also promoted the consultation of the original languages for improving the Latin scriptures and argued that if the church fathers themselves promoted the study of Hebrew and Greek source texts, he saw no reason to remain silent on the topic himself. In his defense, Nebrija also pointed to the decision made at the Council of Vienne to make the teaching of Hebrew and Greek compulsory at universities. Nebrija was more cautious than Valla and other humanists, but nonetheless was accused of arrogance for suggesting changes to the Vulgate. His opponents also scolded him for dealing with issues that were supposed to be handled by theologians only and that, according to his opponents, fell outside the remit of mere grammarians (Nebrija 2014, 106).

Among the staunch defenders of Jerome's text were the Spanish scholars Jacobus Lopis Stunica (Diego López de Zúñiga, ca. 1470–1531) and Sanctius Carranza (Sancha Carranza de Miranda, died in 1531). But even though they were opposed to the idea of revising the Vulgate, they nonetheless were interested in studying the source texts. At the initiative of Cardinal Francisco Jiménez de Cisneros (1436–1517), a supporter of humanist studies, a group of scholars embarked on a project of a polyglot bible, known as the Complutensian Polyglot. It was a six volume-folio edition of the Old and New Testaments, in which the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek source texts were printed next to each other, together with the text of the Vulgate. The work started in 1502 at the university of Alcalá (Latin, Complutum). Even though the New Testament was printed and ready to be published in 1514, the full publication, including the text of the Old Testament, was postponed until much later, in 1522. During these years, Carranza and especially Stunica became entangled in a bitter polemic with Desiderius Erasmus (ca 1469–1536), who in 1516 had published his *Novum Instrumentum* in which he presented precisely what they abhorred: a new Latin text, that is, a revision of the Vulgate (Rummel 1989[b], 145–171; Coroleu 2008 and 2016). Erasmus had added notes (*Annotationes*) in which he explained the changes he had made to the Vulgate. Stunica and Carranza opposed the idea of making improvements and changes to Jerome's work and accused Erasmus of irreverence towards the church father. Ironically, however, they too contributed to the further development of translation by supporting the work on the Complutensian Polyglot. The Greek text of the Polyglot, together with the Greek text printed in Erasmus's *Novum Instrumentum* of 1516, would become the basis for revisions of the Vulgate and new translations, in Latin and vernaculars, of the New Testament.

The idea that the biblical texts in their original languages could be studied with no further consequence for the Vulgate, as Stunica and Carranza had hoped for, proved to be an impossibility. As soon as humanists started studying the original texts of the Bible, this set into motion a development that ultimately would dethrone the Vulgate as the only text of the Church. Valla's critical notes on the Vulgate were a first step in this direction and a century later the Vulgate was no longer the only Latin translation available.

Revisions and retranslations

The first to produce a full revised Latin text of the New Testament in Latin after Jerome was Giannozzo Manetti (1396–1457). He did so at the instigation of Pope Nicholas V and completed most of the work in Rome from 1454 to 1455,

along with a translation of the Psalter. Manetti, however, never published his New Testament translation and the reasons he did not remain unknown.[15] Some have argued that Manetti was reluctant to publish his work because he had seen how in Valla's case suggesting changes to the Vulgate had sparked a storm of criticism. However, Manetti worked at the bidding of the Pope, which would have protected him from the Church's criticism. Manetti apparently made use of Valla's annotations on the New Testament (Den Haan 2016, 48–54), but whether he used Valla's *Collatio* or his later *Annotationes*, or even perhaps another version of the notes, cannot be established with certainty. In his *Apologeticus* (1458),[16] in which he dealt with the topic of Bible translation more systematically, Manetti argued that for translations of the works of philosophers and theologians, and even more importantly translating Scripture, a literal approach was required. A translator had to do justice to the content of these writings. For literary genres, however, a free translation style was appropriate.[17] At the same time, following the example of Jerome,[18] Manetti rejected the idea of slavishly following the original when translating. A good biblical translation, therefore, had to find the middle ground between a literal and a free rendering of the source text (Manetti 2016, 136 and 263), and here again Manetti takes Jerome as his guage. Manetti's translation method was certainly less concordant than Valla's: while Valla rejected the Vulgate's variation in the Latin renderings of the same Greek term, Manetti sought to translate according to the context (Manetti 2016, 169–172). Ultimately, Manetti's translation remained somewhat on the conservative side, adapting the style of the Vulgate text to classical usage, though he allowed himself more freedom in exegetical and textual issues as he worked his way through the books of the New Testament. It is unknown whether the two manuscripts that have survived represent Manetti's final text or are rather an intermediate stage of his translation enterprise.

The first Latin New Testament revision of the Vulgate to be published in print was that of Jacobus Faber Stapulensis (Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, ca. 1455–1536). In 1512, Faber published his revision of the letters of Paul, printed together with the text of the Vulgate and accompanied by notes in which he explained his changes to the Vulgate's text (Faber 1978). Apparently, Faber made use of the *Annotationes* by Valla, which had become available in 1505 (Bedouelle 1976, 83). Faber's translation was, like Manetti's, more of a revision of the Vulgate than an entirely new translation, and he presented his own translation assist the reader. Clearly, Faber anticipated criticism. In the dedication letter to Guillaume Briçonnet, bishop of Lodève and a supporter of the humanists' cause, Faber asks for understanding and acceptance for his work and not to be judged for presenting a version of his own. He

underscores his respect for Jerome and Jerome's translation and presents his text as an aid for the reader to understand Jerome's text more clearly (Faber 1978, fol. aii r). At the same time, in the *Apologia* to his translation, Faber, in line with Valla but not in such strong terms, denies that Jerome was the translator of the text in the Vulgate. He surmises that the current version of the Vulgate in fact reflects a pre-Jerome version of the Latin text (Faber 1978, fol. aii v; see also Rice 1985, 176–177).

Faber's changes to the Vulgate's text were mostly cautious, but occasionally his renderings show a great independence from tradition, such as his unique translation of Hebrews 2.7, where he, against the Latin Vulgate and the Greek text of the New Testament, understood the verse to mean that Jesus was 'a little less than God,' rather than 'a little less than the angels.' Faber argues that Paul had originally written his letter in Hebrew, and that the Hebrew word for 'God' (*elohim*), quoted from Psalm 8.6, had mistakenly been rendered as 'angels' in the Greek translations of both the Septuagint and its quotation in Hebrews 2.7. The interpretation of this verse would become the cause of great contention between Faber and Erasmus (Rummel 1989a, 49–54).

In his translation, Erasmus largely shared Manetti's strategies, aiming at a text in correct Latin that faithfully represented the Greek source. His *Novum Instrumentum* of 1516 was part of his humanist program to educate and transform society and Church and to teach the piety of Christ. He maintained that the use of good and proper (that is, classical) Latin, was an integral part of this program. Apart from dedication letters and introductory writings, the work contains three major components: a revision of the New Testament text, a Greek text and explanatory notes (*Annotationes*).[19] Rather than placing his Latin version next to the Vulgate's text, as Faber had done, Erasmus used the Greek text for the second column. His target audience were theologians: university teachers, clergy, and those who worked in churches and schools. Erasmus, like Faber, expressed his hope that his Latin revision might assist in a better understanding of the Vulgate (De Jonge 2016, 31–32). And like Faber, Erasmus too argued that the current state of the Vulgate's text did not reflect the original work of Jerome. The differences among the various Vulgate editions showed that the work of the church father had been corrupted in the process of its transmission. Moreover, Jerome himself had corrected translations that had become part of the Vulgate text (CWE 41, 430n27).

The translation method used for his New Testament was less concordant than Valla's proposals showed, though he too, like Valla, criticized the Vulgate for its unnecessary variations (De Jonge 2016, 37). In his notes, Erasmus clearly has made use of Valla's *Annotationes*, sometimes openly

referring to him, other times using his suggestions without mentioning him. Whether he made use of Faber's translation is less clear (CWE 41, 54), but his more detailed attention to Paul's letters compared to some of the other New Testament writings may suggest that he sought to compete with his predecessor (De Jonge, 2016, 40). Though aiming at good Ciceronian language, Erasmus also understood that ecclesiastical terms (*ecclesia*, *prophetia*, *fides* or *gratia*; see Botley 2004, 153–154) could not be replaced by classical words. The Bible, Erasmus argued, was after all a book of the Church.

The controversies surrounding Erasmus's revision came at a critical moment in history: they coincided with the birth of the Reformation. Diverting from the revered text of the Church was already a dangerous enterprise in Valla's days but could now be linked to explosive political and ecclesiastical circumstances and could be associated with pro-Reformation sentiments. Defenders of the Vulgate pulled out all the stops to show that Jerome's text was the only acceptable translation of Scripture, and that those who tried to change it were undermining the Church's authority. A case in point is the work *De tralatione Bibliae* (1525) by Pierre Cousturier (Petrus Sutor, 1475–1537). Cousturier, a trained theologian and member of the Carthusian order, argued against all types of new translation, both vernacular and Latin. In Chapters 20 and 21 of his book, he counters Faber and Erasmus respectively.[20] Sutor also attacks Valla, whom he accused of arrogance for denying Jerome's authorship of the Vulgate's translation. He rejected the idea that the Vulgate is an insufficient translation and considers it an affront against Jerome's reputation. He believed the humanists' pursuit of *elegantia*, *munditia* and *puritas* in the Latin language to be dangerous: emphasis on correct literary style obscured that the language of Scripture was not the same as that of worldly literature. Moreover, beautiful language did not serve the Church as many humanists claimed; in some cases, it could even change the meaning of the text and lead readers astray. Sutor, therefore, did not believe that the versions created by Faber and Erasmus were innocent undertakings. Even though the authors might have thought that their translations caused no harm when used privately as tools for the study of Scripture, their works in fact gave rise to *vanitas obnoxia*, instead of leading to the piety that Scripture encouraged (Sutor 1525, fol. lxxiii v). Moreover, Sutor saw no merit in giving priority to the Greek text for improving the Latin: The Greek manuscripts were simply too diverse. Sutor's most significant argument against Erasmus and Faber was that Jerome had been inspired, and they were not.

Accusations as expressed by Sutor fed into the fear that changing the current text of Scripture, let alone presenting new translations, meant

subverting the foundations of the Church.[21] Erasmus was keen to defend (not always in an equally fair and elegant fashion) both his reputation as a scholar and as a supporter of the Catholic Church, because he depended on his Catholic benefactors for his livelihood. Retranslations and revisions of the New Testament, then, always had to be introduced with care.

When Jerome started his revision work, he understood that he had to tread carefully, because the *Vetus Latina* was held in high regard. In his preface to the Gospels, a letter to Pope Damasus, he explains that the main reason for his undertaking are the objections of the Church's adversaries in the East to the Latin Bible. They had pointed to the discrepancies among the copies of the *Vetus Latina* which were circulating in the Church, and the differences between the Latin translation and the Greek original. A unified text, one that was properly checked against the Greek original, should respond to these objections. This strategy was repeated by Manetti who, a millennium later, faced a similar problem with Jerome's text. In the preface to his translation of the Psalter, Manetti mentions that 'Greeks and Jews' criticized the translation of the Vulgate. As Den Haan (2016, 150–151) demonstrates, Manetti did not go into any details of what this criticism entailed, but at least he had covered himself sufficiently: the new translation is not the result of his own dissatisfaction with the Vulgate but was intended as a response to the critique of outsiders.

Valla could still claim that his work should not be seen as an attempt to change Scripture itself, but a translation of it. He even argued that he could do a better job than Jerome (Valla 1978, 136). Because it was not the Latin translation that should be perceived as sacred, but what the original authors had written in Hebrew and Greek. Manetti offered a similar argument(Den Haan 2018, 103), but was at the same time aware that not everybody shared this opinion. He and other authors of revisions and retranslations tried to gain the sympathy of their readers by acknowledging the great achievement of Jerome. Manetti (2016, 267) explicitly called Jerome "the best and most serious translator" and an example of a translator who found the middle ground between free and literal translation. Attempts to improve the Latin text should not be seen as opposing the Vulgate but as an exercise which was performed in the same spirit in which the church father himself had worked.[22] Not only Manetti, but Faber and Erasmus too, emphasized the importance of Jerome's work and blamed the mistakes in the Vulgate on the defective manuscript transmission. They also emphasized that their translations should not be perceived as replacements of the Vulgate, but merely as ancillary. Erasmus, for example, presented his work as a pedagogical tool for theologians, and not as a text to be used in the liturgy of the

Church.[23] This could have been, as Botley (2004, 174; cf. De Jonge 2016, 32–33) notes, somewhat disingenuous. Erasmus certainly would have preferred his revised translation also to be used in the Church as a replacement of the Vulgate, but he clearly understood that the tide was against him.

Once the Reformation had established itself, diverging from the Vulgate's text was much less of a problem, at least in the Protestant tradition. In his Bible translation, the French Reformed theologian Sebastian Castellio (1515–1563) was much freer than Manetti, Faber or Erasmus could ever have been in their revisions. In *Moses Latinus* from 1546 (the preface to his rather free Latin rendering of the Pentateuch), in his preface to his Latin Bible of 1551 (a dedication letter addressed to the king of England, King Edward VI) and in his Defence (*Defensio suarum translationum bibliorum*) of 1562, Castellio argued that for his translation he freely used a correct and elegant Latin style which was needed to render the biblical books understandable. He, like Erasmus, was convinced that the use of proper Latin and learning piety went hand in hand (Eskhult 2012, 180). And he, too, presented his translation as a pedagogical tool rather than as a Bible for use in the liturgy of the Church. But an important difference with his predecessors was that Castellio introduced his work as a *new* translation. Castellio certainly had more freedom to use vocabulary that clashed with that of the Vulgate.[24] Even though he was criticized for his deviations from the popular Church language, there was no longer the threat of being exposed as someone who threatened the unity of the Church. The Reformation had already become an established fact.

The permanent instability of the holy text

With the number of translations growing, including those in vernacular languages, the sixteenth century witnessed the loss of a holy text that was used by all. The Vulgate had been the only Bible in Western Europe for more than a thousand years, but it gradually began to lose its traditional status. The main reason for this was the discovery of the Greek source text and its growing status among scholars. Not the target text but the source text was seen as paramount and the Vulgate had become merely a translation amongst others. Scholars like Carranza and Stunica, both involved in the production of the Complutensian Polyglot, tried to defend the status of the Vulgate and opposed the idea of new Latin translations, but ultimately served the cause of translation by providing scholars with the source texts of the Bible. The availability of the source texts and the production of new

translations inevitably raised the question: what *was* the Church's sacred and inspired text? Valla, as we have seen, raised exactly this question. But if, as he claimed, only the writings in their original languages represented Sacred Scripture, then only those who could read those languages had access to the inspired texts of the Church. Valla could not have known that his question became even more urgent with the rising popularity of vernacular Bible translation. The availability of the Hebrew and Greek source texts was of great importance to the further development of the study of the Bible, but they also exposed the imperfection and transience of Bible translations.

Since the early Reformation, the Western Church had to learn to live with the fact that their sacred text was always something other than the original, more fleeting and temporary. In recent times, even the source text itself has been shown to be less stable than often assumed.[25] The reality of the sacred text as 'just' a translation, however, has never been fully accepted. Just as the Vulgate gradually grew from translation to inspired original, so have many of the vernacular translations, such as the King James, the Portuguese Almeida, the Spanish Reina Valera or the Arabic Van Dyke versions. Retranslations and revisions of Bibles therefore will always face some sort of opposition by those who refuse to see that their own Bible too was once 'just' a translation.

Abbreviations

CWE 41   *The Collected Works of Erasmus. Volume 41. The New Testament Scholarship of Erasmus: An Introduction with Erasmus' Prefaces and Ancillary Writings.* Edited by Robert D. Sider. Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 2019.

NPNF 2/6   *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers.* Series 2, Volume 6. *St. Jerome. Letters and Select Works.* Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1893.

Notes

1. The name "Vulgate" was not the official name for Jerome's translation until much later, at its recognition as the official text of the Catholic Church at the Council of Trent in 1546. Earlier use of the term *vulgata* usually refers to what is now known as the *Vetus Latina* (see below at n.3). See Sutcliffe 1948, 349; Linde 2012, 15–16.

2. I refer to, for example, Hamilton 1996, Botley 2004, Eskhult 2006 and 2012, De Jonge 2016, Gordon and Cameron 2016, and especially Den Haan 2016 and 2018.

3. The most important difference between the two translations was that the *Vetus Latina*'s translation of the Old Testament was based on the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the Septuagint, while Jerome based his on the Hebrew text of the Old Testament.

4. Jerome, in his address to Pope Damasus in the *Preface to the Gospels* (NPNF 2/6:487): "You urge me to revise the old Latin version, and, as it were, to sit in judgment on the copies of the Scriptures which are now scattered throughout the whole world; and, inasmuch as they differ from one another, you would have me decide which of them agree with the Greek original."

5. "But to avoid any great divergences from the Latin which we are accustomed to read, I have used my pen with some restraint, and while I have corrected only such passages as seemed to convey a different meaning, I have allowed the rest to remain as they are" (NPNF 2/6: 488).

6. For an overview of these attempts to improve the Latin text of the Bible, see Stotz 2011, 25–35; Linde 2012, 39–48.

7. Linde 2012, 49–77. Up until the fourteenth century, Jerome's ascetic life had been emphasized, but from the early Renaissance the emphasis shifted to Jerome the scholar and man of letters (Rice 1985, 49–83).

8. Three important collections of Greek manuscripts compiled in the second half of the fifteenth century were those of the Vatican Library (compiled under Pope Nicholas V, who ruled in the years 1447–1455), of Lorenzo de' Medici (1449–1492) and the library of Cardinal Bessarion (1403–1472). See Reynolds and Wilson 2013, 147–150; Kraye 2016, 52–53.

9. In a letter that Aurispa wrote to Ambrogio Traversari and dated 27 August 1424, he mentions a collection of writings of, among other authors, Plato, Plotinus, Pindar and Xenophon.

10. The corpus for this classical Latin differed from author to author. When working on his Latin translation of the New Testament, Erasmus, for example, relied mainly on five authors as representing "classical" Latin (Cicero, Caesar, Sallust, Livy and Quintilian); see De Jonge 2016, 37. Of course, the humanists' verdict that only classical Latin was correct Latin, was based on their programmatic revival of classical studies. In Jerome's time, Latin was as much a living language as it was in Cicero's. Any later development of the Latin language could just as well have served as a model.

11. For specific references in Valla's *Annotationes*, see Botley 2004, 113. See also Valla's *Antidotum primum* (Valla 1981) I, 136.

12. Valla addressed Poggio's critique on his attitude towards the Vulgate and Jerome in the *Antidotum primum* (1452). See Valla 1981; Den Haan 2016, 22–23.

13. Nebrija was opposed to making emendations to the source text. Johannes Reuchlin, for example, had proposed a different reading of the Aramaic words in Mark 5.41 (*abita cumi* instead of *talitha cumi*), a change Nebrija lamented (Valle Rodríguez 2008, 68).

14. The first edition was confiscated and Nebrija worked on a second one in secret. Only the third edition, the *Tertia Quinquagena*, survived. It appeared in 1516 (Valle Rodríguez 2008, 64–65).

15. The work survives in two manuscripts, both of which are in the Vatican Library in Rome. Den Haan (2016) published Manetti's translation for the first time.

16. See Manetti 2016. For a discussion of Manetti's other translation work, see Botley 2004, 70–82.

17. Manetti 2016, 248, 251 and especially 253. Botley 2004, 111, points to the fact that Manetti may have depended on Jerome, here, *Epistula* 57, V,2; see Jerome 1980, 13.

18. See *Epistula* 57, V,2 (Jerome 1980, 13), where Jerome mentions his strategy of not translating *non verbum de verbo, sed sensum de sensu*. Jerome uses the Latin translation categories *ad verbum* and *ad sensum*. Den Haan (2016, 95) notes that contrary to what Georg Steiner claims (see his *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, 239), these categories have been used in different ways at different times by different authors. For example, while Cicero used the category of *ad sensum* to free the translation from its source (in his case, translation as competition with the original), Jerome used it instead to emphasize fidelity to the source, because an *ad verbum* approach could distort its meaning. Compare Copeland 1991, 49–51.

19. For overviews of the origins of Erasmus' *Novum Instrumentum*, see Brown (1984), De Jonge (1988), Dill (2016) and Vessey (2016).

20. Chapter 20 addresses a "recently produced New Testament translation" (fol. lxxvii r), while Chapter 21 addresses a recent interpretation and translation of Paul's letters (fol. lxxxii r).

21. For the idea that this is a recurring theme in the critique of his Catholic opponents, see Rummel 1989a and 1989b.

22. For a similar strategy with Old Testament translators (for example, Martin Bucer or Konrad Zwingli), see Hobbs 2008, 467 and 485.

23. In the *Apologia* to his *Novum Instrumentum* of 1516 Erasmus states: "It is one thing to change the official text in public use; it is another thing to purge the publicly used text of faults and clarify it with a text of private status." See De Jonge 2016, 32.

24. Castellio used classical terms instead of ecclesiastical one, for example, *genius* instead of *angelus*, *collegium* for *synagoga* or *res publica christiana* for *ecclesia* (Eskhult 2006, 49), renderings which would have been rejected by Erasmus, who shared Castellio's preference for classical Latin, but who also understood that the Bible had its own vocabulary.

25. For the New Testament, Parker (1997, 7) argues that the Greek source text of the New Testament was fluid and impermanent because of a constant interplay with the living tradition in which it was embedded. He emphasizes that the assumption that there is such a thing as "the original text" is a mistake.

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The authority of the old for producing the new: the thorny path towards a new authoritative Russian Bible translation

Alexey B. Somov

Abstract

Producing a new authoritative version of the Russian Bible is largely determined by its relationship to previous authoritative Bible translations. It means that a new widely accepted Russian Bible should not only be accurate, literary, and meaningful, but also in line with preceding authoritative versions. These previous authorities will be discussed first: the Church Slavonic Bible and the Russian Synodal Bible. An explanation as to how they became authoritative is offered, and the extent of their influence on new translations into Russian and other languages of the former USSR is assessed. Then, other attempts to produce a new Russian Bible are described. Finally, this study explores tendencies of the contemporary movement toward a new authoritative Bible translation into Russian and discusses what such a translation might look like, what would be its textual basis and translation principles, and who could initiate and produce such a translation.

Keywords: Bible, translation, Septuagint, Slavonic, Russian, Synodal, Bible Society, Church, Orthodox

Introduction

The practical criteria typically needed for a particular Bible translation to be acceptable, influential, and authoritative for most people include such features as its eligibility for private and public worship, its citation rate and an ubiquitous use by priests, pastors, Sunday school teachers, lay people, and secular readers. Such a translation is the kind that usually sells best. But is such a Bible translation also based on the principles of accuracy, literary style, and readability? Experience demonstrates that this is not automatically the case. There are certain political and cultural contexts which influence local publishing conventions and the textual basis for

translation (Batalden 1990, 68). In addition, in the case of the Russian Bible the authoritative status of any new translation is also largely determined by its relation to previous authoritative Bible translations. Thus, to create a new Russian Bible that has a chance of being widely accepted, such a Bible should not only be accurate, literary, and meaningful, but also in line with preceding authoritative versions.

The first Bible to become authoritative Scripture for Slavic speaking peoples of Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, and the main Bible of the Russian Orthodox Church, was the Church Slavonic Bible (hereafter, CSB). It remains the most authoritative for many Orthodox Christians in this area, especially for the Russian Orthodox. The first authoritative translation into Russian, the Russian Synodal Bible (hereafter, RSB) has less authority than the CSB and is not officially used in liturgical practice. Nonetheless, for Russian non-Orthodox Christians (Protestants and Catholics) the RSB became the most authoritative. Moreover, the RSB wields significant influence on all new translations, not only into Russian but also into a considerable number of the non-Slavic languages of the former USSR. New Bible translations in the Russian-speaking world must all somehow relate to this authoritative version.

This article begins with a discussion of the history of the CSB and RSB and traces how these versions became authoritative. This will be followed with a description of other attempts to produce a new Russian Bible that would be widely accepted. It is, of course, hardly possible to review all new translations made after the RSB. In this regard, I chose for my analysis three translations which position themselves as directly related to the RSB: these were either translations initiated as a revision of the RSB, produced as the opposite of it in translation principles and textual basis, or were an attempt at 'a middle way,' where translators tried to combine some virtues of the RSB as well as some new approaches. In addition, for these three translations it is possible to find objective data about how widely they have been distributed and what assessment (either positive or negative) they have received from communities of Russian believers and from the broader Russian society. Finally, tendencies in the contemporary movement toward producing a new authoritative Bible translation in Russian are explored and what such a translation might look like, what would be its textual basis and translation principles, and who could initiate and produce such a translation are discussed.

History of the Church Slavonic Bible

The history of the Church Slavonic Bible goes back to the work of the brothers Cyril (826–869) and Methodius (815–885), the Christian missionaries to the Slavic people, who translated some parts of the Bible – first, the Gospels, portions of Acts and the Epistles, the Psalms, and probably those portions of the Old Testament that are used in the Orthodox liturgy, as well as some liturgical books – into Old Church Slavonic.[1] In addition to the translation itself, Cyril and Methodius initiated scribal work and trained priests who were able to minister according to the translated liturgical texts. Following the deaths of the two brothers, their disciples continued translation work on the biblical books, which lasted for the next few centuries. After the South Slavic lands were conquered by the Turks, the center of Slavic culture and writing moved to the Eastern Slavic regions. The need to collect the translated Scripture portions was pronounced in eastern Slavic circles from the middle of the fourteenth century onwards.[2] The appearance of printed Bible editions in Europe also stimulated interest to have such a Bible published in Slavonic. The process of collecting Slavonic biblical texts into one Bible was initiated by Gennadiĭ, Archbishop of Novgorod and Pskov (1484–1504). The main part of this new edition was taken from the Slavonic manuscripts available in Novgorod at the end of the fifteenth century. Most Old Testament books of this new Bible were translated from the Septuagint (hereafter, LXX), which was regarded as the most authoritative Bible version in the Eastern Churches;[3] the New Testament was translated from late Greek manuscripts, which modern New Testament textual criticism regards as belonging to the so-called Byzantine text type.[4] However, some books and portions of the Old Testament were not available in translation yet,[5] because they were rarely used. Perhaps this was because these books were rarely if ever used in worship. These books were then translated in Novgorod from the Latin Vulgate by a Benedictine monk named Benjamin. His translation was very literal and closely followed the syntax of the Vulgate's text. Moreover, the Vulgate was used as a model in terms of structure as well as book and verse order in this collection. Thus, Gennadiĭ's Bible, which became the first full Bible manuscript in Slavonic, was an eclectic edition of the CSB. The earliest fully preserved manuscript of this codex[6] is dated 1499 and contains 1002 sheets, or 2004 pages. Even though in some parts the Gennadiĭ Bible drew on the Vulgate, the LXX was regarded as the most authoritative text. In addition, from the very beginning, the CSB often depended on the syntax and lexical choices of the Greek LXX and of the Greek of the New Testament.

The second important edition of the CSB is connected to the work of Prince Konstantin of Ostrog, a city in the western part of Ukraine in Volynia. Becaues of Konstantin's efforts, Ostrog had become a cultural and educational center in the area, which was a part of the Rzeczpospolita. This edition became important because other Slavonic Bible versions, which had been circulating there before Konstantin's time, came from the Protestant environment and depended on Polish and Czech translations of the Vulgate. The Slavonic translation by Georgii (Frantiszek) Skorina printed in Prague in 1517-1520 was based on Bohemian and Latin translations. Orthodox people, however, wanted to have a Bible which was based on Greek (Florovsky 1979, 43–44). Konstantin therefore initiated a new project, and the resulting Slavonic edition was published by Ivan Fëdorov in Ostrog. It used the text of Gennadiï's Bible as its foundation source. Nonetheless, this new text was carefully checked and revised against editions of the LXX; many Latinisms of Gennadiï's Bible were removed or refined (Florovsky 1979, 53). This new edition of the CSB was decorated with headpieces and illuminated initials. This was the first complete printed CSB and became known as the Ostrog Bible. It was issued in two editions: the first one in 1580, the second in 1581. It was much more compact than Gennadiï's Bible and contained 628 sheets, or 1256 pages.

The later edition of the CSB is the so-called Moscow Bible. This Bible is mentioned here because it became the first Slavonic Bible published in the Grand Principality of Moscow (Muscovy). It was a Moscow-based 1663 reprint of the Ostrog Bible, with no fundamental changes.

The next edition of the CSB is the Elizabeth Bible. It was published under the Russian Empress Elizabeth in 1751 and became the third printed CSB containing the whole Bible. In this edition, the portions of the Old Testament which had been translated from the Vulgate were now re-translated from the LXX, except the book of 4 Ezra, which was never part of the LXX but came to the CSB through the Vulgate. Its text only survives in a Latin translation of a, most likely, Greek original. The rest of the Old Testament was revised with the LXX. The second edition of the Elizabeth Bible, printed in 1756, became the authorized version of the CSB in the Russian Orthodox Church.

As the above indicates, the Russian Orthodox Church always tended to conform the Slavonic text of the Old Testament to the LXX. That some portions of Gennadiï's Bible had been translated from the Latin Vulgate and not from the Greek LXX was simply because the translators had no access yet to Greek manuscripts of these sections. The reason Greek and not Hebrew was chosen as source-text is two-fold: the text of the LXX was considered older than the Masoretic Hebrew text tradition (further, MT)[7]

and it was respected as the Bible used by the first Christians and the early Church. Moreover, the Hebrew text was sometimes even rejected based on the accusation that rabbis had modified or changed the Hebrew text to deprive Christians from their messianic proof texts.

The Russian Synodal Bible

While the translators of the Slavonic Bible always tended to conform their work to the most authoritative Greek original, it often lacked clarity and was difficult to understand. The thorough editing in accordance with the LXX did not make the translation clearer. This was exacerbated by the lack of clarity of the Greek of the LXX itself. As mentioned above, Slavonic translations, including the authoritative Elizabeth Bible, often depended on the syntax and lexicon of the Greek text. In addition, the text of the Slavonic Bible remained unclear for most Russian-speaking readers.

Printed copies of the CSB were limited and expensive. They could not be widely distributed. Even theological seminaries suffered from shortages and often used the Vulgate. Such a limited use of the CSB also explains why in Russia no tradition of Bible reading at home developed, either by clergy or by lay people. Scripture was read mostly during church services. In addition to this, many people were illiterate, especially in rural areas. Furthermore, until the eighteenth century there was a situation of diglossia in Russia, in which alongside spoken Russian a Slavonic-stylized linguistic medium was used in church and state functions (Batalden 1990, 68). However, Slavonic had started losing its communicative function in the eighteenth century. While ordinary people had limited access to the CSB in any case, the Russian aristocracy started reading the Bible either in Latin or more often in French.

All this showed that there was a need for a Bible in contemporary Russian. The pivotal date in the history of shaping the authoritative Russian Bible was December 6, 1812, when the Bible Society in Russia (hereafter, BSR) was established in St. Petersburg. BSR was founded by British missionaries and at first was a subsidiary division of British and Foreign Bible Society. The work of BSR was supported by Prince Alexander Golit͡syn, who was the minister of education and the president of the society, and Archimandrite Filaret (Drozdov), who later became the Metropolitan of Moscow. BSR was greatly supported personally by Tsar Alexander I and reflected some of the reformist trends of his reign.[8] At first, BSR distributed the CSB; however, with the emperor's decree of February 23, 1816, a Russian Bible translation project was established (Batalden 2013, 57). That same year the translation

of the New Testament into Russian began. For this, the Greek text was used alongside the Slavonic text. The main task of the translators was to transform the Slavonic text into understandable Russian (Batalden 2013, 65). The four Gospels were published in 1819, and the entire New Testament followed in 1821.

Translation teams started working on the Old Testament, which resulted in publishing the book of Psalms in 1822, while the Pentateuch was ready for printing in 1824. This smooth-running process was soon to be interrupted. In 1824, because of court and church intrigues, Golit͡syn was forced to resign from his office as BSR president. A member of the Holy Synod, Metropolitan Serafim (Glagolevskiĭ), a fierce opponent of the project, became the new president. According to him, a change of language in the Bible from a loftier (Slavonic) to a more colloquial one (Russian) would only harm the status of the Christian faith. Also, BSR's decision to use the MT as base text for the Old Testament, was frowned upon, since traditionally all Orthodox Church liturgical readings had always been translated from the LXX. In addition, Western protestant circles objected to the inclusion of the deuterocanonical Old Testament books in the Bible.[9]

Ultimately, because of the continuing resistance to their new Old Testament translation, BSR destroyed most of the newly translated portions. Ultimately, BSR was closed in 1826 by order of the new tsar, Nicholas I, who was a more conservative leader than Alexander I. The opposition to BSR's work was not the only reason for this closure, the political climate was also unfavorable. Conservative powers in Russia gained the upper hand after the Decembrist revolt in 1825. There was a growing fear of the influence of new movements like mystical pietism or Freemasonry. In addition, there were concerns about sectarian heterodoxy within traditional Russian Orthodoxy, which were perceived as a challenge to religious authority (Batalden 2013, 82).

There were private attempts to produce a new Russian Bible translation,[10] but the next pivotal moment on the way to an authoritative Russian translation was the start of the Synodal project of the Russian Bible (RSB) in 1856. The project was initiated by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and was approved by the next Russian tsar, Alexander II. The BSR, Pavskiĭ, and Glukharev translations were all to various degrees used in this project.

In 1860 the four Gospels were published, in 1862 the rest of the New Testament was ready. The textual basis of the New Testament in the RSB is not fully clear, but it is close to the editions of Matthei (1803–1807), of Scholz (1830–1836; reprinted by Rossiĭskoe Bibleĭskoe Obshchestvo, the Bible Society in Russia, in 2022), or to the Elzevir edition of the Greek New

Testament which was published in Moscow in 1810 (Batalden 2013, 137 n.16).[11] In general, the Synodal New Testament represents a text based largely on late Greek manuscripts of the Byzantine text type. Moreover, sometimes it conforms to Slavonic New Testament readings. A good example of a Slavonic reading is found in 2 Cor 13:13. The Greek text reads:

Ἡ χάρις τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ, καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν [The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you]

In the RSB this verse is rendered as follows (the difference between the Greek text and the Russian translation is in bold):

Благодать Господа нашего Иисуса Христа, и любовь Бога **Отца**, и общение Святого Духа со всеми вами [The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God **the Father**, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you]

The word 'Отца' ('Father') is absent from all known Greek manuscripts and was added under the influence of the Slavonic translation.[12]

In addition, the influence of the Elizabeth Bible can be seen in Mat 1:11. The Greek source for the RSB reads:

Ἰωσίας δὲ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰεχονίαν καὶ τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς αὐτοῦ, ἐπὶ τῆς μετοικεσίας Βαβυλῶνος [Josiah begot Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon]

In RSB Mat 1:11 is rendered as follows:

Иосия родил **Иоакима** [Josiah begot **Jehoiakim**]; **Иоаким родил** Иехонию и братьев его [**Jehoiakim begot** Jechoniah and his brothers], перед переселением в Вавилон [before the deportation to Babylon]

Here, the RSB follows a reading (ἐγέννησεν τὸν Ἰωακίμ, Ἰωακὶμ δὲ ἐγέννησεν ['begot Jehoiakim, Jehoiakim begot']) found in some Greek New Testament manuscripts.[13] In the footnote to Mat 1:11, the Elizabeth Bible reads:

въ нѣкїихъ греч.: їѡсіа же роди їѡакіма и бра́тїю е҆гѡ̀ [Some Greek manuscripts read 'Josiah begot Jehoiakim and his brothers]

Either the Synodal translators chose this marginal reading because of their exegetical ideas,[14] or they accepted it because the Elizabeth Bible refers to it.[15]

While there was little debate about the textual basis and principles behind the New Testament translation, the source for the Synodal Old Testament was much more problematic. The use of the Masoretic text was rejected out of ideological reasons, and not exegetical or translational (Mihăilă 2018, 30–60). As mentioned above, some claimed that the Masoretic text had been corrupted by rabbis to deprive Christians of their messianic proof text.[16]

However, thanks to the efforts of the Metropolitan of Moscow, Filaret (Drozdov), a compromise was found. It was decided that the new Russian translation should follow mainly the Hebrew Text, but "under the guidance of the LXX." This meant that in passages that were considered important for certain theological truths, the translators had to follow the LXX readings. In addition, important LXX readings were added in square brackets. Where the Masoretic text and the LXX diverged from each other significantly, the translation followed what the Slavonic text read. The final result of this strategy was an eclectic product which arbitrarily followed the LXX in one case, the Hebrew Bible in the other.

A prominent example of preferring LXX readings over the Masoretic text is Isa 7:14: се, **Дева** во чреве приимет ('**The virgin** will conceive'). In Hebrew the word for 'дева' is הָעַלְמָה, which can be rendered as 'young woman' or 'girl,' while in Greek it is παρθένος, which refers to a virgin.

After years of intense polemics, debates and intrigues, the Synodal Bible translation was finally approved by the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and published in 1876. It took 60 years to finalize the project. Not only did the St. Petersburg department of the British and Foreign Bible Society deal with the distribution, but also with the Society for the Dissemination of Holy Scripture in Russia, which was founded in 1863 (Batalden 2013, 184). All this resulted in one million copies of the RSB sold by the early twentieth century (Batalden 2013, 187).

Apart from Church translations, the late imperial era also saw the publication of several Jewish translations into modern Russian, but these only targeted a Jewish audience: they used Jewish key terminology, Jewish forms of proper names, and specifically referred to rabbinic traditions.[17] Also, within the Orthodox traditions some new Russian translations were produced by individuals (Alfeev 2017, 498). However, none of these were ever used widely.

The influence of the RSB on new Bible translations into Russian and non-Slavic languages of the former USSR

Officially, the Synodal translation never gained any status in the Orthodox Church. It has less authority than the CSB and is not officially used in liturgical practice. However, the RSB became the authoritative Bible for Protestant churches in Russia, like the Baptist and Pentecostal churches.[18] It even initiated a popular and spontaneous Bible study movement among Russian peasants (e.g., *Shtundisty*; from German *Stunde*).[19]

Not long after its publication, suggestions for revising the RSB were already being made (Evseev 1917; Batalden 2013, 196). A serious attempt to revise the translation was initiated in the 1950s. It was supervised by Bishop Cassian (Bezobrazov), New Testament professor and rector at St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris. The revision project sought to make use of the newest developments in New Testament text research and took the latest edition of the Greek text as its base text. It effectively resulted, however, in an entirely new translation. Even though this New Testament was not widely accepted, it gained popularity in church-scholarly circles (Alfeev 2017, 499) and as a study tool in theological seminaries.[20]

Once the Russian Bible Society was reestablished after perestroika, it engaged in a new translation based on the dynamic-equivalent principles of Eugene Nida, which are quite different from those used for the Synodal (Rudenko 2019).[21] The result was a new New Testament called *Joyful News* (Kuznet͡sova 2001). Its translator, Valentina Kuznet͡sova, closely followed the model of the Good News Bible translation, a model that was widely used within the Bible Society movement. The distribution of this publication was accompanied by a very intensive advertising campaign by BSR. The translation avoided some traditional Russian key terms. For instance, it renders раб (slave) as служитель (minister), волхвы (magi) as звездочеты (astrologists), Агнец (Slavonic word for 'lamb') as Ягненок (lamb), благодать (grace) as милость (mercy), евангелие (Gospel) as благая весть (the good news), воскресить (resurrect) as поднять (raise), and крестить (baptize) as омывать (bathe).

Kuznet͡sova's translation was criticized primarily for the use of the latest critical edition of the Greek text rather than the traditional Byzantine text and the changes in important key terms (Alfeev 2017, 500). Its dynamic-equivalent translation method was perceived as paraphrase, rather than translation.[22] Also, its level of language was criticized: it was perceived as vulgar (meaning Soviet), lacking "reverent attitude to the Word of God" and "desacralizing the Scriptures" (Alfeev 2017, 500). Because of its more

explicative approach, it was also seen as narrowing down the space for interpreting the biblical text (Desnit͡skiĭ 2015, 246).

An Old Testament translation project was initiated by BSR in the 1990s. Unlike the New Testament, however, this project did not aim at a colloquial translation in the Good News tradition but envisioned a more literary translation. The translators were Russian biblical scholars and linguists. The result was published in 2011 together with a revision of the Kuznet͡sova New Testament (Rossiĭskoe Bibleĭskoe Obshchestvo 2011). But even though the New Testament was made more traditional (for example, by reintroducing traditional key terms), it remained clear that the two testaments had been translated with different translation strategies.

Another translation was done by the Russian Adventist community. Scholars and translators from different backgrounds worked together on this project, which resulted in 2015 in the so-called Zaokskiĭ Bible (Kulakov 2015). This translation gained popularity among several Protestant churches. It was widely distributed by the Russian Adventist community, BSR, and St. Andrew's Theological-Biblical Institute. It has survived several editions; its first audio version was released in 2022. Except for a few details (Desnit͡skiĭ 2015, 252–253), there is little or no influence of Adventist doctrine in the Zaokskiĭ Bible. On the one hand, the Zaokskiĭ Bible preserved traditional Russian key terms (e.g. grace, mercy, baptism) and kept the RSB spelling of proper names. It uses a rather lofty style and may be considered a philological translation.[23] On the other hand, it also helps the reader by making certain details explicit and including explanatory words in italics. An example is Matthew 1:19, where the Greek source text for the Zaokskiĭ Bible reads:

> Ἰωσὴφ δὲ ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς, δίκαιος ὢν καὶ μὴ θέλων αὐτὴν δειγματίσαι, ἐβουλήθη λάθρᾳ ἀπολῦσαι αὐτήν [Her husband Joseph, being righteous and unwilling to disgrace her, wanted secretly to dismiss her]

The RSB translates this quite literally:

> Иосиф же, муж Ее, будучи праведен и не желая огласить Ее, хотел тайно отпустить Ее [Her husband Joseph, being righteous and not wanting to disgrace her publicly, wanted secretly to dismiss her]

The Zaokskiĭ Bible renders this verse with some explanatory words added in italics (bold italics in this example):

Будущий ее муж, Иосиф, был ***человеком*** праведным; он не захотел выставлять ее на позор, и потому решил тайно расторгнуть помолвку [Her ***future*** husband, Joseph, was a righteous ***man***; he did not want to expose her to shame, so he decided to break off the engagement secretly] (Matt 1:19)

This analysis is far from exhaustive, but it gives us an idea of three projects that are directly related to the RSB.[24] The New Testament by Bishop Cassian (Bezobrazov) is an attempt at revising the Synodal translation. The BSR project (*Joyful News* and the BSR Bible) is produced as an alternative to the RSB in its translation principles and textual basis. The Zaokskiĭ Bible chose the middle way and is, on the one hand, respectful to the Synodal, but on the other, much more meaningful and literary. Despite some positive reception and a broad distribution program, none of these has become sufficiently authoritative. None of the three Bible translations were accepted by the Russian Orthodox Church: either the textual basis was a problem, or the chosen translation method, or the rendering of the key terms, or there were confessional objections.[25] Even in protestant circles, the Synodal translation remained the preferred text.[26]

Therefore, at this moment, in spite of the Synodal translation's obsolete 'pre-Pushkin' language, textual, stylistic, genre, and syntactic problems, as well as inconsistency in name spellings and some other mistakes, there is no other translation that has gained authoritative status.[27]

Moreover, in the area, the Synodal translation wields significant influence on all new translations, not only into Russian, but also into Belarussian and Ukrainian. For instance, in the Belarussian New Testament translation produced by the Belarussian Orthodox Biblical Commission, Matt 1:11 uses the Synodal textual basis (cf. discussion of this verse above):[28]

Ёсія парадзіў Якіма, Якім парадзіў Ехонію й братоў яго, перад перасяленьнем у Вавілон [Josiah begot Jehoiakim, Jehoiakim begot Jechoniah and his brothers before being deported to Babylon]

The same is found in some Ukrainian translations:

Йосія ж породив Йоякúма, Йоякúм породúв Єхонію й братів його за вавилонського пересéлення [Josiah begot Jehoiakim, Jehoiakim begot Jechoniah and his brothers upon being deported to Babylon'] (Ivan Ogiyenko's translation)

Йосія породив Йоякима; Йояким породив Єхонію і братів його,
перед переселенням до Вавилону [Josiah begot Jehoiakim, Jehoiakim
begot Jechoniah and his brothers before being deported to Babylon]
(Olexander Gizha's translation)

The influence of the Synodal Bible is also seen in Scripture translation into
some non-Slavic languages of the former USSR. In many of the translation
projects of the Institute for Bible Translation (IBT) in Moscow, the Synodal
plays an important role as a model for translations in minority languages.
Most importantly, because their first contact with the biblical message was
through the Synodal, many speakers of minority languages prefer to imitate
its language and style in the translations into their own language, even if
some of the choices go against the rules of that language, for example, in
the spelling of biblical names.[29] Even the format and the structure of a new
translation can be influenced by the printed Synodal edition which is used
in that region.[30] In some cases even the Synodal's additions from the LXX to
the Old Testament are included.[31] In addition, since the Synodal text is often
perceived as an inspired and holy text, perhaps even as *the* authoritative
source text, any translation decision that differs from it is frowned upon.[32]

Prospects for a new authoritative Bible translation in Russian

Given the exceptional status of the CSB in the Russian Orthodox Church
and the RSB in Russian Protestant communities, what are the prospects
for a new authoritative Bible translation in Russian? What would be the
textual basis for such a new translation, and what translation principles
should it follow? Is it at all possible to have a single authoritative translation
that could comply with different and, in some cases, mutually exclusive
needs? There is not enough information about the viewpoints of Russian
Protestants in this matter, in the Russian Orthodox Church these questions
have been discussed by the Church's Biblical-Theological Committee. In 2010
some preliminary decisions were made about a new authoritative Russian
translation. Such a translation is expected to:

– take into consideration the findings of modern Biblical scholarship,
  archeology, textual studies, Semitic studies, etc.;
– be based on modern translation theory;
– use all the resources of the contemporary Russian language to convey
  the meaning, style, beauty, and multiformity of the biblical texts;

– maintain a close connection with Russian church tradition;
– be supervised by the authority of the Russian Orthodox Church;
– be tested among the Russian Orthodox audience (Alfeev 2017, 501–503).

In addition to this, the Biblical-Theological Committee has decided to prepare a critical edition of the CSB,[33] to revise liturgical readings taken from the Scriptures, and to prepare Russian-language lectionaries. It was also decided to translate the LXX into Russian and to write and publish a scholarly Biblical commentary. The Committee also noted the need to revise old translations or produce new ones in the languages of the ethnic groups that belong to the Russian Orthodox Church. Most of these decisions have not even begun to be implemented. Given the current political and in-church situation in Russia, it is difficult to predict whether a new impulse to begin such an ambitious project will arise. In addition to the political reasons behind this delay, there is another serious problem which needs to be resolved somehow before such a project can start. Although the Biblical-Theological Committee decided that a new authoritative Russian Bible translation must account for the findings of modern Biblical scholarship, many Orthodox believers have a negative or suspicious attitude to such scholarship. This problem has existed for a long time. As Fr. Alexander Schmemann states (Schmemann 1972, 176–177):

> For several reasons Biblical studies represent the weakest area in modern Russian theology. Before the Russian Revolution, free discussion of problems arising from a critical and historical approach to the Bible was heavily censored, if not completely forbidden, in official academic theology. Gifted biblical scholars were not lacking, to be sure. [...] After 1917 all research became impossible in the USSR, and unfortunately very few of the theologians who left their country were specialists in biblical disciplines. This, however, is not the only explanation of the deficiency in specifically scriptural areas. On a deeper level, one can say that Orthodox theology has never felt 'at home' in modern biblical scholarship and has not accepted as its own the biblical problem as formulated within the western theological development [...] This of course does not mean that a revival and a deepening of biblical scholarship is impossible or undesirable in the future; but one can predict that such a revival will consist, first of all, of a deep reassessment and reevaluation – within Orthodox theological categories – of the very presuppositions of western biblicism.

Therefore, the task of reassessing and reevaluating Biblical studies within the Russian Orthodox Church is an integral precursor to starting a new authoritative Bible translation project into Russian.

The Russian Orthodox Church should decide how such a translation will relate to the Synodal. If it is only a revision of the Synodal, what should the principles behind such a revision be? Should it have a different textual basis? Should it replace obsolete words and expressions with modern ones, increase the consistency of the spelling of personal and place names, and improve the syntax? Such suggestions have been made more often, and most of these have already been implemented in Bishop Cassian's New Testament and, to a lesser degree, in the Zaokskiĭ Bible. However, as discussed above, neither of these translations has become authoritative.

A first step towards a new translation suitable for the Russian Orthodox Church and, in fact, for other Russian churches as well, would be to follow the interesting proposal made by A. Desni͡skiĭ (2015, 211–221). He rightly observes that a single translation can never meet the needs and preferences of every reader. With Skopos's theory in mind, one would have to aim strategically for several translations.[34] Desni͡skiĭ put these considerations into practice and published two translations of the New Testament Epistles (Desni͡skiĭ 2021).[35] The first one is a translation based on the Byzantine form of the New Testament text (Antoniades 1912), which is close to the textual basis of the Synodal and the Slavonic NT. This translation tries to preserve features of the original Greek and the traditional Russian terminology. It requires additional commentary (including Church preaching) and maintains the cultural and historical distance without artificial archaization. This translation is literary; it targets readers with a liberal arts college education. It should be suitable for liturgical purposes, and therefore the language must be solemn. No textual variants or conjunctures should be used in this translation. The translator calls this version a 'liturgical' or 'traditional' translation (традиционный перевод) (Desni͡skiĭ 2015, 211, 214). Desni͡skiĭ's second translation is based on the critical Greek text of the New Testament (Aland, Karavidopoulos, Martini and Metzger 2012). This version clarifies many of the more important issues in the translation. It is also literary (as opposed to common-language), but targets people who are not familiar with biblical culture and church tradition and have only a secondary education or a higher education in a technical field. Desni͡skiĭ calls this version "a popular translation" (or "understandable for all," in Russian общедоступный перевод) (Desni͡skiĭ 2015, 213). Here are Rom 13:1a and James 1:1 in Desni͡skiĭ's translations taken as examples:

Всякая душа да подчиняется существующим властям [Let every soul be subject to the existing authorities] (Rom 13:1a, traditional translation approach)

Всякий человек да подчиняется существующим властям [Let every person be subject to the existing authorities] (Rom 13:1a, popular translation approach)

Иаков, раб Бога и Господа Иисуса Христа, двенадцати коленам, пребывающим в рассеянии, желает радоваться! [James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ to the twelve tribes, who are in the dispersion, wishes to rejoice!] (James 1:1, traditional translation approach)

Иаков, раб Бога и Господа Иисуса Христа, двенадцати израильским племенам, рассеянным по земле, желает радости! [James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes of Israel scattered throughout the world, wishes a joy!] (James 1:1, popular translation approach)

Concluding suggestions

I conclude this article with my own suggestions about producing a new authoritative Russian Bible translation. As is seen from the discussion above, there are at present more questions than answers about such a translation. First, it should consider the dynamics of the modern Russian cultural-religious situation and answer the important question of who could be considered sufficiently authoritative to initiate such a nation-wide project that would be accepted by all Christian confessions/denominations and Russian society in general? Modern Russian society is much more pluralistic than it was in the nineteenth century when the Synodal Bible was produced. It is scarcely imagineable that a new translation project could be initiated by the state authorities, as was done earlier in Russian history. Nevertheless, in modern Russia, a new Bible translation may still be initiated by the Russian Orthodox Church as the main church body in Russia. Because of the Orthodox preference for conservatism and traditionalism, this translation should preserve the traditional terminology and be as foreignizing as the Synodal translation. This means that the new translation would have to maintain a cultural and historical distance between the receptor language

and the source text, but without artificial archaization. Considering the ongoing authority of the CSB and Synodal version, this new translation should be literary enough but also solemn. In addition, the Russian Orthodox Church needs new Orthodox translations of Scripture portions for liturgical purposes (lectionaries, Psalms). These could be produced based on the Byzantine New Testament Greek text and the LXX (perhaps confirmed with Slavonic readings). Finally, all Russian Bible translation projects since the 1990s have ignored the translation of the deuterocanonical portions of the Old Testament, which are absent from the Hebrew Bible and are included only in the LXX. Therefore, to produce a new authoritative Bible, these books should be translated from the LXX (and from the Vulgate for 4 Ezra) for Russian Orthodox and Catholic communities.

In the present Russian context, this tremendous task is, in a sense, a comprehensive revision of the existing authoritative translation, which could even be introduced and officially presented as such as a revision. This could facilitate its reception by a wider readership. If such a work is initiated by the Russian Orthodox Church, it will mean that the issues of exegesis and terminology are controlled by the Orthodox scholars and church authorities. This raises the question, however, of what an Orthodox scholar/translator is to be. Does this mean that such a person officially belongs to the Orthodox Church or that he/she uses specific Orthodox approaches to the Scriptures? The former does not automatically imply confessional methods of exegesis. Nonetheless, as shown above, the latter is a task that requires significant further effort to reassess and reevaluate Biblical studies in the Orthodox context.

Notes

1. This is a literary Slavic language which was based on a South Slavonic dialect of the ninth century. It was further adjusted to local vernaculars. This article deals with recensions adjusted to the regions of Ukraine, Russia, and Belarus, and is called "Slavonic" for simplicity of presentation. A modern liturgical language used in the Russian Orthodox Church (as well as in some other Slavic Orthodox churches) is called Church Slavonic.

2. During this time, not only biblical texts were translated, but also theological, liturgical, and ascetic literature, as well as the Palaea literature, which comprises biblical, apocryphal, exegetical, and apologetic material; see, e.g., Adler 2013, 585–599.

3. The LXX is a translation of the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek. It is the earliest surviving Bible translation, produced for the Jewish community in Alexandria in the third and second centuries B.C.E.

4. Since the end of the nineteenth century more ancient Greek New Testament manuscripts have been found. These manuscripts demonstrate some differences with those belonging to the Byzantine text type.

5. 1-2 Chronicles, 1 Ezra, Nehemiah, 2-3 Ezra, Tobit, Esther (chapters 10-16), Judith, the Wisdom of Solomon, Jeremiah (chapters 1–25; 46–51), Ezekiel (chapters 45–46), and 1-2 Maccabees.

6. This manuscript is in Russian State Historical Museum collection GIM Sin. # 915.

7. The Masoretic Bible is a collection of twenty-four biblical books of the Old Testament (Tanakh) written primarily in ancient Hebrew, with some portions of the book of Daniel and the book of Ezra written in Biblical Aramaic. Rabbinical scholars, called the Masoretes, provided vocalization and accentuation marks for the consonantal Hebrew text, as well as some marginal notes. Their work started early in the sixth century, and continued from the seventh to the tenth centuries. The earliest surviving copy of the entire vocalized Hebrew Bible is called the Leningrad Codex (early eleventh century) The Masoretic Hebrew Bible is the text that has been widely used from the Reformation onwards as the source for translations of the Old Testament.

8. During the war against Napoleon, Alexander I read the Bible (in French rather than in Church Slavonic) almost daily (Batalden 2013, 31; Tikhomirov 2016). This was accompanied by reflections on the destiny of Russia and his reign, as well as about spiritual renewal. Perhaps his decision to establish a Russian Bible translation project was also connected with a certain disillusionment with French culture among the French-speaking Russian elite because of the war with Napoleonic France (I thank Pieter Boulogne for this observation). One of the leaders of this anti-French movement in Russia was count Fëdor Rostopchín (1763–1826), who was the governor of Moscow in 1812 and wrote against the influence of French culture and language on Russia (Kravet͡skiĭ 2021, 239–251).

9. The deuterocanonical ("second canon") books of the Old Testament (Tobit, Judith, Ben Sira, Wisdom of Solomon, 1-2 Maccabees, Baruch, as well as the additions to Daniel and Esther) are texts which were written later and are therefore absent in the Hebrew Bible, but which were included in the Greek Bible, the LXX. In both the Catholic and Orthodox traditions, these books are considered to be holy and authoritative. In the Catholic church they even have the same authority as those of the protocanonical books of the Hebrew Bible (Collins 2014, 1–17). In the Lutheran and Anglican Church, the deuterocanonical books are accepted as part of Scripture for the purpose of general teaching, but not as a foundation for dogmatic teaching. In most other protestant traditions, they are not even included in the Bible.

10. Archpriest Gerasim Pavskiĭ (1787–1859), who had been a member of the editorial board of BSR, translated large parts of the Old Testament. The Russian missionary and translator named Archimandrite Makariĭ (Glukharev; 1792–1847) translated almost the entire Old Testament. Makariĭ based his work on Pavskiĭ's translation. Both men were

experts in Masoretic Hebrew studies and translated from the Hebrew Bible (Batalden 2013, 68). For a list of the numerous publications of the translated parts of the Old Testament by Pavskiĭ and Glukharev, see (Batalden 2013, 214-215, 218-219, 228-235, 242-244, 247, 255).

11. The Moscow edition was based on the second edition of the Elzevir text, published in 1633 (Elzevir 1633). The text of the Elzevir editions as well as that of other similar editions produced in the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries was largely based on late Greek manuscripts and became known as "textus receptus."

12. Cf. 2 Cor 13:13 in the Elizabeth Bible: Бл҃года́ть гд҃а на́шегѡ і҃иса хрⷭ҇та̀, и҆ любы̀ бг҃а и҆ ѻ҆ц҃а̀, и҆ ѻ҆бще́нїе ст҃а́гѡ дх҃а со все́ми ва́ми ("The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you").

13. There are several manuscripts that support this reading: Θ *f*[1] 33 sy[h**]; Ir[lat vid] (Aland, Karavidopoulos, Martini, Metzger 2012, 2).

14. King Josiah lived not during the deportation to Babylon but before it (2 Chr 33:25–35:27). In addition, according to 1 Chr 3:15-16, he was the father of Jehoiakim and Jehoiakim was the father of Jechoniah.

15. Readings like these are still followed in some modern Bible translations in the former USSR.

16. Such a negative attitude to the Hebrew Bible is not exclusive feature to the Russian Orthodox Church, but is prominent in other Orthodox Churches as well (Mihăilă 2018).

17. For more information, see Batalden 2013, 163–182.

18. In Russia, Baptists have been around since about 1867 and Pentecostals since the beginning of the 20th century.

19. *Shtundisty* was a Protestant movement among peasants in Ukraine in the latter part of the 19th century. It was influenced by German Pietism in the southern parts of the Russian Empire. They read and studied the Bible on a daily basis.

20. In 2002, BSR published a bilingual version of the New Testament, which contains the Paris-Brussels translation and a critical text of the Greek New Testament (Alexeyev 2002).

21. Nida's dynamic-equivalent approach (Nida and Taber 1969) is about translating meaning (message) rather than form.

22. As early as 1994, there were claims that Nida's approaches (dynamic equivalence and functional equivalence) were not the only applicable ones in the context of Bible translation in Russia (Desniṫskiĭ 2015, 71–73). For instance, one called for Literary Equivalence (Desniṫskiĭ 2003).

23. A philological translation is designed to convey all the features of the source text, both substantive and formal, to bring the reader as close to it as possible. In the case of Russian translation, it is usually the language of classical Russian literature, with use of archaisms (Desniṫskiĭ 2015, 212).

24.   Several other new Russian translations have been produced over the past 30 years. For instance, the World Bible Translation Center Version (1993) (significantly revised by the Bible League in 2014), "The Word of Life" by Living Bibles International (LBI) and the International Bible Society (IBS) (1993), translations produced by A. Alekseev, S. Averint͡sev, A. Desnit͡skiĭ, I. Ivliev, S. Ovsi͡annikov, M. Seleznëv, and others. Most people, however, preferred the Synodal and criticized the new translations as too free and as full of errors. Even though some of the new translations are works of quality and accuracy, none of them became authoritative. See more information about new Russian Bible translations in Elliott 1999; Desnit͡skiĭ 2015, 232-253.

25.   "For obvious reasons, translations by Protestant congregations cannot be recommended to members of the Russian Orthodox Church" (Alfeev 2017, 500).

26.   A good illustration of how the RSB is still important for Russian-speaking Protestants is the fact that the conference celebrating the 140th anniversary of the Synodal translation was organized not by the Russian Orthodox Church but by the Christian Interconfessional Advisory Committee (Moscow, Oct. 4th, 2016).

27.   There were several editions of the RSB (e.g., in 1956, 1968, 1976, 1993), but they were not able to solve its major problems. Perhaps the Synodal translation's main problem are its too clumsy constructions and excessive literalism (Desnit͡skiĭ 2015, 228).

28.   It should be noted that in contrast to Russia, neither Ukrainian nor Belarussian churches ever approved one single authoritative translation.

29.   See a report about how Tuvans perceive the Synodal text and relate it to the Tuvan Bible translation in Voĭnov (2007).

30.   Thus, Tuvan readers wanted the Bible printed in two columns simply because that was the format of the Synodal translation they were used to reading (Voĭnov 2007). Other projects, e.g., the Khakas, preferred a bilingual edition containing the Khakas translation together with the Russian Synodal translation (Institut perevoda Biblii 2003).

31.   For instance, the Tuvan translation of Gen 4:8 adds: "Ховуже бараалам" ("Let us go to the wilderness") and the same is done in the Yakut translation of this verse ("Хонуга тахсыахха"). Cf. Διέλθωμεν εἰς τὸ πεδίον ("Let us go out to the plain") in the LXX.

32.   Some examples of such a perception of the RSB can be found in Voĭnov (2007).

33.   Ivan Evseev proposed such a project in 1911. It was approved as the Commission for the Scholarly Edition of the Slavonic Bible by the Holy Synod in 1915. The commission published several research publications on this subject before and after the Russian revolution. It was closed down in 1929 (Batalden 2013, 196).

34.   Skopos's theory defines the purpose of a translation as a primary aim of the translation strategy (Reiß and Vermeer 1984).

35.   Originally, Desnit͡skiĭ had planned to produce all three types of translation: traditional, popular, and scholarly, as was proposed in Desnit͡skiĭ 2015, 211–221.

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Retranslation and negotiating authority in Bible translation: a sociological perspective of the Protestant Arabic translation of the Bible (1865)

Sameh Hanna

Abstract

This chapter explores the concept of authority in Bible (re)translation from a sociological standpoint. It focuses on the Arabic translation known as the Van Dyck version, completed in 1865. The chapter highlights the perceived authority and significance of this translation among its producers and Arabic-speaking Christians. The Van Dyck version was considered by its creators to be a divine and unmediated text, comparable to the biblical source text in its original languages. However, this perceived authority poses a paradox for modern Arabic-speaking Christians who seek to reach new audiences with new translations while still relying on the Van Dyck version as the base text. The chapter discusses the need for retranslation, the tension between old and new translations, and the social and institutional processes that shape the authority of Bible translations. It suggests viewing retranslation in terms of "social ageing" within a field of power relations and cultural prestige. Using Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of cultural production, the complex socio-historical dynamics of Bible (re)translation and the construction of 'authority' are explored.

Keywords: Arabic translations of the Bible; Van Dyck version; retranslation; authority; social ageing; Pierre Bourdieu; sociology of translation

Introduction: the paradox of an 'authoritative translation'

On Friday, March 10, 1865, a celebration took place at the American mission press in Beirut to mark the printing of the Arabic translation of the Bible, now widely known as the Van Dyck version. The translation was traditionally named after the American missionary Cornelius Van Dyck (1818–1895) who allegedly led the translation team in the last stage of the project, although

his solo agency in running the project was later contested by a few scholars.[1] According to the narrative promoted by Henry Jessup (1832–1910), in his historiography of the early years of the American Mission in Syria, workers at the press lifted their voices in signing with an Arabic hymn that was specially composed for the occasion by Ibrāhīm Sarkīs, one of the press workers, as well as a poet and historian. Meanwhile, in the Upper Room of the Mission House, Dr Van Dyck and his fellow American missionaries were praising God for the completion of a task that took the mission almost 16 years (Jessup 1910, 76). On the evening service of the following Sunday, another celebration was held involving members of the mission alongside native Arab Christians, including those who played different roles in the translation process. Sarkīs's hymn was sung again, accompanied this time by an English translation authored by Henry Jessup himself. In a typical style of nineteenth century missionary historiography, Jessup comments on the occasion for the celebration in these terms: "Surely not for centuries have the angels in heaven heard a sweeter sound arising from Syria than the voices of this band of pious young men, singing a hymn composed by one of themselves, ascribing glory and praise to God, that now, for the first time, the Word of God is given to their nation in its purity" (ibid). The same hymn was repeatedly sung over the years on different anniversaries commemorating a major Bible translation, including its 150th anniversary, which was celebrated in 2015 by the Bible Society of Lebanon.

The Arabic hymn and its slightly "free" English version (see Figure 1 below) give us a glimpse of how the Bustānī-Smith-Van Dyck (henceforth, BSV) was perceived by those who produced it, and probably by those who first used it. *Al-Kitāb*, with the exclusive definite article in Arabic, was the word used by Sarkīs to refer to BSV. Literally meaning "the book," the word came to be used by Arabic-speaking Christians to mean "the Bible" and over time its sense became increasingly restricted to one version of the Bible, and that is the Arabic BSV. In Jessup's English version of the hymn, BSV was referred to as "Thy printed word" and "His precious word." Although Sarkīs uses the Arabic word *tarjamah*, meaning "translation," to refer to the work of Van Dyck and his fellow translators, the word "translation" is dropped in Jessup's English hymn. Judging by the discourse used by the American mission on the translation and the one used by native Arabs who contributed to it, it is safe to assume that those who produced the translation placed it at a level that came very close to the Bible itself in its original languages. For them, it was *al-Kitāb*, God's divine and unmediated word.

The aura which surrounded BSV in its early days continued to build up until the translation occupied a position that is almost above history: it lost its historicity and became a "timeless" entity; as timeless as the Bible itself,
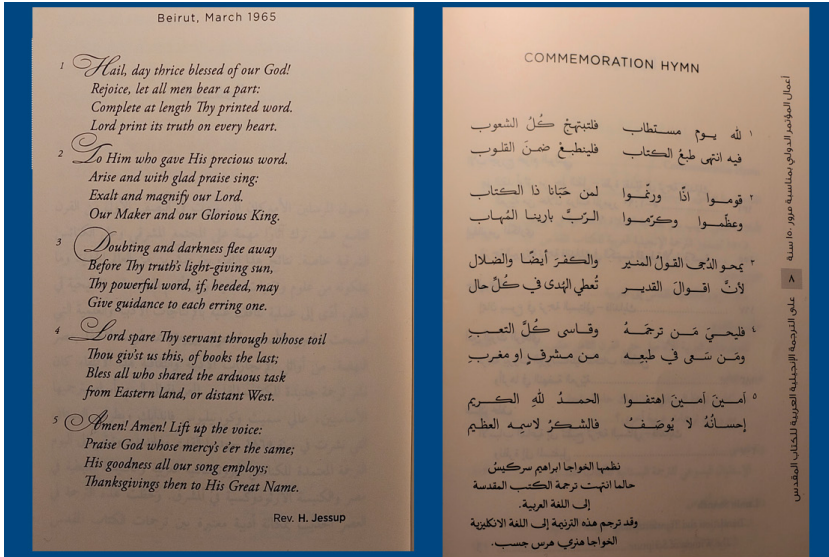
Figure 1. Ibrahim Sarkīs's Arabic hymn and its English translation by Jessup. Reproduced from Issa (2018)

according to many Arabic-speaking Christians. This status was foreshadowed in Sarkīs's hymn and its English version. In the second stanza of the Arabic hymn, Sarkīs invites celebrating worshippers to praise God who gifted us with *al-Kitāb*, suggesting, probably unknowingly, that there was no other Arabic translation of the Bible before BSV. Jessup, in stanza four of the English version, describes the translation as "of books the last." The history of the Arabic Bible, according to Sarkīs's hymn and its English translation, starts and ends with BSV. This was not only the perception embraced and promoted by the producers of the translation, but it also became one that continued to shape the imagination of Arabic-speaking Christians until the present day.

This perceived status of BSV results in a crippling paradox for modern day Arabic-speaking Christians, or at least for those who are in church leadership or in charge of setting policies of Bible translation into Arabic. While they feel the need for new translations that speak to different audiences, they continue to be caught up in an assumed authority of a Bible translation that was produced by nineteenth century translators for a nineteenth century audience under specific historical and socio-cultural contingencies. As a result, it is not unusual nowadays to see Bible societies in the Arab world initiating translation projects in Arabic dialects to reach out to a young, unchurched audience, while using BSV as their base text.[2] This curious paradox raises a few questions at the interface of both retranslation, authority and canonicity,

including the socio-cultural conditions that dictate the need for a new translation of a sacred text, the historical tension between the new translation and both its predecessors and the ones which are produced after it and the social and institutional processes which invest the new translation with authority or marginalise it. Answering these questions with regards to BSV is only possible through constructing a social history of the Arabic Bible that posits it in the field of activity that formed around the production and dissemination of Arabic translations of the Bible. The genesis of this field could be traced back to the sixteenth century, i.e., the early print period, although it evolved and expanded remarkably in the nineteenth century due to the rise of different agents with vested interests in the translation of the Bible into Arabic, both institutional and individual, native Arabs and foreign missionaries.

Retranslation, authority, and canonicity: a sociological perspective

Retranslation is usually thought of as a response to past translations which are deemed ageing either because they fell short of capturing a linguistic essence in the source text or fell short of communicating that essence to a new audience. To make up for the infirmities of the "expired" translations, the new version seeks to improve the textual quality of the translation in order to either draw nearer to the source text or push the source text closer to a perceived audience. This understanding of retranslation is premised on a linear and reductionistic view of the translation process, whereby the translation product is seen as the response to a textual stimulus (be it the source text itself or another assumed "faulty" translation). This same understanding is also driven by a teleological view of the history of (re)translation, which is reduced to a mere movement toward a "textual telos" that surpasses in its quality what has already been there.

Limiting the discussion of retranslation to linguistics and textuality comes with two risks: first, losing sight of the historical processes that shape (re)translations, canonize, or marginalize them; second, losing sight of the individual and institutional agency that motivate retranslations and condition their trajectories in the translation field of the target language.

Perhaps one way to avoid the risks associated with the notion of "linguistic ageing" is to think of (re)translation in terms of "social ageing." I borrow the idea from Pierre Bourdieu's sociology in which he views any given cultural product as embedded in a field of social and power relations. This field has its own boundaries, normative (or doxic) practices, power structure and

legitimate forms of capital over which the agents in the field compete. This capital could be financial or symbolic. Symbolic capital takes the form of cultural prestige, usually expressed through different canonization strategies. According to Bourdieu, producers of culture (in our case translators and publishers of translation) also fight over time, which is seen here as one form of symbolic capital. They fight over the position they and their products would occupy in the history of the field. The following quote from Bourdieu might explain the competition over time and its implications for the notion of "social ageing," which is relevant to understanding the history of the Arabic translations of the Bible:

> The ageing of authors, works or schools is something quite different from a mechanical sliding into the past. It is engendered in the fight between those who have already left their mark and are trying to endure, and those who cannot make their own marks in their turn without consigning to the past those who have an interest in stopping time, in eternalizing the present state; between the dominants whose strategy is tied to continuity, identity and reproduction, and the dominated, the new entrants, whose interest is in discontinuity, rupture, difference and revolution. (Bourdieu 1996, 157)

In view of this understanding, ageing is no longer a tag to be automatically pinned to a given translation of the Bible after some time from the publication date of its first edition. Ageing becomes, instead, a function of the competition over cultural memory among the producers of translation (translators, publishers and patrons). The struggle here is over which translation or translator becomes part of history or even is elevated above history (i.e., labelled as a 'classic'), on the one hand, and which translator/ translation is thrown out of history. The means to win this battle over time is for producers of translation to distinguish their products from those of others, using what Bourdieu calls 'marks of distinction':

> In this struggle for life, for survival, one can understand the role given to *marks of distinction* which, in the best of cases, aim to pinpoint the most superficial and visible of the properties attached to a set of works or producers. Words, names of schools or groups, proper names – they only have such importance because they make things into something: distinctive signs, they produce existence in a universe where to exist is to be different, 'to make oneself a name,' a proper name or a name in common (that of a group). (Bourdieu 1996, 157; emphasis in original)

Figure 2. The front cover of Cranmer's Bible (1539)

There are cases in the history of Bible translation (including translation into Arabic) where the producers of a given translation strive to accumulate various 'marks of distinction' in their work, using the text of the translation and its different paratexts to flag them for both peer producers and target consumers of the translation. This is meant to foreground the distinctive qualities of the translation, and hence its entitlement to an 'authoritative status' as well as its right to push other ageing translations out of history. These marks of distinction could be expressed in crude forms of 'authorization' by a political or religious body. A good example is the front cover of Cranmer's Bible, published in 1539 (see Figure 2). On this cover, as described by Rogerson (2002, 21), we see the title "The Byble in Englyshe" and above it, King Henry VIII, "enthroned, and simultaneously handing copies of the Bible to the chief representatives of spiritual and secular power in the land: Archbishop Cranmer and Thomas Cromwell," who, in turn, "distribute the Bible to the clergy and to the laity, all of whom were uttering their gratitude with the words 'vivat rex'." In addition to being authorized by King Henry VIII, the various names attached to it served as strategies of distinction: it was known as Cromwell's Bible (because Cromwell directed its publication) and the Great Bible because of its large size.

The *authority* of a Bible translation, however, is not always the outcome of a visible *authorization* by an individual or an institution. In some cases, it builds up over time through the accumulation of historical processes until the point when the translation is seen at an equal par with the source text. The targum may provide a good example here in illustrating the authority of a translation of a sacred text that stands, according to some, on an equal footing with the Hebrew Bible. Medieval Jewish Rabbi David Kimhi (1160–1235), for instance, was known to have deemed the targum worthy of that status. Rabbi Kimhi's appreciation of the targumim is described in these terms by one scholar:

> He cites them copiously, comments upon them and discusses textual variants in them *as if they were the biblical text itself*; explains their language and methodology; paraphrases them in Hebrew; and expresses great astonishment when the Targumim come up with something he cannot agree with. (Talmag 1975, 62, cited in Rogerson 2002, 17–18; emphasis added)

The fact that the text of the targum is placed alongside the text of the Hebrew Bible paratextually demonstrates the status which the targum acquired over time. However, the conclusions drawn from this might be contradictory. This

Figure 3. Text-critical footnotes on the ending of the gospel of Mark in BSV edition of 1877

visual representation of the relation between the targum and the Hebrew Bible might suggest some kind of authority for the targum. Alternatively, it also asserts the derivative nature of the targum which draws its authority from the Hebrew Bible.

The visual presence of the source in print editions of the translation might come across with different messages for the reader. In the 1877 edition of BSV, for instance, multiple text-critical footnotes drew the reader's attention to facts related to the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, their historical transmission as well as the socio-cultural conditions which shaped them. This edition even used either bracket around segments of the text which are not thought by scholars to be in the earliest manuscripts or highlighted them explicitly in the footnotes (See Figure 3 for the footnote on the ending of the Gospel of Mark).

The use of these text-critical footnotes gradually gave way in later editions of BSV, until they were completely removed since the early 1990s. It seems a BSV edition without text-critical footnotes that drew the readers' attention to the source text was what gave it an edge over the rival Arabic Jesuit translation whose first edition was published a few years after BSV was published. One key reason that made BSV get accepted in the Syriac Orthodox Church of Antioch, according to Roger Akhras (*Rūjīh Akhras*), was

> [...] keeping the text in the Protestant version free from comments, unlike the revised Jesuit edition which used introductions and footnotes drawn from modern text-critical studies. This confused the modern Arab reader who is not used to such critical comments as 'verse difficult to understand,' 'uncertain text,' 'corrupted text,' 'word not clear in Hebrew,' etc. (Akhras 2018, 125–126, my translation)

Similar views are embraced by the leadership of the Coptic Orthodox Church. Bishop Epiphanius al-Makari cites the late Pope Shenouda III when he criticized the Arabic Jesuit translation because of using footnotes: "We do not want to write our own words under God's word in the Holy Bible. The words of the Holy Bible are sufficient for us. Adding footnotes is like mixing God's word with our own opinion and this is not acceptable by us" (al-Makari 2018, 164, my translation).

Text-critical footnotes, it seems, break that illusion, echoed in Sarkīs's hymn, that BSV is the unmediated word of God. They make the agency of the translators (and other producers of the translation) visible and hence strip the translation of its assumed 'divine' authority.

In order to understand the social and institutional processes that made BSV stand immune to 'social ageing,' it is crucial to trace the genesis of the field (in the Bourdieusian sense) of activity around Bible translation in Arabic-speaking Christianity.

The field of the Arabic Bible in the early print period

From manuscript to print culture: the genesis of the field of the Arabic Bible

Bible translation into Arabic has been an ongoing activity since at least the ninth century CE. The outcome of these activities were mostly handwritten manuscripts that were circulated within the closed circles of monasteries, parishes or within wealthy families. These translation activities, however, do not lend themselves easily to sociological analysis. It is not viable, either methodologically or theoretically, to view these activities as a 'field,' in the Bourdieusian sense. Two constitutive features of a field are *relationality* and *visibility*. Any field of cultural production (including Bible translation) functions because of the working relations (collaborative or conflictual) between the agents active in it; and these relations are only viable when the field boundaries, power structure, the different active agents are reasonably visible. In manuscript culture this was hardly the case. With the small number of manuscripts produced and their limited circulation, relationality and visibility were generally missing. One striking example of this controlled and limited production is the Vatican Coptic 9 manuscript, dated 1205, which includes the four gospels in both Coptic and Arabic. From the first written leaf of the manuscript, we know that it was donated to the monastery of St Antonius in Egypt and was not to be taken out of the monastery at the request of the donor. Moreover, the patriarch at the time seems to have written a word of warning to the monks, asking them to avoid taking the manuscript outside the chapel of the monastery, unless necessary. The manuscript, as per the admonition of the patriarch, was to be used and read only on Sunday masses, evening and morning prayers and on feasts.

Although the large-scale production and wider dissemination introduced by the printing press from the mid-fifteenth century brought about different modes of producing and consuming translated Scripture which were significantly different from those associated with the manuscript culture, the manuscript tradition of the Arabic Bible passed on to the print tradition two strategies of affirming the authority of Bible translation. One is the use of a 'sacred language' side by side with the Arabic translation. Vatican Copt 9, for example, was in both Coptic and Arabic. The languages considered 'sacred' and endowed with a large amount of symbolic capital included, in addition to Coptic, Hebrew, Greek, Syriac and Latin. A considerable number of the Arabic translations of the Bible produced within the manuscript tradition and the early print period included one of these languages.

The second strategy of asserting authority was affirming an impression that what is in the manuscript was the 'unmediated' word of God and that the agency of the translators was absent or minimal. One way of doing that in the manuscript tradition was using illustrations at the beginning of each book of the Bible showing the writer of the book receiving it from Christ himself or through an angel. One of the earliest Arabic translations to be circulated in print form was "The Four Gospels" in one volume which was first published in 1590 to be followed by a second edition in 1591 in both Arabic and Latin. This edition, which was published in Rome based on an earlier Arabic translation, is one evidence of the key role played by the Catholic church in translating the Bible for Arabic-speaking Christians. Underneath the Arabic verses, the Latin Vulgate was used in one of the early examples of interlinear editions. The use of the Vulgate as an authority-carrying badge established a normative practice that continued to be followed in different ways by editions of translations produced by the Catholic church. In a few cases from the manuscript and the print cultures the Arabic translations are written in the script of one of these 'sacred languages,' as in Judaeo-Arabic[3] and Garshuni (i.e., Arabic in Syriac script). An example of the first is the translation of books of the Tanakh by the Jewish rabbi Saadia Gaon (882–942) for Arabic-speaking Jews in the tenth century Iraq; and an example of the second is the translation of the psalms by the bishop of Damascus, Sarkīs al-Rizzī (ca. 1572–1638) for the fifteenth century Arabic-speaking Syriac Christians.

Diversification of the field of Arabic translations of the Bible: Protestant translations and the struggle over authority in the nineteenth century Levant

During the period from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries the Catholic church had been the key, if not the only, producer and patron of Bible translation for Arabic-speaking Christians, especially in the Levant.[4] During this period there was no major translation of the whole Bible in Arabic made by a Protestant translator or supported by a Protestant institution. Perhaps, the only exceptions were the Arabic translation of the New Testament published in 1616 by the Calvinist theologian Thomas Erpenius (1584–1624) and the 1727 Arabic translation of the New Testament and the Psalms, produced by Solomon Negri (bap. 1665, d. 1727) and published by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK). Until the mid-nineteenth century, the Catholic church monopolized most Arabic translations of the Bible which included lectionaries, versions of the four gospels and the psalms,

in addition to the *Biblia Sacra Arabica* which was a translation of the whole Bible published in Rome in 1671 "under the patronage of the *Congregatia de Propaganda Fide*, the organization within the Vatican responsible for evangelizing among the Eastern Rite churches to bring them back under the fold of Rome" (Grafton 2015, 48). This Catholic monopoly of the production and dissemination of the Arabic Bible was gradually challenged when British and American missionaries launched their activities in the East Mediterranean in the early nineteenth century. It all started when the British Church Mission Society (CMS) chose Malta as the location of its Mediterranean Mission in 1815, which established an Arabic printing press in 1825. In collaboration with the Religious Tract Society and the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Mediterranean Mission Press printed Christian Scriptures in the liturgical languages of the Eastern churches, mainly in Arabic (Cragg 2000, 122–123). In addition to Christian Scriptures and literature, the Mediterranean Mission Press printed secular and educational texts for use by students in many of the schools and colleges which gradually increased in the Middle East and partly instigated what later came to be known as the Arab *Nahda*, i.e., renaissance. Some of these schools were established by the American missionaries in Syria and relied on the print material that came from Malta. As reported by Roper (2004, 111), "figures from the missionary archives and records indicate that a total of over 150,000 Arabic and Turkish books and 8,600 newspapers from Malta arrived in the Middle east and North Africa between 1825 and the mid-1840s." Egypt and Syria were the main destinations of these publications which met the needs of the educational institutions established by these missionaries (ibid).

Although the American Board of Commissioners for the Foreign Missions (ABCFM) founded an American mission in Beirut in the 1818, the American missionaries had not started their Arabic printing activities before 1833 when they set up their own printing press. Before that they commissioned the press of the British Church Mission Society in Malta to provide them with the needed print literature.[5] Since the 1840s and through the second half of the nineteenth century the American Mission Press in Beirut produced scores of Arabic books with new typefaces. Due to its success and popularity, the name 'American Arabic' was given to these typefaces (Roper 1999, 50). The large Arabic printed output was seen by some historians as effecting a conversion of "Near Easterners to America's bookish culture" and playing an important role in "bringing the Gutenberg epoch to the Ottoman Empire" (ibid). The printing of the first edition of the whole Bible in Arabic in 1865 marked the culmination of this significant change that the American missionaries brought to the Levant.

The diversification of the producers of Bible translation in the nineteenth century Levant, as a result of the printing of BSV, not only broke the monopoly of the Catholic church over Bible translation, but also changed the dynamics of translating, disseminating and reading the Bible. As Rana Issa (2023, 11) rightly observes, the BSV proved to be "a rupture with repetitive practices of translating Bibles, and challenged how these Bibles were consequently read, against a millennium-long canon of Biblia Arabica." The first implication of the diversification of the field of the Arabic Bible is that it called into question the assumption that religious translation is a disinterested enterprise. Not unlike other cultural products, Bible translation was unveiled as a site for competition involving different agents motivated by conflicting interests, using their own tools of production and deploying the 'marks of distinction" of their products in order to claim authority in the field. The BSV emerged as a response to earlier translations, most of them initiated by the Catholic church, and did itself trigger another major Catholic translation by the Jesuits whose first edition was published in 1876 in response to BSV. These conflictual dynamics, associated by the mass printing of Bible translations by competing agents, made Bible translation into "an exchange commodity, sold to anonymous buyers" (Issa 2023, 11). This was different from the 'gift economy' under the Catholic church whereby the translated Bible was granted as a gift from the patriarch or bishops to local parishes and congregations (ibid). The entrance of the protestant missionaries into the field of Bible translation in the nineteenth century Levant did not only change the constitutive principles of producing translation, but also reshaped the modes of its consumption. The Bible was no longer restricted to communal reception through church liturgies. As the relationship with God was privatized, according to the Protestant world-view, the relationship with the Bible became personalized and its reception became as equally individual as communal.

Negotiating authority and reshaping the boundaries of the field

Mapping the field and identifying a niche

When Eli Smith, and Van Dyck at a later stage, embarked on the new project of the protestant translation, they were aware of the structure of the field they aimed to be part of, i.e., the key Arabic translations of the Bible, both in print and manuscript forms, the major agents and the positions they occupied in that field. As newcomers to the field, they needed to find a

niche for their new product, a gap that was left unplugged by the available translations. They sought to make this niche visible, not only for their perceived readership, but also for their patrons in Boston, i.e., ABCFM. In order to establish a legitimacy for their new translation venture, they sought to reshape the boundaries of the field by claiming an *authority* for the new product and *de-authorizing* existing translations.

A glimpse of the scene of the Arabic Bible, as seen by the translation team and the members of the American Mission in Syria could be seen in a few select reports and correspondence penned by Smith and Van Dyck and published after their death by the American Mission under the title of *Brief Documentary History of the Translation of the Scriptures into the Arabic Language* (1900). This evaluation of the scene is also echoed in Jessup's history of the mission (1910). It seems the headquarters of the ABCFM in Boston were so keen to have a mapping of the field of the Arabic Bible and how the new protestant translation would position itself vis-à-vis existing translations. Keeping a record of this mapping was deemed necessary, not only to justify the funding of the proposed translation, but also to maintain its claimed, enduring authority, even after its publication. Two reports were written by members of the translation team, one by Eli Smith, dated 16th March 1844 entitled 'on the existing Arabic Versions of the Scriptures' and the other by Van Dyck, dated 7th March 1885 entitled 'Dr Van Dyck's History of the Arabic Translation of the Scriptures'. The latter report was in response to a request from Dr James Dennis, then a member and librarian of the American Mission, who encouraged Van Dyck to "prepare a full and careful sketch of this great work, giving all the facts which will be of interest and value in connection with it" (Smith and Van Dyck 1900, 19). In addition to its being a historical resource for future biblical students, Dennis contends, this record would serve another function:

> It seems to me also important as a resource *in the future defense and advocacy of the translation, in case it should be attacked, and some ambitious or inimical parties should wish to supplant it*. One other translation has already been made by the Jesuits, and we may have at some future time to meet a serious proposal on the part of others to do the same thing, which could be, in part, prevented by statements showing the thorough work done in the present translation. It seems also unscholarly and neglectful that a work of such great literary and religious moment should be put forth by our Mission with no historical statement in the shape of a prolegomenon to the version. (Smith and Van Dyck 1900, 15; emphasis added)

The American mission, including the key translators of BSV, were aware of the conflictual dynamics of the field which had been set off because of the new modes of translation production and reception they brought into it. This made it pre-requisite for them to consolidate the position of the new translation against 'inimical parties' who might consider displacing it. Referring to the Arabic Jesuit translation which had already been published a few years earlier in response to BSV is not coincidental. The role of the missionary historiography penned by members of the mission was partly to affirm the status of BSV, both against earlier translations which it supplanted and the Arabic Jesuit translation which sought to reclaim Catholic authority over Bible translation which was lost to the Protestants after the publication of BSV. The American mission's obsession with recording the history of the BSV in a way that canonizes it and de-authorize competing translations might explain Dennis's criticism of the lack of such documentation as 'unscholarly' and 'neglectful.' At the centre of this historical record that Dennis encouraged Van Dyck to create, especially after the death of Eli Smith,[6] was "a notice of previous Arabic versions and their excellencies or imperfections that we may intelligently appreciate the necessity for the new one, and see its value in contrast" (ibid). In his response to Dennis's request, Van Dyck identifies a few of the Arabic translations known to him and the team, including Saadia Gaon's translation of the books of the Tanakh, as included in one of the available Polyglots, the Four Gospels in Arabic (1590), the London and Paris Polyglots published in the seventeenth century, Thomas Erpenius edition of the New Testament (1616), Biblia Sacra Arabic (1671), which is the only translation of the whole Bible, and Solomon Negri's edition of the New Testament (1727). For most of these translations, Van Dyck's evaluation tends to be more generalizing without providing illustrative examples to prove whatever limitations he identified about the translation in question. This fragmentary evaluation was, of course, meant to appeal to an audience who were not necessarily experts in Biblical languages or translation and it was not totally different in style from an earlier report penned by Eli Smith in 1844 where he concluded that "the character of all the existing versions to which we have access indeed, is such, that we have no doubt that a new translation is exceedingly desirable" (Smith and Van Dyck 1900, 3). What is interesting about Smith's and Van Dyck's evaluative representations of existing Arabic translations of the Bible is the strategies they use to de-authorize them in order to carve a niche for their translation and then claim authority for it.

Blurring and muting translations: Saadia Gaon and Ahmad Faris al-Shidyāq

Two strategies, among others, were used in the historical accounts given by Van Dyck, and earlier by Smith, in de-authorizing older translations: blurring the quality of a translation or, otherwise, muting it completely in the sense of removing it from cultural memory. Two striking examples are the translations of the Pentateuch by Saadia Gaon (882/892 – 942) and the co-authored translation of the whole Bible by Samuel Lee (1783 – 1852) and Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq (1804–1887). Saadia was an Egyptian-born rabbi who moved to Iraq later in his life where he produced translations of the books of the Tanakh in Judaeo-Arabic. In producing these translations, described by the translator as *tafsīr* (i.e., interpretation), Saadia pioneered a translation method that prioritizes the reader to the source text and seeks to contextualize the source text in the thought-world of the reader, aligning its codes to the socio-cultural codes of the receiving audience. Saadia's tafsir had such a wide ranging impact on Arabic-speaking Jews that "it was frequently copied, in whole or in part, for a considerable period of time" and continues to be published in numerous editions, especially the Pentateuch, with translations into other languages for world-wide Jewry (Greenspoon 2020, 73). It seems that publishers of Arabic Christian Bibles were well aware of this impact that they included Saadia's *tafsīr* in the London and Paris Polyglots which were in circulation in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Judging by the reports left for us, it is surprising to see that Van Dyck did not think highly of Saadia's work, only based on some advice from a friend. When he was about to make a copy for himself from Saadia's translation of the Psalms, he was discouraged by Dr Roediger and "from what little I saw of it," says Van Dyck, "I think he was right. The Jewish translations all aim at being so very literal, word for word, as to leave many passages unintelligible in a translation, which are at least somewhat intelligible in the original" (Smith and Van Dyck 1900, 17). Blurring the quality of Saadia's translation and misrepresenting it as 'so very literal' is hard to understand, given the prominent place it had always occupied "among the free versions" of the Hebrew Bible (Greenspoon 2020, 70). One likely reason for Van Dyck's lack of appreciation of Saadia's work is the latter's use of Islamic terminology in his contextualised translation. As we will see later, this was something that the translation team decided to avoid.

Sponsored and supported by the British Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), an Arabic translation of the Bible was published in 1857. This translation project was spearheaded by British orientalist

and Cambridge University professor of Hebrew, assisted by Aḥmad Fāris al-Shidyāq, a key figure in the Arab Renaissance, linguist, journalist and travel writer, among other things. It is intriguing to see that Van Dyck, his team and the American mission were silent on this translation, even though it was published a few years before the publication of the first edition of BSV in 1865 and was supported by a Protestant missionary organization. No reference to it is made in the list of Arabic translations that Smith and Van Dyck had access to and reported in their historical records. Two main reasons may account for muting this translation and removing it from cultural memory, not only by Van Dyck and his team but by most of the historical records produced by the American mission in Syria. First, al-Shidyāq converted to Islam in 1860, after he had already converted from Catholicism to Protestantism earlier in his life. Second, al-Shidyāq was very critical of Samuel Lee's translation skills and knowledge of Arabic language and culture and gave some detailed account of his working relationship with Lee when he stayed to work with him in England for some time. This account was recorded in al-Shidyāq's travelogue *Kashf al-Mukhabba' 'an Funūn Ūrūbā* (Revealing the Hidden Arts of Europe), which he published in 1866 and must have been in the public domain for the American mission to see at that time. This criticism of the British missionary could have been seen as undermining of the American missionaries and the working model they followed in their dealings with their Arab Christian colleagues. For al-Shidyāq, missionaries like Lee are indifferent to the nuances of meaning and style in Arabic and have no interest in the Arabic language in itself. For them, it is a tool for understanding Biblical and ancient languages, such as Hebrew and Syriac, "which they hold in greater esteem" (translated in Shamma and Salama-Carr 2022, 236). This lack of appreciation of the nuances of meaning and style drive Lee and other missionaries to be literalist in their approach to Biblical translation. Al-Shidyāq's account of his discussion with Lee about the translation of the Hebrew attention getter particle הִנֵּה , translated as 'behold' in most English translations, underlines Lee's word-for-word approach:

One argument arose because he endeavored to use the phrase *huwa dha* [هوذا] everywhere he found 'lo and behold' in the Hebrew original. Nothing could deter him from saying things like 'because lo and behold', 'while it is lo and behold,' and 'he was, lo and behold, a man'. He did not believe that 'there is' or 'there was' (*itha*) in sentences like 'I went out and there at the door was Zaid' did the work of 'lo and behold.' (translated in Shamma and Salama-Carr 2022, 236)

In trying to account for this literalist mindset, al-Shidyāq contends that Lee "lived in fear of being censured by his rivals, of whom there were many" (ibid, 237). The receptor audience becomes a second priority, as a result. This translation approach is similar in many cases to the *modus operandi* underlying the production of BSV; and this might be one reason the translators and the American mission found it in their interest to avoid listing it as one of the existing translations they consulted.

Pushing a dominant translation 'out of history': Biblia Sacra Arabica (1671)

One translation features prominently in two reports by Eli Smith in 1844 and 1854 and that is the Biblia Sacra Arabica (BSA), published in 1671and otherwise known as the Arabic Vulgate or Arabic Propaganda. Compared to other available translations mentioned in the reports of the American missionaries, BSA received the most attention. This is obviously due to the status this translation enjoyed as the institutionalized translation of the Catholic church which had been in circulation for two centuries in all of the churches of the Levant, including the catholic as well as Syriac orthodox churches. Before commenting on Smith's evaluation of BSA and the strategies he used to de-authorize it, let me locate this translation in its context.

From the Arabic title at the bottom of the front cover we know that this is a bilingual edition in both Arabic and Latin that was based on the Vulgate translation. We also know that it was printed in Rome and authorized by the Holy Council in charge of the Propagation of Christian Faith, for the benefit of Eastern Churches. The translation was printed in three volumes, two for the OT and one for the NT. From a sociological point of view, the introduction of the translation makes available a wealth of information that makes it possible for the sociologist (or the social historian in this case) to reconstruct the field of the Arabic Bible translation at that time. This information also helps us understand the tension created in this field through the rise of other competing translations done by Protestant missionaries in the nineteenth century, including BSV.

Although the translation project, which started in 1625, was supported in-stitutionally and logistically by the Catholic church, the driving force behind the project and the man who initiated it was Sarkīs al-Rizzī (c.1572–1638), a native Arab who was the Maronite bishop of Damascus at the time when the project was launched. This modus operandi would change later with translation projects by protestant missionaries who would always initiate

and lead the project, as we see in the case of Lee – al-Shidyāq and Smith/Van Dyck-Bustānī. Al-Rizzī was assisted by a team of theologians and linguists, both Syrian and Italian.

The fact that al-Rizzī, together with his fellow translators, was keen to make the Biblical text accessible to different audiences[7] with different linguistic needs in his community reveals his own understanding of Bible translation, whereby he seems to have given more priority to the audience, compared to the more literal approach developed by protestant missionaries later in the nineteenth century. This tendency to give priority to the audience is evident right from the introduction to the translation where the language used is not particularly 'ecclesiastical', but more of literary Arabic and even shows influence from Islamic discourse. Here are a few examples of the lexicon used in the introduction:

English gloss	Arabic word/expression
May Allah be blessed (*tabāraka aḷḷāh*)	تبارك الله
Praise be to Allah/Allah the most exalted (*aḷḷāh subḥanuhu/aḷḷāh taʿālā*)	الله سبحانه/الله تعالى
The Creator of Earth and Heaven (*fātir al-arḍ wa al-samā'*)	فاطر الأرض والسماء
Allah sent down His Precious Book (*anzala aḷḷāh kitābahu al-karīm*)	أنزل الله كتابه الكريم
Books (*maṣāḥif*)	مصاحف

This clear focus on the audience is even evident in the way Biblical inspiration and the translation of the Bible into different languages are explained to the reader:

> These words sent down by Allah Almighty were first written by the prophets and messengers in their languages, each in the language of his own country or people. *Then the words of Allah were translated into different languages, so that all nations would know what Allah had revealed for the salvation of them all.* While the accepted copies contain word differences, such as local variants or multiple meanings in the original, in truth these words still have the same interpretation, and carry no contradiction to the truth. This is especially the case

in this well-known version, commonly used by the One Holy Roman
Apostolic Church, which agrees with the original text – that is to say
the Greek and Hebrew. (translated in Shamma and Salama-Carr 2022,
192; emphasis added)

The translation team behind BSA do not only seek to approximate their
language (in both the introduction and the translation) to that used by the
majority of their audience, they also do not shy away from underlining
text-critical issues in the source text, which were mostly veiled by protestant
translators later.

When evaluating the translation, it is striking to note that Smith does not
get the date of its publication right. While this project commenced in 1625
and was finally published in 1671, Smith puts it back by a hundred years
claiming that it commenced in 1525 and got published in 1571 (Smith and
Van Dyck 1900, 1). While it is difficult to ascertain the cause of this factual
error, it is hard to believe that the translation team, with the whole mission
workforce behind them, could not get a basic information right about the
most important translation of the Bible at that time. One likely explanation
is that at this early stage of the BSV project and when Smith was trying to
convince the ABCFM of the fallibility of the BSA in this early report, he was
keen to frame it as an old translation whose language must have gone out of
currency and is no longer fit for purpose. This is particularly obvious when
Smith provide details of specific parts of the translation where meaning
is either ambiguous or totally lost. For example, he finds the meaning in
the Epistles "often not clear, and the argument of continuous passages
is not unfrequently lost." As for the poetic and prophetic portions of the
Old Testament, "much is either without force, in bad taste, or absolutely
unintelligible" (ibid). Overall, Smith finds the language of the translation
structurally awkward, with inconvenient choice of words and broken
grammar. He concludes by saying that this translation is 'out of date' and
is not serving the evangelizing purpose of the mission:

We have been ashamed to put the sacred books of our religion, in
such a dress, into the hands of a respectable Muhammedan or Druze,
and felt it our duty to accompany them with an apology; and some
of us never think of reading a chapter in public without previously
revising it. We have a growing conviction that we cannot expect a
strong thirst for the Scriptures to be created in the public mind, nor
that much effect will be produced by them, until we present them in
a purer form. (Smith and Van Dyck 1900, 1–2)

These different strategies are deployed by Smith and Van Dyck to convince both their funders, the Arab Christian translators working with them, and ultimately their audience that the existing translations in the field had then expired and were without any authority. For them, BSV was a good candidate to fill the gap and meet the need.

Concluding remarks

The authority BSV had accumulated over the years is the construct of social, ideological, and cultural processes that made it possible for this translation to claim authority. The construction of this authority was also effected by the work of individuals and institutions with particular theologies of language and translation. Reconstructing this social space within which BSV emerged and the relational dynamics between translators, funders, church leadership and audience is fundamental for understanding this constructed authority. Also, the challenges levelled against the BSV by later translations, including the Arabic Jesuit translation (1876), should enhance our understanding of the narratives and strategies used by competing institutions to get their translations authorized and deplete others of authority.

Notes

1. Grafton (2015) outlines the diverse nomenclatures given to the translation and the implications of each for the perceived agency of those who collaborated in producing it. In this study, I refer to the translation as the Bustānī-Smith-Van Dyck (henceforth, BSV), a nomenclature first used by Kenneth Bailey (Bailey 1982, 22) and later adopted by a number of scholars.

2. In such cases where Bible societies work from a translation, a Bible translation consultant from United Bible Societies with knowledge of Biblical languages checks the product against the Biblical and Greek texts for quality assurance purposes.

3. Judaeo-Arabic is an ethnolect of the Arabic language as spoken by Jews, with substantial Hebrew and Aramaic influence. It is usually written in Hebrew script, but not necessarily so.

4. The Coptic Orthodox church in Egypt supported a few partial translations of the Bible, to be used as lectionaries.

5. For details of the history of the Arabic printing by the ABCFM in Beirut, see (Roper 1999).

6. According to Dennis, Eli Smith had already provided a record of the existing Arabic translations which he was aware of when translating the Pentateuch and his evaluation of them (Smith and Van Dyck 1900, 20).

7. In his career, he also produced a translation of the Psalms in Garshuni (Arabic in Syriac script) for Arabic-speaking Syriac Christians in 1610.

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Part 2

HISTORICAL APPROACHES TO RETRANSLATING THE QUR'AN

The hybridity of a Hebrew retranslation of the Qur'an from Dutch by a Jewish convert

Naima Afif[1]

Abstract

This chapter explores a double indirect Hebrew translation of the Qur'an from the eighteenth century produced in the Dutch Indies by a Jewish convert to Christianity with a particular focus on how the translator's conversion and identity influenced his translation approach. After briefly introducing the Hebrew retranslation and its context, the paper analyzes its paratext and selected passages about Jesus in the Qur'an. The analysis reveals that, although the translator sometimes preserved the Muslim interpretations of his model, he often adopted a hybrid translation strategy, combining elements of Judaization and Christianization. Based on this, the paper suggests that the retranslation aimed to connect the Jewish readers with a familiar background when reading a foreign religious text, likely with the intention of conveying Christian doctrines.

Keywords: Qur'an, Hebrew, Jewish, Conversion, Retranslation, Hybridity, Dutch Indies, van Dort, Du Ryer, Glazemaker

Introduction

The translation history of the Qur'an in European vernaculars during the pre-modern period was marked by many retranslations for several centuries (Loop 2018, 1–20, see also Burman 2014, 25–34). Although Jews had some interest in the Qur'an, there is no evidence that they produced any translation before the early modern period.[2] In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, Jews in Europe became more engaged with the Qur'an and translated it into Hebrew and Spanish (Lazarus-Yafeh 1998/99; Basal 2011a, 2011b and 2012; Den Boer and Tommasino 2014). But not from Arabic. These translations are Jewish retranslations based on Christian retranslations of the Qur'an in European vernaculars, either because the translators did not know Arabic or did not have access to it. By retranslation, here, we refer thus to an indirect

translation in which a text is translated from a mediating language different from the original language (Shuttleworth and Cowie, 1997, 76–77). Among this intermediary way of transmission, the Qur'an was translated from Arabic into French by André du Ryer in 1647 (Hamilton and Richard 2004). From French, it made its way into Dutch with the retranslation by Jan Hendrik Glazemaker one decade later (Glazemaker 1657). From Dutch, the Qur'an was then retranslated again into Hebrew around 1750 by a Jewish convert settled on the Malabar Coast, crossing linguistic, confessional and even geographical boundaries. So far, this Hebrew retranslation has been analyzed by focusing on its transfer between different languages through the lens of well-defined faith communities (Basal 2012, 69–93). However, this approach does not provide an accurate vision of the complexity that governs the retranslation process of this Hebrew retranslation of the Qur'an which provides a very interesting case of cultural hybridity where the source-text includes several elements of both sources and target cultures.[3] The phenomenon is not easy to analyze as involving multiple strata of hybridity. The Qur'an itself contains Christian and Jewish materials as Islam, Judaism and Christianity are related by origin. Then, the Christian translators into French and Dutch included some of their Christian views on the Qur'an. Finally, the Qur'an was retranslated into Hebrew with readings of a Jew who converted to Christianity. Below, this submission will consider the hybridity of the Hebrew retranslation through the prism of the plural cultural background of the translator, who not only operated at the crossroads of religions but also at the intersection of multiple territories and activities. This will offer, following recent methodological approaches, a new understanding on the process of retranslation in relation to the translator as a mediator occupying a strategic position within a wide network (Roig-Sanz and Meylaerts 2018). The Hebrew retranslation will be introduced by presenting its source, author and aim. Culling examples from the Qur'anic text as well as its paratext, we shall then illustrate that the retranslation of the Qur'an into Hebrew combines a number of original Jewish and Christian readings reflecting the translator's acquaintance with the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament. We shall conclude with a discussion of the implication of the hybridity in this Hebrew retranslation of the Qur'an for further research.

The Hebrew retranslation and its translator

The Hebrew retranslation of the Qur'an under discussion is preserved in a single copy, the MS Washington Library of Congress Heb. 183.[4] According to Weinstein (1971/72), the manuscript dates from the eighteenth century

and was copied in Cochin (today known as Kochi in the State of Kerala), an important commercial port and cosmopolitan hub on the Indian Ocean, which was under Dutch rule from 1663 to 1795. The Hebrew translation is based on the Dutch by Glazemaker (1657) and ascribed to Leopold Immanuel Jacob van Dort (1710–1761), a Dutch converted Jew to Christianity. The different stages of van Dort's life reflect a mitigated position towards his Jewish origin and his new Christian faith.[5] Native of the Dutch province of Gulich, van Dort studied Eastern languages in Germany. He converted to Catholicism before turning to Protestantism and was actively involved in missionary activities. Between 1750 and 1752, he authored various works in German defending the messianism of Jesus and the Christian faith against Judaism. While in Germany, van Dort also had some connections with Frankism (Hillel 2018, 145–152)[6] and Jews from Poland (or Ukraine) who were disposed to embrace Christianity.[7] In 1754, he was hired by the Dutch East India Company to work as a teacher of Hebrew at the Seminary of Colombo and reached Ceylon in 1755. The seminary was invested in the training of catechists, interpreters and ministers along with the propagation of the Dutch Reformed Church. Two years later, van Dort was a bookkeeper at the main office of the governor of Ceylon in Cochin, where local Jews played a major role in the trade of pepper. During this period, van Dort was in contact with the local Jewish community and translated various works into Hebrew, mainly those dealing with the history of religions: the Qur'an, the New Testament and a work on Hindu belief and practice (Hillel 2018, 44–50). These translations were commissioned by Ezechiel Rahabi, a chief merchant and diplomat in Cochin who worked for the Dutch East India Company nearly for 50 years (Weinstein 2002). Previous studies concluded that van Dort was motivated either by polemical purposes or by a pure intellectual interest on Islam (Weinstein 1971/72, 40; Basal 2011b, 98–99). Cochin, with its important religious and cultural diversity, was notable for its exceptionally tolerant atmosphere which persists to this day (Nandy 2000). These circumstances certainly set up an ideal breeding ground for fostering religious encounters and scriptural translations. However, van Dort's retranslation of the Qur'an, produced at the request of an influential merchant, was probably motivated by more pragmatic goals and aimed to provide Jewish readers with information about Islam for their business and legal interactions with the Muslim world. Through his commercial and diplomatic activities, Rahabi was in contact with travelers from various religious and ethnic groups. One can assume that he had no access to their religious sources, including the Qur'an in original Arabic. He therefore requested translations into Hebrew, a language widely known among the Jews of Cochin as the language of instruction.

In 1758, van Dort worked again as a preceptor in Hebrew at the Seminary of Colombo until 1760 when the teaching program was reformed and his position abolished. He died one year later in Colombo.

This brief biographical information shows that van Dort did not depart from the Jewish community, although he was active inside the Dutch Reformed Church. In a seminal study, Hillel considered that van Dort fictitiously converted to Christianity for his career advancement (Hillel 2018, 153–162). He argues that while in Cochin, van Dort produced several anonymous Hebrew writings and translations of works directed against Christianity (Hillel 2018, 30–38 and 39–81). One of them is a Hebrew translation of Rabbi Saul Levi Morteira's *Questions of a Priest from Rouen* (1631) which questions the most important Christian dogmas (see Wilke 2019). This would mean that van Dort was involved in a double-discourse where his writings in German were in polar opposition with his alleged works in Hebrew. But the issue here is not to determine van Dort's faith or sincerity. What we would like to illustrate is how the translator identities are negotiated, articulated and reconstructed in a process of retranslation which is complicated by many factors. In other words: what happens when a baptized Jew familiar with Christianity translates the Qur'an into Hebrew from an indirect Christian translation?

The retranslation of a Jewish convert

Before answering this question, it is necessary to briefly give some background about the structure and features of the Hebrew retranslation (Weinstein 1971/72, 23–24). Glazemaker's Dutch retranslation, along with the Qur'an, contains several texts but most of them were omitted or reshaped in Hebrew.[8] The Hebrew manuscript opens with three distinct chapters: a short preamble on Islam coming from Du Ryer's French, an abridged biography of the Prophet Muhammad and a story of Muhammad's night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and his ascent to heaven.[9] Then comes the Qur'anic text itself which is divided into suras. Each sura is called *pārāšâ*, a term which designates the section of a biblical book in the Masoretic text. The foreword to the reader rendered from French into Dutch, which expresses negative views on Islam, is not preserved in the Hebrew manuscript, either because van Dort did not translate it, or because the manuscript is incomplete.

Regarding the language of the Hebrew retranslation, van Dort makes abundant use of Biblical and post-Biblical Hebrew together. This is a general characteristic of the Hebrew writings in Enlightened Dutch Jewish circles during the eighteenth century (Zwiep 2007). A salient feature is the use of

šibbûṣ, a literary technique dating from the Middle Ages that consists in insert-
ing biblical verses or fragments into a new composition (Pelli 2010, 135–160).
According to Basal, van Dort's inclination for this technique and for Biblical
Hebrew, held in high regard, denoted an attempt to magnify the prestige of the
Qur'anic Hebrew translation (Basal 2012, 82). Basal also noticed that van Dort
followed the Muslim interpretation found in Glazemaker via Du Ryer's French
and that the paratextual material was neutrally presented as in the French and
Dutch texts (Basal 2021).[10] Yet, the picture is more complicated. A closer analysis
shows that the Hebrew retranslation bears traces of the Jewish and Christian
backgrounds of the translator. This is reflected through three tendencies which
had until then gone unnoticed. First, van Dort uses the Hebrew Bible not only
for ideological reasons, but also as a hermeneutical tool. Second, he relies on
not only the Hebrew Bible but also the New Testament. Third, he conveys not
only Muslim interpretations but also Jewish and Christians views, following
a double Judaizing and Christianizing strategy. However, van Dort's Hebrew
retranslation of the Qur'an does not seem to represent a blend of beliefs or
a form of syncretism. As we shall see, it is more a combination of eclectic
interpretations from the different monotheist traditions.

Let us start with the Hebrew translation of Glazemaker's *Kort Begrip
van de Godsdienst der Turken* (*Brief Understanding of the Religion of the
Turks*). The text, translated for Du Ryer's French (*Sommaire de la Religion
des Turks*) gives an interesting insight into the perception of Islam by the
translators.[11] The title in Hebrew is מנהגי הישמעאלים (*The Customs of the
Ishmaelites*), with a Jewish common denomination to refer to Muslims and
Arabs. In some instances, van Dort preserves the Muslim interpretation
found in the Dutch translation and its French source. For example, when
dealing with the Islamic month of fasting, he renders the Arabic name by
a transliteration as in the mediating European vernacular languages:

Ils jeûnent le mois où la Lune qu'ils appellent Ramazan

Zy vasten de maant of maan, die zy Ramazan noemen

[They [= the Turks] fast the month or the moon, which they call
Ramazan]

המה מתענים בחודש הנקרא בלשונם רָאמָאצָאן

[They [= the Ishmaelites] fast during the month called Rāmāṣān in
their language]

In other instances, Du Ryer and later Glazemaker adapted Islamic concepts to
Christian terms (see Hamilton 2017). At times, van Dort adopts the Christian
perspective which stems in his source-text. This is visible in the description
of Islam as a monotheistic religion:

> Les Turcs croyent un ſeul Dieu en une seule perſonne, Createur du
> Ciel & de la Terre,

> De Turken geloven in een enig God, in een enig persoon, Schepper
> van hemel, en van aarde,

> [The Turks believe in one God, in one Person, Creator of heaven and earth]

> הישמעאלים מאמינים באל אחד בהויה אחד ובתואר אחד בור[א][12] ועושה שמים וארץ

> [The Ishmaelites believe in one God, in one Person and in one Attribute,
> Creator and Maker of heaven and earth]

In French and Dutch, we read that Muslims profess the existence of one
God who is one Person, a Christian reference to one person of the Trinity.
The same idea is reworked and amplified in Hebrew: God, who is described
as 'one person', becomes 'one person and one attribute' or 'form', probably
to underline his divine manifestation. The single word 'Creator' is then
rendered by the synonyms 'Creator and Maker' which echoes a part of
Psalm 124:8 (עושה שמים וארץ 'maker of heaven and earth').

A few lines later, Du Ryer and Glazemaker describe again Muslim beliefs
by using the Christian concept of salvation:

> Ils croyent que Mahomet eſt un tres-grand Prophete, que Dieu l'a
> envoyé au monde pour enſeigner aux hommes le chemin du ſalut & ſe
> nomment Muſulmans, c'eſt à dire, les reſignez en Dieu ou les ſauvez.

> Zy geloven dat Mahomet een zeer groot Profeet is, en dat God hem in
> de werrelt gezonden heeft, om aan de menschen de weg der zaligheit
> te leren. Zy noemen zich Muselmannen, dat is de genen, die zich aan
> Gods wil hebben overgegeven, of de Zaligen

> [They believe that Mahomet is a very great Prophet, and that God
> sent him into the world to teach men the way of salvation. They call

themselves Muselmannen, that is, those who abandon themselves to God's will, or the saved.]

ושמחמד היה נביא גדול הנשלח מהאל בעולם להראות לבני אדם דרך חיי עולם והמאמינים בו נקראים מוזלמננין פירוש אנשים שמסרו עצמם ברצון האל או בני חיי עולם.

[and [they believe] that Muhammad was a great prophet sent by God in the world to show to the mankind the way of eternal life, and those who believe in him are called Muselmanen, which means people who abandon themselves to the will of God or sons/children of eternal life.]

In the Hebrew retranslation, van Dort replaces 'the way of salvation' by 'the way of eternal life.' The translator then establishes a parallel with New Testament theology: just as attaining eternal life depends for Christians in believing in Jesus (cf. John 3:36 and 1 John 5:11–12), for Muslims it depends on believing in Muhammad. Next, the translator specifies the meaning of 'Muslim' by the same comparison and renders the term 'saved' by 'sons' or 'children of eternal life.' These changes demonstrate that van Dort was deeply familiar with Christian theology and that he provides readings from the New Testament which are not found in the Dutch translation of the Qur'an.

Such a tendency is, however, neither systematic nor exclusive. Along with these interventions, van Dort adopts an important Judaizing strategy. For instance, regarding the ritual of circumcision for Muslims, the notion of Christian sacrament is adapted to that of covenant in Judaism.

Ils n'ont point de Sacrement que la Circoncifion,
Zy hebben geen ander Sakrement, als de Besnijdenis.

[They have no other Sacrement, but the Circumcision.]

אין להם ברית אחרת כי אם המלה

[They have no covenant other than the circumcision]

It is important to note that van Dort also replaces Islamic concepts by Jewish ones which had not been replaced by Christian concepts in his source-text.

As an illustration, the following passage explains the rule dealing with women, divorce and remarriage:

mais les femmes ſont obligées d'attendre juſques à ce qu'on ſoit aſſuré qu'elles ne ſoient pas groſſes avant de ſe remarier

Maar de vrouwen zijn gehouden zo lang te wachten, tot dat men verzekert is dat zy niet zwanger zijn, eer zy weêrhuwen

[But women are obliged to wait until it is assured that they are not pregnant, before they marry again]

אבל הגרושה [..]ך להמתינה לברר בבירור גמור שאינה עומדת בעיבו[ר] [..]״כ מותרת לכל אדם[13]

[But the divorced woman [...] to wait to find out absolutely clearly that she is not pregnant [...] she is permitted to any man]

The text refers here to the Qur'anic rule stated in Q 2:232 according to which, after the death of her husband, a widow must observe a waiting period to ensure that she is not pregnant. In Hebrew, the translator makes a parallel with a similar Jewish law (Mishnah, Yevamot 4:10) and adopts the legal terminology of rabbinic sources. He uses the specific word *gərûšâ*, designating a divorced woman. He then renders the passage 'they marry again' by מותרת לכל אדם ("she is permitted to any man"), an expression which is taken from the Jerusalem Talmud in a section dealing with the authorisation for a divorced woman to remarry (Gittin 9:1).

These few examples show that, although van Dort follows some of the Muslim interpretations already found in his Dutch model, he adopts a number of Jewish and Christian readings. In the following, van Dort's hybrid approach of Judaization and Christianization will be illustrated by discussing the way of rendering two passages on Jesus' crucifixion.[14] The Arabic and French are given as a starting point. Only the Dutch and Hebrew are translated into English and compared in our discussion. The first example comes from Q 4:157–159 and is known for the difficulties of interpretation which it raises:[15]

وَقَوْلِهِمْ إِنَّا قَتَلْنَا الْمَسِيحَ عِيسَى ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ وَمَا صَلَبُوهُ وَلَكِن شُبِّهَ لَهُمْ وَإِنَّ الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّنْهُ مَا لَهُم بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا اتِّبَاعَ الظَّنِّ وَمَا قَتَلُوهُ يَقِينًا بَل رَّفَعَهُ اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَزِيزًا حَكِيمًا وَإِن مِّنْ أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا لَيُؤْمِنَنَّ بِهِ قَبْلَ مَوْتِهِ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

ils ont dit, Nous avons tué le Meſſie, Jeſus fils de Marie, Prophete &
Apoſtre de Dieu : Certainement ils ne l'ont.pas tué, ny crucifié, ils ont
crucifié un d'entr'eux qui luy reſembloit, ceux qui en doutent ſont en
une erreur manifeſte, & n'en parlent que par opinion; Certainement
ils ne ſont pas tué, au contraire, Dieu l'a élevé à ſoy, il eſt tout-Puiſſant
& Prudent en ce qu'il fait: Ceux qui ont cognoiſſance de l'eſcriture
doivent croire en Jeſus vant.ſa mort, il ſera, teſmoin contr'eux de leurs
actions au jour du Jugement

Wy hebben de Messias, Jesus, Marias zoon, Gods Profeet an Apostel,
gedoot. Zeker, zy hebben hem niet gedoot, noch gekruist; zy kruisten
een onder hen, die hem geleek: de genen, die 'er aan twyffelen, zijn
in een openbare doling, en spreken 'er alleenlijk af door waan, Ze-
ker, zy hebben hem niet gedoot: in tegendeel, God heeft hem tot zich
opgeheven; hy is almachtig en voorzichtig in't geen, dat hy doet. De
genen, die kennis van de Schrift hebben, moeten in Jesus voor zijn
dood geloven, hy zal in de dag des Oordeels getuig van hun werken
tegen hen zijn.

[We have killed the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, Prophet and Apostle
of God. Surely they did not kill him, nor crucify him; they crucified
one among them who looked like him: those who doubt that are in a
manifest perplexity and speak only by delusion, Surely they did not kill
him: on the contrary, God raised him up to Himself; He is almighty and
careful in what he does. Those who have knowledge of the Scriptures
must believe in Jesus before his death, he will be a witness of their
deeds against them on the day of judgment.]

אומרים הרגנו ורצחנו את המשיח ישו בן מרים נביא השם ושלוחו כי חטאותיהם כסדום
הגידו ולו כחדו אבל זהו שקר וכזב כי המה המיתו והצליבו איש אחר אשר תוארו היה
כתואר ישו וסברו שרצחו וצלבו לישו ומי שמסופק בדרך הזה הוא בדרך סרה ובדרך
תועה אבל השם לקח אותו מעמהם לשמים¹⁶ ומשם יבא לשפט ולהעיד על כל הסוררים
והרשעים כי אני אל שדי ויודע כל הנסתרות ואותם המאמנתם בתורתי נצרכין להאמין
קודם מיתתם בישו שהוא עדיין חי ואזי יהיה להם למליץ ביום הדין והנורא

[They say: We have killed and murdered the Messiah, Jesus, son of
Mary, the prophet of God and his envoy because they proclaim their
sin like Sodom they do not hide it; but this is a lie and a falsehood
because they put to death and crucified another man who has the
same appearance than Jesus appearance and they believed that they

have killed and crucified Jesus; and whoever is uncertain on this way
wandered on the way and will be lost on the way, but God took him
up to Himself from among them to the heaven and from there he will
come to judge and to testify about all the rebellious and the wicked,
because I am the Almighty and I know all the secrets things. Those
who believe in my Law will be forced to believe before their death in
Jesus who is still alive. Then, Jesus will come and intercede for them
on the terrible day of judgement.]

The Hebrew retranslation exhibits various characteristics that distinguish
it markedly from the Dutch text. The translator makes abundant use of
paraphrasing, addition and repetition. He reports and insists on the Muslim
interpretation according to which Jesus (named *Yēšû* following a designation
from the Babylonian Talmud) was neither killed nor crucified by the Jews.
He then expands on the theory of substitution: "this is a lie and a falsehood
because they put to death and crucified another man who has the same
appearance than Jesus' appearance and they believed that they killed and
crucified Jesus." The translator knows this from the paratext where the
subject was previously discussed:

> ils affeurent auffi que les Juifs croyans crucifier Jefus crucifierent un
> Homme d'entr'eux qui luy reffembloit.[17]

> Sy versekeren ook dat de Joden, meenende Jesus Christus te kruissen,
> een man onder hen kruisten, die hem geleck.

> [They [= the Turks] also assure that the Jews, thinking they were cru-
> cifying Jesus Christ, crossed a man among them who looked like him.]

> ובשביל הצלוב[18] אומרים שזהו הנצלב עי[=עַל יְדֵי] היהודים היה איש אחר שלקח תואר
> ישו בנס והיהודים סברו שצלבו ישו

> [Regarding the crucified, they [= the Ishmaelites] say that the one who
> was crucified by the Jews was another man who took the appearance
> of Jesus by miracle and the Jews thought that they crucified Jesus]

Although the translator keeps the traditional Muslim interpretation found
in the Dutch source-text of Q 4:157–159, he follows a Judaizing translation
strategy, especially by using the technique of *šibbûṣ*. The translator selects a
given verse simply because it corresponds to the meaning of the source-text

or with a deeper interpretative motivation. This can be illustrated by one example. After the Qur'an has refuted the Jewish claim that they have killed Jesus, the Hebrew translation supplies a passage of Isaiah 3:9: "because they proclaim their sin like Sodom, they do not hide it." By saying this, the translator indicates that the Jews aggravate their sin like the inhabitants of Sodom and that they act with no shame (Genesis 19:4–5). This biblical quotation also acts as a reminder and refers to the wider context of the verse where Isaiah prophesies the consequences which Judah and Jerusalem will suffer for their corruption. The Hebrew retranslation also displays terminological resonances which link the Qur'an and the Hebrew Bible. A striking example is found in the word *lāqaḥ* ('to take') which in the Hebrew Bible is used to signify the end of Enoch (Genesis 5:24) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:3) with the idea that God took them to heaven. The translator also uses biblical terminology and biblical expressions (i.e. 'the terrible day of judgement' which occurs in Malachi 4:5). He juxtaposes two synonyms: "we have killed and murdered the Messiah," "this is a lie and a falsehood" (Q 4:157). Rhetorically, the translator adopts the first person instead of the third when God speaks: "I am the Almighty" (Q 4:158), referring to one of the divine attributes for which there are over forty occurrences in the Hebrew Bible.

In addition, the translator makes connections with the New Testament and introduces Christian interpretations in the Qur'anic passage. While in Q 4:159 the Dutch has "God raised him up to Himself," the Hebrew retranslation gives us: "God took him up to Himself from among them to the heaven and from there he will come to judge and testify about all the rebellious and wicked." The addition of the passage which says "to the heaven and from there he will come to judge" is part of the Apostles' Creed or Symbol of Faith: "He (= Jesus) ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead" (Lochman 1999). In his strategy of Christianisation, van Dort therefore even introduces a confession of Christian faith in the Qur'an.

Some readings in the Qur'anic passage in Hebrew also show that the translator may have used source other than Glazemaker or that he has had the benefit of information from Muslim speaking informants. However, the question of the potential sources used by the translator demands more thorough investigation at this stage of the research. For instance, we read in the Dutch version the following: "Those who have knowledge of the Scriptures must believe in Jesus before his death, he will be a witness of their deeds against them on the day of Judgment." The Hebrew translation offers: "Those who believe in my Law will be forced to believe before their death in Jesus who is still alive. Then, Jesus will come and intercede for them

on the terrible day of judgement." The affirmation that Jesus is still alive follows the Muslim classical exegetical account according to which Jesus was taken to heaven and that someone else died in his place. Furthermore, the use of a plural 'their death' in the Hebrew retranslation against 'his death' in the Dutch source-text (following Uthman's recension) corresponds to a variant reading of the Qur'an (*qirāʾā*) which has been reported in the Muslim tradition.[19] However, the passage seems to be turned in the affirmation of Christian convictions. Indeed, the idea of Jesus' intercession combined with the one that he is alive could be a reference to the Epistle to Hebrews 7:24–25 which says: "he (= Jesus) is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them."

The connection between the Hebrew Qur'anic retranslation, the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament is much more obvious in Q 3:55, another passage related to Jesus' crucifixion:

إِذْ قَالَ اللَّهُ يَا عِيسَى إِنِّي مُتَوَفِّيكَ وَرَافِعُكَ إِلَيَّ وَمُطَهِّرُكَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَجَاعِلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّبَعُوكَ فَوْقَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ ثُمَّ إِلَيَّ مَرْجِعُكُمْ فَأَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ

Souviens-toy comme le Seigneur a dit ; O Jeſus, je te feray mourir, je t'eſleveray à moy, je t'eſloigneray des infidelles, & prefereray ceux qui t'auront obey aux infidelles au jour du Jugement ; ce jour vous ſerez tous aſſemblez devant moy.[20]

Gedenk hoe de Heer gesegt heeft: O Jesus, ik zal u doen sterven, ik zal u tot my ophessen, van d'ongelovigen verwyderen, en de geenen, die u gehoorzaamt hebben, in de dag des Oordeels voor d'ongelovigen stellen. Gy zult in deze dag alle voor my vergadert zyn.

[Remember how the Lord said: O Jesus, I will put you to death, I will raise you up to Me, I will keep you away from the unbelievers and prefer those who will obey you to the infidels on the Day of Judgment. You will be all gathered in front of Me on that day.]

זכר מה שאמרתי ישו ישו אני אני הוא אשר יקח את נפשיך[21] מקרביך ותמות במיתה הכבודה ולקחתי אתך לי מבירא עמיקתא לאינרא רמא למען שתהיה רחוק מרשעי ארץ ואותם המאמינים בך יהיו ביום הדין הגדול הבא עדים על הרשעים כדי להאבידם[22] מחלק עולם הבא והצדיקים[23] ירשו ארץ לעולם

[Remember what I said: "Jesus, Jesus, I, I am the one who will take your soul[24] from inside you and you will die in a glorious death. I will

take you up to Me from a high rooftop to a deep pit so that you will be
far from the wicked of the earth, and those who believe in you will
be witnesses about the wicked on the great day to come of judgement
in order to banish them from the share of the world to come, and the
righteous will inherit the earth forever.]

Here again, the influence of the Bible is evident from a rhetorical point of
view. On the one hand, the translator reinforces the relationship between
God and Jesus by using a repetition of his name ('Jesus, Jesus'). In the Hebrew
Bible, such a repetition occurs at crucial moments, for instance when God
calls Abraham who is about to sacrifice Isaac and when God calls Moses from
the burning bush. Nonethess, by using another repetition when God speaks
('I, I am the one'), van Dort reinforces the role of God, who is unequivocally
responsible for Jesus' death. The responsibility of the Jews is thus excluded
in the Hebrew retranslation as stated originally in the Qur'an.

The biblical and especially Christian resonance is manifest in other places
where the translator introduces several additions and modifications. These
follow in fact a theological progression. First, Jesus' death is described in
very specific terms: "you will die in a glorious death. I will take you up to
Me from a high rooftop to a deep pit." The translator here uses an Aramaic
and Talmudic expression (Babylonian Talmud, Hagiga 5a) to render the
idea of a radical change in status ('from a high rooftop to a deep pit'). This
expresses the abasement and exultation of Christ, similar to those found
in the Epistle to the Hebrews 2:9: "But we do see Jesus, who was made
lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor
because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death
for everyone." The Hebrew translator then uses a biblical passage: "so that
you will be far from the wicked of the earth." The last words are quoted
from Psalm 119:156: רחוק מרשעים ישועה ("salvation is far from the wicked").
The verse is incomplete in van Dort's retranslation. The missing word is
yəšûʿâ ('salvation'), from which the name of Jesus is derived. The integration
of these biblical segments is thus an allusion to the messianic salvation
and the goal which needs to be reached by Jesus' death. The Qur'anic verse
mentions then that the faith in Jesus bears consequences, with an explicit
reference to the reward of those who believe in him. The Dutch gives: "[I
will] prefer those who will obey you to the infidels on the Day of Judgment."
Yet, in the Hebrew translation, we read the following development: "those
who believe in you will be witnesses about the wicked on the great day to
come of judgement in order to deprive them from the share of the world to
come, and the righteous will inherit the earth forever." Here, the translator

inserted a quotation of Isaiah 60:21 which describes the future blessings on Jerusalem, but the entire addition is in fact a reference to Mishna Sanhedrin 10 which lists various categories of people who will have no share of life in the world to come. Among them are those who deny the resurrection. According to the context, the meaning of the Hebrew translation implies that those who do not believe in Jesus' death and resurrection will be excluded from any future reward.

The interpretation given to Q 3:55 by van Dort is deliberately structured according to the following succession of themes: death, glory, abasement, elevation, salvation and opposition between the fate of the righteous and the wicked from an eschatological perspective. In other words, the structural unit in the Hebrew retranslation reflects a Christian theological reading of the Qur'anic passage. All the biblical quotations and reminiscences which are independent are articulated within this Christian frame. Even if the Islamic interpretation is preserved, and the Hebrew Bible is used at several levels, the central ridge of the verse is built on the New Testament. By doing so, the translator goes back to the biblical background of the Qur'an and could refer to Philippians 2:7–9 (2:6–11 is often classified as an early Christian hymn), in which Paul depicts how God glorified Christ after the crucifixion.[25]

Conclusion

The Hebrew retranslation of the Qur'an from Dutch by van Dort was partially studied. However, much work remains to be done regarding how the translator's conversion and identity influenced the content of his work. In this paper, we have demonstrated that van Dort adopted a hybrid approach consisting in a dual Judaizing and Christianizing strategy. This strategy is, however, not systematic. An examination of the paratext and the Qur'anic passages about Jesus shows that van Dort seeks to preserve the Muslim interpretation which is found in Dutch. But he also makes connections between the Hebrew Bible, the rabbinic literature and the New Testament. He certainly relies on the presence of the biblical substrate of the Qur'an by proceeding to a 'retour aux sources' and reflects some Christian readings of his model. But he also interprets the Qur'an from his own hybrid identity and his knowledge of Judaism and Christianity. On the one hand, he adopts a Judaizing translation strategy as he received an advanced Jewish education and was familiar with the canonical Hebrew and Aramaic texts. In this way, the learned Jewish reader could easily be connected to his familiar background even when reading a foreign religious text. On

the other hand, van Dort introduces elements from Christian theology, probably for preaching to his Jewish readers and transmitting new doctrines. This assertion has to be considered in the context of van Dort's life. Before reaching the Dutch Indies, he was deeply engaged in missionary activities. He composed three works where he recognises and defends Jesus as the true Messiah. Furthermore, when he was in Ceylon, he was a Hebrew teacher at an institution of the Dutch East India Company, which was invested in the propagation of the Dutch Reformed Church. Whatever may have motivated van Dort's translation approach, we can reach some preliminary conclusions. His Hebrew retranslation of the Qur'an does not simply illustrate a linear transfer across languages and religions. It consists in a multidimensional process involving the plural identity and religious knowledge of a Jewish translator converted to Christianity. However, we have to keep in mind that the translator operated within a wider inter-religious translation project, within an inter-cultural milieu: his Hebrew retranslation of the Qur'an is the product of a larger interest in beliefs of the Malabar Coast while he was in Cochin, a cosmopolitan convergence point for people from various cultures and religions. Therefore, only a multi-scale analysis of these complex networks will allow for an understanding of the process of retranslating the Qur'an into Hebrew in the eighteenth-century Dutch Indies.

Notes

1. This research is supported by the ERC Synergy Project 'The European Qur'an. Islamic Scripture in European Culture and Religion 1150-1850 (EuQu).' The project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (grant agreement no. 810141). This paper is based on a talk delivered in March 2021 at the "International Workshop: Qur'an and Bible" organized by the University of Notre Dame and by the ERC project "The European Qur'an."

2. For a general overview of the Jewish engagement with the Qur'an, see Lazarus-Yafeh 1992, 143–160.

3. On this topic see, in particular, Simon 2011.

4. For a detailed description of the manuscript, see Weinstein 1971/72. This publication also discusses the circulation of the manuscript and shows, following the testimony of the Christian missionary Joseph Wolff (1795–1862), that in the nineteenth century a copy of this Hebrew translation of the Qur'an reached Sufi Jews of Mashhad (Persia).

5. I have based my sketch of Van Dort's biography on Fischel 1967; Hillel 2018, 199-216; Van Dort 2021.

6.   Frankism is a Jewish messianic movement that began in Poland in the second half of the eighteenth century. The movement, influenced by Sabbateanism, was created by Jacob Frank (1726–1791). See Maciejko 2011.

7.   This is evident from van Dort's letter addressed to the Christian and enlightened scholar Johann Michael von Loen (1694–1776), see Burnell 2017.

8.   These are in Glazemaker, *Mahomets Alkoran*, 1696: Voor-Reeden aan den Leser (*3r–*4r); Kort Begrip van de Godsdienst der Turken (*4v–*6v); Mahomets Leven getrokken uit de Sarasijnsche Historie van Georgius Elmacinus (465–477); Mahomets Leven uit verscheide Christe Schryvers getrokken (477–506); Vertoning, door Mahomet en zijn navolgers verdigt, van een reis, die hy, op het beest Alborach zittende, naar Jerusalem deê, en vandaar ten hemel opklom (506–518); Samenspraak van een Jood met Mahomet, die aan hem rekening van zijn lering geeft (518–547).

9.   These texts are the following: לידת מחמד וארץ מולדתו ומעשותו (fol. 1r–2v), מנהגי הישמעלים שאירע לו כל ימי חייו (fol. 2v–8v), (9r–16r) מנסיעות מחמד לשמים על הבהמה שנקראת אלבורך.

10. In this publication, Basal builds on his previous one of 2012.

11. Du Ryer, *L'Alcoran*, *2r–*3v; Glazemaker, *Mahomets Alkoran*, *4v–*6v; MS LC Washington Hebr. 183, fol. 1r–2v.

12. The last letter is unreadable in the manuscript. בורא] coni. (cf. schepper, creator).

13. Some letters are illegible because the manuscript is damaged.

14. About the interpretation of the passages discussed here, see Reynolds 2009.

15. Du Ryer, *L'Alcoran*, 95–96; Glazemaker, *Mahomets Alkoran*, 76; MS LC Washington Hebr. 183, fol. 61v–62r.

16. להשמים] corr. לשמים.

17. Du Ryer, *L'Alcoran*, *3r; Glazemaker, *Mahomets Alkoran*, *6r; MS LC Washington Hebr. 183, fol. 2r.

18. הצילוב] corr. הצלוב.

19. The variant reading is mentioned in the recension of Ubayy ibn Ka'b (m. 649), see Jeffery (1937, 127).

20. Du Ryer, *L'Alcoran*, 54; Glazemaker, *Mahomets Alkoran*, 42; MS LC Washington Hebr. 183, fol. 41v–42r.

21. נפשך] coni. נפשותיך.

22. להאבידם] corr. להאבדם.

23. והצדיקים] corr. והציקים.

24. The Hebrew text should read *nepeš* ('soul, life') in singular rather than *napšôt* ('souls') in plural. This unexpected form, which is a way to capture the attention of the reader, consists in a play on words in the context of Jesus' death. Indeed, *nepeš* and *napšôt* mean also 'sepulchre(s).' The word play continues with the use of *qereb* ('inside, intestine') which contains the same consonants as *qeber* ('grave, tomb, sepulchre'). This could be reminiscent of Jesus' burial and resurrection.

25.   The 'Christ Hymn' in Philippians 2:6–11 is one of the most discussed texts in Paul's
       letters. The abundant debates on the passage focus on the genre, authorship, back-
       ground, form, structure and Christology (see, e.g., Hansen 2009, 118–159). Here, van
       Dort prefigures Zaehner who in the twentieth century demonstrated that the Qur'anic
       passage of Jesus' crucifixion in sura 4 was explicable through the lens of the whole
       Pauline pericope (Zaehner 1958, 213).

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In the Shadow of Orientalism: Tracing the Legacy of Ignatiĭ Krachkovskiĭ in Russian Salafi Qur'an Translations[1]

Elvira Kulieva

Abstract

This chapter focuses on the lasting legacy of Qur'an translation by the Soviet Orientalist Ignatiĭ Krachkovskiĭ. Celebrated as a notable figure in academic circles, Krachkovskiĭ's diverse academic interests and publications firmly anchor him in the history of Russian and Soviet Orientalism. However, despite his multifaceted contributions, for the wider public he is primarily remembered for his translation of the Qur'an, which gained renewed prominence after the collapse of the USSR. This chapter traces the modern trajectory of Krachkovskiĭ's Qur'an translation and its impact in shaping the subsequent Russian Qur'an translations produced by Muslims. Focusing primarily on Salafi-labelled translations and comparing their literal translation choices of verses concerning God's attributes, this chapter underscores the connection with Krachkovskiĭ's translation. This paper argues that Krachkovskiĭ's translation not only influenced the development of Russian Qur'an translations, shaping how later translators positioned themselves and engaged with his work but also influenced the modern Muslim polemical lexicon. The interplay between past Orientalist scholarship and contemporary Muslim-authored translations reflects the dynamic nature of Russian Qur'an translations and its intricate role in shaping religious discourse.

Keywords: Orientalism, Qur'an, Qur'an translation, Russia, Azerbaijan, USSR, Salafism

Introduction

The history of Russian Orientalism, just like its European and American counterparts, has been shaped by a number of pivotal figures who have influenced the development of the field for generations to come. One such figure was the Soviet Russian Arabist and Qur'an translator Ignatiĭ Iul'ianovich Krachkovskiĭ (1883–1951). Krachkovskiĭ was a remarkable man

whose legacy is very much celebrated and respected within academic circles, both within the Russian sphere of influence and in Europe.[2] He left not only a vast oeuvre, but also a generation of influential students, known as the Krachkovskiĭ school, who endured through the turmoil of recent Russian history and went on to define the direction of Oriental studies in the region.[3] Krachkovskiĭ himself was someone whose life spanned the two periods of Imperial and Soviet Russia, and his works have had a lasting influence in the subsequent, post-Soviet era. For his wide nonacademic readership, however, Krachkovskiĭ's name is firmly associated with only one work: his Russian translation of the Qur'an, *Koran: Perevod i kommentarii*, which was published for the first time in 1963 (Krachkovskiĭ 1963).

While the distinguished academic credentials of the translator created an image of a rigorous and reliable translation, *Koran: Perevod i kommentarii* was a posthumous publication that, in fact, consisted of unfinished work based on rough drafts Krachkovskiĭ used for a university course he was teaching about the Qur'an, and was never approved by him for publication. Despite this, Krachkovskiĭ's translation came to be widely respected during Soviet times, as it was based on the original Arabic source text, was not associated with the anti-Islamic polemics of Christian missionaries,[4] and was thought to represent "genuine academic objectivity" according to the standards of that time. These days however, when it comes to a Muslim readership, the name of Krachkovskiĭ, and the Orientalist tradition in general, are often framed by a discourse of distrust, and it is often alleged that his non-Muslim epistemologies could not provide a rendering of the Qur'an that would be regarded as reliable by mainstream Muslims.[5] This attitude was reflected in trends in the publication of Islamic texts that emerged with the collapse of the Soviet Union, a time at which discourse about Islam entered into the wider public sphere. There was a proliferation in the publication of religious literature in general, and a flourishing market for Qur'an "retranslations"[6] authored by Muslim translators came into being, and these translations quickly became more popular than Krachkovskiĭ's amongst believing Muslims. In the new post-Soviet environment that came about after the fall of the USSR, Muslims began to retranslate the Qur'an and competed to achieve the "best" translation, challenging the works of those who preceded them.

It is important to note here that the traditional vernacular languages spoken by Muslims in Russia, such as Tatar or the languages of the Caucasus, did not become the *lingua franca* for these new post-Soviet Qur'an translations. Alfrid Bustanov, who specializes in the Tatar manuscript traditions of the Soviet era, rightly notes that Muslim Qur'an translations produced

in both late tsarist Russia and the Soviet era did not reach their envisioned audience (Bustanov 2018, 171). Either the works were mysteriously lost, as happened in the cases of Musa Bigi's and Ziya Kamali's Tatar Qur'an translations, both of which were authored during the imperial period, or the authors could not publish their works and wrote mostly for the desk drawer, as with ʿAbd al-Bari Isaev's recently discovered Qur'an translation into Tatar which was written during Soviet times (Bustanov 2018, 169–184). Before Muslim translations of the Qu'ran became ubiquitous, Krachkovskiĭ's translation was a key reference point for lay Muslims of various ethnicities wishing to reconnect with their Muslim identities, particularly during the latter part of the Soviet era and in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR.

For Qur'an translators, the adoption of a confessional perspective in translating the sacred text at least partly requires translators to position themselves vis-à-vis previous attempts. In this regard, Krachkovskiĭ's Russian translation was an important inherited source in terms of the ways that later translators defined their own stance and approach in creating new renderings. Muslim translators of the Qur'an affiliated with the various religious movements that emerged after the end of the Soviet empire "grew up" with Krachkovskiĭ's translation as it was available in the libraries of the USSR. His translation had an impact on many of the stylistic features and word choices made in later Qur'an translations of differing types. The main focus of this chapter is on those translations classified in public discourse as Salafi in Russia (by E. Quliyev and Abu Adel), as this is where a significant similarity can be identified. To trace this similarity, it examines a number of comparative examples relating to the theological concept of the attributes of God (*al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt*, lit. "[God's] Names and Attributes"). There are certain verses in the Qur'an that contain anthropomorphic descriptions of God and which have been the focal point of theological debates about how they should be properly understood. According to the dominant theological view, either the anthropomorphic words in these verses should not be interpreted and should be left as they are (*tafwīḍ*), or they should be viewed in the context of the verse and interpreted metaphorically (*taʾwīl*). For some, Qur'an translations should necessarily be a reflection of theological stance, and therefore enter into the terrain of polemics. By focusing on the specific patterns used to render verses related to *al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt* in Krachkovskiĭ's translation, comparing them to the choices made in later works, this chapter demonstrates that the popular Salafi-labelled works, which emphasize a literal and close-textual approach to *al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt*, share common ground with the Orientalist translation of Krachkovskiĭ. In the socio-political context in which these later works appeared, certain Qur'an translations

became directly associated with specific identity markers, and the derogative 'Salafi-Wahhabi' label was insistently linked to foreign influence. However, this chapter argues that among the multitude of factors that influenced Russian Qur'an translations, internal aspects, namely the continuities and changes in the ways Krachkovskiĭ's work was conceived by later Muslim translators, are important and influential sources for understanding both the development of the Russian Qur'an translation genre and the nature of polemics in the Russian-speaking Muslim communities.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the problematics inherent in translating the Qur'an and the concept of retranslation. The next section introduces Ignatiĭ Krachkovskiĭ, his intellectual context and his Qur'an translation. The section thereafter demonstrates the transformations in the reception of his work that followed the fall of the USSR and that serve to demonstrate the dynamics of Krachkovskiĭ's influence. The final section is dedicated to two "confessional" Salafi works, which are juxtaposed with Krachkovskiĭ's translation, and analyses the similarities in their literal approaches to the apparent meanings (*al-maʿnā al-ẓāhir*) in translation.[7] Approaching Krachkovskiĭ's work as an intertext for subsequent Muslim-authored Russian Qur'an translations, this chapter shows that the genealogy of Muslim Qur'an translation into Russian in the modern era is inseparable from the Orientalist scholarship of the past. For some translators, Krachkovskiĭ's translation was seen as an authoritative work that needed to be considered, or as a useful tool based on which a "correct" translation of the Qur'an could be built. For others, it was important to adopt a critical stance, and to escape and rework his linguistic legacy. Moreover, it will become clear that the tensions at play in Krachkovskiĭ's work became a part of the Russo-Islamic lexicon, and a point of departure for ideological creedal debates connected to linguistic practices and vocabulary within Russian Muslim communities.

The Qur'an: translation and retranslation

Historically the enterprise of Qur'an translation has been intrinsically connected with various ideological projects, and is a topic that is often surrounded by polemics and rivalry. In medieval and early modern Christian Europe, the Qur'an was seen as a heresy to be disproved. In this light, translations of the Qur'an were often produced as part of the missionary project to demonstrate the superiority of Christianity over Islam and were characterized by a clear refutation of the Muslim faith, or reductionist simplification of the Islamic scripture. The torch was later handed on to

various nineteenth- and twentieth-century European Orientalists, including Russians, whose philological approaches were certainly much closer to the Arabic original than the early works. At the same time, their critical methods towards the Qur'an prioritized their own set of assumptions and strategies, ignoring Muslim traditional scholarship, and this led many Muslims to view their works not only critically, but even with contempt.[8]

The emergence of Muslic-authored Qur'an translations as a global phenomenon that replace those of Christian missionaries and Orientalists was not without obstacles. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in the intellectual centers of the Muslim world like Cairo and Istanbul, there emerged a strong opposition to the idea of translating the Qur'an. For example, the famous Islamic reformist Rashid Rida (*Rashīd Riḍā*, d. 1935) saw Qur'an translations as the "tools of colonization" and a barrier to the unity of the Muslim *ummah* (Wilson 2014, 120). The last Ottoman Shaykh al-Islām, Mustafa Sabri (d. 1954), despite having a very different ideological outlook to that of Rida, also opposed Qur'an translation as a principle. For Sabri, translation (*tarjamah*)[9] was a harmful enterprise which is detrimental to Islamic rituals, and he wrote a legal treatise refuting those Arab theologians who regarded it as permissible (Wilson 2014, 214). Those *ʿulamāʾ* who opposed the translation of the Qur'an insisted that the dissemination and availability of the translated Qur'an would diminish the importance of the Arabic original sacred text, and thus further weaken the fragmented Muslim *ummah*. As Brett Wilson has convincingly demonstrated, there was a complex sociopolitical context that underlay the rejection of the enterprise of Qur'an translation on principle. This context included the Ottoman policies of Turkification that aimed to "nationalize the Qur'an," the emergence of Turkish secular nationalism, the *ʿulamāʾ*'s loss of their monopoly as authoritative interpreters of the sacred text, and the widespread theological rejection of the Ahmadiyya movement's adoption of Qur'an translation as a missionary activity. This nexus of factors influenced the polemical debates about the legal permissibility of Qur'an translation, but the controversy largely fell out of fashion during the 1930s as various Muslim authorities aligned their stances with the more modern *zeitgeist* that the issue of Qur'an translation should be framed in the context of discussions of *how* to translate. In other words, the main concern became the matter of quality, rather than legality of Qur'an translations. Even Rashid Rida, the once vocal opponent of translation, changed his opinion once he realized the practical value of Qur'an translations and envisioned the central role Egyptian scholars could play in the global Islamic call (Wilson 2014, 116–184).

New trends in Qur'an translation emerged in the twentieth century when rival individual, institutional and national projects produced a variety of

Muslim-authored Qur'an translations, based on different theological and stylistic approaches. In the Russian context, the trend toward Muslim-authored Qur'an translations written in Russian as a post-imperial language emerged with the collapse of the USSR.[10] Some actors, like a number of religious authorities in Daghestan, considered an "appropriate" translation of the Qur'an to be an almost unattainable goal and therefore, until recently, viewed all works that appeared in a negative light.[11] Nevertheless, since the demise of the USSR, Muslim-authored Qur'an retranslations in Russian have been continuously produced, such that today there are more than thirty retranslations of the Qur'an.

It is precisely this constant intellectual quest for both continuity and change that makes the phenomenon of retranslation such a fascinating subject for research. The task of retranslation by its very definition implies that the translator does not start from scratch. At a fundamental level, it creates an impression that each subsequent retranslation accords with an ideal that involves incremental progress and gradual improvement in quality. However, because some translations of the Qur'an retain their popularity and significance over time demonstrates that retranslations rarely completely replace the earlier works (Koskinen 2019, 319). There is also a general assumption that retranslation is a process that follows one of two main independent tracks. The first involves amending an existing work (usually by the same translator) in terms of revising mistakes, polishing language or tweaking to increase correspondence between the translation and existing expectations held in one or another sociocultural context. The second involves the production of a completely new translation by another competing actor (Koskinen 2019, 315). This assumption that these are two unconnected forms of retranslation is in fact misleading as it does not capture the complex interrelationship between the various produced texts.

As self-evident as it is, Qur'an translators and their (re)translations do not exist in a vacuum, and it can often be impossible to achieve a precise understanding of whether a translation is made only through consulting the source text – the Arabic Qur'an – or through extensive reworking of and improving other translations. Retranslation is often about "the past [that] is present in the present," (Deane-Cox 2014, 191) and this is especially true of Muslim translations of the Qur'an that were produced in the wake of earlier Orientalist renditions. These should be studied holistically, within the context of existing works of Qur'an translation, as retranslations often channel both conscious and unconscious "ebbs and flows" from the corpus of their predecessors (Deane-Cox 2014, 189). General modernist assumptions embrace an idea of "progress" that does not always correlate with the variety

of Qur'an translations that have been produced. Even if some of the more recent translations can be perceived as having a greater and more subtle degree of "textual accuracy," they are nevertheless always ideologically charged and always debatable. When it comes to Muslim Qur'an translators, sometimes their opposition to one another's works is not so much about delicate stylistic features, but is rather a reflection of theological tensions resulting from the ideas of Islam that different institutions and communities endorse. These tensions can be exacerbated by various sociocultural factors and events that take place within the borders of different nation-states, as well as globally. Taking this into account, as Deane-Cox has pointed out, "(re)translation is as much a socially and culturally embedded phenomenon as it is a textualized one" (Deane-Cox 2014, 189–190).

The study of retranslations emphasizes their socio-cultural aspects, and is valuable as regards revealing and interpreting "the specific contextual dynamics that have acted on the decisions to (re)translate, the physical appearances of the (re)translations, the relative values accorded to those (re)translations and the nature and the extent of any interaction between these multiples of one" (Deane-Cox 2014, 23). A further angle that is enriching is to look at retranslations from the perspective of genetic criticism.[12] Genetic critics aim to understand "the practices of the working translator and the evolution, or genesis, of the translated text by studying translators' manuscripts, drafts and other working documents" (Cordingley and Montini 2015, 1). From this perspective, the study of the transformations that take place with the translated text becomes the main point of interest. Because many Muslim translators of the Qur'an do not see their activity as ever finalized, even if their translation is already a published text, these translations are the perfect example of the "continuum of textual creation" (Cordingley and Montini 2015, 2). Genetic critics use a variety of "draft" sources to understand this continuum, and it is possible to view previous Qur'an translations, which were seen by the new translators as "imperfect," as falling into this category.[13] Shifting the focus to translations as independent texts in their own right, this perspective opens the possibility of tracing the history, transformations, metamorphoses and interrelationships between translations. In this vein, Krachkovskiĭ's translation, although he worked with the Qur'an using an Orientalist framework, is not just an example of the past, irrelevant to modern Muslim translations, but, on the contrary, is a source through which one can understand the present. It opens a window that allows us to view translatorial interconnections, even if some of these are deliberate retranslation practices that consciously attempt to go against Krachkovskiĭ's original renderings.

Ignatiĭ Krachkovskiĭ and the orientalist intellectual context

Ignatiĭ Krachkovskiĭ is associated with a particular "school" that even today emphasizes its historical continuity with the established Russian Orientalist academic tradition of studying Eastern languages and Islamic studies, and which is associated with a particular academic institution. The Faculty of Asian and African Studies, commonly known today as the Vostochnyĭ Faculty, is part of St Petersburg State University, and its history can be traced back to March 1818 when the university started to offer courses in Persian and Arabic.[14] Krachkovskiĭ is considered one of the principal representatives of the St Petersburg/Leningrad school and his name is a matter of Vostochnyĭ pride up until this day. The approach emphasized in Vostochnyĭ was closely connected to another academic institution known as the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts,[15] and it presented itself as a place where priority was given to those with strong expertise in oriental languages, as well as ardent defenders of classical philology who undertook seemingly "apolitical" studies of old manuscripts.[16] Krachkovskiĭ's expertise in and passion for Arabic manuscripts even led to his posthumous award of the prestigious State Stalin Prize, for his book *Nad arabskimi rukopisyami* ["Among Arabic manuscripts"][17] in 1951, even though under Stalin's regime his freedom and life had hung in the balance (Kemper, introduction to Kratchkovsky 2016, 3).

As is often the case for people living in times of historical transition, Krachkovskiĭ was a witness to many difficult events during his life. A scholar whose life spanned two epochs, a *mukhaḍram*[18] as one of his students described him, Krachkovskiĭ was caught up in the upheavals of the two world wars, blockades and Stalin's purges, during which he lost many of his friends and colleagues, and was even arrested himself, but fortunately later released (Rodionov 2011, 48). His dedication to his work despite all the calamities of his time became a source of national pride, as well as winning him admiration from abroad. Krachkovskiĭ began work on his Qur'an translation before the revolution and went on to complete it even when faced with the difficulties of life in a totalitarian post-revolutionary context.[19] Although he never had a chance to travel abroad after the revolution, it can clearly be seen in his works that his scholarship was very much connected to the European Orientalist tradition. This reflected the fact that prior to the revolution in 1908–1910 he had traveled to both the Middle East, where he worked in libraries in Egypt, Lebanon, Palestine and Syria, and Europe, where he worked and had contact with some of the leading figures of European Orientalism, such as the Dutchman Snouck Hurgronje and

the Hungarian Ignaz Goldziher.[20] Krachkovskiĭ was an incredibly prolific author with a broad range of scholarly interests, encompassing Arab history and philology, as well as poetry and prose from various eras, including the works of contemporaries associated with the Nahda.[21] His own research and writings encompassed not only the Muslim and Christian Arabic literature of the Middle East, but also Arabic literature within the borders of the Russian empire and USSR, for example in the Caucasus.

The first and second editions of Krachkovskiĭ's Qur'an translation were completed by his two student-editors Soviet academics V. Belyaev and P. Gryaznevitch, and allow us to see how his original drafts were transformed into the published work that, in addition to the translation itself, included his endnotes and his summaries of relevant lectures and teaching notes. Krachkovskiĭ was competent in several European languages, namely, German, French, and English, as his correspondence and the sources he used demonstrate. The endnotes to his translation comprise 142 pages and are replete with references to the Orientalist academic works that were available to him. In fact, most of these references relate to works by European Orientalists, although he does occasionally mention such Russian academics as Kseniia͡ Kashtaleva and Gordiĭ Sablukov, as well as such Muslim sources as the *al-sīra al-nabawiyyah* of Ibn Hishām, and the *tafsīr*s of al-Zamakhsharī and al-Bayḍāwī, but these do not even constitute ten percent of his total references. On this basis, Krachkovskiĭ should be viewed as operating within the intellectual milieu of the European Orientalist tradition towards which the German, English, and French sources used in his Qur'an translation point.

The inclusion of summaries of Krachkovskiĭ's course lectures in the translation gives us a sense of where and how his epistemological stances and methodologies coincided with those of his Western colleagues. These paradigms include a focus on source criticism, the search for "origin" and historical suspicion, all of which informed Krachkovskiĭ's own approach to the study of the Qur'an.[22] His neglect of traditional Muslim sources on the Qur'anic sciences did not reflect a genuinely "unbiased" approach, but rather is demonstrative of speculations about the origin and borrowings in the Qur'an and its meanings commonly found in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western Orientalist tradition (Krachkovskiĭ 1986, 672, 680). In relation to translation, the dominant intellectual paradigm of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Europe proposed the stability of the text and its meanings, which was a significant factor that influenced his focus on the importance of the notion of accuracy. Krachkovskiĭ's focus on philological "accuracy," which many of his later readers liked to emphasize,

and his avoidance of engagement with the traditional Islamic interpretive corpus, led to some sometimes very clumsy renderings. However, a discussion of the errata in Krachkovskiĭ's translation is not particularly useful for two reasons. First, since the translation was based on drafts and published posthumously, one can scarcely blame the author for any infelicities in the translation. Secondly, from a more practical perspective, these errata have already been much discussed, and the inaccuracies do not actually undermine the significance of Krachkovskiĭ's work, as will become clear in the following sections. Rather, what is more important is that we place his translation within the intellectual context from which it emerged, as it helps understand its retranslation history.

One important intellectual trend that occupied the minds of many European Orientalists of Krachkovskiĭ's time, and which is an important leitmotiv that recurs throughout his endnotes to his Qur'an translation, is the idea of reconstructing the Qur'an's chronology, implicit in which is a critical rearrangement of the Qur'an. Krachkovskiĭ shared the popular Orientalist preoccupation with chronology, and his translation also emphasized the vision of the Qur'an as a "literary monument," a recurring trope that also appeared in the writings of many of Krachkovskiĭ's students. This idea was clearly set out in one of Krachkovskiĭ's course descriptions, which was included in the first two editions of his translation, and according to which his course on the Qur'an undertakes:

> The study of the Qur'an, mainly from the historical and literary side.
> To give an idea of the monument in its historical development, selected
> parts are studied in the chronological sequence of all four periods.
> (Krachkovskiĭ 1986, 697)

Krachkovskiĭ did not offer his own approach to chronology, and in his course the Qur'an was divided based on the chronology of Nöldeke-Schwally, but Krachkovskiĭ also engaged with other chronological paradigms, like those of Richard Bell, Régis Blachère, and Kseniia͡ Kashtaleva, as can be seen in his endnotes where these chronologies are presented in critical conversation with each other.[23]

The selection of the Arabic editions of the Qur'an on which Krachkovskiĭ based his translation is also particularly telling. While there were St Petersburg and Kazan editions of the Arabic Qur'an, Krachkovskiĭ did not base his translation on these. Although these Arabic editions were sources of Russian imperial pride and constituted an "openly colonial endeavor" (Rezvan 2020, 262), which was used to demonstrate Russian patronage of

Islam, they lacked "critical academic" flavor and were associated with a confessional Muslim stance. Instead, Krachkovskiĭ used two other Arabic editions, which were the products of two different contexts, but both of which were commonly used by Western Orientalists. These were Gustav Flügel's 1834 edition, which is based on unclear methodological principles, and the 1924 Cairo edition, which, although produced in a modern Egyptian context, was nevertheless appropriated for use by Western Orientalist scholars as a standard text. While the precise answer as to why Krachkovskiĭ neglected the Kazan edition in particular needs more substantial research, it may be justly assumed to be due to his overall reliance on Western Orientalists, in other words because his perceptions of the prestige and authority of his selected editions played a decisive role in this prioritization. These orientations are clearly useful in helping us to understand how Krachkovskiĭ approached the Qur'an methodologically and what he prioritized in his approach to the Qur'an and its translation.

Studying an object means discursively establishing control and some power over it. Thus, any kind of normative judgment is significant as powerful scholarly claims, and Krachkovskiĭ did not shy away from making normative judgments about the Qur'an or the Muslim faith more generally. For example, to Krachkovskiĭ the Muslim creed is characterized by "the absence of originality," and by "weak dogmatics" and a "lack of distinctiveness" (Krachkovskiĭ 1986, 666, 681). In his textual analysis, he primarily relied on secondary literature and restated literary judgments on the Qur'an, like describing certain verses as "barbaric syntax" (*ibid*., 669) or commenting that they are "not exquisite" (*ibid*., 678). His Eurocentric views of the qualities of Arabic literature, one of his specialisms, are also clearly stated, for example he comments that "Pre-Islamic poetry is important but in the general scale of world culture it represents a smaller interest" (*ibid*., 672). His evaluation of the artistic merits of the Qur'an was largely influenced by his perception of Western literary genres. Krachkovskiĭ categorized Muhammad as a poet and evaluated the Qur'anic verses as "often unsuccessful poetry" (*ibid*., 682). He supported this value judgment, for example, by citing the fact that even the German scholar Friedrich Rückert abandoned the translation of some verses, stating that even with his skillful rendering, it was impossible to save them from the accusation of aesthetic imperfection (*ibid*., 683). While we do find references to Muslim sources in Krachkovskiĭ's work, he openly states his opinion that the traditional Islamic historical account of the history of the Qur'an is interesting but "only from the perspective of human psychology" (*ibid*., 672). These, and other similar remarks about the Qur'an, are interwoven into the 1963 and

1986 editions of his translation. The second edition, which was prepared at the very end of the Soviet period, emphasized the fact that it reproduced the first with only small amendments related to typos, information on all of which is provided at the end of the book so as to allow readers to trace these minimal editorial interventions.

Cultural assumptions about what constituted neutrality saturated the academic contexts of Orientalist scholarship, no matter whether it was produced in Eastern or Western Europe, and Krachkovskiĭ's translation, although produced in a totalitarian context, was no exception. It reflects a common methodological colonialism according to which Islamic methods and sources are seen as not sufficiently thorough and critical,[24] and are often replaced with supposedly rigorous, but actually unsubstantiated, assumptions whose evidentiary basis is often absent.

The post-Soviet rebirth, transformation and appropriation of Krachkovskiĭ's Qur'an translation

With the change in political climate, this editorial approach, however, underwent significant transformations. Following the advent of Gorbachev's Glasnost and Perestroika, the rise of public religious readers became an important trait of the final years of the USSR. Publishing became a lucrative business, and many new publishers began to republish Krachkovskiĭ in various forms (this trend started in 1985, but most of the republications of Krachkovskiĭ's Qur'an translation appeared in 1990).[25] This boom in newly emerged private publishing houses was also characterized by the fact that many of them did not last long but, as part of this trend, works of religious literature became a free market commodity, saleable, and profitable goods. This was obviously very different to the situation under Soviet ideology, and only became possible during the final stages of the USSR, immediately before its collapse.[26]

The resulting proliferation of Muslim translators did not take place immediately, in fact, it took a few more years. Yet it is important to note that there was already an urgent societal demand for and interest in religion, and in Islam in particular. Because of this, many publishers began to republish those Qur'an translations which were already available. The re-Islamization, or Islamic revival, that took place in the early 90s influenced the market, creating a societal interest in the Qur'an that publishers were eager to satisfy. The most appropriate existing candidates for reprinting were the translations by Gordii Sablukov and Krachkovskiĭ, given that both Sablukov and Krachkovskiĭ remained close to the source text and had translated directly

from the original Arabic. Due to the lack of other available options, both translations were popular, although Krachkovskiĭ's was generally considered more reliable as it lacked the associations with missionary intentions that burdened Sablukov's text, and because of his purportedly "value-neutral" academic credentials. Bustanov has commented that Krachkovskiĭ's translation and the Kharlampiĭ Baranov Arabic-Russian dictionary became *the* two essential works for post-Soviet Muslims and relates an anecdote according to which "One Muslim even joked that if they (Krachkovskiĭ and Baranov) had been Muslims, their way to *jannah* would have been guaranteed because Muslims greatly benefited from their works."[27]

The new editions of Qur'an translations produced by the burgeoning publishing market sought to cater to the religious needs and interests of Russian-speaking Muslims, and for this reason late-Soviet and post-Soviet editions of Krachkovskiĭ's translation often reflected the transformation of the intended audience. In this way, publishers played a crucial role in reintroducing Krachkovskiĭ in a new light, actively transforming the intended audience of the actual translator who wrote not for a confessional readership, but for academics. In most of Krachkovskiĭ's republications in the 90s, it is possible to see the erasure of his course lectures and endnotes, presumably based on their content possibly being seen as offensive to Muslim readers. The covers of some editions acquired "oriental" decorative ornaments and motifs, together with an Arabized Russian font, which make Krachkovskiĭ translation somewhat resemble an Arabic *muṣḥaf*. Examples of such covers can be seen gracing many editions, including a number dating from 1990 and produced by various publishers in Russia and in other soon to be seceded nation-states. These can all be seen as attempts to "Islamize" Krachkovskiĭ's translation, making it appear more attractive and authoritative for a confessional readership. The close-text literalist approach in translation even led to the emergence of a small group that based its understanding of Islam solely on Krachkovskiĭ's Qur'an translation, known as the Krachkovtsy ("Krachkovskians") (Kemper, in Kratchkovsky 2016, 22). However, their adaptation of a sola-scriptura position was not welcomed in traditional Sunni Daghestan and the group has now disappeared from public view. Their existence is, though, proof that the "Islamization" of Krachkovskiĭ's translation in the early 90s and its proliferation in various editions across the post-Soviet space led many ordinary Muslims to embrace this work, despite the stylistic inelegance that inevitably comes with literalism. There was also another aspect of Krachkovskiĭ's literalist approach that became an advantage in the context of its retranslation by Muslim authors, and that was a major factor that made this work so influential and significant for later users, as will become clear in the next section.

Juxtaposing approaches to literalism in translation: Krachkovskiĭ and Salafi Russian translations

The influence of Krachkovskiĭ's translation had a particular significance for two Qur'an translations that are especially widely recognized in Russian-speaking Salafi circles. The translators of both works acknowledge their acquaintance with Krachkovskiĭ's translation, but they view it critically due to his "mistakes," stylistic problems, and orientalist positioning. Nevertheless, as will be shown further, there is a significant congruence centered around some basic hermeneutical principles that are generally shared by Salafi-recognized translations worldwide.

Salafism is the twentieth-century modernist purist movement that retrospectively builds its authority through reference to *al-salaf al-ṣāliḥ* ("the righteous generations" of believers), an essential trope in Salafi discourse.[28] The main imperative for Salafis is to go back to the original sources of Islam: the Qur'an and hadith (*ḥadīth*) literature. This is combined with the rejection, or overly critical reassessment of later creedal schools and their associated traditions of scholastic theology (*kalām*), in addition to legal schools (*madhhabs*), Sufi and philosophical traditions. However, this does not mean a complete denial of the authority of scholars from later generations to the *salaf*; on the contrary, Salafis have their own authoritative scholars, such as the medieval scholar Ibn Taymiyya, whose judgments always carry the highest weight. As a social phenomenon, Salafism has a spectrum of different political and social engagements, and due to politization and negative connotations about Salafism in the media, many Salafis avoid publicly associating themselves with this identity, as is the case for the Qur'an translators who followed Salafi hermeneutical principles in the Russian language context, all of whom avoided embracing Salafism as an identity marker.

In the following, I focus mainly on one theological issue, *al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt*, which is perhaps the most significant one for Qur'an translation polemics, at least in the post-Soviet space. Salafi translations follow the principle of amodality towards anthropomorphic words used to describe God in the Qur'an, presenting them as they are without attempting to provide any figurative interpretation. (Evstatiev 2021, 185). To some extent, this principle is in line with Krachkovskiĭ's treatment of these terms in his translation. Yet, whereas for Krachkovskiĭ this approach is rooted in his pursuit of an "accurate" translation, and his desire to avoid tarnishing his reading of the text with theologically based readings which might dictate a particular word choice, on the basis that these theological positions are later developments that postdate the Qur'anic text, in the case of Salafi translation this reflects,

on the contrary, a theological mode of translation that determines how words should be rendered. However, before dwelling on the topic of Salafi translations and their relationship to the early twentieth-century Orientalist mode of translation, it is important to mention the sociopolitical context that gave rise to an overarching discourse about Salafism and in which these translations emerged.

In the global context, Salafism has often been falsely equated with Jihadism and misleadingly connected to the September 11 attacks. In the post-Soviet Russian sphere this discourse heated up a bit earlier and was linked to the bombing of residential buildings that happened to be a preface for the second Chechen war of 1999.[29] As a consequence of both global and local events, Salafism became a red flag that was often invoked in the discourse around securitization, both in academia and in the wider public debates in the media. In the media, the terms "Salafism" and "Wahhabism" were generally used interchangeably in Russian-speaking contexts, and in public discourse the presence of Wahhabism in the post-Soviet space was often attributed to financial support from the Gulf region, specifically Saudi Arabia, as if its growing influence was imported and alien to the Russian context. Paradoxically, Knysh has argued that the widespread and exaggerated "Wahhabi threat" discourse has led to the wider popularity of this interpretation of Islam among "disgruntled elements in the transitional societies of the former Soviet Union" (Knysh 2004, 26). The story of "bad" Salafism as a necessarily radical form of Islam that was "imported" from the outside was often contrasted with the beliefs of "good", local Sufi-oriented Muslims and later "traditional Muslims," whose interpretation of Islam yields loyal subjects who do not undermine a posited "peaceful coexistence." Precisely in this context, in 2002, the King Fahd Qur'an Printing Complex (KFQPC) published a new Qur'an translation into Russian by Elmir Quliyev (using the Russian spelling of his name, transcribed in English as Kuliev).

Elmir Quliyev (b. 1975) is an Azerbaijani scholar of Islam, who is also active as a translator and Muslim preacher.[30] He often visited Russia and worked closely with various local institutions, like universities, publishers, and such religious organizations as the *muftiiat* DUMRF ('The Muslim Spiritual Administration of the Russian Federation'). *Muftiiats* ('Spiritual Administrations') are state-controlled religious institutions which trace their history back to tsarist Russia, when they were initially established to tame Muslim subjects. During Soviet times, despite an initial anti-religious policy, the *muftiiats* were incorporated into state structures to serve limited functions. However, the first years after the fall of the USSR witnessed an emergence of new *muftiiats*, the activities and finances of which were, to

a larger extent, unregulated. Later, with the consolidation of the Russian authoritarian regime, the *muftiĭats* again became part of the state apparatus. They can be described as, as Bekkin has called them, "people of reliable loyalty" who nevertheless have their own ideological outlooks and rivalries.[31] As will be demonstrated, these differences can be seen when one examines the *muftiĭats'* support and critique of various Qur'an translations.

Similarly to Krachkovskiĭ, despite the wide range of his publications, Quliyev's name for many people is strongly associated with his Qur'an translation. This is for two main reasons: firstly, because it became extremely successful, as is evidenced by the availability of this work in shops, and on the internet, as well as its availability in numerous different editions (which deserve a study in their own right). Secondly, Quliyev's translation is infamous because of polemical debates surrounding it that eventually culminated in it being banned by a court in the city of Novorossiysk due to the "extremism" it allegedly contained. The court decision provoked heated debates, with a large group of supporters of Quliyev's translation critiquing the unclear parameters of "expert examination" of religious texts following the passing of a law in Russia "On Counteracting Extremist Activity" in 2002.[32] Due to the level of publicity and the extent of public disapproval, the court decision was overturned in the same year. However, the very fact that this translation was involved in such politicized debates, especially its being attacked by "state-conformist" Sufi groups related to some *muftiĭats* and subject to a court case issue, lent it controversial status in the eyes of some readers. Yet, for many Russian-speaking Muslims this translation is still the most attractive due to its sensitivity to the source text, legibility and (for some) its particular adherence to Salafi hermeneutical principles in the early editions.

Despite the controversy surrounding Quliyev's translation, it has many supporters who defend its merits. For example, representatives of *muftiĭat* DUMRF have used the early edition of Quliyev's translation. Sibgatullina has recently noted that senior figures from the DUMRF, such as the *muftiĭ* Ravil' Gaĭnutdin, have used this translation during their speeches[33], which might be one of the reasons DUMRF positioned themselves vehemently against the court ban. Moreover, the most recent edition of Quliyev's translation included a preface authored by the *muftiĭ* of DUMRF Ravil' Gaĭnutdin entitled "Blessings of Mufti Shaykh Ravil' Gaĭnutdin" (a "copy-paste" from Christian practice), a clear demonstration that this Qur'an translation has become embroiled in an ongoing process of contestation between various stakeholders in Russia (Kuliev 2022).

Another Qur'an translation into Russian that is widely recognized in Salafi circles is *Koran: Perevod smysla ayatov i ikh kratkoe tolkovanie* [The Qur'an: a

translation of the meaning of its verses, accompanied by concise interpretation], which is authored by a Tatar translator who is known by the teknonymic name Abu Adel (b. 1972). Abu Adel belonged to the circle of a well-known Tatar Salafi preacher, Idris Galavetdin (b. 1963), under whose close guidance he had studied.[34] His path to Islam was similar to that of Quliyev as they both turned to religion as adults. Although for Quliyev this happened during his studies at university, where he studied dentistry, for Abu Adel it happened a bit later: he recounts that he began to pray in the late 90s, at the age of 25, after completing his higher education in mathematics. Once Abu Adel became close to Galavetdin, he began to translate numerous short Islamic booklets, written by his teacher, from Tatar into Russian. Another similarity between Quliyev and Abu Adel can be seen in their path to learning Arabic. Despite having no formal training, both Quliyev and Abu Adel learned Arabic because of rigorous independent study, and this in turn led them to publish their respective Qur'an translations. Abu Adel's translation however was an independent project. First published in 2008, and already in its fourth edition, it aims to bring together the accurately translated text of the Qur'an with its proper interpretation based on *tafsīr*. According to him, the idea of "correctness" is primarily based on adhering to the correct *ʿaqīdah*. Although Abu Adel's work appeared after Quliyev's, and they are both considered to be "Salafi" translations, Quliyev's phrasing was not particularly influential for Abu Adel, although he does not overtly criticize Quliyev's translation. To determine the "correct" interpretation of the text, Abu Adel used the Saudi-produced *al-Tafsīr al-Muyassar* ("the simplified *tafsīr*"),[35] which is the work of a group of scholars affiliated with the King Fahd Qur'an Printing Complex (KFCPQ). His translation includes two types of interpolations: circular parentheses clarify implicit meanings related to the syntax and structure of the Arabic language, while square brackets indicate interpretations taken from *tafsīr*. Abu Adel's translation project became a success without the support of influential patrons or institutional backing. This can be attributed to its concise "translation cum *tafsīr*" format, which combined the two without mixing. Abu Adel's name became familiar to many through his teach-yourself book series on the Arabic language (Adel 2007), especially popular among self-taught and home-studying young Muslims, who referred to themselves as *ṭullāb al-ʿilm*, and his popularity increased after the publication of his Qur'an translation. The *tafsīr* included in his Qur'anic renderings helped to improve the reader's overall understanding of the text with reference to a reliable Salafi authority (i.e., *al-Muyassar*), while the segregated source-oriented Qur'an translation did not take away from the literal meanings. This was particularly important to and appreciated by those with a basic understanding of Arabic.

A major theological concern in Qur'an translations for Salafi-oriented Muslims and their opponents is the issue of the "correct" translation of *al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt*, and this is perhaps one of the most visible hermeneutical issues that differentiate the various theological approaches taken in modern Qur'an translations. While Salafism is a contested phenomenon that is essentially modern, it is fair to speak about "a specific mode of scriptural engagement" that is found not only among modern Salafis but also in premodern, medieval theological debates, according to which modern Salafis find their authoritative references in the works and opinions of so-called proto-Salafis.[36] According to the predominant view represented and developed by "historical orthodoxy," namely the schools of Ashʿarī and Māturīdī theology that are dominant in Sunni Islam, Allah is transcendent and completely different from everything in the created world. This absolute negation implies that Allah has no shape, body, or any kind of form, nor does He occupy a position in space. Two of the popular maxims through which this negation is expressed are "Whatever you imagine, Allah is not like that" and "Allah exists without a place."[37] This creates problems when it comes to scriptural interpretation, as there are some anthropomorphic descriptions of Allah in the Qur'an. This predominant theological framework necessitates that either one leaves the Qur'anic verses that contain Arabic words that literally mean, for example, "face," "shin," "feet" and "face," and the verses that speak about Allah's "throne," as they are in Arabic, that is, without explanation, according to the concept known as *bi-lā kayf* ("without asking how"), or one resorts to metaphorical explanations on the basis that these wordings also exist in Arabic as idiomatic phrases. While Salafis generally contest the anthropomorphic meanings of Allah's actions and attributes, they also assert that the scriptural description of Allah present in the verses related to *al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt* cannot be the subjects of human interpretation because the Qur'an states in Q. 3:7 "only Allah knows the true meaning".[38]

Intense medieval theological debates about the various interpretative possibilities occupied many books of *kalām* and *tafsīr,* while in modern times the issue drifted also into discussions about Qur'an translation. Whereas medieval theologians were arguing about the proper *understanding* of anthropomorphic expressions in Arabic, now it is the theological ramifications of signifiers in other languages that has become the new battlefield: translators need to make interpretive decisions, and when the words and phrases are transported into another language, this inevitably involves a new imaginative focus and therefore new contestations. Modern translation theory holds that any translation is in fact an act of interpretation, therefore the hermeneutical principle of literal translation of *al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt*

propagated by the KFQPC and independent Salafi translators demonstrates a paradox. On the one hand, there is a clear desire to stick to Salafi doctrine and not to interpret, and thus translate literally. However, on the other hand, the act of translation into any other language entails the appearance of some new meanings and connotations, while some old meanings and connotations disappear from the text, even if one attempts to translate as literally as possible. Thus, the Salafi theological motivation conditions the choice to translate literally, even though literal translation cannot completely avoid interpretation. The main opposition of modern Salafis is directed towards those who prefer to resort to metaphorical translation that would allegedly correspond to certain Arabic idioms and would thus make the creedal aspect as clear as possible. Whatever their approach to issues such as these, however, many Muslim translators – whether Salafi or Ashʿarī and Māturīdī – experience a degree of discomfort with the concept of Qurʾan translation. As a result, many modern Muslim-authored Qurʾan translations avoid titles like "the Qurʾan" or "translation of the Qurʾan" but instead choose various cumbersome titles like "translations of meanings of the Qurʾan" or "interpretation of the meanings of the Qurʾan."

Many of Krachkovskiĭ's students went on to extol in their own work the unique and innovative methodology proposed by their teacher, which was supposed to be based on "Extensive use of surviving artefacts of Bedouin poetry and prose from the sedentary population of Inner Arabia"[39] (from the time of Muhammad and slightly earlier), and a rejection of *tafsīr* as an interpretive aid. In fact, however, because Krachkovskiĭ's translation was not completed before his death, it cannot be fully judged by the proposed method. Unsurprisingly, however, it was not Krachkovskiĭ's "unique" methodology but his style, which often tends to be grammatically overly literal, that made his work particularly valuable and influential for subsequent Muslim translators. In the rest of this section, a comparative discussion about *al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt* in Krachkovskiĭ's, Quliyev's and Abu Adel's translations will demonstrate that the literality of the three target texts is similar, even in the case of such a sensitive topic as *al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt*. This will be shown through discussion of some sample verses containing the disputed words *wajh, yaduhu, aʿyununā, sāq* (literally: "face," "his hand," "our eyes," "shin"). To clarify my point, I will then provide comparative tables showing the respective authors' translations of the verb *istawā* in Q. 7:54 and Q. 32:4. This verb appears a number of times in the Qurʾan in relation to God and His Throne; the meaning of *istawā* is a subject of debates as it could potentially imply attributing a physical position to God. In addition to the Salafi translations, these tables provide a translation of these verses taken

from a recently published in 2019, professedly Māturīdī translation called *Kal͡am sharif* that, in contrast to the other translations discussed here, deliberately breaks with Krachkovskiĭ's linguistic influence and sets a new trend.[40] *Kal͡am sharif* is a translation produced by the Tatarstan *mufti͡at* (DUMRT), an Islamic institution affiliated with the Russian state and known for its vehement and unrelenting opposition to Salafi preaching activities.

In Q. 2:115, the phrase *"... fa-aynamā tuwallū fa-thamma wajhu llāhi ..."* includes the word *wajh*, literally "face*."* Both Quliyev and Abu Adel use the archaic Church Slavonic word *lik*, meaning "face," which is no longer in use, apart from its traditional use in relation to the portrayal of faces on icons. In doing so, both translators follow in a "tradition" of wording established by Krachkovskiĭ, who also used *lik*. However, if one looks at the whole verse, Quliyev's syntax and wording differ more significantly from Krachkovskiĭ than that used by Abu Adel. Furthermore, Quliyev capitalizes his translation choices for the relevant terms to demonstrate veneration of God. For Abu Adel, the main issue is to supply a translation that gives the "correct" interpretation, using additional material he provides incorporated within his two types of parentheses. The actual translation is, of course, no less important, so we can still see places where Abu Adel has made corrections. For example, in this verse he makes some minor changes to the word endings, from *ob"eml͡iushch* to *ob"eml͡iushchiĭ* (from the short to the full form of an adjective close to the English word "encompassing"), changes *vedushchiĭ* to *zna͡iushchiĭ* (both synonyms of "knowing") and adds the word "i" [и] (*wāw* / "and") which was omitted by Krachkovskiĭ, either intentionally, due to its supposed insignificance, or just as an erratum. However, since *tafsīr* is the priority for Abu Adel, his almost full adoption of Krachkovskiĭ's wording throughout the whole verse is not problematic for him.

However, the approach of using Church Slavonic as a repository for "lofty" terms in relation to divine attributes is not a consistent practice for either Quliyev or Abu Adel. For instance, Q. 67:1 contains the phrase *"tabāraka alladhī bi-yadihi al-mulku ..."*, in which, if using Church Slavonic terminology, the Arabic term *yad* could be translated as *dlan'* while, in Q. 54:14, *aʿyun* could be translated as *oko*, archaic Church Slavonic words for "hand" and "eye" respectively. However, both Muslim translators preferred to use Krachkovskiĭ's wording of *rukakh (*"hands"*)*. Quliyev makes his translation even more literal, using the singular so as to correspond to the actual Arabic word used, while Abu Adel simply capitalizes the following pronoun, otherwise completely replicating Krachkovskiĭ's wording of the whole verse, except for just one word in Q. 67:1. In the case of Q. 54:14, both translators used the same literal word with the same root as in Krachkovskiĭ.

In another case, Q. 68:42 includes the phrase *yawma yukshafu ʿan sāqin* which, if translated literally, corresponds to the "the day of the will-be uncovered shin," which is how it is translated by Abu Adel. Quliyev adds the word "Allah" after which makes it "shin of Allah" based on the *hadīth*, which Abu Adel adds into his translation in brackets. Similar to Krachkovskiĭ, they both render the Arabic wording literally, although Krachkovskiĭ changed the singular "shin" to the plural, perhaps to make it sound more anthropomorphic, while Quliyev and Abu Adel followed the Arabic text literally, and treat *sāq* as a divine attribute which cannot be altered. In terms of the mainstream Sunni understanding, the phrase *yukshafu ʿan sāqin* is an Arabic idiom that metaphorically refers to a time of difficulty, and here is related to the Day of Judgment. For example, Abdel Haleem gives this translation: "On the Day when matters become dire, they will be invited to prostrate themselves but will be prevented from doing so" (Abdel Haleem 2004). This is interesting when one compares Quliyev's and Abu Adel's translations to other Russian translations published shortly after the fall of the USSR. Arguably the two most popular and widely discussed translations were those by Iman Valeriia͡ Porokhova (1940-2019), a Russian convert to Islam, and Magomed-Nuri Osmanov (1924-2015), a Daghestani academic. If we look at these two works, they both also used metaphorical explanations far from the literal "shin". However, such resort to metaphorical translation was not a consistent translation strategy in either of their translations, primarily one assumes because the issue of *ʿaqīdah* in relation to *al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt* was not a yet such a contested issue and thus was not among the main considerations in their translations.

Tables 1 and 2 show the translation of *istawā* in Q. 7:54 and Q. 32:4, a verb which is often invoked in polemical debates about correct interpretation and translation between Salafis and their Ashʿarī/Māturīdī opponents. While polarization around the interpretation and translation of this particular word is not new or unique compared to other languages, in the Russian context it is exacerbated because of the semantics of the word *utverdilsi͡a,* which can be traced back to Krachkovskiĭ's translation (he used it consistently), from where it migrated to these Salafi translations, where it was also used consistently.

The word *utverdilsi͡a* has the root *tverd,* which means (to become) "firm," "hard" or "solid," and thus has inevitably "material" implications. Quliyev preferred the word "ascend" (*voznessi͡a*) as a translation but also added *utverdilsi͡a* in brackets as a legitimate alternative version. Abu Adel, in contrast, preferred *utverdilsi͡a* but added "exalted" (*vozvysilsi͡a*) in brackets. Importantly, given the wide range of *tafsīr* and translation sources he

Table 1. Q. 7:54

إِنَّ رَبَّكُمُ ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ فِى سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ ٱسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ يُغْشِى ٱلَّيْلَ ٱلنَّهَارَ يَطْلُبُهُ حَثِيثًا وَٱلشَّمْسَ وَٱلْقَمَرَ وَٱلنُّجُومَ مُسَخَّرَٰتٍ بِأَمْرِهِ أَلَا لَهُ ٱلْخَلْقُ وَٱلْأَمْرُ تَبَارَكَ ٱللَّهُ رَبُّ ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ

Krachkovskiĭ	Quliyev	Abu Adel	*Kalî am sharif*
Поистине, Господь ваш – Аллах, который создал небеса и землю в шесть дней, а потом **утвердился** на троне. Он закрывает ночью день, который непрестанно за ней движется… И солнце, и луну, и звезды, подчиненные Его власти. О да! Ему принадлежит и создание и власть. Благословен Аллах, Господь миров!	Воистину, ваш Господь – Аллах, Который сотворил небеса и землю за шесть дней, а затем вознесся на Трон (или **утвердился** на Троне*)*. Он покрывает ночью день, который поспешно за ней следует. Солнце, луна и звезды – все они покорны Его воле. Несомненно, Он творит и повелевает. Благословен Аллах, Господь миров!	Поистине, Господь ваш (о, люди) – Аллах, Который создал небеса и землю (из небытия) (по Своей мудрости) за шесть дней, (хотя Он мог их сотворить и за один миг, сказав лишь: «Будь!»), а затем **утвердился** [возвысился] (как подобает только Его величию) на Троне. Он по-крывает ночью день, который непрестанно за ней движется… И солнце, и луну, и звезды, подчиненные Его власти [Его могуществу]. О, да! Ему принадлежит и создание и власть. Благословен Аллах, Господь миров!	Поистине, ваш Господь — Аллах, Который создал небеса и землю за шесть [земных] дней, и возвысился [возвышением, подобающим величию Его Сущности, без передвижения и занимания места в пространстве] над Аршем. Он покрывает ночью день, который следует за ней без промедления. Солнце, луна и звезды – все они подчинены Его воле. Без сомнения, Он творит и повелевает [что пожелает]. Возвышен Аллах [и бесконечно далек от любых недостатков], Господь миров!

consulted, *utverdilsi͡a* was also used by Osmanov and *utverdil* (a word from the same root) is found in Porokhova's translation but is not used consistently in either. This usage connects all of these translations back to Krachkovskiĭ's word choice and reinforces his significance in the genealogy of Russian Qur'an translations. In both verses containing the verb *istawā*,

Table 2. Q. 32:4

ٱللَّهُ ٱلَّذِى خَلَقَ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ وَٱلْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِى سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ ٱسْتَوَىٰ عَلَى ٱلْعَرْشِ مَا لَكُم مِّن دُونِهِۦ مِن وَلِىٍّ
وَلَا شَفِيعٍ أَفَلَا تَتَذَكَّرُونَ

Krachkovskiĭ	Quliyev	Abu Adel	*Kalî͡am sharif*
<u>Аллах – тот, который сотворил небеса и землю и то, что между ними,</u> в <u>шесть дней, потом **утвердился** на троне. ...</u>	Аллах – Тот, Кто создал небеса и землю и то, что между ними, за шесть дней, а затем вознесся на Трон (или **утвердился** на Троне)...	<u>Аллах – (Он) Тот, Который сотворил небеса и землю и то, что между ними</u> (по Своей мудрости) за <u>шесть дней,</u> (хотя Он мог их сотворить и за один миг, сказав лишь: «Будь!»), <u>потом **утвердился** [возвысился] на Троне</u> (так, как подобает только Его величию, а не подобно творениям)...	Аллах – Тот, кто создал небеса и землю и все, что между ними, за шесть [земных] дней и возвысился [как подобает Его величию – без перемещения и занятия места в пространстве] над Аршем...

if the material in brackets is removed from Abu Adel's translation, it is again almost entirely identical to Krachkovskiĭ's in wording, syntaxis and even punctuation. The recent *Kalî͡am sharif* translation deliberately breaks with Krachkovskiĭ's *utverdilsi͡a*, which it extensively discusses in the introduction, and consistently avoids this and other words such as *voznessi͡a* used by Quliyev. Approaching it specifically from the perspective of creed and polemic opposition, *Kalî͡am sharif* uses *vozvysilsi͡a* ("exalted" or "rose to prominence"), which has stronger "non-material" implications but can still be understood to mean direction. Therefore, comments were added in *Kalî͡am sharif* to control the readers' avoidance of anthropomorphic implications. Additionally, the word ʿarsh was left untranslated to prevent the connotation of "throne".

It can also be seen, through the words underscored in the table above, and in the discussion of the extent of reliance on Krachkovskiĭ's wording, that in the case of Abu Adel, he relied on Krachkovskiĭ's translation not only when it comes to such specific issues as *al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt*, but more generally as a kind of skeleton text that he fleshed out with his own interpretations and

translation from *al-Muyassar.* This means that for Abu Adel, Krachkovskiĭ's identity was not particularly problematic when he was satisfied with his translation choices.

The specific translation decisions made when it comes to *istawā* reflect wider theological and ideological issues at work in the Russian context and Krachkovskiĭ's influence is such that the word *utverdilsi͡a* now is firmly integrated into the Russian Muslim polemical lexicon among Salafis and anti-Salafis.[41] In the Russian-speaking context, debates about *istawā* have become a symbolic stumbling block in the binary of Salafi and anti-Wahhabi discourse. They have been invoked in a variety of internet polemics and YouTube videos, and have even become an exemplary case in the introduction of the recent *Kali͡am sharif* Qur'an translation published by the DUMRT, which clarified its methodology of translation through the interpretation of the word *istawā.* The *muftii͡at* of Daghestan (DUMD), DUMRT and such closely related internet *daʿwah* projects as garib.ru and darulfikr.ru relentlessly publish materials and new videos polemicizing against those they consider to be "astray", namely, Wahhabis. In their clarification of Islam, the use of literal translations or anthropomorphic phrases in the Qur'an are often used as examples of incorrect belief.[42] From this viewpoint, erroneous belief is intrinsically linked to "extremism" and the threat to security (a stance extensively debated and nuanced in academic studies) which recognize the diverse Salafi ideological orientations.[43]

In response to anti-Salafi polemics, various Salafi groups point to the Māturīdī/Ashʿarī leanings of the DUMRT and of the DUMD as illustrated in their joint translation venture, *Kali͡am sharif,* and the discrepancies between this project and the views previously propagated by the "official Islam" represented by DUMD that the Qur'an should not be translated at all.[44] One of the loudest voices to take this position is that of the Daghestani émigré preacher Abdullakh Kostekskiĭ, who became known as the sharia judge for the Sunni nationalist militant organization The Caucasus Emirate (*Imarat Kavkaz*)[45] and is currently a YouTuber with almost 200,000 subscribers. Kostekskiĭ's preaching encompasses different kinds of religious polemics relating to issues that include Qur'an translations, *fiqh*, and current affairs, such as clarification of the impermissibility of participation on the side of ISIS or the Russian army in Syria and Ukraine.[46] While the Salafi approach to translation has been associated with extremist ideologies, it is important to note that, according to Denis Sokolov, the influence of Salafi preachers in preventing the Russian youth from joining ISIS has been underestimated. He argues that their impact has actually been far greater than that of official Russian state bodies like the *muftii͡ats*.[47] While *muftii͡ats* seek to portray

themselves as advocates of "peace and moderation," a stance that aligns well with the global "War on Terror" paradigm, this fails to fully capture their involvement in state activities, which has resulted in a lack of trust in them among the Muslim youth in Russia. The fact that many of the *muftiĭat*'s representatives are permanent loyalists to the Russian state's hawkish foreign policy, not to mention their extensive history of cooperation with state security forces, has rendered them unappealing to many Muslims. It is important to note that both Quliyev and Abu Adel are almost totally absent from these antagonistic religious disputations about proper beliefs, and the relationship between these and Qur'an translations. Quliyev is more publicly active, which means that his views on Qur'an translation are in the public domain, however he is not involved in public refutations nor does he openly disapprove of newly published works.

Based on the above analysis, it has become clear that the Qur'an (re) translations addressed here have their own genealogy that can be traced and explicated and that this can be related to political and theological stances on the part of the author(s). In the polemical debates that began in the 90s and, with the widespread use of the internet, became more intense in the following decades, the vocabulary used in Qur'an translations accepted by Salafis has been explicitly linked to foreign Wahhabi influence. For example, the state-connected Islamic internet portal IslamNews has stated that the debates over *utverdilsĭa* and *al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt*: "reflected the educational level with which students from Russia returned from various Arab and Muslim countries, where they had received their religious knowledge."[48] These and similar claims about Islam in Russia penetrated the disputes over the Qur'an translations and show how theological claims can be distinctly political, as in the case of anti-Wahhabi discourse in the Russian context. The political element is manifested through various means, such as the creation of an official list of "extremist literature," courts orders against specific Qur'an translations and *tafsīr*, and the rivalries and tensions implicit in the support or criticism of certain Qur'an translations by different *muftiĭats* on the basis of whether or not they are perceived to be 'Wahhabi'. The polemical vocabulary present in public Islamic discourse in Russia has been shaped not only through adversarial disputes among various Muslim groups in Russia, but also by exogenous factors, as demonstrated by the Orientalist Krachkovskiĭ's use of anthropomorphic nouns and the verb *utverdilsĭa*. While anthropomorphic nouns were used in many translations and do not necessarily indicate a particular creedal approach, especially in the early period after the fall of the USSR, later polemical debates between Muslims have meant that these words are nowadays necessarily related to ideas of

ʿaqīdah. In this context, the loudest disputes were over aqīdah polemics that occurred between the two main polarizing camps: various types of Salafists and muftiīats of Daghestan and Tatarstan. The muftiīats and other state-related stakeholders prioritized debates on "correct aqīdah" over other possible themes and issues because it provided a "safe space" that aligned with the state's focus on the securitization of Islam. This, in turn, reinforced the politicization of Qur'an translations in Russia.

Conclusion

One of Krachkovskiĭ's favorite phrases was a Latin expression that "Books have their destiny" (*Habent sua fata manuscripta*). As this study has demonstrated, the unfinished academic materials of this Russian Orientalist have indeed proved this true. Despite the complex relationship between confessional Muslim positions and the epistemic approaches of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Orientalists, the paradoxical context that was created by the dissolution of the USSR "revived" and "Islamized" Krachkovskiĭ's work and made it perhaps the most important secondary source in Russian for Muslim and specifically Salafi translations in the post-Soviet period.

As for the translations that are appreciated in Salafi circles, the focus on issues relating to *al-asmāʾ wa al-ṣifāt* demonstrates a clear congruence in the adoption of controversial Qur'anic terms by Krachkovskiĭ and both Quliyev and Abu Adel. Moreover, for Abu Adel, Krachkovskiĭ is often employed as an apparent intertext alongside the translated *tafsīr* explanations included in his translation. Perhaps most importantly, this chapter has found evidence that, apart from stylistic influences, there is a shared polemical vocabulary that was appropriated by Muslim translators which can be traced back to Krachkovskiĭ, as was demonstrated by the Orientalist Krachkovskiĭ's use of anthropomorphic nouns and the verb 'utverdilsi͡a'." The narrative of foreign influence largely ignores the "sources of the self" of modern Russian-speaking Muslims, which have various inner foundations, as some earlier scholars have noted.[49] These sources can be related to even the core foundational Muslim texts, as has been shown here with reference to the legacy of Krachkovskiĭ's Qur'an translation. Since Qur'an translations are often used as identity markers and are used to support intra-Muslim polemics, the fact that it is possible to trace Krachkovskiĭ's influence in Qur'an translations raises the question of what exactly makes a translation Salafi, apart from the alleged identity of the translator. Of course, institutional support, paratexual materials,

in-text interpolations and supportive *tafsīr* are among the significant factors which may affect such categorisations. However, the main debates are often about the specific word choices made in translation and it is what largely remains central to the domain of polemics. It is important to note, however, that the translations of religious texts may not necessarily reflect the beliefs and practices of Muslim individuals and communities. The use of certain translations as identity markers and the ways in which they are employed to support intra-Muslim polemics demonstrate how translation can be wielded for political and ideological purposes, rather than simply serving as a means of conveying the religious text to a wider audience.

This chapter has examined the influence of Krachkovskiĭ on two post-Soviet translations that were perceived by larger public as Salafi. However, due to the familiarity, authority and prestige of the Russian language in the whole post-Soviet space, and the frequent lack of availability of vernacular translations in print, many Muslim translators working in languages such as Kyrgyz, Azerbaijani, Uzbek and Crimean Tatar have also used Krachkovskiĭ as an important source for Qur'an translations in their own languages. Moreover, it has also been used beyond the borders of post-Soviet countries, for example in Bulgaria and the Czech Republic, and the story of Krachkovskiĭ's translation in Central Asia and beyond is still to be told.

Krachkovskiĭ's student-editors have lamented that when *Koran: perevod i kommentarii* was published for the first time it disappointed many people due to the incomprehensiveness of the text, and in the post-Soviet period, his translation has often been criticized by Muslim translators because of its "mistakes" and sometimes overly-literal style. However, from the practical side of the development of the genre, it is fair to say that it is precisely its literal aspect that gave it such "potentiality" (Deane-Cox 2014, 192) and, in fact, was an advantage that has given this work such a long life. Almost sixty years since it was first published it can be said that, despite its shortcomings, Krachkovskiĭ's book has, indeed, had a remarkably prominent destiny.

Notes

1.   This publication is a product of the project "GloQur – The Global Qur'an" that has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Program (Grant agreement n° 863650).

2.   For instance, Krachkovskiĭ's bestselling monograph *Nad arabskimi rukopisi͡ami* was originally translated into English and published by Brill in 1953, and republished in 2016 with a new introduction by Michel Kemper (Kratchkovsky 2016).

3. One of his students, the Arabist Teodor Shumovskiĭ (who also translated the Qur'an, although his translation did not become very well known) even called one of the chapters in his memoirs "The Krachkovskiĭ school" (Shumovskiĭ 1977).

4. The translation by the Christian missionary-polemicist Gordiĭ Sablukov (1804–1880) is still continuously reprinted; however, due to the background of its translator, Krachkovskiĭ's translation has a higher prestige. See Sablukov 2012. For more about Sablukov, the Kazan Theological Academy and Sablukov's Qur'an translation, see Geraci 2018.

5. Despite this general outlook, there was a peculiar and marginal sect known as "Krachkovt͡sy": Akhmet I͡arlykapov, "Traditsionnogo islama na severnom kavkaze net," accessed November 3, 2022, https://lenta.ru/articles/2015/03/04/salafism/.

6. The word "retranslation" is used here as a technical term, which will be discussed in more detail in the following sections.

7. Some of these later Qur'an translations were extremely popular and had multiple reprints and editions with many changes. However, to trace Krachkovskiĭ's influence the most suitable approach is to focus on first editions and, where these are not available, on the earliest available works: see Porokhova 1993; Osmanov 1995; Kuliev 2002; Abu Adelʹ 2008.

8. On Orientalist work on the Qur'an see, for example, Stefanidis 2008.

9. For more on the concept of *tarjamah* and Qur'an translations, see Pink 2020, 70–73; 2022. For an historical account of the doctrine of Qur'an inimitability and Muslim polemics about translation, see Zadeh 2012.

10. This does not refute the importance of languages of Muslim minorities like Tatar or the languages of the Caucasus. However, Muslims writing in the languages of empire is a common modern phenomenon.

11. An example of this approach to translation and critique of early Qur'an translations can be found in the work of Kuramukhammad Khadzhi Ramazanov (1956–2007), a Daghestani preacher associated with the *muftii͡at* of Daghestan (DUMD) (Ramazanov 2015). On Ramazanov, see Bobrovnikov 2020, 252.

12. For more on genetic criticism, see Cordingley and Montini 2015.

13. Genetic critics describe their sources as "avant-texte[s]" and generally don't focus on retranslations, however the possibility of using previously published texts as avant-texts has been noted by various authors. See, for example: Nuriev 2016); Deane-Cox 2014, 192.

14. For more on the Vostochnyĭ Faculty, see: https://www.orient.spbu.ru/index.php/ru/o-fakultete/istoriya-fakulteta/, accessed November 3, 2022; With the active involvement of the deputy mufti of the Moscow-based *muftii͡at* DUM RF, Damir Mukhetdinov, St Petersburg State University recently opened a new specialization in "Theology," which has challenged the "secularity" of Vostochnyĭ. Mukhetdinov also heads a new research center, on which see: https://spbu.ru/centr-islamskih-issledovaniy-spbgu, accessed

November 3, 2022. For more about Damir Mukhetdinov and the ideological strategies of his intellectual project, see: Kemper 2019.

15. In 1916, when Krachkovskiĭ was working there, it was called the Asian Museum of the Russian Academy of Science.

16. This positionality is misleading: see Bustanov 2015; Kemper 2019.

17. Michael Kemper, introduction to I.Y. Kratchkovsky, *Among Arabic Manuscript,* 3.

18. *Mukhaḍram* is an Arabic term used of poets who lived in the crossover between the late pre-Islamic era and early Islamic era. The metaphor was used to describe Krachkovskiĭ in Dolinina 1994.

19. For more on the "St Petersburg/Petrograd/Leningrad school," and Krachkovskiĭ in particular under pressure from the Bolshevik regime, see: Rodionov 2011.

20. Kemper, in Kratchkovsky 2016, 23. On Ignaz Goldziher and his methods in Islamic studies, see: Salaymeh 2022.

21. For the list of Krachkovskiĭ's works, see: Kolpakova 2007.

22. Jonathan A.C. Brown unites these approaches under the general term the Historical Critical Method (HCM) specifically in relation to *hadith* and provides an overview and genealogy of HCM in European Renaissance humanism. See: Brown 2017; also Salaymeh 2022.

23. On Kseniiā Kashtaleva's approach see, Kseniiā S. Kashtaleva, "'K voprosu o khronologii 8, 24, 47 sur Korana,' Doklady Akademii nauk," Vostokovedenie (1927), 101–7; Efim Rezvan, *Koran i ego mir* (St Petersburg: Orientalia, 2001), 58–61.

24. Salaymeh 2022, 117; Stefanidis 2008, 13. For more on the Eurocentric approach in contemporary Qur'anic studies and the coloniality often embedded in it, see: Lumbard 2022, 176.

25. For more about the publishing boom in post-Soviet countries, see: Rezvan 2011, 449–50.

26. For more on this period, see: Bobrovnikov 2019.

27. https://realnoevremya.ru/articles/109602-intervyu-s-istorikom-alfridom-bustanovym-ch2, accessed November 4, 2022; Bustanov 2017, 187.

28. On the genealogy of Salafism, see: Lauzière 2016.

29. The organization of which Russian state attributed to Chechen/Wahhabi separatists. The tragic events were surrounded by controversy, with the alternative accounts in which the Russian state itself was accused.

30. In addition to print publications, Elmir Quliyev has a website which contains a wide range of religious content: see https://e-minbar.com/, accessed November 4, 2022.

31. For more on the institution of *muftiiāts,* see: Bekkin 2020; Kemper 2012.

32. See, for example: https://www.gazeta.ru/social/2013/10/03/5680425.shtml and https://nazaccent.ru/content/9136-sovet-muftiev-rossii-raskritikoval-priznanie-populyarnogo.html, both accessed November 4, 2022.

33. Sibgatullina 2019, 238. For more on *muftiĭ* Gainutdin, see: Kemper 2012.

34. For more on Galavetdin, see: Bustanov 2017, 186–190.

35. Abu Adel's usage of *al-Tafsīr al-Muyassar* was not entirely consistent, as he acknowledged using other supplementary sources of *tafsīr* to a lesser extent.

36. Evstatiev 2021, 172. On Salafi paradigms, see: Pink 2019, 48–52.

37. For a short summary of Ashʿarī vs Salafī positions, see: Nahouza 2018, 11–19.

38. Ashʿarīs interpret it differently (see: *ibid.*, 20).

39. P. Grīaznevich and V. Beliaev's preface to Krachkovskiĭ 1986, 11, 21.

40. The new trend is evident in the latest edition of Quliyev's Qur'an translation (2022), where the word *istawā* is translated identically to *Kaliam sharif*, breaking from its longstanding position and departing from the established approach. The internal changes made in Quliyev's editions and the role of his works in the development of the Qur'an translation genre in the context of the Russian language merit a separate study. However, for the purposes of this particular chapter, the focus is limited to the earliest available edition to more accurately trace the influence of Krachkovskiĭ's Qur'an translation.

41. For more on the Russian Muslim lexicon, see: Bustanov and Kemper 2012.

42. YouTube is full of this kind of video from various preachers. For example, the recent one from DUMD by Daghestani theologian Musa Bagilov dated 2022: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YYpKa-nCd5E, accessed February 25, 2023.

43. For instance, Wiktorowicz (2006) subdivides Salafis into purists, politicos, and *jihādis*.

44. In this video, Daghestani preacher Mukhammadrasul Gimbatov, associated with DUMD, upholds the longstanding position of DUMD that the Qur'an should not be translated. In the comments section of the video, he clarifies that this position has changed after the appearance of *Kaliam sharif*, see: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wJBFVdfD_E, accessed March 2, 2023.

45. More about *Imarat Kavkaz* can be found on: Mapping Militant Organizations. "Caucasus Emirate." Stanford University. Last modified August 2018. https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/caucasus-emirate, accessed March 12, 2023.

46. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ScDgMv2osuc, accessed March 1, 2023.

47. The summary of Sokolov presentation entitled "Muslims of the former Soviet Union in Exile" at the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies on 11 April 2017 available here, see: https://www.caa-network.org/archives/8862, accessed March 02, 2023.

48. https://islamnews.ru/Muftij-Hanafity-maturidity-shafiity-asharity-i-tochka, accessed February 25, 2023.

49. For example, Danis Garaev (2023) has demonstrated that the language of Russian speaking jihadists in the post-Soviet North Caucasus was shaped by the Soviet intellectual heritage through the ideas of such people as the Russian philosopher and historian Lev Gumilev.

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Traversing and transcending the empire on which the sun never sets: the colonial and postcolonial afterlives of Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation

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Abstract

The English Qur'an translation by Muhammad Ali, the head of the Lahore Ahmadiyya movement, was first published in 1917 and arguably became the most influential Muslim Qur'an translation in subsequent decades. It was partially and fully translated into several languages and many translators around the world drew on both the text of the translation and the notes. Moreover, Muhammad Ali's style and layout choices were frequently copied. This chapter pursues the genealogy of Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation throughout the past 100 years, tracing the ways in which it influenced subsequent translations, up to the point of plagiarism. The analysis demonstrates that after the Second World War, the Ahmadiyya was increasingly marginalized and vilified, and this led many editors to purify Muhammad Ali's legacy of ostensibly Ahmadi elements. This process of erasure created distinctive exegetical identity markers that made a translation recognizable as an Ahmadiyya translation, whereas de-Ahmadified versions of Muhammad Ali's translation continue to be marketed to Shi'i and Sunni Muslims.

Keywords: Qur'an, Qur'an translation, India, British Empire, Ahmadiyya, Dutch East Indies, Indonesia, South Africa

Introduction

In 2014, the Islamic Dawah Movement (IDM) of Southern Africa in Durban, South Africa, published a new, "rectified" edition of the Afrikaans Qur'an translation by Mohammed Armien Baker that had first been printed more than fifty years before in 1961.[1] One of the more conspicuous changes made by the editors can be seen in their revision of Baker's translation of Q 3:55, a verse in which God addresses Jesus by saying, in the original Arabic, *Yā*

ʿĪsā innī mutawaffīka wa-rāfiʿuka ilayya. Baker's original translation had rendered the segment as

> O Jesus, Ek sal u laat sterwe en u in My aanwesigheid verhef
> [O Jesus, I will let you die and elevate you into My presence]

which the editors in Durban changed to

> O Jesus, Ek sal u ophef en u in My teenwoordigheid verhef
> [O Jesus, I will raise you up and elevate you into My presence (*teenwoordigkeit* being a more common and up-to-date term than *aanwesigheid*)]

Both Baker's original choice of translation and the editors' decision to revise it are closely connected to the fact that Baker, without acknowledging it, made use of a controversial Qur'an translation from British India: Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Qur-án*, first published in Woking, England, in 1917. Muhammad Ali was an important figure in the messianic Ahmadiyya movement and, because of the Ahmadiyya's efforts at spreading Islam within and beyond the British Empire, his translation was adopted and adapted in many parts of the world. At the same time, due to the bitter polemics against the Ahmadiyya on the part of non-Ahmadi Muslims, it was attacked to the point of provoking counter-translations. It was also common, as is the case with the Durban edition, that attempts were made to erase the traces of his translation and eliminate it from the history of modern Muslim Qur'an translation.

This chapter sheds light on the global genealogies of Muhammad Ali's translation, including its afterlives in South Africa, and on the ways in which translators, editors and publishers affirmed, rejected and erased his choices, making Qur'an translation a site of sectarian identity formation.

"Speaking back to the rulers": Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation

In 1917, the English Qur'an "translation and commentary" by "Maulvi Muhammad Ali M.A., LL.B., President Ahmadiah Anjaman-i-Ishaet-i-Islam Lahore, India" was published in Woking, England (Ali 1917; Lawrence 2017, 51–57). It was the fourth complete English Qur'an translation by a Muslim to appear in the short time span since 1905. However, all its predecessors had been published in India and failed to have an impact beyond its borders

(Khan 1905; Abu'l-Fadl 1911; Dihlawi 1916). This was decidedly different with Muhammad Ali's work which was reprinted, revised, reworked, reviled, and translated countless times.

Muhammad Ali (1874–1951) was a native of Punjab in British India. Having obtained a B.A. in mathematics, an M.A. in English and a legal degree at British educational institutions in India, he joined the messianic movement led by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835–1908) of Qadian. Because of his fluency in English, he translated many of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's writings into English and wrote English articles in defense of Islam against the arguments of Christian missionaries. Most of these articles were published in the Ahmadiyya journal *Review of Religions*, which Muhammad Ali edited.[2]

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad saw a need to produce English writings on Islam, including a "commentary of the Qur'an," and send them to Europe for missionary purposes (Ahmad and Faruqui 2011, 35). His successor Hakim Nur-ud-Din (1841–1914), who had a strong interest in the Qur'an and its exegesis and was teaching these subjects within the Ahmadiyya community, continued this policy and commissioned Muhammad Ali to produce an English Qur'an translation. Muhammad Ali seems to have embarked on this project with vigor, supported by Nur-ud-Din who followed his progress closely. He soon gained the impression that his translation would not be useful without extensive paratextual additions such as a detailed introduction, notes, cross-references, an introduction to and summary of each sura, and section headers (*Ibid.*, 64–75).

By the time Ali completed the translation in 1916, Nur-ud-Din had passed away and the community had split in two over the question of succession. Muhammad Ali had become the head of the Lahore branch, which firmly rejected the transfer of the caliphate to Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's eldest son Mirza Bashir-ud-Din in 1914, whereas the Qadian branch accepted Bashir-ud-Din's caliphate as well as his all-encompassing authority. Muhammad Ali decided to include the Arabic text of the Qur'an in the translation and have it printed in England through the Woking Muslim Mission. This institution, while officially non-sectarian, was closely associated with the Lahore Ahmadiyya (Ansari 2018, 138–48; Gilham 2014, 125–29, 138–39, 200). The decision to have the translation printed in England, as opposed to India, seems to have been primarily made for reasons of print quality, but it also ensured the translation a reception beyond India, especially in the heart of the British Empire, placing "(…) the Ahmadis (…) at the forefront of British colonial subjects who responded to the impact of Protestant missions to India. A product of British rule, they spoke back to their rulers, becoming global proselytizers for Islam" (Lawrence 2017, 53).

Muhammad Ali's translation saw reprints in 1920 and 1935, as well as an edition without the Arabic text and with abridged notes in 1928, which was also reprinted several times. According to the Lahore Ahmadiyya, these editions, up until around 1950, totaled 42,000 copies (Ahmad and Faruqui 2011, 145–149).

While the translation used the same archaic English, reminiscent of the King James Bible, that all other Qur'an translators opted for at the time, it had many features that distinguished it from its predecessors. It was the first complete English translation to contain both the English and the Arabic text of the Qur'an in good print quality.[3] Unlike the translations by George Sale (1697–1736), John Rodwell (1808–1900), and Edward Henry Palmer (1840–1882) that dominated the market of English Qur'an translations at the time (Sale 1850; Rodwell 1909; Palmer 1880). it was written by a Muslim and therefore appealed to Muslim audiences. However, the extensive notes were also geared towards readers with a Christian European background and made ample reference to their knowledge of the Bible and their preconceived notions of Islam. For Muslim readers used to Urdu or Persian Qur'an translations,[4] the way that Muhammad Ali conscientiously refrained from including exegetical additions in the text of the translation itself was a novelty. He closely followed the Arabic wording and syntax and relegated explanations to the footnotes, whereas previous Muslim translations into South Asian languages had usually opted for delivering an explanatory paraphrase (Pink 2020, 329–59).

It was not only in this regard that Muhammad Ali was among the pioneers of a new genre of Qur'an translation in a Muslim context. The translation contained extensive paratextual material, such as an introduction of nearly 90 pages, an abundance of footnotes, and a detailed index. The introduction and the notes were not only informative for curious non-Muslim readers who were unfamiliar with the Qur'an, but also useful for Muslims who wanted to defend the Qur'an against typical accusations coming from Christian missionaries, for example, with regard to inconsistencies between the Qur'an and the Bible. Furthermore, Muhammad Ali might have thought of the needs of potential converts, as can be seen from the detailed prayer instructions he gives in the introduction.

The translation had many novel features, such as the column-style layout that made it easy to align the Arabic text with the translation, the inclusion of marginal notes for alternative translations and cross-references, and especially the subdivision of suras into thematic sections with section headers. Furthermore, each sura was preceded by an abstract and introduction, allowing readers to make sense of its content, which is often stylistically and thematically diverse.

Muhammad Ali's affiliation with the Ahmadiyya community was already controversial among Muslims at the time of publication and only became more so as time progressed. His translation provoked scathing reactions on the part of Muslim scholars and intellectuals, especially in Egypt, where it was even publicly burned in the courtyard of the Azhar Mosque (Wilson 2014, 190–96; Ichwan 2001, 143–61). The messianic claims of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, which most other Muslims considered to be erroneous at best and heretical at worst, were the main bone of contention between Ahmadiyya and non-Ahmadiyya Muslims. However, these claims were not readily apparent in the text of Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation, as he had made a conscious attempt to present his work as non-sectarian, addressing all Muslims. Therefore, Muslim critics of *The Holy Qur-án* mainly focused on two features of the translation that, while initially not entirely unique, were distinctive enough to attract attention and gradually became closely associated with adherence to the Ahmadiyya.

First, Muhammad Ali was determined to harmonize the Qur'an and the modern natural sciences, and this led him to make some unusual translation choices. He consistently tried to interpret Qur'anic verses about prophetic miracles in a manner that rid the stories of their supernatural dimension. The table below addresses some of the most striking examples. Muhammad Ali's translation is juxtaposed here with that of the English Orientalist Edward Henry Palmer, which adopts a more conventional reading of these passages:

Palmer	Muhammad Ali
Q 2:55 And when ye [Moses' people] said to Moses, 'O Moses! we will not believe in thee until we see God manifestly,' and the <u>thunderbolt</u> caught you while ye yet looked on. **56** Then we raised you up after your <u>death</u>; perhaps ye may be grateful.	**Q 2:55** And when you [Moses' people] said: O Moses! we will not believe in you until we see Allah manifestly, so the <u>punishment</u> overtook you while you looked on. **56** Then We raised you up after your <u>stupor</u>[5] that you may give thanks.
Q 2:60 When Moses, too, asked drink for his people and we said, '<u>Strike with thy staff the rock</u>,' and from it burst twelve springs …	**Q 2:60** And when Moses prayed for drink for his people, We said: <u>Seek with your staff a way into the mountain</u>. So there flowed from it twelve springs.[6]
Q 12:93 [Joseph said:] 'Take this my shirt, and throw it over the face of my father, he will <u>become able to see</u>.' […] **96** And when the herald of glad tidings came he threw it on his face, and he was <u>restored to sight</u>.	**Q 12:93** [Joseph said:] Take this my shirt and cast it before my father, he will <u>come to know</u> […] **96** So when the bearer of good news came he cast it before him, so he <u>became certain</u>.[7]

Q 27:18 until they [Solomon's army] came upon the valley of the <u>ants</u> [ar. *naml]*. Said an <u>ant</u>, 'O ye <u>ants</u>! go into your dwellings, that Solomon and his hosts crush you not while they do not perceive.' **19** And he [Solomon] smiled, laughing at her speech…	**Q 27:18** Until when they [Solomon's army] came to the valley of the <u>Naml</u>, a <u>Namlite</u> said: O <u>Naml</u>! enter your houses, (that) Solomon and his hosts may not crush you while they do not know. **19** So he [Solomon] smiled, wondering at her word …[8]
Q 27:20 And he [Solomon] reviewed the birds, and said, 'How is it I see not <u>the hoopoe</u> [ar. *hudhud*]? Is he then amongst the absent? [There follows a dialogue between Solomon and the hoopoe in which the latter brings information on the Queen of Sheba.]	**Q 27:20** And he [Solomon] reviewed the birds, then said: How is it I see not <u>Hudhud</u>, or is it that he is of the absentees?[9]
Q 105:1 Hast thou not seen what thy Lord did with the fellows of the elephant?[10] **2** Did He not make their stratagem lead them astray, **3** and send down on them birds in flocks, **4** <u>to throw down on them stones of baked clay</u> …	**Q 105:1** Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant? **2** Did He not cause their war to end in confusion, **3** And send down <u>(to prey)</u> upon them birds in flocks, **4** <u>Casting them against hard stones</u> …[11]

Thus, according to Muhammad Ali's understanding of the Qur'an, the Israelites were not miraculously raised from the dead, springs did not suddenly burst forth from a rock that Moses struck with his staff, Jacob did not regain his eyesight after his face had been covered with his son's shirt, Solomon most certainly could not talk to ants or birds or understand their language, nor was the army with the elephants marching on Mecca attacked by stone-throwing birds; instead birds preyed on the soldiers' corpses. Supernatural events have no place in his approach to Qur'anic narratives.

Many of the above-mentioned interpretations were not his own invention. First, they were based on an understanding of the text he shared with Nur-ud-Din, who had also passed it on to the Qadian branch of the Ahmadiyya, in whose translations it occurs as well. Second, this understanding clearly went back in many cases to the Urdu Qur'anic commentary by Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817–1898) who had been a strong proponent of a "scientific" reading of the Qur'an (Khan 1308). However, Sayyid Ahmad Khan's Qur'anic commentary only covered the first half of the Qur'an. This excludes, for example, the story of Solomon's campaign to Sheba during which Solomon comes to the Valley of the Ants and talks to the hoopoe; reinterpreting this narrative in the above-mentioned manner seems to be an Ahmadiyya specialty.

Both Sayyid Ahmad Khan's and Muhammad Ali's approach to miracles deviated from the premodern Muslim exegetical tradition. The difference between them was that, whereas Sayyid Ahmad Khan had written an

extensive Qur'an commentary that purported to present an explanation of the source text, Muhammad Ali aimed to provide a direct representation of the source text's meaning in which he completely obscured the very existence of miracles in the source text. In this, he not only differed from mainstream Islamic scholarship but also from the Orientalist Qur'an translations that had usually rendered the immediately apparent, straightforward meaning of the text. In the eyes of Muhammad Ali's opponents, his rationalism and admiration for the modern sciences matched the – often negatively colored – perception of the Ahmadiyya as allies of the British and proponents of European thought on the part of many South Asian Muslims.

The second noteworthy and contentious feature of Muhammad Ali's translation choices is related to his perspective on the death of Jesus which is reflected in his translation of Q 3:55, cited at the beginning of this chapter.[12] In this case, his translation renders the Arabic text in a fairly straightforward literal way:

> **3:55**[13]: O Jesus! I will cause you to die (*mutawaffīka*) and exalt you in My presence …

This translation is similar to that of earlier Orientalists such as Sale, Rodwell and Palmer but it appeared problematic to many Muslims because Muhammad Ali's choice was clearly associated with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad's distinctive ideas about the death of Jesus. Against a background of disputes with Christian missionaries, and at a time at which biblical archaeology enjoyed great prestige, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad had advanced the idea that Jesus had survived his crucifixion and had then migrated to Kashmir where he died and was buried. One function of this claim was the refutation of the Christian missionaries' argument that Jesus was superior to Muḥammad because Muḥammad was a mere mortal while Jesus was resurrected from the dead and raised to heaven (Friedmann 2003, 113–15; Valentine 2008, 18–30).[14]

Yet most non-Ahmadiyya Muslims believe that Jesus physically rose to heaven while still alive. However, unlike the rejection of Jesus' death on the cross, which is a crucial difference between Muslim and Christian beliefs, this was hardly a core component of Muslim theology before the Ahmadiyya emerged. It only became an important doctrine in contradistinction to Ahmadiyya beliefs, especially since Mirza Ghulam Ahmad connected his idiosyncratic theory with his own messianic claims: The old Messiah had died, and therefore a new Messiah had to appear.[15] The increasing awareness of these claims and their rejection on the part of non-Ahmadi Muslims were inextricably linked to debates over the correct translation of the

Qur'an. Many Muslim translators who were not Ahmadis chose to translate *mutawaffīka* with expressions that do not imply death, for example, "I am gathering thee" (Marmaduke Pickthall, 1875–1936) or "I will take thee" (Abdullah Yusuf Ali, 1872–1953).

Muhammad Ali also made translation choices that are not as clearly linked to Ahmadiyya beliefs as the examples cited so far but which nevertheless distinguish his translation from many others. For example, he chose to render the term *furqān* in Q 25:1, after which the sura is named, as "the distinction": "Blessed is He who sent down the distinction upon His servant." The term *furqān* is usually understood by exegetes as a designation for the Qur'an, and since it is derived from the root *f–r–q*, which denotes a difference, distinction, or separation, they explain it as a reference to the standard or criterion by which truth can be distinguished from falsehood. Muhammad Ali's choice to use the English term "distinction" is very close to the original meaning of the root of the word *furqān* but does not constitute an easily comprehensible translation; it is probably for this reason that the majority of English translators seem to prefer the term "criterion."

Another, maybe more striking choice is related to a controversy that has deep roots in Islamic theology and that concerns the anthropomorphic descriptions of God in the Qur'an. It is a well-established opinion in Islamic theology that descriptions of God's eyes, hands or face or His station on the Throne have to be understood metaphorically. This does not necessarily mean that a translator of the Qur'an would need to completely remove the literal aspect of these verses from his translation and replace it with a metaphorical expression. However, this was precisely what Muhammad Ali did.

For example, the famous "Throne verse" (Q 2:255, *āyat al-kursī*) says of God that *wasiʿa kursiyyuhū al-samawāt wa al-arḍa*, which might be translated as "His seat [or chair or pedestal, Ar. *kursī*] extends over the heavens and the earth." Muhammad Ali translates the segment as "His knowledge extends over the heavens and the earth," with no mention of any seat, chair or pedestal. This is not an unusual interpretation as such because many exegetes understood the term *kursī* to refer to either God's knowledge or power. However, unlike Muhammad Ali, they did not deny that its literal meaning is that of a seat or pedestal. Muhammad Ali makes a substantial effort to convince readers that his metaphorical translation is the true meaning of *kursī*; he even resorts to claiming in a footnote that Q 2:255 is known as "*the verse of power* or *knowledge*," rather than the "Throne verse" (Ali 1934, 120 n. 341).

A further idiosyncrasy can be found in Muhammad Ali's approach to the disjointed letters at the beginning of many suras. For example, the second

sura starts with the letters *Alif Lām Mīm*. Muhammad Ali translates them as "I am Allah, the best Knower," reading the letters as an acronym of that sentence in Arabic. In this regard, Muhammad Ali is clearly indebted to esoteric practices of interpreting the Qur'an that were shunned by most modern Qur'an translators, unless they were explicitly aiming to deliver a Sufi interpretation.

All in all, Muhammad Ali produced a ground-breaking translation of the Qur'an, but his exegetical choices were not always in line with mainstream approaches. It was next to impossible for subsequent Muslim translators, especially in English and in British India, to avoid taking a stance on it, as an analysis of the works written by his immediate successors shows.

Negotiating Muhammad Ali's influence in British India

Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation set a precedent. It was only twelve years earlier that the first English Qur'an translation by a Muslim translator had been published,[16] but by 1917 Muslim translation activity in English was gaining traction in India, and the impact of Muhammad Ali's work only served to speed up this process. While reception of his work was mixed, its influence loomed large in the background of subsequent English Qur'an translations from British India, especially during the 1920s and 1930s.

In 1929, a translation was published by Ghulam Sarwar, a district judge in Singapore who, like Muhammad Ali, was a British-educated Muslim from Punjab (Lawrence 2017, 53).[17] In the introduction, Sarwar reviews previous English Qur'an translations, including Muhammad Ali's to which he devotes six pages. He lauds Muhammad Ali's erudition and praises the introduction and the notes of his translation, not only for their impeccable English but also because of their informative content. The introduction, in particular, he calls "most authoritative and masterly," "the *vade mecum* of Muslim students, writers, and lecturers," and "a labour of love for which Muslims and non-Muslims alike are for ever [sic] indebted to Maulvi Muhammad Ali" (Sarwar 1929, xxxvi-xxxvii). Generally, he confesses himself to be most impressed with Muhammad Ali's paratextual choices and the innovative features he introduced. It is also clear that he implicitly aims to defend Muhammad Ali against accusations of distorting the Qur'an's meaning to support the claims of the Ahmadiyya. Sarwar writes,

> Let no man run away with the idea that Maulvi Muhammad Ali has introduced any new meanings into the translation of his text. If one is not hasty, one will always find that Maulvi Muhammad Ali is as great

an investigator as he is a scholar. I do not say that he is not novel in some of his comments, but there is no harm in that. Everyone who is honest in his interpretation of the Qur-ân has a right to express his views in his own way. (*Ibid*., xxxvii).

While Sarwar does categorize Muhammad Ali's translation as a masterpiece that no other English translation can compete with, he is unhappy with the English style of the translation proper, which he considers poorly constructed. This is either, he suspects, for lack of time or out of respect for a literal translation of the Arabic source text that forces the Arabic syntax and vocabulary upon the target text. As a result, Sarwar contends, many passages can only be easily understood by readers who know Arabic and would make no sense to others. He lists a number of verses as evidence of this claim (*Ibid*., xxxvii-xli). He does emphasize that it is merely the English style and not Muhammad Ali's understanding of the Qur'an with which he finds fault (*Ibid*., xlii).

Thus, it could be said that Sarwar aimed to produce a counter-translation to Muhammad Ali's work on a stylistic level while approving of and adopting many of Muhammad Ali's structural and exegetical choices. He took from Muhammad Ali the idea of writing extensive summaries of the contents of each sura and of dividing the suras into thematic segments. He also follows many of Muhammad Ali's idiosyncratic takes on prophetic miracles: Moses is commanded to "go into the mountains" with his staff (Q 2:60); Jacob becomes "enlightened" when Joseph's shirt is laid on his face (Q 12:93, 69); Solomon's army enters the Valley of the Naml (Q 27:18), which Sarwar explains as either ants or the name of a tribe; and *hudhud* is treated as a proper name, rather than Arabic for "hoopoe." However, Sarwar's versions of Q 2:55–56 and Q 105:1–4 are more conventional. More importantly, he does not follow Muhammad Ali in his specifically Ahmadi interpretation of Q 3:55; in his translation, God does not say to Jesus "I will cause you to die," but rather "I will give thee full (reward)." Sarwar does not see any reason to explicitly denounce Muhammad Ali's choices with respect to these verses, though.

While Sarwar's translation did not receive much attention or recognition, another translation that was published shortly thereafter by the British convert to Islam Marmaduke Pickthall, and funded by the Nizam of Hyderabad, met with a very different reception. Some eleven years before the publication of his translation, in 1919, Pickthall had mused on the bad quality of existing Qur'an translations, and it is hard to avoid the impression that his remarks on translators who were "preoccupied by individual words ... rather than by the meaning as a whole," their "prosy ... discursive and garrulous

translations" and the "foolish ... notes which choke the text" were targeted at Muhammad Ali specifically (Pickthall 1919, 19). After all, the translations by Sale, Rodwell and Palmer, which were Muhammad Ali's main competitors at the time, did not have extensive annotation. That said, Pickthall's musings were published in a Lahore Ahmadiyya journal, which suggests that he harbored no marked hostility towards the Ahmadiyya. While in his Qur'an translation he does not follow the vast majority of Muhammad Ali's less conventional choices regarding prophetic miracles and the death of Jesus, he mentions in a footnote on Q 46:29 the interpretation of the *jinn* as a Jewish tribe by "some commentators." By this he is almost certainly referring to Muhammad Ali, who was just as opposed to the idea of an invisible species of beings made of fire as he was to the notion of miracles. Pickthall's failure to distance himself from Muhammad Ali in this matter drew the criticism of a later Sunni reviewer, who also blamed him for mentioning Muhammad Ali by name in a footnote on Q 2:73 with no sign of disapproval (Kidwai 2017, 231–48).[18] In fact, given how few footnotes Pickthall's translation contains and how terse they usually are, the explicit mention of Muhammad Ali's opinion in this case is probably meant to indicate his approval (Pickthall 1930, 32 n.1; Kidwai 2017, 240–41). Thus, Pickthall, while not subscribing to most of Muhammad Ali's peculiar exegetical choices, also saw no need to *a priori* reject or deliberately oppose them in his translation and had no qualms about mentioning them favorably when he felt it was warranted.

Abdullah Yusuf Ali's English translation (1934–1937) pursues a similar strategy and his verdict on Muhammad Ali is reminiscent of Sarwar's. In his introductory review of existing Qur'an translations, Yusuf Ali describes Muhammad Ali's translation as a "scholarly work" that is "equipped with adequate explanatory matter in the notes and the Preface, and a fairly full index." However, he continues, "the English of the text is decidedly weak, and is not likely to appeal to those who know no Arabic" ('Alī 1934a, xviii).

That said, Yusuf Ali is clearly very much indebted to Muhammad Ali as regards the content and arrangement of his translation: the two-column bilingual layout with copious footnotes, the inclusion of introductions to and summaries of each sura and the subdivision of suras into sections. He does not subscribe to any of Muhammad Ali's distinctive interpretations but his way of dealing with supernatural events indicates how much Muhammad Ali's rationalistic approach to them reflected the *zeitgeist* among British-educated South Asian intellectuals, even if they did not share Muhammad Ali's specific methods. While Yusuf Ali opts for a literal translation of miracle narratives in the Qur'an, he frequently explains in the notes that they should be understood as parables. For example, ants,

according to him, symbolize the weakest and most humble believers. Thus, the question of whether Solomon actually understood the speech of ants is immaterial. Occasionally, but rarely, Yusuf Ali tries to integrate a rationalist interpretation – which might be a reference to Muhammad Ali or a different source, like Sayyid Ahmad Khan – with a more conventional one. For example, he argues that the incident where Jacob regained his sight might be understood with regard to both physical and mental vision. Like Pickthall, he tends to be skeptical of the concept of *jinn* as a different species (Ali 1375, n. 4809), but this was not an entirely unusual view at the time and certainly not specific to the Ahmadiyya.[19] Thus, like Pickthall, Yusuf Ali strikes a balance between recognizing Muhammad Ali's achievement, criticizing his linguistic style, ignoring his more unusual exegetical choices without polemicizing against them, and adopting a few of them where he felt it was warranted. Muhammad Ali's views do not feature prominently in his notes, but he does refer to him occasionally by name when he feels that his notes are informative.

Not everyone was happy with such a laid-back approach towards the Lahore Ahmadiyya and their translation, especially given the popularity of Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation. A. F. Badshah Husain, a Shi'i translator and commentator connected to important Shi'i educational and missionary institutions in North India, was so preoccupied with the refutation of Muhammad Ali's approach to the Qur'an that this seemed to dwarf even his desire to defend Shi'i doctrines. In his foreword to the first volume, he wrote,

> An apology may be required for repeated references to the Ahmadi Commentary—very frequently for the purpose of attack. I have nothing but admiration for this finely executed work which I regard as great in many respects. But frequently to support his views and predelictions [sic], more so to avoid the supernatural element in the Quran, the author systematically perverts the plainest meaning of words and passages, and in my opinion in this he has done an amount of dis-service to Islam that is incalculable. (Husain 1931, I, 2)

Thus, in contrast to the previously discussed South Asian translators, it is not Muhammad Ali's English that Badshah Husain finds fault with but his exegetical choices, and he misses no opportunity to make this abundantly clear. It nearly goes without saying that he rejects the Ahmadiyya approach on Q 3:55, translating the beginning of the verse as "O Jesus I will take hold of thee (*mawaffika* [sic]) and lift thee up to my presence" and dedicates a footnote that covers two and a half pages to the refutation of the Ahmadiyya

interpretation of the verse. He concludes that footnote by polemicizing against materialism, trying to prove the existence of heaven and drawing on modern mathematical theories of four-dimensional space to do so (*Ibid.*, 1936, 44–8). This is completely in line with the general fervor with which he defends supernatural events and divinely-ordained miracles. Thus, regarding the subject of angels, he states that "it is wrong, utterly wrong, to take them as the Ahmadi Commentator and other rationalists do to take them [sic] as a mere name for the powers of good," (*Ibid.*, 1931, I, 35) and in another instance he berates Muhammad Ali's "brilliant display of jugglery in turning the meanings of words and making whole sentences disappear from the sight of his readers" (*Ibid.*, 1931, I, 77).

When it comes to Badshah Husain's commentary on those verses regarding prophetic miracles that Muhammad Ali interprets in a rationalistic manner, we only have access to the first five suras, as it seems that he did not publish any more of his translation.[20] He devotes an entire page to denouncing Muhammad Ali's interpretation of Q 2:56–57, according to which the Israelites were not resurrected from death but from a "stupor." Badshah Husain argues that this goes against the unequivocal Qur'anic meaning of the term *mawt* ("death"), and that the Ahmadi commentator "in his zeal to get rid of the miraculous" ignores the detailed biblical account of the event (Husain, 1931, I, 61).[21] He makes a similar argument with regard to Q 2:60 where, he says, the clear Qur'anic meaning is that Moses "was commanded to strike the rock with his staff, and twelve springs miraculously came out" and comments that this "incident is well-known and given in Exodus" (Husain 1931, I, 64. Cf. Exod. 17:1-6). Muhammad Ali's desire to do away with miracles clearly seems so absurd to him that on one occasion, he exclaims in frustration, "It is really degrading to have to deal with such class [sic] of writers" (*Ibid.*, I, 77).

Even Badshah Husain's fervent attacks against Muhammad Ali's translation testify to its impact, though. In the context of British India in the 1920s and 1930s, it was obviously a Qur'an translation that could not be overlooked.

A second-hand translation in the Dutch East Indies

The influence of Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation extended far beyond British India, and beyond the boundaries of the British Empire. This was not only because of the missionary activities of the Lahore Ahmadiyya, but also because of the pioneering role of *The Holy Qur-án* in the English-speaking field and its innovative features that made it a useful resource for many

readers. Moreover, in the interwar period, the Ahmadiyya movement, while certainly controversial, was not shunned and reviled among non-Ahmadiyya Muslims to the extent that it came to be in the second half of the twentieth century. Many Muslims, especially outside British India, had never even heard of it. To others, the Lahore Ahmadiyya was simply a reform movement that offered answers to many of the issues raised by modernization and globalization, including the challenge posed by Christian missionaries.

For all these reasons, Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation was partially translated into Chinese (Eroğlu Sağer 2016, 186–196), used as the basis of a translation into modern Turkish in Latin Script in 1934 (Rıza 1934),[22] and in the same year, a full Dutch translation was published (Ali 1934). The latter was produced in Batavia (present-day Jakarta) by a Javanese Muslim called Soedewo who was a member of the Lahore Ahmadiyya. It was a bilingual Dutch-Arabic work which the Ahmadiyya publishers explicitly framed not as Soedewo's original work, but as Muhammad Ali's translation with commentary, rendered into Dutch by Soedewo. This seems justified since Soedewo strove to stay as close to Muhammad Ali's original text as possible. As such, the exegetical decisions within and structural features of both Qur'an translations are practically identical.[23]

Maybe the most noteworthy feature of Soedewo's second-hand translation is the resounding success it had, which also tells us something about the needs met by Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation at the time. It was popular with intellectuals from the Dutch East Indies who were graduates of modern colonial schools that offered instruction in Dutch. Many of them were nationalists and saw Islam as an essential part of the national culture and heritage,[24] yet they possessed few resources that would have enabled them to connect with that heritage. The Qur'an was mainly taught at traditional Islamic schools, not in translation but in Arabic. To the extent that its exegesis was studied, this either happened in Arabic, too, or in a local language like Malay or Javanese, written in Arabic script. Graduates of Dutch-language schools had access to neither oral religious instruction nor literature in Arabic script, which they had not been taught to read. Soedewo's Qur'an translation met the precise needs of this group, which even included the later President of Indonesia, Sukarno: it gave them a version of the Qur'an in a language and, importantly, script, that they could read.

Moreover, Muhammad Ali addressed many of these intellectuals' concerns. Like the Ahmadiyya in India, they felt a need to defend Islam against criticism coming from Christian missionaries, and Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation gave them all the counterarguments they needed, for example against claims that the author of the Qur'an had misunderstood or misremembered biblical

material in cases where the Qur'an seems to be in conflict with the Bible. The extensive introduction also gave them an overview of Islamic beliefs and practices which their socialization and education had not necessarily provided them with. Finally, Muhammad Ali's rationalistic interpretations of prophetic miracles and other supernatural phenomena, like angels and *jinn*, matched the worldview and religious needs of many Indonesian intellectuals of the time who had been raised to value science and to be wary of anything superstitious and "irrational." They could also use these interpretations to posit the superiority of Islam over Christianity.[25]

In Indonesia, the dominance of Soedewo's translation of Muhammad Ali's translation was such that even the official Qur'an translation published by the Indonesian Ministry of Religious Affairs after independence adopted its layout, consisting of two columns with footnotes, as well as most of his other innovative features, like a lengthy introduction, introductions to suras, section headers, and summaries of suras (Departemen Agama Republik Indonesia 1965; 1967; 1969)

Muhammad Ali in disguise in the Cape Province

Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation made a renewed appearance in 1961 in the Cape Province of South Africa when Mohammed Armien Baker, who was introduced at the beginning of this chapter, published his Afrikaans translation of the Qur'an (Baker 1961). The South African context was very different from that of India or Indonesia where translators used the language of the colonial rulers to reach the segment of the vast local Muslim population that had received a colonial education. In Muhammad Ali's case, converts or potential converts in Europe were also among his target group. Either way, translators were addressing educated readers.

In South Africa, until the early twentieth century, Afrikaans was typically considered a lower-class dialect, or possibly creole, of Dutch, while educated Afrikaners, the descendants of Dutch settlers, strove to speak "proper Dutch" (Davids 1990, 36–47).[26] Afrikaans was also the *lingua franca* of Muslim "Malays" in the Cape Colony. The group that was so labelled consisted of the descendants of slaves and deportees from South and Southeast Asia who had been brought to South Africa by the Dutch from the second half of the seventeenth century until the British outlawed slavery in 1834. Afrikaans was adopted by this community as a religious language, and by the second half of the nineteenth century, even Islamic writings were produced in Afrikaans using Arabic script (Versteeg 2015, 284; Stell 2007, 89–127; Davids 1990).

In the first third of the twentieth century, white Afrikaners increasingly promoted Afrikaans as the language of their ethno-nationalist, racist project of nation-building. The elevation of Afrikaans to the status of a literary language and its simultaneous "Protestantization" was reflected in the publication of the first Afrikaans Bible translation in 1933 (Naudé 2005, 167–179; Kriel 2018). However, in the second half of the twentieth century, nearly half of Afrikaans speakers were still "coloured," that is, they belonged to a legal category that meant they were neither white nor black nor Indian (Van Der Merwe 1989, 89–93).[27] In the Cape Province, this usually signified Malays, many of whom were Muslim. These Malay Muslims achieved social upwards mobility while white Afrikaners tried to monopolize Afrikaans as a symbol of their own ethnic and national identity.

Mohammed Armien Baker's (1910–1982) life experience is a case in point. He was a fifth-generation inhabitant of Simon's Town (Simonstad), a small naval settlement near Cape Town, and the eldest of twelve children of a fisherman. After having received a teaching diploma, he became principal of the local Muslim school, which had recently been built from private donations, and imam of the Noorul Islam Mosque.[28] His Qur'an translation was published by the biggest Afrikaans publisher in the country, Nasionale Boekhandel (NB). Ironically, NB was, and still is, owned by Nationale Pers, a media company that was the mouthpiece of the National Party, the main architect of the apartheid regime. Imam Baker and the vibrant Muslim community of Simon's Town fell prey to that regime when, in 1967, the non-white inhabitants of Simon's Town were forced to leave although they constituted the majority of the population.[29]

To date, Baker's translation is the only complete translation of the Qur'an into Afrikaans. It has earned him lasting fame, and that its reliance on an Ahmadiyya source is not clearly visible has probably helped in this. Baker was careful to conceal his indebtedness to Muhammad Ali. In the foreword, he claims that his translation was made from the original Arabic and subsequently corrected against "various" Dutch and English translations. But while he does not slavishly follow Muhammad Ali or Soedewo, the similarities between his translation and theirs – particularly Soedewo's, which was probably his immediate source – are striking.

The similarities begin with the introduction, which consists largely of excerpts from the introduction to Muhammad Ali's/Soedewo's Qur'an translation, arranged to be more accessible to a non-Muslim audience. For example, Baker replaced a lengthy section on the details of ritual prayer with a short paragraph describing prayer in general terms. In the translation itself, he uses precisely the same subdivisions and section headers as

Muhammad Ali/Soedewo. Moreover, he had no qualms in adopting many of Muhammad Ali's idiosyncratic choices. Unlike Pickthall or Yusuf Ali, and like Muhammad Ali and Soedewo, he translates *kursī* in Q 2:255 as "kennis" ("knowledge"). Even more significantly, he follows all of Muhammad Ali's non-supernatural interpretations of prophetic miracles, to the extent that they are contained in the edition of 1928 that was used by Soedewo.[30] The Arabic *naml* is rendered as "Namliet," "Hoedhoed" is the name of a person and not a hoopoe, Jacob regains certainty rather than his eyesight, and so forth.

Yet Baker's translation is no carbon copy of Muhammad Ali's or Soedewo's. For a start, he does not use Muhammad Ali's notes; his translation has very few notes and these consist of a few words at most, quite unlike Muhammad Ali's extensive explanations. Occasionally he relegates some of Muhammad Ali's more unusual translations to his footnotes, as is the case with such disjointed letters as *Alif Lām Mīm* (Q 2:1). Baker renders the letters simply as "Alif Laam Miem," but he adds a footnote that provides Muhammad Ali's translation, namely, "Ek is Allah die Alwetende" ("I am Allah, the All-Knowing"). Incidentally, he chooses to translate *allāh* as "Allah," as did Muhammad Ali in the first edition of his translation, whereas subsequent editions – including Soedewo's – used "God."

Baker frequently made his own linguistic and exegetical choices, which demonstrate that he engaged with the source text beyond the use of Muhammad Ali's or Soedewo's work. Some of his translations, especially of the short suras at the end of the Qur'an, bear little resemblance to Soedewo's, and his rendering of the sura names also differs from those of Soedewo. Moreover, Baker made some changes and additions to the original Arabic text that are not present in Muhammad Ali's or Soedewo's translation and that clearly have an apologetic purpose. For example, in Q 4:34, a husband is given permission to "beat" his wife according to Muhammad Ali's translation (or Soedewo's, who has "sla"). In Baker's translation, the husband is allowed to "discipline" ("tugtig") her, which might or might not be interpreted as corporal punishment.

By way of further illustration, in Q 5:51 the believers are instructed not to take the Jews and Christians as their *awliyāʾ*, which Muhammad Ali renders as "friends" (Soedewo: "vrienden"). Baker follows them in this, but his translation of the whole sentence reads as follows: "O julle gelowiges, neem nie die vyandiggesinde Jode en Christene as vriende nie." ("O you believers, do not take the Jews and Christians who are hostile towards you as friends.") The adjective "vyandiggesinde," which denotes those with a hostile disposition, is an addition that can be found neither in the Arabic wording of the verse nor in either Muhammad Ali's or Soedewo's

translations. Baker probably felt a need to make such changes and additions because his translation was published in a Muslim minority context, and he did not have the luxury of extensive notes that could have mitigated the bad impression such verses might leave.

Given that Baker was able and willing to translate things differently from Muhammad Ali when he felt it was warranted, it becomes all the clearer that he had no issue with Muhammad Ali's rationalistic interpretations, his metaphorical understanding of the Throne Verse or his conspicuously Ahmadi approach to Jesus's death in Q 3:55; he did not choose to change any of these interpretations.[31] His translation was reprinted without changes by the Islamic Propagation Centre in Durban in 1981 and by the Islamic Dawah Movement of Southern Africa in Durban (IDM) in 2001, 2005 and 2008. Only in 2014 did the IDM publish a new edition that had been proofread, "rectified" and approved by the Muslim Judicial Council of South Africa. The corrections that were made and the silence the editors kept about the Ahmadiyya background of Baker's work both fit into the general pattern of how publishers, editors and Muslim religious institutions have dealt with the impact of Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation in the post-World War II period.

Censure and erasure in the globalizing networks of Sunni-Salafi Islam

Whereas Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation had been a central point of reference in British India in the 1920s and 1930s, after the partition of India and the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947 it started to lose its importance. This was because a larger number of Qur'an translations had by this time become available, but it was also part of a general tendency to negate the influence of the Ahmadiyya in the field of Qur'an translations.

For example, the Sunni Abdul Majid Daryabadi, whose *Tafsir-ul-Quran*, an English Qur'an translation with extensive notes, was published in instalments between 1943 and 1956 (Daryabadi, 1991; Kidwai 2018, 39–40). carefully avoids any mention of Muhammad Ali despite the fact that in earlier writings that date to around 1920 he had credited Muhammad Ali's translation with having had a profound impact on him, to the extent that it inspired him to turn from secularism to Islam (Aziz 2017, 38–39; Lawrence 2017, 52–53). He does not include Muhammad Ali in the introduction among the list of translators and exegetes to whom he is indebted, nor does he cite him, not even in the copious notes he provides on specific verses that are related to idiosyncratic Ahmadiyya beliefs. With respect to the death of Jesus, Daryabadi's

translation, at first glance, seems quite similar to Muhammad Ali's: "I shall make thee die and am lifting thee to me" – but in the notes, Daryabadi explains that God, in contrast to what this phrase might be understood to imply, raised Jesus bodily to heaven while still alive, and death would only occur after this event, at the end of Jesus's natural lifespan (Daryabadi 1991, III, 233 nn. 469–471). The only place where Daryabadi acknowledges the existence of Muhammad Ali's exegesis, albeit without mentioning his name, is with respect to Q 2:60, the verse that describes, according to the conventional understanding, how Moses strikes a rock with his staff. Here, Daryabadi remarks that the Arabic verb *ḍaraba* ("to hit, strike, beat") was "misinterpreted by an English translator of the holy Qur'ān," as was the noun *ʿaṣā* ("staff, rod") (Daryabadi, 1991, I, 38–39 nn. 248–249). Thus, Daryabadi, who otherwise cited a wide range of English and Urdu sources including, for example, Yusuf Ali's Qur'an translation, deliberately refrained from mentioning Muhammad Ali although he never went as far as to declare the Ahmadis non-Muslims, as many others did (Lawrence 2017, 207 n. 5.).

The increasing tendency among non-Ahmadi translators to keep silent about Muhammad Ali had to contend with an obnoxious problem: traces of his translation were present in a number of vastly popular non-Ahmadi translations. Later editors of these translations therefore made an effort to delete all direct and indirect references to Muhammad Ali. Paradoxically, this suggests that, rather than fading from their awareness, the specter of the Ahmadiyya continued to haunt them. For example, when the King Fahd Holy Qur'an Printing Complex in Medina, Saudi Arabia, published a revised version of Yusuf Ali's translation, the editors removed segments of footnotes in which Muhammad Ali was mentioned. They also deleted Yusuf Ali's suggestion that the *jinn* in the Qur'an might denote anything other than supernatural beings, which, while not explicitly identified as a reference to Muhammad Ali, bears great similarity to his interpretation.[32] Similar steps were taken with regard to some editions of Marmaduke Pickthall's translation: for instance, the North American Kazi edition is lacking the footnote in which he mentioned Muhammad Ali by name (Pickthall, 1994).

In fact, the exegetical opinion that God caused Jesus to die came to be so closely associated with the Ahmadiyya that a translator who adopted it in an unmitigated manner ran an increasing risk of being accused of heresy, even though any relatively straightforward literal translation of the expression *innī mutawaffīka* in Q 3:55 would convey that opinion, as the example of Daryabadi's translation shows. It was on these grounds that the Muslim World League refused to print Muhammad Asad's (1900–1992) Qur'an translation, as they had originally planned in the 1960s. This

correlated with an undated fatwa by the permanent fatwa committee of Saudi Arabia according to which this translation contained falsehood and unbelief. The sole evidence the fatwa provided for this was the fact that Asad translated *innī mutawaffīka* as "I shall cause thee to die." The fatwa manages to denounce Ahmadiyya beliefs without mentioning the name of the movement or its protagonists at all. It is clear that the mere suspicion of any kind of proximity to Ahmadiyya beliefs sufficed for a verdict of unbelief (al-Lajna n.d., 213–215).[33]

Obviously, within a few decades, belief in Jesus' death, which had once been a point of contention in Muslim-Christian debates in colonial India over the relative status of Jesus and Muḥammad, had become a marker of unbelief in a setting in which it was no longer the Christians but the Ahmadiyya who were seen as the main adversary. The shifting focus of religious boundaries had elevated the belief that Jesus has not died to the status of a central doctrine of faith, and the focal point of this process was the debate over the correct translation of the Qur'an, especially with respect to Q 3:55.

The desire to erase identity markers that might point to an Ahmadiyya origin is also evident in the revised 2014 edition of Baker's Afrikaans Qur'an translation. The editors do not specify any reason for the perceived need to revise the translation, and the changes they made are not extensive and typically affect the text on the word level, but most of them concern choices that are characteristic of Muhammad Ali's translation, even when they are not related to any specific Ahmadi beliefs, like his translation of *furqān* (Q 25) as "distinction."[34] However, the editors' strategy is hardly consistent. For example, the introduction, which Baker largely copied from Muhammad Ali/Soedewo, is missing in its entirety. However, the section headers, which Baker also took from Muhammad Ali/Soedewo, have been retained. With respect to Baker's exegetical choices, a similar picture emerges. In many cases, those of Baker's translations that are modelled after Muhammad Ali's choices remain unchanged, even when decidedly unconventional: the punishment of the Israelites, the Throne Verse, the effect of Joseph's shirt on Jacob, or the birds that prey on the army of the elephant rather than casting stones on them. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the footnote on the disjointed letters *Alif Lām Mīm* in Q 2:1 that Baker had explained, like Muhammad Ali, as an acronym of the formula "Ek is Allah die Alwetende" ("I am Allah, the All-Knowing") was changed by the editors to the laconic statement "Afgekorte letters" ("abbreviated letters"). The Namlites in Q 27:18 were replaced with ants ("rooimiere"). As regards the hoopoe in Q 2:20, the editors were apparently torn. Baker had used the Arabic word *hudhud* as a proper name ("Hoedhoed"). The editors replaced this with the Afrikaans

word for the hoopoe, *hoep-hoep*, but still used it as a proper name ("Hoe is dit dat ek Hoep-hoep nie sien nie"); this leaves readers with both options, namely, that Solomon is either talking to a bird or to a person who carries the bird's name. However, as far as the question of Jesus' death is concerned, the editors leave no room for ambiguity: God's statement that he will let Jesus die ("laat sterwe") is replaced by the claim that he will raise ("ophef") Jesus.

Why this inconsistency between content that was seen as deserving of modification and content that was left untouched? I would argue that by 2014, some features of Baker's Afrikaans Qur'an translation had become so closely associated with the Ahmadiyya that editors would recognize them as potentially problematic and remove them, either because they disagreed with them or because they were afraid that they would expose the translation and its publishers to criticism. This is true of the foreword, of Baker's very noticeable and peculiar choice of translating the Arabic *naml* not as ants but as Namlites, which is even visible in the rendition of the name of the twenty-seventh sura, and particularly of the reference to the death of Jesus. In many other cases, like the section headers or the birds of prey in Q 105, Muhammad Ali's idiosyncratic choices are less widely known or have not become a major object of criticism, and the South African editors might even have been unaware of their Ahmadiyya origins.

The Durban editors' attempt to obfuscate Muhammad Ali's translation choices and replace them with a more mainstream Islamic point of view is not an isolated case, nor is the somewhat inconsistent manner in which this happened. In 1968, probably, a translation that was ascribed to one Muhammad Habib Shakir was published in Pakistan. It was essentially a superficially revised version of the first edition of Muhammad Ali's translation.[35] This edition, which I could not obtain, was the basis of many subsequent editions, both printed and online, often with further revisions.[36] While the editions differ from each other in many small details, it is clear that all of them aimed to rid the translation of Ahmadiyya elements, albeit inconsistently. Moreover, there is an interesting interplay between Sunni and Shi'i editors at work here.

The earliest reprint that I could find is a digitized version of an edition that was published in Tehran in 1974 by the "World Organization for Islamic Services" and which is presumably based on, if not identical to, the original Pakistani version. This is corroborated by the South Asian calligraphic style of the Arabic source text that is included in the edition.[37] The editors have, however, made a number of changes to Muhammad Ali's text. They have deleted the introduction and replaced the English names of biblical figures with their Arabic equivalents, such as "Musa" instead of "Moses."

While retaining the division of suras into subsections, they have removed the section titles and summaries, as well as the introductions to and summaries of suras. They have also removed the esoteric interpretation of the disjointed letters (e.g., *Alif Lām Mīm* in Q 2:1) as well as the reference to the death of Jesus in Q 3:55, translating *mutawaffīka* as "I am going to terminate the period of your stay (on earth)." Most of Muhammad Ali's rationalistic interpretations of supernatural events have been changed,[38] but not all of them;[39] most intriguingly, the twenty-seventh sura kept the title "The Naml," and in Q 27:18, Muhammad Ali's interpretation of the Arabic *al-naml* as the name of a tribe was retained. The editors took no issue with his translation of *kursī* as "knowledge" in Q 2:255 either.

The editors were not content with removing Ahmadiyya elements, though, but also added an Imami Shi'i dimension to Muhammad Ali's translation. For example, Q 2:1 (*Alif Lām Mīm*) was explained in a footnote as follows: "Many surahs begin with letters of the Arabic alphabet. They indicate some mystic words of truth, beyond the understanding of the people except the Holy Prophet and 12 Apostolic Imams."[40] Q 2:3 was changed from "Those who believe in the unseen" to "Those who believe in the ghaib" and the note on the verse says "Al-ghaib means the unseen, such as the existence of Allah, angels, Jinns, hell, heaven and the twelfth Apostolic Imam Muhammad Mehdi, who is living, but ghaib and who will reappear just before the Day of Resurrection."[41]

Later Sunni editions, while not entirely identical to each other, largely have in common that they both de-Shi'ified and further de-Ahmadified the translation. They usually do not contain any notes at all, thereby removing most of the Shi'i references. They also replaced the term "ghaib" in the translation of Q 2:3, which the Shi'i editors had understood as an allusion to the Imami Shi'i concept of the occultation (*ghayba*) of the Twelfth imam, with "unseen" and thereby returned to Muhammad Ali's original translation. Furthermore, many editions changed the title of Q 27 from "The Naml" to "The Ant" or "The Ants" or at least added a reference to ants in brackets. At the same time, they overlooked the use of "Naml" and "Namlite" in the translation of Q 27:18, which produces the rather strange effect that in these editions, the sura is named after ants but no actual ants appear in the English translation of the text of the sura.

In a few cases, comparing Muhammad Ali and the various Shakir editions allows us to identify a sequence of changes. For example, in the translation of Q 105, the first three verses remain unchanged, but with regard to verse 4, the editions incrementally move from Muhammad Ali's idiosyncratic and grammatically problematic translation towards a more conventional understanding of the verse.[42]

Muhammad Ali 1917	Shakir, Tehran 1974	Shakir, various online editions[43]
Q 105:1 Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant? **2** Did He not cause their war to end in confusion, **3** And send down (to prey) upon them birds in flocks, **4** Casting <u>them against hard stones</u>...	**Q 105:1** Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant? **2** Did He not cause their war to end in confusion, **3** And send down (to prey) upon them birds in flocks, **4** Casting <u>them against stones of baked clay</u>...	**Q 105:1** Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant? **2** Did He not cause their war to end in confusion, **3** And send down (to prey) upon them birds in flocks, **4** Casting <u>against them stones of baked clay</u>...

Once again, the strategy at work here is the erasure of all traces of Muhammad Ali's text while simultaneously not acknowledging the influence or even the existence of his translation. The modifications to his original interpretations are carried out inconsistently, though. In some cases, the editors might have left Muhammad Ali's choices alone because they agreed with them and did not associate them with Ahmadiyya doctrines, as in his rendition of the 'Throne Verse.' At other times, they might simply not have recognized the fact that particular decisions were rooted in the Ahmadiyya's exegetical approach. In the latter case, this was sometimes rectified in subsequent editions.

Conclusion

It might not be a surprising insight that Qur'an translation, with all its exegetical implications, may function as a medium of polemics. However, inquiry into the genealogy of Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation shows a more nuanced picture of open and tacit borrowings, distancing and marginalization.

The pioneering role that the Lahore Ahmadiyya played in the field of Qur'an translation ensured its visibility and the popularity of its publications, especially its English Qur'an translation. Even opponents of the Ahmadiyya movement had to concede that Muhammad Ali's *The Holy Qur-án* was successful in conveying a sympathetic perspective on the Qur'an and Islam to non-Muslim readers as well as Muslim readers with a Western education. It introduced many innovations in terms of form and content that were obviously useful, given how often they were copied by later translators. It also promoted a distinctive rationalist approach to Qur'anic

interpretation that fulfilled the needs of its target audience, even though it met with fierce polemics on the part of more traditional Muslims such as Badshah Husain.

Subsequent translations of the Qur'an for a while reflected the importance of Muhammad Ali's work, showing an engagement with some of his ideas and the substantial influence that his translation exerted far beyond Ahmadiyya circles, inside and outside the borders of the British Empire. However, that engagement was gradually replaced by resounding silence regarding his impact. In the travels of Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation across the world and across language boundaries in the era of decolonization, we can observe an increasing trend towards erasing its traces. Mohammed Armien Baker, the Afrikaans translator from the Cape Province in South Africa, preferred not to mention Muhammad Ali's name despite the extensive borrowings he made from the author/translator. Erasing the ostensible traces of Ahmadiyya beliefs and identity markers became an issue of paramount importance for the editors charged with revising earlier Qur'an translations, including those by Yusuf Ali, Marmaduke Pickthall and Baker. They did not necessarily go through these translations conscientiously in order to eliminate each and every similarity to Muhammad Ali's work; they were just concerned with those aspects that were particularly conspicuous. This observation underscores the central role that editors play in the history of translations and retranslations.

The fate of Muhammad Ali's translation, up to and including the 2014 Durban edition, demonstrates that, over the course of the decades, many of Muhammad Ali's idiosyncrasies flew under the radar whereas a few specific translation choices became so closely identified with the Ahmadiyya that it was difficult to continue including them in a non-Ahmadiyya translation. This is often true for the interpretation of the Arabic *naml* as the name of a tribe, rather than the word for "ants." It is always, invariably, the case with Muhammad Ali's approach to the death of Jesus. Only through the interplay between Ahmadiyya and non-Ahmadiyya translators has the translation of God's word to Jesus, *mutawaffīka* in Q 3:55, as "I will cause you to die" become a point of contention to the point that correct non-Ahmadiyya doctrine is equated with avoiding this translation. As a result, few subsequent Sunni or Shi'i translators dared follow the route that the Ahmadiyya took. When Muhammad Asad did so, the Muslim World League turned against him.

Still, one should be careful not to allow these ideological developments to obscure the historical role of the Ahmadiyya movements, and particularly the Lahore Ahmadiyya, in shaping the modern genre of Qur'an translation. Muhammad Ali's profound impact on the genre remains visible today.

While the Ahmadiyya's specific brand of scientific rationalism has largely fallen out of fashion, many of the ways in which Muhammad Ali made the Qur'an accessible to readers were widely adopted. His extremely grammatical style of translation, while criticized by some of his successors, has remained the method of choice for a substantial number of Muslim Qur'an translators, not necessarily because they imitated him but because they agreed with his basic premise, which was to keep the translator's additions out of the translation as much as possible and relegate them to the notes. It is unlikely that many translators, publishers and readers are conscious of the impact of Muhammad Ali's translation on the style and format of Qur'an translations. Few of them are likely to give a second thought on the tabular layout, the presence of section headers or the innovative character of chapter summaries.

It may be possible to explain this erasure of the Ahmadiyya from the genealogy of modern Muslim Qur'an translation from a dogmatic perspective, since many non-Ahmadiyya Muslims consider the Ahmadis heretics at best and non-Muslims at worst. But from a historical point of view, it eclipses a vital part of the context that has shaped the choices of translators and editors ever since Muhammad Ali first published his English translation in 1917 – a text that travelled from Woking to China and from Batavia to the Cape Province within a few short decades and continues to be reworked, reprinted and plagiarized today.

Notes

2.   Ahmad and Faruqui 2011, 3–60. This is a biography written by members of the Lahore Ahmadiyya movement. An academic biography of Muhammad Ali has yet to be written.

3.   The translation by the Bengal scholar Mirza Abu'l-Fad, published in 1911 and 1912, did contain the Arabic text but suffered from extremely poor typesetting.

4. For a brief overview, see Tareen 2020: 233–56.

5. Muhammad Ali goes to great lengths in a footnote on this verse to explain that the Arabic word *mawt* ("death"), which he translated as "stupor," does not always mean "cessation of life."

6. Muhammad Ali acknowledges in the footnotes that the more ordinary translation is "strike the rock with your staff." In the 1928 edition he changed his strategy and chose as his primary translation "smite the rock with thy staff" while pointing out in the footnote that an alternative meaning would be "walk up to the rock with thy staff / thy community" and then arguing that this alternative meaning is preferable. This is one feature that makes it possible to identify the edition of Muhammad Ali's translation that later works were based on.

7. Again, Muhammad Ali vehemently defends this translation in a footnote and argues that the Arabic term *baṣīr* ("seeing") does not refer to eyesight here but rather to insight.

8. Here, Muhammad Ali argues that the Qur'anic *wādī al-naml* cannot be translated literally as "valley of the ants" because it is a proper noun designating a valley in Palestine in which a tribe called "Namlites" lived.

9. Muhammad Ali explains in the notes that the "birds" refer to Solomon's cavalry, rather than actual birds, and that Hudhud, the Arabic term for the hoopoe, is the proper name of one of Solomon's officers.

10. This is usually understood to refer to an army equipped with elephants that was marching on Mecca from Yemen in the year of Muḥammad's birth.

11. Here, like in Q 2:60, Muhammad Ali changed his translation of verse 4 in the 1928 edition to one that is a more plausible rendition of the Arabic original, namely, "Hurling on them hard stones."

12. Another contested verse in this context is Q 4:157, but here, the problem is less with the translation and more with the interpretation of the verse. For the sake of brevity and clarity, I will limit the discussion of the death of Jesus in this chapter to Q 3:55. It might be worth pointing out that I am not making any claims regarding the true or original meaning of either of these verses or their use in Muslim-Christian polemics, on which a vast body of scholarship exists, especially with regard to Q 4:157.

13. According to Muhammad Ali's verse numbering, Q 3:54.

14. I thank Kamran Khan for his helpful amendments on this matter, and his corrections on a few others.

15. For a discussion of the controversy, see also Pink 2019, 231–39.

16. This translation was also produced in an Ahmadiyya context, but not used or promoted by the Ahmadiyya because the translator left the movement soon after the publication of his translation and polemicized against Mirza Ghulam Ahmad. Moreover, he was far less proficient at English than Muhammad Ali. See Khan 1905.

17. Bruce Lawrence claims that is was published in 1920, probably based on Kidwai 2018, 39. However, the digitized version that I have worked with has "first edition" printed on the cover and a library has added the date 1929 to it. Since it contains the texts of two lectures that Sarwar gave in 1924 and 1925 (Sarwar 1929, l), it cannot have been published sooner than that; 1929 seems to be the most likely date.

18. For the controversy over the verse, see also Robinson 1997, 266.

19. See, for example, 'Alī 1934a, 63 n. 163, on Q 2:159.

20. Either that or further volumes are not available, but given the bibliographic information that I could obtain, it seems likely that only two volumes were published.

21. In actual fact, there is no biblical account of this event although it echoes certain themes from Exodus. See Reynolds 2018, 46.

22. Ömer Rıza (who later adapted the surname Doğrul) generally followed Muhammad Ali's choices, even with regard to Q 3:55 or the rendition of the *naml* as "Namlites" in Q 27, and used much of the information in his footnotes. Like the Chinese translations, this is a part of Muhammad Ali's reception history that I will not analyze further in this chapter.

23. Soedewo's Dutch translation is based on the monolingual English version of Muhammad Ali's translation with abridged notes that was published in 1928 but he uses the lengthy introduction of the first edition of 1917.

24. This matches Benedict Anderson's analysis of how colonial institutions produced nationalists in Southeast Asia (2006, 113–140).

25. For a succinct and convincing analysis of the impact of Muhammad Ali's Qur'an translation in Indonesia, see Burhani 2015: 264–266.

26. I wish to thank Margherita Picchi for providing me with literature and expertise on the linguistic status of Afrikaans and its use by Malays in the Cape Province, including the aforementioned article.

27. I am using the South African spelling of "coloured" here since it is a legal term specific to this country.

28. On the establishment of the mosque and the development of the Muslim community in the early twentieth century, see Davids 2011, https://open.uct.ac.za/bitstream/item/12424/thesis_hum_2011_davids_a.pdf?sequence=1.

29. See South African History Online, "The Simon's Town Mosque," https://www.sahistory.org.za/place/simons-town-mosque#endnote-v, retrieved October 19, 2022; Mountain 2004, 170–171; Brodie 2015, 217.

30. Muhammad Ali had adapted his translation of Q 2:60 and Q 105:4 to a more conventional reading of these verses in the 1928 edition. See notes 6 and 11.

31. His translation was also apparently perceived as sufficiently Ahmadi for the Qadian Ahmadiyya to use it as the basis of their own edition of selected parts of the Qur'an in Afrikaans. See Sending 1989.

32. See, for example, the revised note on Q 2:159: Ali 1405, 64 n. 163.

33. My sincere thanks to Mykhaylo Yakubovych for providing this reference.

34. Soedewo translated this as "Onderscheiding" and Baker as "Onderskeiding." The revised edition has "Kriterium" ("criterion").

35. For the Lahore Ahmadiyya's claim of plagiarism, which seems justified, see Aziz 2005. For more information on the first edition and on Shakir, with further references, see Aziz 2006.

36. See, for example, Shakir 2009 and Shakir 1991. There are also many online versions available as PDF files or through university library catalogues, for example https://quranicquotes.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/habib-shakir-quran-english-translation.pdf, retrieved October 19, 2022.

37. See https://quran-archive.org/explorer/m-h-shakir/1974, retrieved October 19, 2022. Library catalogues mention another version that was published around 1975 in Qom, Iran. Ali 1934 and Shakir 1975.

38. For example, Q 2:56 where *mawt* is translated as "death," rather than "stupor"; Q 2:60, where the editors have God instruct Moses to strike the rock with his staff; Q 12:93 and 96, where they have Jacob regain his eyesight through contact with Joseph's shirt; Q 27:20 where the term *hudhud* is translated as "hoopoe."

39. For example, Q 105:3–4 remained unchanged.

40. The belief in the twelve imams and their privileged access to divine knowledge is a doctrine specific to the Imami Shi'a.

41. Again, the idea of the occultation (*ghayba*) of the Twelfth imam, from which he will return at the end of times, is a doctrine specific to the Imami Shi'a.

42. Similarly, Muhammad Ali translates *al-furqān* in the title and first verse of Q 25 as "the distinction"; the Shi'i edition uses the Arabic term "furqan" and explains in a footnote that it is a name of the Qur'an and means "distinguisher between right and wrong"; and later Sunni editions either added "The Criterion, the Standard" in brackets or replaced the title "Furqan" with "The Criterion" while generally leaving the first verse unchanged.

43. https://www.namazzamani.net/quran/shakir/, https://quranicquotes.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/habib-shakir-quran-english-translation.pdf, https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzIwMDkyMzRfX0FO0, retrieved October 19, 2022.

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Part 3

CURRENT DEBATES ABOUT RETRANSLATING THE BIBLE

Printed Modern Hebrew Bibles for the Jewish Publics: Shades of Translation

Hilla Karas

Abstract

This chapter examines the conceptual consequences of the intersection between Bible (re)translation and intralingual diachronic translation. Interlingual translation of Scriptures in Abrahamic religions has long been a focus of interest for theologians, philologists, historians and many other scholars. Nonetheless, intralingual and diachronic translations have only recently been drawing scholarly attention. The present study examines four Modern Hebrew Bible translations published in print between 1955 and 2015, for different Jewish publics, varying from secular to ultra-orthodox. The purpose of this analysis is to compare the concepts of translation in these publications on two levels: first, their use of the term "translation" as a label or description; secondly, the manner in which they put forward the translational component both in their layout and in any explicit discussions of translation in the peritextual elements of these books (e.g., preface or reading suggestions).

Keywords: Intralingual translation, Hebrew Bible, Biblical Hebrew, diachronic translation, paratext

Introduction

This paper[1] examines the conceptual consequences of the intersection between two main topics: Bible (re)translation and intralingual diachronic translation. The interlingual translation of the different scriptures produced by Abrahamic religions has long been a focus of interest for theologians, philologists, historians, and scholars of many other disciplines. Nonetheless, intralingual translation in general or diachronic intralingual translation in particular have been drawing scholarly attention only in the past decade or two. It is unsurprising that intralingual diachronic Bible translations may demonstrate singular characteristics depending not only on the religion and the language in question, but also on other relevant factors like prevalent translation traditions or societal concepts of language continuity. In this

study we examine four Jewish Modern Hebrew Bible translations published since the second half of the twentieth century. Our purpose is to compare the concepts of translation reflected in these productions through their use of the term "translation" as a label or description, as well as their explicit discussions of it within these very same volumes.

Jewish Bible translation

Translating Scriptures in Abrahamic religions is at the core of this entire volume; it would be redundant to elaborate here on this prominent topic again. Instead, let us remind the readers of certain relevant issues raised by scholars of the Jewish tradition of Bible translation. The attitude manifested by Judaism towards the translation of its scriptures seems quite different from that shown by Christianity. Perhaps one reason, as noted by Greenspoon (2020, x) regarding interlingual versions, is that the Jewish Bible is rarely a translation from other languages.[2] More importantly, Christianity had been relying on intralingual renderings (in Syriac and Latin, for example) of the New Testament since the very early books, and its worldwide spread has been so closely linked with translations that rather than a deviation from norm, this was perceived as standard.

In contrast, Judaism deemed the unique accepted text as untranslatable,[3] since it consists of a divine language which is both highly motivated and performative in its very materiality as a sign, as Bennett (2018) observed. Consequently, even in modern times, texts and objects using the original Hebrew are still irreplaceable in many rituals, for example, the writing on such ritual objects as *mezuzah* and *tefillin*.[4] Nonetheless, over time translation of the Bible has indeed gained a certain known legitimacy in many contexts (Seidman 2006), although the Hebrew Torah has mostly retained its primacy over any translation (Gillman 2018, 9–10). In fact, one might argue that "Jewish Bibles point to the original rather than replace it; in other words, they supplement but never supplant the original Hebrew" (Greenspoon 2020, xi). Judaism is described as fascinated by the sounds, shapes, word frequencies, intonations, and the diverse diacritics and abbreviations of its Bible, finding the holistic message precisely in these abundant yet minute material details (Bennett 2018; Robinson 1996, 66).

Jewish Bible translations were usually authored by individuals with deep familiarity with the Biblical texts and the accepted commentaries, and they were often leaders of their communities (Greenspoon 2020, 222–223). Indeed, in circumstances of social and political change, Jewish Bible translations

have enabled religious, linguistic and cultural progress ever since the Middle Ages. They provided a way to reconnect with the surrounding culture and strengthen their position within it, while preserving their singularity (Gillman 2018, 9–10; Gottlieb 2021, 17–75; Seidman 2006). Hence, Bible translation could be seen to handle the cultural translation Jews were practicing (Gillman 2018, 12), or even as a method to enhance it, a "spiritual embrace" between the two peoples (Seidman (2006) 2010, 157).

One noteworthy aspect of Jewish Bible translations, Greenspoon observes, is that they constantly remind their readers that they are just translations and in no way equivalent in their status to the consecrated ancient text. They do that not just by leaning more towards formal equivalence and literality, but also through locating the translation and the original on facing pages, retaining mentions of the biblical book and *parashah* (weekly portion), printing in volumes opening right to left in languages which normally read in the other direction (Greenspoon 2020, 224–225) and even using Hebrew letters and commentary to accompany the text. In addition, regardless of their personal religious affiliations, translators have remained close to the accepted Masoretic texts and the widely approved exegetes, mentioning divergent readings mainly in their commentaries rather than the translation itself (*ibid.*, 225–227). This of course is consistent with Nida's assumptions that translators would adopt the interpretive basis recognized by the believing community (Nida 1994).

Early authorized translations were few and cautiously separated from any others (Onkelos,[5] Aramaic translation, Aquila's Greek translation which replaced the Septuagint) (Gillman 2018, 16). According to Gillman, prior to the *Haskalah*,[6] Jewish Bible translation was not considered creative and advantageous for the community. Translations were markers of loss and fearful events which obliterated past communities or associated with the shame of ignorance and forgetfulness; their use was strictly regulated, and they occupied a marginal position in cultural and religious debates (*ibid.*, 15).

Translations of the Pentateuch are particularly important because of the "Twice Scripture Once Translation" duty (hereafter abbreviated as TSOT) mentioned in the *Talmud* (Berakhot 8a): one (first and foremost men) supposedly lives a long life if he studies the weekly Torah portion by reading the scripture twice, and its translation once. Originally, this practice involved the third century canonized Aramaic Onkelos translation. This recommendation has known several interpretations, especially since Aramaic fell out of favor among Jewish communities in the early Middle Ages.[7] According to prominent opinions that appeared in medieval times, one can use the commentary of famous exegete Rashi, or combine it with Onkelos (*cf. Orach Chayim* 285, 2). Some Rabbis suggested using other exegetes (Brown 2016), while others

suggested vernacular versions which follow Rashi. Later the advice was to use a translation of Rashi, or even a translation of the Biblical text itself, when all other options were lacking. However, in many communities and traditions, Onkelos is still obligatory (Brown, ibid.).

Gillman remarks that the TSOT method "seemed to guard against [...] the notion that the Hebrew words are a vessel for some otherwise transmissible content", emphasizing that the text is secondary to the performance and ritual of listening to it (Gillman 2018, 16). In fact, oral consecutive translation was the norm at synagogues or *heders*.[8] It was later (16th century) also delivered to Ashkenazi Jews in Yiddish in print as *Chumesh Teitsch*.[9] In fact, as we shall see later for modern Hebrew translations, the earliest fragments to be translated were those used in liturgy: the Pentateuch, the *Haftarahs* (sections from the Prophets read on Sabbaths), the Five Scrolls, and Psalms (Gillman 2018, 16). Written translations[10] were first prohibited and later tolerated under specific forms, because they were assumed to prevent misunderstandings. However, they were still thought to present a risk of distortions and defy the rabbinical exclusive authority on commentary.

Translations prevailed because of high demand. In Ashkenaz for example, they proliferated in two forms: word-specific explanations, and verse-specific elucidations based on credited sources such as commentaries and *midrashim* ("fables") (Gillman 2018, 17). Neither genre provided readers with a complete standalone version, reflecting the "impossibility of doing justice to both wording and sense" (*ibid*., 17–18). In general, subsequent Bible translations in Europe often reflected shifts in Christian and Jewish faiths – the reformation, Enlightenment and *Haskalah*, Biblical criticism and the liberal strands of Judaism.

Intralingual diachronic translation

Intralingual translation appears still to occupy the margins of the translation category, while "translation proper" is still assumed to be interlingual translation (Jakobson 1959/2012). Intralingual translation can cover various methods of textual reproduction be it across regions, social classes or historical periods, beyond several types of boundaries, like semiotic systems, communication channels or religious affiliations (Pillière 2010; Berk Albachten 2015; Brems 2018). Broader definitions include summaries and various types of accessibility measures like subtitles for the deaf or simplification for people with cognitive disabilities (Zethsen 2009; 2018; Hill-Madsen 2015). Several researchers have been opposing the idea of including some, or all, types of

intralingual translation within the more general category of translation, claiming that these are operations of great qualitative difference (Newmark 1991) or simply basing their definitions on the very condition that source and target languages be distinct (Mossop 1998 or Schubert 2005).

Nonetheless, Zethsen and Hill-Madsen (2016) maintain that all the aforementioned forms of transfer should qualify as translation as long as they derive from a source, aim at relevant similarity and overcome a communication barrier. Others discuss the difficulty of differentiating languages in circumstances of political and ideological change, emphasize the fuzziness of the very notion of language, and point at alternative criteria like the level of mutual intelligibility and "intercomprehension" (Schmid 2008; Matthews 2005).

Nevertheless, intralingual diachronic translation is frequently considered very similar to interlingual translation, much like inter-dialectal mediation. Very often, people in the culture would intuitively refer to both modernizations or geographic adaptations within the same language as translation, as is the case for Modern and Old French or television subtitles of various English dialects. Mossop (2016) even views dialectal or diachronic intralingual translation as interlingual conversions.

The status of intralingual intertemporal translations in a given culture may be reflected in the labels they are assigned: "modernization", "new rendering", "adaptation", "paraphrase," or "prose version" all indicate that the culture prefers excluding such operations from the category of translation (Karas 2016a). This stance is often derived from the role that linguistic continuity plays in the national identity at hand. Indeed, as Sakai (2009) suggested, when speakers treat an older linguistic layer as an integral part of the same language, rather than as a distinct phase of one evolving entity, they will likely refuse to treat the conversion as translation (Karas 2020). The very use of the term translation, according to Sakai (2006), distinguishes between languages and nations, portraying whatever is on the other side as "other" and suppressing the possibility that it may also be somewhat "same".

Consequently, applying the term "translation" may constitute a threat to a less established nation's identity, unity or historical continuity. One may assume that if the text in question is the founding text of a nation, the perceived danger will be greater and even critical. This was well illustrated by the famous case of the *Evangelika* (1901) and *Oresteiaka* (1903) clashes in Greece over translations of the New Testament and the *Oresteia* into the modern vernacular variety of Greek rather than the archaic *Katharevousa* (Maronitis 2008, 371).

A less violent, yet equally negative reception, awaited the Modern Hebrew translation of selected sections from the Pentateuch, several forms of which

have been published in Israel since 2008. The *Ram Bible* translation encountered public dismay expressed in newspapers, blogs, academic conferences and internal discussions and decisions of the Israeli ministry of education (cf. Karas 2016b; Karas 2022). One could therefore conclude from this wide range of media and discussion fora that ideological considerations related to the fragile existence of the State of Israel and the central role played by the Hebrew Bible in its culture are the root cause of this unfavorable reception. However, it was later revealed that other Modern Hebrew translations, both earlier and later than *Ram Bible*, have been much more easily accepted and even gained great popularity. As a result, it seemed that the linguistic and historical continuity explanation should be either nuanced, completed or replaced.

As a first step, the present paper explores the ways in which these Modern Hebrew translations use the very label of "translation": it deals with the extent and the manner in which they emphasize or propose this component and any explicit discussions of translation in the peritextual elements of these books (such as preface, or reading suggestions) with an emphasis on their layout. It is important to note that only publications explicitly using the Modern Hebrew term *targum* ("translation") or its derivatives are considered here. Because of the theoretical framework, only translations published by Jews for a Jewish public are included. Partial translations accessible only online or in separate (unbound) short fragments were omitted. The corpus includes four items, published in Israel between 1955 and 2015.

Corpus analysis

1. Lemašma'ut (for meaning) – Yakobson[11]

Haim Yehuda Yakobson's reference booklets, *Lemašma'ut*, were designed for young boys learning the *Torah* at the ultra-orthodox *heders*, with selected weekly portions from *Genesis*, *Exodus* and *Leviticus*,[12] apparently published since 1955.[13] According to one preface in the series, Yakobson's books were widely accepted and appreciated in ultra-orthodox *heders* worldwide (Yakobson 1986).

The books in Yakobson's series provide several tools to facilitate reading the Biblical text: Onkelos's translation, Rashi's commentary, Yakobson's Modern Hebrew translation and a short Modern Hebrew commentary, also by the author. To avoid confusion, the modern commentary is presented juxtaposed to its Modern Hebrew translation in smaller letters.[14] At the end

of the booklet there are supplementary commentary sections and annotated tables with important information to memorize. The volume chosen for analysis here was initially the only one containing the preface, reading instructions and endorsement letters from prominent Rabbis, while most other volumes merely refer their readers to this one.[15]

Using the Label "translation": The cover and front page make no reference to translation; Weidenfeld's endorsement letter (p. 5) only mentions that the booklets "clarify" the rules; the one from the union of teachers (p. 6) does not mention the translation as one of the main advantages of the book.

However, the term "translation" is clearly mentioned in the author's preface: discussing the problems that the book strives to solve, the author mentions boys with (language) difficulties who require a helper to *translate* and *explicitate* the text (*lešon hatargum* or *lešon habe'ur*, respectively) (p. 8); another paragraph specifies that pupils require a "translation of the words and the sentences in the Biblical text" (p. 11). In addition, Yakobson shares that younger pupils sometimes find it difficult to remember all "translations and explanations" received in class if they are not written down (p. 9). He later humbly mentions that this edition is nothing but a tool and a "mere translation", although it necessitated some work finding out the correct translation or explanation according to the *halachah* (p. 9). The value of the translation is its contribution as a learning instrument shedding light on the *halachic* implications of the verses. The author keeps emphasizing how important the volume is in making the "meaning" clear – not just the literal meaning but also that of the different verses and larger textual segments comprising together complex *halachic* issues, along with their consequences regarding the correct lifestyle and Jewish law (p. 10).

Towards the end of the preface, the author apologizes that he has no intention of providing the definitive meanings, and states that his main focus is to help the teacher (*melamed*) and the pupils.[16]

The Layout: As visible in the example in Figure 1, the Biblical text is printed in the largest font and at the top of the page, with the Onkelos translation appearing on its side. Below it we find Rashi's commentary, and then two columns: on the right – the Biblical text, this time segmented in very short phrases; on the left – its modern Hebrew translation in corresponding segments; later (not shown) the author's explanation under titles in Rashi script; and the translation of the complete verse again – before the next one starts. While verses are broken into shorter expressions, we find the complete translation at the end of each verse, to remind the pupil of the full issue. The child is instructed to say the number of the verse aloud so that he connects the complete meaning to the relevant segment (11).

Further suggestions are offered in footnotes, elucidating topics implied by the explicit text or referring the reader to the separate commentaries at the end of the volume and external traditional sources. At the end of the portion, its entire content is summarized in smaller letters. Thematic titles for paragraphs are printed (in some booklets) at the bottom of the page in Rashi script, followed by their Modern Hebrew version.

As seen in figure 1 above, the Modern Hebrew in the left column is often more than a translation, as it can include clarifications and explanations, both in the larger and the smaller font size. A more detailed discussion of the relations between the different textual components of the text can be found in Karas (2024).

Discussion: It is clear that the author and publishers refer to the Modern Hebrew version as a translation, although it is only mentioned as such in the preface. The preface often uses the terms "translation" and "explanation" together as a binomial expression of sorts, for example when it discusses pupils' difficulties (p. 9). In other contexts, however, "translation" does not seem interchangeable with "explanation". It is actually treated as a basic, simple operation without much sophistication when the author refers to it as a "tool and a mere translation" (p. 9). Here Yakobson provides a lengthy justification as to why the translation sometimes did require research and deliberation, in contrast to an implicit presupposition that translation is an easy, straightforward process: "and even if, as mentioned above, the intention of this publication is nothing but [to serve as] an instrument and a simple translation, it is still important to stress that it did require a certain effort, because in some points there was a need to determine the correct translation or explanation according to the *halacha* [...]" (p. 9). Among ultra-orthodox speakers, who constitute the main audience for these publications, the gap between Modern Hebrew and Biblical Hebrew, also known as *lešon hakodeš* ("the holy language"), is taken for granted, as exemplified by the distinct designations of these linguistic varieties.

While the preface does elaborate on several subjects, it makes no reference to the process involved in establishing the correct understanding and wording of this Modern Hebrew version. This point is only discussed through a specific example (Leviticus 4:3, and 13) of two incompatible interpretations and their implications on Jewish sacrifice laws. Even here, it is not translation *per se* but rather the traditional interpretive basis which is at the core of the dilemma.

It is important to note that some other volumes offer different models and layouts, presenting for instance Onkelos, *Ba'al Haturim* interpretation and *Toldot Aharon's* talmudic references, bilingual columns, and tables (the 1994 volume). However, most interestingly for the present study, some volumes

אונקלוס   ויקרא א   ה

מִן תּוֹרֵי דְּכַר שְׁלִים הַבָּקָר זָכָר תָּמִים יַקְרִיבֶנּוּ אֶל־פֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד
יַקְרְבִנֵּהּ לְתַרְעַ מַשְׁכַּן
זִמְנָא יְקָרֵב יָתֵיהּ לְרַעֲוָא יַקְרִיב אֹתוֹ לִרְצֹנוֹ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה׃ד וְסָמַךְ יָדוֹ עַל
לֵיהּ קֳדָם יְיָ: ד. וְיִסְמוֹךְ

רש"י

אומר זכר למטה שאין ת"ל זכר ולא טומטום ואנדרוגינוס: תמים בלא מום: אל פתח אהל
מועד. מטפל בהבאתו עד שמביאו מכאן מה אומר יקריב יקריב אפילו נתערב עולת ראובן בעולת
שמעון יקריב כל אחד לשם מי שהוא וכן עולה בחולין יומכרו החולין לצרכי עולות וכן הרי כן כולן
עולות ותקרב כל אחד לשם מי שהוא יכול אפילו נתערב בפסולין או בשאינו מינו ת"ל יקריבנו:
יקריב אותו. מלמד שכופין אותו יכול בעל כרחו ת"ל לרצונו הא כיצד כופין אותו עד שיאמר
רוצה אני: לפני ה' וסמך: (ד) על ראש העולה. להביא עולת חובה

אם ירצה להביא את העולה מן הבקר — לא מן הצאן.
דינו כך :
הקרבן יהיה זכר — לא נקבה   זכר

רק זכר מן הבקר [10] כשר לעולה אבל נקבה מן הבקר
פסולה לעולה [11]
ויהיה שלם — בלי מום [12]   תמים

רק תמים מן הבקר [10] כשר לעולה אבל בעל מום מן הבקר
פסול לעולה [13]

יקריב אותו [14]   יקריבנו

לחצר אוהל מועד [2]   אל פתח אהל מועד
יביא אותו [14]   יקריב אתו

בעל הקרבן מחויב לטפל ולהביא את הקרבן לחצר אוהל
מועד [15]

להסכמת דעתו של המקריב [16] — ולא בעל כרחו   לרצנו

המקריב יקיים חיובו להביא את הקרבן ברצונו, ואם
אינו רוצה לקיים לא יכריחו אותו — ב"ד — להביא
על כרחו, אלא, כופין אותו עד שיאמר רוצה אני —
שטו"ס תהיה ההקרבה ברצונו.

ויביא את הקרבן בחצר) לפני ד'   לפני יי :

10. עיין ביאורים סג.
11. ר' הל' מעה"ק פרק א: כל פרק זה מיוסד לביאור הכשרי הקרבנות
12. מום — ליקוי בגוף : והגדרת מום — מה נקרא מום לפסול קרבן — עיין ר' הל' בי"מ ז' ובהל' אסה"מ ב'
13. ר' הל' בי"מ ו', ו'
14. יקריבנו — יקריב: א.— לקרבן, ב.— להבאה. ועיין הערה 6.
15. עיין ביאורים ח
16. עיין ביאורים ט

Figure 1. Yakobson 1976, page 5. Leviticus 1: 3-4.

(*Noah*, 1976; *Genesis* 1976) directly present a bilingual two-columns setting
with interlinear explanations, standalone commentaries and informational
tables. This is the most succinct model, where the bilingual page constitutes
the main text, much like the bilingual editions commonly used in scholarly
editions for classical Greek, Latin or Old French.

As far as the layout is concerned, there is no confusion between translation and commentary (*be'ur*, *peruš*), because they are presented separately. Yakobson also explains that "apart from the issue of meaning, there is another matter, which is *translating for the pupil the words and the sentences of the Bible*" (p. 11, italics added). Here, "meaning" seems to refer to the rules and ideas communicated in the different textual units, while "translating" focuses on replicating the denotative content of the text and its linguistic structure. However, the translation often diverges from strict literality – mostly to convey the accepted exegesis or as a result of standardization.

2. Ṣohar Latteyva (A window to the word) – Gerlitz

The Label: C. M. Z. Gerlitz published his book as: *Ḥumaš – Ṣohar Latteyva (Pentateuch – A window to the word): Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus.*[17] The front page refers to an "adapted and abridged Rashi commentary in a clear and easy language interposed under the vocables of the Biblical text, guiding the reader word by word". It is explained that the commentary is "laid out in a modern and pedagogic fashion to assist learners and teachers, and to convey the series [sic] 'TSOT' through 'understanding'". This wording does not clearly mention that the reformulated Rashi commentary functions as translation, although it does imply that it is accepted as translation for the TSOT duty.

In the *Genesis* volume, the next page after the volume's title proposes a list of advantages attributed to the book. It states that the "interpretation" is a summary of Rashi's exegesis based on several of his commentators, and that it offers a "maximal explanation through a minimal text." The "translation of the word and its meaning is explained through a single term, to facilitate reading" (no page number).

As for the importance of his venture, Gerlitz mentions in his preface that he was thankful and highly motivated when he found out that both men who dedicate their life to religious studies and others who did not, have benefited from a spiritual experience reading his version for *Psalms* (p. i).

Gerlitz explains that *heder* instructors now tend to disassociate Rashi's commentary from the learning of *Teitsch* (Bible translation either in Yiddish or Modern Hebrew). He rejects this new practice with the argument that the most essential element in young boys' understanding of the text of the *Torah* itself (*pešat*) is indeed Rashi (p. i-ii): Rashi is translation and translation is Rashi. The preface however mentions both boys and men.

Gerlitz expounds on the effort made to include both Rashi and his commentators while adhering to a very brief and clear translation (p. iii).

ד בראשית א

פרט ב) וכל המים היו על הארץ עצמה

(והארץ היתה התהום)

פרט ג) והיה רק חשך

פרט ד) ורוח א׳ מרחפת על פני המים

סידור חדש [7]

ג. ויאמר אלהים   ד׳ אמר [8]

יהי אור   שיהיה אור

ויהי־אור :   ונהיה אור, והיה אור וחשך ביחד

בריאת האור

בריאת האור)   ג : ד׳ ברא את האור, באמירה

באמירה) ד׳ אמר שיהיה אור

הויה) ונהיה אור

בערבוביא) והאור והחשך היו ביחד

ד. וירא אלהים את־האור [שם הפרט]   ד׳ ראה את האור

כי־טוב   שהוא טוב, ולא יאה שיהא האור והחשך ביחד

ויבדל אלהים   ד׳ הפריש [9]

בין האור   בין האור ובין החשך, שלא יהיו מעורבים ביחד, אלא שיהיו

ובין החשך   מופרדים בזמנים מיוחדים

האור — יהיה בזמן מיוחד לבד

והחשך — יהיה בזמן מיוחד לבד

הבדלה

הבדלה)   ד: ד׳ הבדיל בין האור ובין החשך

שלא יהיו מעורבים ביחד אלא בזמנים מיוחדים

כל דבר בזמן מיוחד לבד

ה. ויקרא אלהים לאור יום   ד׳ קרא שם לאור שהיה שמו — יום

הזמן שבו יהיה האור לבד, יהיה שמו — יום

[שם הפרט]   ולחשך קרא שם שיהיה שמו — לילה

ולחשך קרא לילה   הזמן שבו יהיה החשך לבד, יהיה שמו — לילה

_____

7 עיין באורים א

8 עיין באורים ב

9 למתחלה שמשו בערבוביא אור וחושך ביחד, ועכשיו הבדיל ד׳ ביניהם שיהא כל אחד בזמן לחוד, רש״י

Figure 2. Yakobson 1973, page 4. Genesis 1:3-5.

Readers do not need to conjugate nor adjust Rashi's commentary on the text, because the interlinear version does that for them. Gerlitz also explains the criteria applied in selecting the correct interpretation in cases of controversy (p. iii-vi).

The author describes the debate on whether TSOT should be applied to Rashi (p. vi-vii). He briefly discusses different opinions on the subject but concludes that his publication means readers have no need to choose between Onkelos and Rashi when they cannot opt for the preferred alternative of reading them both: his own format is clear, short and reliable, and it presents both translations side by side in a manner that enables a seamless transition and comparison – readers in a hurry can go for the standalone "fast of hearing" translated version with its thematic titles.

The Layout: To enable easy reading and understanding, the author provides two forms of the Modern Hebrew text: an interlinear version and the same text as a full standalone segment at the beginning of each *Torah* portion. The interlinear presentation prevents an interruption in the reading to the search for explanation, and the standalone translation ("fast of hearing") enables readers to get acquainted easily with the topic and to prepare themselves for a more in depth reading with the interlinear version (p. ii-iii). The standalone text is divided into smaller units with thematic titles and sub-titles to enhance comprehension and orientation (p. iii).

An endorsement letter by Rabbi Zorger (of the Satmar community) clarifies that one does not derive *halachic* implications from the text, since it is meant to serve as a short clear explanation lending the wisdoms of the *Torah* a stronger, more accessible voice (no page number).

The standalone translation preceding the weekly portion itself is printed in what seems like *Koren* font, with vowelization (vowel diacritics) and modern punctuation. The pages that follow the standalone translation present Onkelos's translation on one side and the Biblical text in bigger, archaic serifed letters on the other. Gerlitz's interlinear translation is printed in a smaller, more modern font (similar to *David* font). Rashi's commentary in its original wording is on the lower part of the page in Rashi script.

Unlike Yakobson's somewhat similar offering for the ultra-orthodox public, here the Biblical verses aren't segmented into shorter phrases, and the translation seems to be more oriented towards quiet reading rather than reading aloud or learning by heart.

Discussion: The preface explicitly discusses pupil's comprehension difficulties vis-à-vis the Biblical language and style; it cites the conciseness of the Bible, its ambivalent formulation and numerous gaps (pp. i-ii). In addition to explaining linguistic issues and denotative meanings, Gerlitz emphasizes that all readers also struggle to grasp the broader ideas and events in the text – an obstacle which he endeavors to overcome with the thematic titles and sub-titles.

Based on the preface and the endorsement letters, Gerlitz's intentions are quite modest. Since the prime consideration is clarifying the text based

אונקלוס · בראשית א בראשית · כה

וַיַּבְדֵּל בֵּין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מִתַּחַת לָרָקִיעַ
וּבֵין הַמַּיִם אֲשֶׁר מֵעַל לָרָקִיעַ וַיְהִי־
כֵן: ח וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים לָרָקִיעַ שָׁמָיִם
וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר יוֹם שֵׁנִי: פ

כותרון א: הָאָרֶץ כֻּלָּה הָיְתָה מְכֻסָּה מֵרוֹב הַמַּיִם וְהֶעֱרִימָם אֱלֹהִים בְּמָקוֹם אֶחָד וְהִזְהִירָם
שֶׁלֹּא יִשָּׁפְכוּ מִשָּׁם. (תְּהִלִּים קד, ו)

כותרון ב: מַטְרַת הַפְּרִי הָיָה לְאַחְסֵן הַזֶּרַע בִּלְבַד כִּי הֲרֵי הָיָה נִתָּן לֶאֱכֹל מִגּוּף
הָעֵץ עַצְמוֹ.

ט וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יִקָּווּ הַמַּיִם מִתַּחַת
הַשָּׁמַיִם אֶל־מָקוֹם אֶחָד וְתֵרָאֶה
הַיַּבָּשָׁה וַיְהִי־כֵן: י וַיִּקְרָא אֱלֹהִים
לַיַּבָּשָׁה אֶרֶץ וּלְמִקְוֵה הַמַּיִם קָרָא
יַמִּים וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי־טוֹב: יא וַיֹּאמֶר

Figure 3. Gerlitz 2011, page 25. Genesis 1: 7-11.

on Rashi and accepted exegesis, the translation includes various types of alterations, explanations and additional information beyond those linguistically required. Nevertheless, to provide a concise translation, it omits terms from synonymous binomial expressions, explicates metonyms, anaphoric

pronouns and ellipses. Brevity or literality are therefore less important than clarity and established interpretations.

The cover page uses three different terms to refer to the abridged interlinear Rashi commentary: *peruš* ("interpretation, exegesis"), *be'ur* ("explanation, commentary") and *hesber* ("explanation"). The term *targum*, "translation," refers at this point to the Onkelos translation; and as mentioned above, *targum* is different from "meaning" (*mašma'ut*). The sentence "the translation of a vocable and its meaning are explained in one vocable, to facilitate reading" clearly contrasts the two. Here "translation" is more about the literal meaning while "meaning" refers to the "essence of Rashi's commentary as extracted and carefully distilled from the issues, complications and branching of dozens of commentaries on Rashi" (ibid).

The four terms all cover the same textual component in the book, highlighting various functions it fulfils at the same time. In this work, the translation of the Biblical text may be read with or before the original, it conveys first and foremost its traditionally accepted meaning in a brief and reader friendly manner. The detailed debates and hair-splitting discussions concerning the original wording are indeed important but it is made clear that they will not be accessed through this translation.

3. Tanaḵ Ram (Ram Bible) – Ahuvia

Tanaḵ Ram, or *Ram Bible*,[18] was first published in 2008 (Ahuvia 2008), and instantaneously generated a public controversy in Israel. It was almost entirely rejected by officials in the state education system (see Karas 2016b), who allowed it only as an aid for pupils with special needs.

Ram Bible was first published as 14 booklets with complete biblical chapters from the Israeli official school program. The translator Avraham Ahuvia was a former Bible teacher and inspector in the Ministry of Education; the publishing house Reches, which specializes in school textbooks, offered the translation in two versions, one for religious state-run schools and one for secular schools. In 2010 the Pentateuch and First Prophets were published in their entirety in two hard cover volumes.

The Label: Unlike the previous works, *Ram Bible* bore more boldly, although not always proudly, the designation "translation". The front cover of the booklets in the earlier prints claims it offers "the language of the Bible in contemporary Hebrew, verse to verse", avoiding the explicit term "translation". The back cover however explains that "this is not an adaptation or abridged version (...), but an actual translation (...) each verse shown with

its translation" (Ahuvia 2008, no page number); the title page and the preface both use the specific designation as well (Ahuvia 2008, 5). In more recent prints, the new title of the front cover of the booklets for secular schools now reads "each verse alongside its translation", while the new edition for the religious state schools presents the exact same phrase, with quotation marks around the significant term.

In addition, the Reches Publishing House website uses quotation marks around the term "translation" in its descriptions of the version for the religious sector:

> *Tanak̲ Ram* for State religious schools is a "translation" into modern Hebrew [...] It does not contain adaptations or abridged versions of the stories of the Bible, but rather is an actual "translation" [...] for students, many of whom find biblical Hebrew to be practically a "foreign language".[19]

Quotation marks are used in the introduction as well (Ahuvia 2008, 9). In it, Ahuvia claims that schoolteachers usually translate the opaque Biblical verses orally during class, so that the booklets merely provide a more convenient version (2008, 9–10). The front cover and title page on the 2010-2011 books still used detours like "biblical text in contemporary Hebrew" or "copied the biblical language into modern language."

In his introduction for the hard cover books, Ahuvia even claims oral translation takes place in any Bible study group (2010, 10). He explains that the translation is mostly based on his own skill and vast knowledge of traditional and modern exegesis; however, much effort was made to keep such decisions to a minimum. "I did not copy the biblical text in its original form, but rather poured its content into its translation. I strove not to introduce any interpretation" (*ibid*., 11). He does however admit that there is always a personal and a subjective factor in translation and expresses concern that he might have introduced some errors in the text.

The introduction in the booklets compares *Ram Bible* to Joseph Klausner's translation of *Amos* (1943), mentioning that both renderings address the difficulty to read an ancient text even in one's own language. Klausner, however insisted on avoiding the explicit label.

Interestingly, Ram Bible also offers a second introduction, this time written by the editor, Rafi Moses. It is clearly less apologetic in its use of the word translation without quotation marks and in its admission that the authors were certainly aware that their task was "daring, complex, ambitious, and challenging, and entailed much responsibility" (*ibid*.,12).

Moses explains that the bilingual format aims to help any reader to access and understand the original text and language and enjoy them. He justifies the division into segments, the use of captions and sub-captions, vowel diacritics, and punctuation to facilitate reading.

The Layout: The original and the translation are presented in two columns of identical width, but they use different fonts. The source text is printed in *Koren* font, which is common in printed Hebrew Bibles, and the translation is given in smaller *Frank Ruehl* characters, frequently used in newspapers. These fonts are somewhat similar but far from identical. Based on the direction of reading in Hebrew, the original appearing on the right-hand side would be read first and the translation on the left second. In addition, the original verses are marked by letters, and the translation by numbers. The authors explicitly refer to the layout, saying that the columns were designed to allow one to read the source on the right, while shifting the eyes to the left when encountering a difficult phrase (Ahuvia 2010, 11). It is recommended in the preface that readers follow the "principle" of TSOT (ibid), greatly facilitated by the bilingual juxtaposed format.

Discussion: It is of note that *Ram Bible* was actually published in three versions – the religious school booklets, the secular booklets and the hard cover volumes.[20] Only the recent editions of the secular booklets exhibit the label "translation" on their cover and their main title with no reservations; the others however do so in their title page and prefaces. In fact, the mention of Ahuvia having "copied" the text actually uses a modern term which meant "translate" in medieval Hebrew. While this sense is no longer widely accepted, it lends the text an archaic nuance and indirectly links the authors with the famous Tibbon dynasty of rabbis and translators.[21] At the same time, it allows the authors to abstain from the explicit denomination.

The attitude towards the decision to translate seems ambivalent, as reflected in the hesitation regarding the use of this term in the different peritextual and epi-textual elements, and the use of quotation marks in the author's preface and the publisher's webpage. There is a clear contradiction between the expression "actual translation" and the hesitation revealed in the addition of quotation marks. Also, the quotation marks around the phrase "foreign language" softens the harsh insinuation that school children are so estranged from Biblical Hebrew that they require close guidance to decipher it. The latter assumption is not at all taken for granted by experts and the laity in Israel. Interestingly, the differentiation between the secular and the religious booklets is now more evident due to the quotation marks added to "translation" on the cover of the religious ones, while the secular booklets carry in both cases the plain term in a prominent location. This

י 14–16: שָׁאוּל אֵינוֹ מְסַפֵּר עַל עִנְיַן הַמְּלוּכָה

יד. וַיֹּאמֶר דּוֹד שָׁאוּל אֵלָיו וְאֶל־נַעֲרוֹ
אָן הֲלַכְתֶּם וַיֹּאמֶר לְבַקֵּשׁ אֶת־
הָאֲתֹנוֹת וַנִּרְאֶה כִי־אַיִן וַנָּבוֹא
אֶל־שְׁמוּאֵל:

14. וְדוֹדוֹ שֶׁל שָׁאוּל שָׁאַל אוֹתוֹ וְאֶת
מְשָׁרְתוֹ: "לְאָן הֲלַכְתֶּם?" עָנָה לוֹ
שָׁאוּל: "לְחַפֵּשׂ אֶת הָאֲתוֹנוֹת;
וּמִכֵּיוָן שֶׁלֹּא מְצָאנוּ אוֹתָן, בָּאנוּ
אֶל שְׁמוּאֵל."

טו. וַיֹּאמֶר דּוֹד שָׁאוּל הַגִּידָה־נָּא לִי
מָה־אָמַר לָכֶם שְׁמוּאֵל:

15. הִמְשִׁיךְ הַדּוֹד וְשָׁאַל: "אֱמָר נָא לִי,
מָה אָמַר לָכֶם שְׁמוּאֵל?"

טז. וַיֹּאמֶר שָׁאוּל אֶל־דּוֹדוֹ הַגֵּד הִגִּיד
לָנוּ כִּי נִמְצְאוּ הָאֲתֹנוֹת וְאֶת־דְּבַר
הַמְּלוּכָה לֹא־הִגִּיד לוֹ אֲשֶׁר אָמַר
שְׁמוּאֵל:

16. אָמַר שָׁאוּל לְדוֹדוֹ: "הוּא אָמַר לָנוּ
שֶׁנִּמְצְאוּ הָאֲתוֹנוֹת." וְהוּא לֹא
סִפֵּר לוֹ עַל עִנְיַן הַמְּלוּכָה שֶׁאָמַר
לוֹ שְׁמוּאֵל.

י 17–24: שָׁאוּל נִבְחָר בְּגוֹרָל

יז. וַיַּצְעֵק שְׁמוּאֵל אֶת־הָעָם אֶל־
יְהוָה הַמִּצְפָּה:

17. אַחַר כָּךְ כִּנֵּס שְׁמוּאֵל אֶת הָעָם אֶל
מִקְדַּשׁ ה' שֶׁבַּמִּצְפָּה,

יח. וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כֹּה־אָמַר
יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָנֹכִי הֶעֱלֵיתִי
אֶת־יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרָיִם וָאַצִּיל
אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וּמִיַּד כָּל־
הַמַּמְלָכוֹת הַלֹּחֲצִים אֶתְכֶם:

18. וְאָמַר לִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: "כָּךְ אָמַר ה'
אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל: אָנֹכִי הוֹצֵאתִי
אֶת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם, וְהִצַּלְתִּי
אֶתְכֶם מִיַּד מִצְרַיִם וּמִיַּד כָּל
הַמַּמְלָכוֹת שֶׁלָּחֲצוּ אֶתְכֶם,

יט. וְאַתֶּם הַיּוֹם מְאַסְתֶּם אֶת־אֱלֹהֵיכֶם
אֲשֶׁר־הוּא מוֹשִׁיעַ לָכֶם מִכָּל־
רָעוֹתֵיכֶם וְצָרֹתֵיכֶם וַתֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ
כִּי־מֶלֶךְ תָּשִׂים עָלֵינוּ

19. אֲבָל אַתֶּם הַיּוֹם מְאַסְתֶּם
בֵּאלֹהֵיכֶם, הָאֱלֹהִים שֶׁהִצִּיל
אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל הָרָעוֹת וּמִכָּל הַצָּרוֹת,
וַאֲמַרְתֶּם לוֹ: לֹא, אֶלָּא מֶלֶךְ תָּשִׂים
עָלֵינוּ!

וְעַתָּה הִתְיַצְּבוּ לִפְנֵי יְהוָה
לְשִׁבְטֵיכֶם וּלְאַלְפֵיכֶם:

וְעַכְשָׁו הִתְיַצְּבוּ כֻּלְּכֶם לִפְנֵי ה' לְפִי
שִׁבְטֵיכֶם וּלְפִי מִשְׁפְּחוֹתֵיכֶם!"

כ. וַיַּקְרֵב שְׁמוּאֵל אֶת כָּל־שִׁבְטֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּלְכֵד שֵׁבֶט בִּנְיָמִן:

20. וּשְׁמוּאֵל קֵרֵב אֶת כָּל שִׁבְטֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל, וְשֵׁבֶט בִּנְיָמִין נִלְכַּד
בַּגּוֹרָל.

**Figure 4. Ahuvia 2009 (the booklet for elementary school), page 42.
Samuel 1, 10:14-20.**

may reveal the publisher's assumptions about how comfortable different sectors in Israel feel about the label in question.

Ahuvia's reference to the oral translations in class as opposed to the printed, structured version he proposes, echoes Yakobson's explanation of the benefits that *heder* teachers may draw from a well-organized book documenting a fluent text based on Rashi. Yakobson seems to place more emphasis on the decision to *disseminate* a translation of considerable length in print, while Ahuvia seems more defensive about the *act of translation* itself and the responsibility it entails. Just as Yakobson talks of a "mere translation," Ahuvia writes that he does no more than document and circulate the oral translations already habitually given.

Indeed, the responsibility which translators shoulder and the complexity of their endeavor are explicitly acknowledged in Moses's preface. In contrast, Ahuvia claims he had hardly applied his own interpretation other than unconsciously. He does not cite any specific source but notes that his views are derived from many years of consulting "the Biblical text, its commentators and the rich literature on the subject, *be it 'ours' or 'theirs'* [italics added]" and his own teachers (Ahuvia 2010, 11). This is an audacious move: rather than protect himself from criticism over the subjective aspect through recognized sources, he admits to using non-traditional and non-Jewish interpretations and studies. Such a stance befits the secular school system whose program includes both traditional exegetes and the more modern discipline of Bible Criticism, but is less acceptable among conservative or orthodox sectors.

Ahuvia puts his emphasis on understanding the original text in its surface level (*pešat*) and the acquaintance with Biblical language, as alluded to in Moses's preface and the public debate concerning the translation (Karas 2016b). Both are central issues in the school curriculum.

4. Mikra Mevo'ar (A Glossed Pentateuch)[22] – Kokhav

The modern Hebrew translation by orthodox rabbi David Kokhav is accessible both as a printed book and a free downloadable file (on Wikisource and other websites) as well as an application for smartphones (launched in 2017)[23].

Since the translation was disseminated and published not only in print but also through internet sites and apps, it is most likely not geared primarily towards the ultra-orthodox public, in contrast with the almost exclusive orientation of the first two items. The authors of the endorsement

letters are both ultra-orthodox rabbis, with close connections to the official Israeli Rabbinate which serves the orthodox and laity. The author explained (personal communication, September 2022) that his work is aimed at any reader, starting with the youngest child or the newest newcomer (who lacks language mastery), or newly religious readers.

The Label: The full title presents the work as a Bible based on the Masoretic text with a "Translation into contemporary Hebrew, conforming to the exegetes."[24]

This volume seems to have been generally accepted as translation. In a very positive review by Rabbi Yoel Katan on the *Channel 7* website (2015), which identifies with the modern orthodox-nationalist sector, the book is openly discussed as translation; the review refers to several translational decisions but does not question the very nature of the publication as translation, or the need for one. The application is described on its Google Play page (in Hebrew, but not in English) both as a translation into easy Hebrew, appropriate for the TSOT duty, and as an interpretation (*be'ur* and *peruš*, respectively).[25]

The preface (pp. 5-6) mentions the tradition of Jewish Bible translation and the aforementioned duty of reading with translation. It clarifies that the term "interpretation" (both *be'ur* and *peruš*) used to refer to translation rather than commentary, underlining how ancient this practice is. The author lists the advantages of translation over exegesis: it is designed to transmit every term without omissions, it is fluently read and easily understood.

According to the paratextual elements, the translation is based on Onkelos's Aramaic translation, Rashi and other prominent exegetes. In general, the Biblical wording and context are said to be preserved, but word order was readjusted. The translation is justified based on historical language change and the misunderstandings it may entail.

The preface also explains that a translation may qualify for the TSOT duty if it is based on *halacha*, a condition fulfilled by the present work. One of the endorsement letters includes a ruling that this specific translation is adequate to fulfil TSOT. Also, the text is meant not only for men but also for women, children, and the entire community. They are all obligated to listen to the weekly portions along with their translation. This is why the translation opts for the simplest expressions available.

The publisher's website states that the book is intended for anyone interested in the literal meaning or the TSOT duty, including teachers, [orthodox] parents and secular people who are less familiar with the text's nuances.[26]

The Layout: The Biblical text is divided into the commonly accepted weekly portions, while the translation is also segmented into smaller thematic units

carrying titles which also start with the word *parashah* (weekly portion) but constitute an additional, non-traditional segmentation level. The text is presented in two columns, similar to *Ram Bible*: the original on the right, in traditional-style characters (like those used in *Torah* scrolls, similar to the *Ezra* font) and the translation on the left (in *Koren*, or *Guttman-Koren* style fonts). In some versions, the left side has a light grey background color, possibly to further differentiate it from the original text. No other translations, commentaries or didactic components are provided in this volume.

Discussion: The double presentation in a two-column layout, with the text segmented into weekly portions (rather than chapters) and verses (rather than shorter phrases), calls for quite a quick fluent reading based on verses as its elementary units, facilitated by the lack of any other material which might confuse readers and prevent straight forward processing. Given that the secular readership and its school system are more used to chapters than *parashahs*, this translation probably does not view them as its primary market. According to the translator, Rabbi Kokhav, the book is perfectly suitable for use in synagogues and it is already read in some. One could add that the book's popularity could be increased by it being a manageable pocket edition focusing on the most essential elements.

The translation is often literal but still includes several types of additions beyond those derived from diachronic language change, mainly various types of explicitations (like pronouns, metonyms or the addition of summarizing clauses) and relatively few modifications based on accepted commentary (see Karas 2024). Since the translation is intended for the widest common denominator, the translator endeavored to choose the clearest and simplest wording to convey the immediate meaning (*pešat*)[27] indicated by accepted commentators.

This is the only publication that presents an endorsement letter with a ruling from an eminent Rabbi, ZN Goldberg, who is respected by several orthodox and ultra-orthodox groups, stating that the text qualifies for fulfilling TSOT. The previous ones only mentioned general rulings and opinions about TSOT to reinforce their compatibility. Interestingly, even this particularly firm stance did not provoke heated debates around the text.

In his use of the term "translation", the author clearly points out that while translation and interpretation used to be commonly understood in the context of the Biblical text as having partially overlapping meanings, this is no longer the case. Kokhav argues that a translation is based on authoritative interpretation but does not generate one on its own. In spite of the two-column layout, which might have encouraged a more literal

פרשת בראשית

בָּרָא אֹתָם:

כח וַיְבָ֣רֶךְ אֹתָם֮ אֱלֹהִים֒ וַיֹּ֨אמֶר לָהֶ֜ם אֱלֹהִ֗ים פְּר֥וּ וּרְב֛וּ וּמִלְא֥וּ אֶת־הָאָ֖רֶץ וְכִבְשֻׁ֑הָ וּרְד֞וּ בִּדְגַ֤ת הַיָּם֙ וּבְע֣וֹף הַשָּׁמַ֔יִם וּבְכָל־חַיָּ֖ה הָֽרֹמֶ֥שֶׂת עַל־הָאָֽרֶץ:

כט וַיֹּ֣אמֶר אֱלֹהִ֗ים הִנֵּה֩ נָתַ֨תִּי לָכֶ֜ם אֶת־כָּל־עֵ֣שֶׂב ׀ זֹרֵ֣עַ זֶ֗רַע אֲשֶׁר֙ עַל־פְּנֵ֣י כָל־הָאָ֔רֶץ וְאֶת־כָּל־הָעֵ֛ץ אֲשֶׁר־בּ֥וֹ פְרִי־עֵ֖ץ זֹרֵ֣עַ זָ֑רַע לָכֶ֥ם יִֽהְיֶ֖ה לְאָכְלָֽה:

ל וּֽלְכָל־חַיַּ֣ת הָ֠אָרֶץ וּלְכָל־ע֨וֹף הַשָּׁמַ֜יִם וּלְכֹ֣ל ׀ רוֹמֵ֣שׂ עַל־הָאָ֗רֶץ אֲשֶׁר־בּוֹ֙ נֶ֣פֶשׁ חַיָּ֔ה אֶת־כָּל־יֶ֥רֶק עֵ֖שֶׂב לְאָכְלָ֑ה וַֽיְהִי־כֵֽן:

לא וַיַּ֤רְא אֱלֹהִים֙ אֶת־כָּל־אֲשֶׁ֣ר עָשָׂ֔ה וְהִנֵּה־ט֖וֹב מְאֹ֑ד וַֽיְהִי־עֶ֥רֶב וַֽיְהִי־בֹ֖קֶר י֥וֹם הַשִּׁשִּֽׁי: פ

ב א וַיְכֻלּ֛וּ הַשָּׁמַ֥יִם וְהָאָ֖רֶץ וְכָל־צְבָאָֽם:

ב וַיְכַ֤ל אֱלֹהִים֙ בַּיּ֣וֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִ֔י מְלַאכְתּ֖וֹ אֲשֶׁ֣ר עָשָׂ֑ה וַיִּשְׁבֹּת֙ בַּיּ֣וֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִ֔י מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּ֖וֹ אֲשֶׁ֥ר עָשָֽׂה:

ג וַיְבָ֤רֶךְ אֱלֹהִים֙ אֶת־י֣וֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִ֔י וַיְקַדֵּ֖שׁ אֹת֑וֹ כִּ֣י ב֤וֹ שָׁבַת֙ מִכָּל־מְלַאכְתּ֔וֹ אֲשֶׁר־בָּרָ֥א אֱלֹהִ֖ים לַעֲשֽׂוֹת: פ

שני ד אֵ֣לֶּה תוֹלְד֧וֹת הַשָּׁמַ֛יִם וְהָאָ֖רֶץ בְּהִבָּֽרְאָ֑ם בְּי֗וֹם עֲשׂ֛וֹת יְהוָ֥ה אֱלֹהִ֖ים אֶ֥רֶץ וְשָׁמָֽיִם:

ה וְכֹ֣ל ׀ שִׂ֣יחַ הַשָּׂדֶ֗ה טֶ֚רֶם יִֽהְיֶ֣ה בָאָ֔רֶץ וְכָל־עֵ֥שֶׂב הַשָּׂדֶ֖ה טֶ֣רֶם יִצְמָ֑ח כִּי֩ לֹ֨א הִמְטִ֜יר יְהוָ֤ה אֱלֹהִים֙ עַל־הָאָ֔רֶץ וְאָדָ֣ם אַ֔יִן לַֽעֲבֹ֖ד אֶת־הָֽאֲדָמָֽה:

ו וְאֵ֖ד יַֽעֲלֶ֣ה מִן־הָאָ֑רֶץ וְהִשְׁקָ֖ה אֶֽת־כָּל־פְּנֵֽי־הָֽאֲדָמָֽה:

ז וַיִּיצֶר֩ יְהוָ֨ה אֱלֹהִ֜ים אֶת־הָֽאָדָ֗ם עָפָר֙ מִן־הָ֣אֲדָמָ֔ה וַיִּפַּ֥ח בְּאַפָּ֖יו נִשְׁמַ֣ת חַיִּ֑ים וַֽיְהִ֥י הָֽאָדָ֖ם לְנֶ֥פֶשׁ חַיָּֽה:

זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה.

אֱלֹהִים בֵּרַךְ אוֹתָם, אֱלֹהִים אָמַר לָהֶם: הוֹלִידוּ יְלָדִים וְהִתְרַבּוּ, וּמִלְאוּ אֶת הָאָרֶץ וְכִבְשׁוּ אוֹתָהּ, וְשִׁלְטוּ בִּדְגֵי הַיָּם וּבְעוֹפוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל הַחַיּוֹת שֶׁזּוֹחֲלוֹת עַל הָאָרֶץ.

אֱלֹהִים אָמַר: הִנֵּה נָתַתִּי לָכֶם אֶת כָּל הָעֲשָׂבִים מַצְמִיחֵי הַזֶּרַע שֶׁעַל פְּנֵי כָל הָאָרֶץ וְאֶת כָּל עֲצֵי הַפְּרִי בַּעֲלֵי זְרָעִים לִזְרִיעָה, זֶה יִהְיֶה לָכֶם לַאֲכִילָה.

וּלְכָל חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ וּלְכָל עוֹפוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וּלְכָל הַזּוֹחֲלִים עַל הָאָרֶץ שֶׁיֵּשׁ בָּהֶם נֶפֶשׁ שֶׁל חַיָּה, נָתַתִּי רַק אֶת כָּל הָעֲשָׂבִים הַיְרֻקִּים לֶאֱכוֹל, וְכָךְ נִהְיָה.

אֱלֹהִים רָאָה אֶת כָּל מַה שֶּׁעָשָׂה וְקָבַע שֶׁזֶּה טוֹב מְאֹד, וְהָיָה עֶרֶב וּבוֹקֶר שֶׁל הַיּוֹם הַשִּׁשִּׁי.

נִשְׁלְמָה בְּרִיאַת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ וְכָל מַה שֶּׁבָּהֶם.

אֱלֹהִים הִשְׁלִים בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי אֶת הַמְּלָאכָה שֶׁעָשָׂה, וְשָׁבַת בַּיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי מִכָּל הַמְּלָאכָה שֶׁעָשָׂה.

אֱלֹהִים בֵּרַךְ אֶת הַיּוֹם הַשְּׁבִיעִי וְקִדֵּשׁ אוֹתוֹ, כִּי בּוֹ הוּא שָׁבַת מִכָּל הַמְּלָאכָה שֶׁאֱלֹהִים בָּרָא וְעָשָׂה.

פָּרָשַׁת גַּן עֵדֶן

זֶה סִפּוּר תּוֹלְדוֹת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ כְּשֶׁנִּבְרְאוּ, בַּיּוֹם שֶׁה׳ אֱלֹהִים עָשָׂה אֶרֶץ וְשָׁמַיִם.

עֲדַיִן לֹא הָיָה בָּאָרֶץ שׁוּם שִׂיחַ שָׂדֶה, וַעֲדַיִן לֹא צָמַח שׁוּם עֵשֶׂב שָׂדֶה, כִּי ה׳ אֱלֹהִים לֹא הִמְטִיר גֶּשֶׁם עַל הָאָרֶץ, וַעֲדַיִן לֹא הָיָה אָדָם שֶׁיַּעֲבוֹד אֶת הָאֲדָמָה.

וְעָנָן עָלָה מֵהָאָרֶץ וְהִשְׁקָה אֶת כָּל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה.

ה׳ אֱלֹהִים יָצַר אֶת הָאָדָם עָפָר מֵהָאֲדָמָה, וְנָשַׁף בְּאַפּוֹ נִשְׁמַת חַיִּים וְהָאָדָם נִהְיָה נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה.

Figure 5. Kokhav 2015, page 12. Genesis 1: 28-31, 2: 1-7.

approach given that readers can easily compare the versions, the translation is actually not very literal and includes some significant additions reflecting important interpretative points. Thus, the easy and immediate comparison does not put off the authors from this deviation, probably because of the authoritative sources on which they draw.

The discussion regarding the decision to translate is short and points to linguistic change rather than to questions like the expertise of the translator or his translational freedom, decisions or responsibility. It seems that the authoritative sources relieve the translator of such apologies. The necessity, the approach and the format are all very briefly discussed in a matter-of-fact tone.

Concluding remarks

In accordance with the Jewish tradition, none of the translations was presented as substitute for the original. In no way are they considered authoritative, and those accepted by their public actually derive their status from their adherence to established interpretations. The itinerary between the mostly hidden translation in the first items and the more explicit one, reflects hesitations specifically relevant for Modern Hebrew as target language of Hebrew Bible translations; other target languages had taken this route long ago.

It seems that the first two translations (Yakobson, Gerlitz) for the ultra-orthodox public form their own subset. They are less open about including translation, and treat the decision to translate as marginal, almost obvious. In fact, they put more emphasis on the pedagogical need to document the translation and disseminate it. They take for granted the importance of translation and prefer to underscore the translation's compatibility with accepted exegesis and *halacha* as well as the TSOT duty. The comprehension struggles, which necessitate translation, are attributed both to the acknowledged gap between biblical Hebrew and Modern Hebrew and to the sheer textual complexity of the Scripture.

Since the two earlier writers focus on *heder* goers, they provide a variety of additional didactic tools set up in different layouts. Consequently, Yakobson's version does not lend itself much to a continuous reading of the translation itself; some layouts of Gerlitz's publication do facilitate reading longer segments of the translation on their own. The bilingual columns in Ram's and Kokhav's translations enable readers to browse source and target versions both separately and simultaneously, without much distraction from other didactic or interpretive elements.

Neither of the two early translations covers the whole Pentateuch, not to mention other parts of the Bible, opting for specific books or weekly portions. Perhaps the decision to avoid textual completeness is related to the prolonged hesitation regarding a large dissemination of the translation as a printed, bound volume – a more "independent" physical object if not a textual one. The closer we come to a full, continuous text which raises the "risk" of standalone reading, even in the presence of its original, the closer we are to a "substitute" Bible that people may view as an alternative rendering. This, of course, is the opposite of the traditional approach to Jewish Bible translation.

The two earlier publications merge the notions of explanation and translation in their paratextual discussion, while in other occurrences they use the terms in very distinct senses. This conceptual intersection seems to be specific for Bible learning, where translation as a pedagogic tool is a much fuzzier concept than translation as a paratextual element.

Finally, the early translations put an emphasis on their status regarding TSOT. They quote general opinions which seem to support their use, but do not commit to it and sometimes include the Onkelos Targum as a precaution.

As for the two later versions (Ahuvia/Ram, Kokhav), they are aimed at a larger readership and exhibit a different view on Hebrew Bible translation. They clearly indicate the term translation on their covers or front pages. The similarities between *Ram Bible* and Kokhav's translation are very significant compared to the two previous works, although there are only five years separating Gerlitz and Ram.

As the only version clearly targeting secular society, *Ram Bible* triggered a serious debate in the laity, in academia and in government institutions and ministries. This may be linked to its specific interest in State-run schools, which require textbooks compatible not only with the official program but also with its implied ideologies. This hypothesis deserves a separate discussion in further studies. In fact, *Ram Bible* exhibits two unique properties. First, it is the only one that draws from non-traditional commentaries.[28] Second, it is also the only one which clearly admits to the subjectivity of its translator, while others refer to it indirectly as they apologize in advance for any potential mistakes and generally explain the criteria they applied when in doubt.

Importantly, the two later versions provide discussions that overtly distinguish and separate Bible commentaries and explanations from translation. That they are both formulated in Hebrew does not blur the semantic boundaries of the label in question. In fact, considering the tough reception of *Ram Bible*, it is likely that avoiding the explicit label on its covers results

from hesitations regarding potential public reactions rather than a fuzzy notion of translation.

As far as TSOT is concerned, *Ram Bible* does not even profess to qualify for it, and mentions it as a reading method rather than duty. On the other hand, Kokhav's Pentateuch explicitly claims it meets the requirements for TSOT and suggests a full array of potential readers, within the orthodox community and beyond.

Both *Ram Bible* and Kokhav's text provide more comprehensive versions, covering complete books rather than just specific *parashahs*. They cover the entire Pentateuch; Kokhav adds in the *Haftarahs*, the five scrolls and Daniel, while Ahuvia had already translated the full Bible, with the publication of its second half still pending.

On the whole, the items surveyed here were designed for all religious and non-religious sectors of Jewish Hebrew speakers in Israel; it is interesting that the great polemic only arose as regards *Ram Bible*, mostly among the secular public and official State institutions. This factor is deserving of more attention and analysis.

It should be noted that none of these translations strive predominantly for literality, as they represent a certain commentary foundation rather than linguistic or poetic features. They are all presented alongside their original, for a public with the competence to at least have some superficial understanding of the latter. They are only an aid for reading and comprehension, opening the door to a vast and complex universe.

On the one hand, these modern Hebrew translations were very cautiously presented, indicating a decreased legitimacy because of the perceived "sameness" linking the two historical layers of the same language; in some cases, there was even apprehension regarding the privileged position such a translation might acquire. On the other hand, the very use of the term "translation" and the demarcation it implicitly draws may protect the unique status of the one and only authoritative Bible in Judaism.

Notes

1.   This paper develops a discussion first presented in an earlier publication (Karas 2024), which examined several modern Hebrew Bible translations. The previous paper analyzed excerpts from several translations to understand their implications on the nexus of linguistic continuity, translation and reception. The current article reviews only bound translations in print, considering the different meanings attributed to the term itself as well as the phenomenon of translation in these contexts from a theoreti-

cal perspective. It should also be noted that at least one printed and bound translation into Modern Hebrew (also available online) has been published by the "The Bible Society in Israel." The organization promotes a sect called Messianic Judaism which is normally not considered part of the Jewish community. This interesting translation was not included here because of the premise that its religious orientation warrants a separate discussion and a different approach.

2. An overall opposition in this respect between the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament would be somewhat superficial, however. It has been argued, for example, that the Gospels constitute a Greek text often discussing events which presumably took place mainly in Aramaic. This is somewhat of a simplification, though, considering that other components of the New Testament have a less clear relation to Aramaic. In addition, some passages in the Hebrew Bible also seem to have been translated from earlier texts (Toury 2009, 427).

3. Even the Septuagint required a miraculous explanation to be partly accepted by Jewish communities/tradition; nonetheless, the date of the 8th of Tevet is viewed in Judaism as a dark day due to the initial translation of the Pentateuch into a pagan tongue.

4. These terms are included here in the same spelling in which they are listed in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, so they do not conform to the transliteration system mentioned above. Similarly, other Hebrew terms below denoting Jewish practices and ritual objects, that are already in use in English, will appear below in their accepted English spelling.

5. According to tradition, Onkelos was a Roman national who converted to Judaism. Based on the Talmud and Midrash, he was a member of the royal Roman family, who lived during Tannaitic times (c. 35–120 CE). However, the historical identification of Onkelos is far from undisputed in scholarly literature, as is the proposed date for the translation in Tannaitic times.

6. Haskalah was an intellectual movement among Jews in Eastern and Central Europe which arose in the 1770s. The aims of the movement focused on preserving Judaism as a separate collective entity, including the revival of the Hebrew language, along with its integration in the surrounding cultures and societies. It is sometimes termed "Jewish Enlightenment".

7. Neo-Aramaic, which is currently spoken by Jews from Iraqi Kurdistan, is quite different.

8. *Heders* are traditional elementary schools for ultra-orthodox boys (first established in the 1st –2nd century CE), where pupils are taught basic Jewish text, starting with the Torah.

9. Literally: a translated book of the Pentateuch. These usually included Yiddish version of all or some of the books and Rashi's commentary, sometimes abridged.

10. Of significant segments of the Bible such as several *parashahs*, complete books, etc.

11.   This chapter uses the 2011 version of the precise transliteration system by the Acad-
      emy of the Hebrew Language, as published in its 2011 records (6300, 26 ילקוט הפרסומים
      (בספטמבר, מא' 6840)

12.   This paper examines in greater detail the volume presenting the first three weekly sec-
      tions in Leviticus, *Vayikra* [Lev 1:1-5:26], *Ṣav* [Lev 6:1-8:36] and *Šemini* [Lev 9:1-11:47], pub-
      lished in 1976. Based on the dates of the endorsement letters included in later editions,
      the volume may have been first published in 1955. Additional books in the series include
      other portions in different division into volumes. Yakobson has printed similar booklets
      with Yiddish translation under the same title. The Hebrew booklets clearly note that they
      follow the Yiddish model.

13.   The booklet on the *Mišpatim* parashah (1957) refers to an earlier one [possibly in Yid-
      dish]; the preface to the Yiddish translation of *Berešit* mentions a first publication in
      1954. The author's preface (Yakobson 1976, 8) mentions a first publication in 1954 but it
      is not clear whether he is referring to the Yiddish or the Hebrew translation.

14.   Different editions offer various sets of didactic tools, as explained below, including
      lists, tables and questions to test the pupils.

15.   The reason is probably that Yakobson attributed particular importance to the book of
      Leviticus (Yakobson 1976, no page number).

16.   The *For Meaning* series was the most important one for its author among his body of
      work (Yakobson 1976, no page number) because he believed it was the most beneficial
      one both for raising the prestige of teaching young pupils and the teaching process
      itself.

17.   Gerlitz 2003 and 2011, apparently self-published, with portions from *Genesis*, *Exodus*
      and *Leviticus*. He also published *Psalms* ([1999] 2011) and the *Song of Songs* (2013).
      There are also separate volumes with smaller segments.

18.   Ram represents here the name of the publisher Rafi Moses but also means "esteemed"
      or "noble".

19.   https://www.reches.co.il/catalog/bible/498-tanach-ram-mamad-breshit/book/1. Last ac-
      cessed on September 4, 2022.

20.   There are plans to publish the rest of the Hebrew Bible (*Latter prophets, Writings*)
      in the latter format. No other Jewish Hebrew translation we are aware of aspires to
      provide the complete Bible; the others content themselves with the Pentateuch, the
      haftarahs or the scrolls, which are publicly read at synagogues.

21.   They lived in the 12th and 13th century, mainly in France. Samuel Ibn Tibbon was
      famous for his translation of Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed* from Judeo-Arabic
      into Hebrew.

22.   In Hebrew the original term is *mevo'ar,* "explained".

23.   The app includes: The Pentateuch, the five scrolls, *Daniel* and most *Haftarahs*.

24.	This edition offers a full text of the Pentateuch, along with the *haftarahs* – sections from the writings of the prophets, publicly read on Sabbaths and festivals. It also contains a commentary regarding cantillations.

25.	As retrieved from https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.eladcohen.mikra&hl=iw.

26.	http://www.darga.org.il/product.asp?productid=1770&CatCode=&title=%E9%F6%E0+%EE%E4%E3%F4%E5%F1%21+%E7%E5%EE%F9+%EE%F7%F8%E0+%EE%E1%E5%E0%F8 last retrieved on September 7, 2022.

27.	Personal communication.

28.	It was suggested that this is the ground for its lukewarm reception (Wikipedia), as opposed to Kokhav's translation. However, we can find many other arguments against Ram in Karas 2016b and 2020.

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Between expectations and effect: public reactions to a retranslation of the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13) in Swedish

Richard Pleijel

Abstract

The present chapter investigates the public reception of a Swedish retranslation of a well-known text from the New Testament, namely, the Lord's Prayer/ Our Father (Matthew 6:9–13). Through this case, light is shed on how non-experts react to retranslations of well-known (religious) works, focusing on how long-established translations shape public perceptions of the works in question. The retranslation under study was carried out in the 1970s, and a draft translation of Matthew 6:9–13 accidentally publicized in 1977 provoked a heated public debate on the pages of Sweden's largest newspapers. Drawing on the reception aesthetics theory of Hans Robert Jauss, I argue that the clash between the public's expectations of how this text should be translated and the effect that the retranslation had upon them made them articulate an experience: that the traditional Swedish translation of the prayer was identical with 'the translation that Jesus taught his disciples to pray,' whereas the retranslation was apprehended as a failed attempt to represent this prayer.

Keywords: Retranslation, reception, reception aesthetics, Hans Robert Jauss, biblical translation, biblical reception

Introduction

History is full of strong, even violent reactions to different translations of the biblical texts. We find one example in a letter that Augustine wrote to his friend Jerome in the year 403. In the letter, Augustine records the tumult that broke out among the congregation in Oea when Jerome's new translation of the book of Jonah was being read at a service; to avoid complete chaos, the presiding bishop had to revert to the old translation (Gamble 2004, 37–38). Some 1,500 years later, we find another example in what happened on the evening of November 30, 1952, when the American minister Martin Luther

Hux publicly burnt parts of the Revised Standard Version (Thuesen 1999, 96–97). Hux was discontented because the RSV contained a rendering of Isaiah 7:14 which differed from that of previous versions (Thuesen 1999, 97), while the congregation in Oea reacted because a certain passage in Jonah 4 differed from the Old Latin translation they were used to hearing (Gamble 2004, 37–38). Hence, the strong reactions arose specifically since the two translations – the RSV and the translation of Jerome eventually known as the Vulgate – were both *retranslations*. These retranslations were apparently assessed, and eventually dismissed, in the light of previous translations of the same source text(s).

As noted by Alvstad and Assis Rosa (2015, 15), earlier studies in the field have dealt extensively with "causes, motivations, influences and sometimes also purposes" of retranslations, but not nearly as much with "the consequences or effects of retranslations". It is such consequences and effects of retranslations that I am concerned with in this chapter. In fact, in the last few years, a handful of studies have demonstrated a growing interest in how retranslations are received, whether by professional critics or "ordinary readers" (Bladh 2019; Cadera 2017; Cadera & Walsh 2022; Demirkol Ertürk 2019; Işıklar Koçak and Erkul Yağcı 2019; Wardle 2019; and Ziemann 2019).[1] In light of this development, it is remarkable that the reception of retranslated religious texts has not been the object of any comparable interest. Brownlie (2006, 146) has observed that while both "canonical literary works" and "sacred texts" have been "massively retranslated," much of what has been written on retranslation has considered only literary texts (see also Tahir Gürçağlar 2020, 484). In other words, scholarly work on retranslation has by and large left out the category of sacred texts.[2] It is precisely this category of texts that I engage in this chapter, as I turn my attention to the reception of a retranslated text from the New Testament.

The text in question comes from the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 6, verses 9–13. In a Christian context, it is known as "the Lord's Prayer" or "Our Father" and constitutes one of the single most important prayers of the Christian tradition (Stevenson 2004). As a prayer, it is not simply a text designed for reading, but also a devotional and liturgical artifact. As I will argue, this is an important factor for understanding the reception of the prayer over time, including the reactions that a particular retranslation of the prayer evoked at a specific point in time. This happened in 1977, as a new Swedish translation of the New Testament was underway, being carried out by a state committee appointed in 1972. In October of 1977, an early draft translation of Matthew 6:9–13 (i.e., the Lord's Prayer) was published. The translation aroused a heated debate on the pages of Sweden's largest

tabloids and newspapers. The draft translation, differing radically from the traditional Swedish rendering which had been virtually unchanged for several hundred years, was largely rejected by those who made their voices heard in the debate. For many among the public, the traditional translation of Matthew 6:9–13 simply represented "the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray," whereas the retranslation was equated with something very different. It is the public reception of this specific retranslation that constitutes my case study in the present chapter, with news media material as the primary source.[3]

As I will argue, the reactions studied in this chapter are typical for how retranslations of religious texts are received in different public contexts, especially by non-experts. To study such reactions and the mechanisms behind them, I will employ Hans Robert Jauss's theory of "reception aesthetics" (*Rezeptionsästhetik*), focusing mainly on his concept *horizon of expectations*. According to Jauss (1970; 1982), it is in the interaction between readers and texts that literary meaning is created. A certain text (such as a retranslation of a well-known work) can conform with the particular horizon of expectations of a reader, but if it does not, the horizon is subject to contradiction or even reversal. I will argue that Jauss's theory can serve as a conceptual framework for understanding why and how the traditional Swedish version of Matthew 6:9–13 came to be equated with "the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray."

In the next section, I will introduce and briefly discuss Jauss's reception aesthetics theory. The following section consists of a survey of the initial translation of the prayer into Swedish and the subsequent versions up until the 1917 Bible. I will then briefly discuss two different public contexts (church and school) in which reception of the prayer took place. The next section comprises the case study on the 1977 retranslation and the reactions to it. The empirical material from this section is discussed in light of Jauss's reception aesthetics theory in the final section. At the end of the chapter a few conclusions will be drawn.

Introductory remarks on Jauss's *Rezeptionsästhetik*

Hans Robert Jauss's (1921–1997) early work was sparked by a dissatisfaction with German literary scholarship, in which Jauss saw a disregard for the historical nature of literature. According to Jauss, scholars either imitated the methods of the natural sciences or regarded literary works as ahistorical, self-contained aesthetic entities (see Holub 1984, 55–56). Jauss therefore

sought to situate literary works historically, and thus to "restore some vital link between the artifacts of the past and the concerns of the present" (Holub 1984, 54). In other words, Jauss sought to forge a link between historical literary works and contemporary contexts, investigating "the history of literary works through time" (Cadera 2017, 181; Jauss 1982, 18–20). In order to do this, he focused on the text and the reader simultaneously, placing the relationship between the two at the center of his investigation. According to Jauss, a literary work does not exist as such, but only in the relationship between text and reader (Beal 2011, 361). This relationship enables the researcher to trace the history of literary works over time (Jauss 1982, 19).

It is worth emphasizing that while earlier literary scholarship had focused on the text (and the author), Jauss did not go to the other extreme, focusing only on the reader. He focused precisely on the relationship between text and reader, in different historical eras and contexts. According to Jauss (1970), the response of a reader to a certain text is shaped by his or her particular "horizon of expectations" (*Erwartungshorizont*). The horizon of expectations can be described as a "mind-set" (Thiselton 1992, 34) or as a set of "cultural norms" (Brems and Ramas Pinto 2013, 142) which readers bring to a text. The horizon of expectations is formed by the personal experiences of the reader, but also by the experiences of past readers (see Cadera and Walsh 2022, 11–12).[4] As indicated by the term, readers therefore come to a text with different kinds of *expectations*. However, a text can contradict or surprise, even reverse, these expectations (Jauss 1982, 44; Thiselton 1992, 34). If this happens, an "aesthetic distance" emerges (Jauss 1970, 14). This distance thus comes out of a divergence between *expectations* and *effect*, and results in a change in the reader's horizon of expectations (Jauss 1970, 14). Because of the change of horizon, readers regard an old text in a new way, ascribing new meaning to it. As this meaning forms an intrinsic part of the work, the work in itself changes (see Jauss 1970, 10).

Having introduced Jauss's reception aesthetics theory, I will now trace the history of the text at the center of my investigation, Matthew 6:9–13 (i.e., the Lord's Prayer). The aim is to determine exactly what textual form of the prayer that Swedish readers would have experienced over time. I will also discuss two public contexts for the reception of the prayer: church and school. Assessing the text, as well as the contexts of its reception, will contribute to an understanding of the horizon of expectations of the readers who reacted to the 1977 retranslation.

The Lord's Prayer in Swedish and its (non)-transformation from to 15th to the 20th century

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9–13) as a biblical text

The text known as "the Lord's Prayer" exists in the New Testament in two versions: a longer one in Matthew 6:9–13 and a shorter one in Luke 11:2–4. Since the Matthean text has been the most used one, in Christian liturgies (Ekenberg 2007, 60–61) as well as in culture and literature (Cerbelaud 2010), I will focus on this version. In Matthew, the prayer is framed as part of the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5–7), and the short section of Matthew 6:9–13 is cast as a prayer that Jesus teaches his disciples to pray, as opposed to how the "gentiles" are praying (Matthew 6:5–8). For the reader who is not immediately familiar with the text/prayer, I will note it according to the NRSV translation:

> [9](...)
> Our Father in heaven,
> hallowed be your name.
> [10]Your kingdom come.
> Your will be done,
> on earth as it is in heaven.
> [11]Give us this day our daily bread.
> [12]And forgive us our debts,
> as we also have forgiven our debtors.
> [13]And do not bring us to the time of trial,
> but rescue us from the evil one.[5]

The initial translation(s) into Swedish

As noted by the Swedish biblical scholar Anders Ekenberg (2007; 1996), we find translations of Matthew 6:9–13 well before a complete biblical translation or even translations of single biblical books existed in Swedish. These translations of Matthew 6:9–13 were carried out with the Latin (Vulgate) translation as a source text. The first complete translation of the New Testament into Swedish was published in 1526. Being an indirect translation, it was based primarily on Erasmus' Latin translation, with the Vulgate and Luther's translation as important secondary sources (Ellingworth 2011, 112). As demonstrated by Ekenberg (2007, 7–8), the 1526 translation of Matthew

6:9–13 also reflected earlier Swedish translations, to the extent that the 1526 translation of the prayer may in fact be considered a revision of an earlier, 15th century translation.[6]

In 1541, a revised version of the 1526 New Testament was included in a full Bible edition (Pleijel 2018, 83). Below, I note the translation of Matthew 6:9–13 from this edition. The Swedish text (in its original orthography but with punctuation and verse numberings added) is found in the left column; in the right column is my own English translation of this text. I will try to mirror the Swedish version as closely as possible, despite the resulting stylistic and syntactical awkwardness.

1541	
[9](…)	[9](…)
Fadher wår som äst j himmelen.	Father our, who are in heaven.
Helghat warde titt nampn.	Sanctified be your name
[10]Tilkomme titt Rike.	[10]Come your Kingdom.
Skee tin wilie	Befall your will
så på jordenne som j himmelen.	so on earth as in heaven.
[11]Giff oss jdagh wårt daghligha brödh.	[11]Give us this day our daily bread
[12]Och förlåt oss wåra skulder	[12]And forgive us our debts,
såsom ock wij förlåtom	as we also forgive
them oss skyldighe äro.	those that are indebted to us.
[13]Och inleedh oss icke j frestelse.	[13]And lead us not in(to) temptation.
Vthan frels oss jfrå ondo.	But deliver us from evil.
Ty Riket är titt,	For the Kingdom is yours,
och machten och herligheten j ewigheet.	and the power and the glory in eternity.
Amen.	Amen.

Apart from changes in orthography, the 1541 translation contains two small differences compared to the 1526 translation: 1) in v. 9, the word *himmelen* ("heaven") is rendered in a different grammatical form, and 2) the beginning of v. 10b contains a different verb, *skee* (yet with the same meaning as the previous one, *wardhe*). Apart from these very marginal differences, the 1526 and 1541 editions contain the same text, and the second is therefore clearly a very cautious revision of the first one.

Later translations up until the 1917 Bible

In 1618, a new official Bible, commissioned by the King Gustav II Adolf, was published (Pleijel 2018, 83). It differed from the 1541 Bible only when it came to orthography and some paratextual features (added verse numberings and prefaces to individual books). Thus, the wording of the Matthew 6:9–13 text remained identical with that of the 1541 edition. In 1703, a new, slightly revised edition, commissioned and authorized by King Karl (Charles) XII, was published. Here, we find a few differences (italicized) compared to the 1541 (and thus the 1618) edition:

> 1703
> [9](…) Fader wår, som äst i *himlom.*   Father our, who are in *the heavens.*
> [10](…) Ske tin wilje   Befall your will
> *såsom i himmelen, så ock på jordene.*   *so in heaven, so as on earth.*

With these slight revisions, the prayer had found the form it would have until the beginning of the 20th century. In fact, until 1917 we find no new official Bible editions in Swedish (Olsson 1973, 422). In 1773, King Gustav III appointed a committee for carrying out a new biblical translation. For various reasons, however, the committee's work stalled, and in the beginning of the 19th century all its original members had passed away. Finally, in 1884, three new members were appointed, and they succeeded in bringing the work to a close. The new version, the first one in Swedish to be translated directly from the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek source texts, was published in 1917 (Pleijel 2018, 90–92). While the translators were clearly inspired by the historical-critical scholarship that was making its breakthrough in Europe at the end of the 19th century (see Jansson 2022), in some respects they also aimed at preserving a continuity with ecclesiastical tradition. The tension between these two objectives is clearly demonstrated by the rendering of Matthew 6:9–13 in the edition. Thus, whereas the 1917 Bible was a fresh retranslation from the source texts, this was *not* the case with Matthew 6:9–13. Here, instead, the reader finds the following text:

> 1917
> [9](…)
> Fader vår, som är i himmelen!   Father our, who are in heaven!
> Helgat varde ditt namn;   Sanctified be your name;
> [10]tillkomme ditt rike;   come your kingdom;
> ske din vilja,   befall your will,

såsom i himmelen, så ock på jorden;	so in heaven, so as on earth;
[11]vårt dagliga bröd giv oss i dag;	our daily bread, give us this day
[12]och förlåt oss våra skulder;	and forgive us our debts;
såsom ock vi förlåta	as we also forgive
dem oss skyldiga äro;	those that are indebted to us;
[13]och inled oss icke i frestelse,	and lead us not in(to) temptation,
utan fräls oss ifrån ondo.	But deliver us from evil.

In addition to changes in orthography, we find a few revisions in terms of content. The word "heaven" in v. 9 now has a singular form (*himmelen*) instead of plural (*himlom*) as in the 1703 Bible. The word order in v. 11 has been reversed (from "give us this day our daily bread" to "our daily bread, give us this day").[7] The doxology at the end of v. 13 is missing. Apart from these changes, the text has simply been copy-pasted into the 1917 transla-tion. However, there *is* a new translation of Matthew 6:9–13 according to the general principles of the 1917 Bible, but this translation – which differs substantially from the traditional one – is confined to an appendix. This clearly illustrates the exceptionally strong standing of the traditional translation of the prayer.

The reception in (changing) public contexts: church and school

In the sections above, I have discussed the different Swedish versions of Matthew 6:9–13, from the initial translations of the 15th and 16th centuries to the 1917 version, to demonstrate how little the translation was in fact revised over the centuries.[8] However, apart from the specific textual form of the prayer, there is also a need to assess the context(s) of its reception, in order to understand the reactions to later retranslations of the prayer. In other words, both the text itself and the different contexts of its reception are pivotal for assessing the horizon of expectations of later readers.

The first that may be noted is that up until the middle of the 19th century, when Bible editions gradually started to become privately owned and read in Swedish homes (Olsson 2001, 62), people primarily experienced the biblical texts in a church context. In such cases, people did not in the first place read texts; they rather listened to the texts being read aloud to them, as a kind of "oral performance" (Gamble 2004, 35). We would therefore do better to speak of *listeners* to texts rather than *readers* of texts. In the late medieval pre-Reformation setting (when Mass was being held in Latin), the priest would read Swedish translations of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and Hail

Mary to the congregation after his sermon (Helander 2005, 149). There are indications that as the Protestant Reformation made its breakthrough and religious services were increasingly being held in Swedish, the congregation began to participate actively in reciting the Lord's Prayer (cf. Lundberg 2017, 76). This means that people would have said the Lord's Prayer together with the priest; the prayer was hence no longer being "performed" *for* the congregation but also *by* the congregation. As church attendance was required from all Swedish citizens by law until 1809, a high percentage of the population would at least once a week (i.e., on Sundays) have experienced the Lord's Prayer in its Swedish translation – whether recited by the priest or by people themselves.[9]

However, the local church was not the only context in which people would have interacted with the text of the prayer. The Church Law of 1686 required parents to teach their children the Small Catechism of Martin Luther, with the Lord's Prayer as a centerpiece.[10] Up until the end of the 19th century, the local parish priest was responsible for controlling such public knowledge of the Christian faith (Kittelmann Flensner 2015, 30–31). In 1842, a mandatory "folk school" system was introduced in Sweden; the local parish was responsible for setting up schools, and Luther's Small Catechism was established as the most important textbook of the school system (Tegborg 2001, 248–249). Even after the Catechism was removed from the curriculum in 1919, pupils were assigned parts of it – including the Lord's Prayer – to learn by heart; still in the beginning of the 1960s, schoolbooks promoted the Lords' Prayer as important Christian knowledge to be learned (see Olsson 2009, 28). Thus, during the better part of the 20th century, the Lord's Prayer continued to be an object of learning in the school context, and apart from changes in orthography and some very slight revisions (noted in the sections above), the specific textual form that was the object of learning remained the same.

Having mapped the textual form of the prayer in Swedish in the previous sections, in the present section I have briefly discussed two contexts for the public reception of the prayer: church and school. In the following section, I will describe the work on a new Swedish translation of the New Testament which began in the early 1970s and resulted in the retranslation of the Lord's Prayer in 1977.

The Bible Commission and the reactions to the retranslation of the Lord's Prayer in 1977

The Bible Commission and a new Swedish Bible

As mentioned above, when the 1917 translation was finally published, it was the outcome of the work of a committee originally appointed in the 1770s. There should have been great satisfaction with the fact that a new translation had finally been published. However, the translation was soon criticized, above all for its general style (Olsson 1973, 423), a peculiar mix of idiomatic language and renderings retained from earlier Bible editions. This led to initiatives concerning a new translation already in the 1930s (Pleijel 2018, 97–98). In the beginning of the 1960s, a member of the Swedish Parliament (Riksdag) placed a private motion bill, urging the Government to take measures towards a new translation, primarily of the New Testament. Eventually, in 1972, the Social Democratic Government appointed a committee with the task of translating the New Testament, later expanded to include the Old Testament and the apocryphal/deuterocanonical texts as well (Pleijel 2022, 61–62). The committee was named *Bibelkommissionen* ("The Bible Commission").[11]

The translation brief (see Pleijel 2018, 111–112) stated that the translators in their work should consider "the present translation" (i.e., the 1917 Bible) if such was deemed compatible with the general intent of the brief. Once the work had begun, however, it became apparent that the translators would *not* take "the present translation" into consideration (Olsson 2000, 169), at least not in the sense of preserving some of its specific renderings. It became clear that traditional versions of liturgically important texts would not be retained in the new translation (as had been the case with the Lord's Prayer in the 1917 Bible). As will be demonstrated and discussed in the next section, this would provoke a heated debate when it came to the Bible Commission's translation of Matthew 6:9–13.

Case study: the retranslation of Matthew 6:9–13 and the public reactions in 1977

The translators of the Bible Commission first convened in February 1973 and immediately started to organize the work. During the translation process, the different representatives of the commission were eager to communicate the ongoing work to the public. The translators for example participated

in conferences and press meetings of various kinds. In October of 1977, one of the translators, Per Block, gave an interview in the Christian weekly magazine *Söndags*.[12] As an illustration of the work of the commission, Block quoted a draft translation of Matthew 6:9–13 carried out by two of the commission's members. The news about the translation of the Lord's Prayer was soon picked up by several newspapers. Among them was the tabloid *Expressen*, which featured an interview with the translator Jonas Palm on October 20, 1977. The interview filled almost an entire page, and in the middle of the page, two versions of the Lord's Prayer were printed: the "old text" (i.e., the traditional version) in the left column, and the (draft) retranslation in the right column.[13]

As the reader can see, there is a dramatic difference between the new rendering and the previous 1917 version (including its predecessors); the prayer is completely recast and rendered in a consistently idiomatic fashion (my English translation can be seen in the right column):

1977
[9](...)

Vår fader i himlen,	Our father in heaven,
låt ditt namn hållas heligt.	let your name be kept holy.
[10]Låt ditt rike komma.	Let your kingdom come.
Låt din vilja ske	Let your will be done
på jorden som den sker i himlen.	on earth as it is done in heaven
[11]Ge oss i dag vårt bröd för morgondagen.	Give us today our bread for tomorrow.
[12]Efterskänk oss våra skulder	Forgive us our debts
såsom vi har efterskänkt	as we have forgiven
vad andra är skyldiga oss.	what others owe us.
[13]Låt inte prövningen komma över oss,	Let not the tribulation come upon us,
utan bevara oss från det onda.	but save us from (the) evil.

Apart from the tabloid *Expressen*, the news was also picked up by the national public service company *Sveriges radio* (Swedish Radio), which in the news program *Dagens eko* of October 19 reported on the draft translation of the Lord's Prayer. The new version of the prayer was apparently considered a national interest. At the end of October and beginning of November, several national and local newspapers (*Aftonbladet*, *Arbetet*, *Expressen*, *Svenska Dagbladet*, *Göteborgs-Posten*, *Nya Norrland*, and others) reported on the retranslation. The news sparked several editorial texts and readers'

letters, and the vast majority of these strongly opposed the new transla-
tion. For example, the editorials in *Nya Norrland* (October 21) and *Svenska
Dagbladet* (October 25) both accused the translators of being "meddlesome"
(*klåfingriga*); the latter editorial also suggested that changing the old Swedish
translation of the Lord's Prayer would be comparable to revising the plays
of Shakespeare. Specific renderings featured in the draft translation were
criticized as "unnecessary" in readers' letters (*Svenska Dagbladet*, October
30 and November 11). In a letter to *Göteborgs-Posten* (October 22), one reader
urged the translators to refrain from changing the prayer "because we have
received it from God himself." In a chronicle in *Svenska Dagbladet* (November
2), the new translation was combed for its perceived lack of poetical style.

One finds several similar reactions in connection to the interview with
translator Jonas Palm in *Expressen* on October 20 (see above). As noted, the
draft retranslation of the prayer had been printed alongside the interview.
The interview ended with a question directed to the readers: "Is this how you
want it?" Readers were encouraged to phone the tabloid's hotline between 7
and 9 pm the same day and give their reactions to the new translation. The
issue of *Expressen* the following day (October 21) featured the reactions of
the readers who had phoned the hotline on the night before. The reactions
had been collected in an article that covered almost an entire page under
the headline "NO – We do not want to change the prayer!" The anonymous
editor reported that "hundreds" of readers had phoned the tabloid's hotline,
and that "almost no one wanted to change the old Father our [*Fader vår*]."
The editor had picked 35 reactions; out of these, only 2 contended that the
prayer should or could be "changed," while the rest stated that the prayer
should *not* be changed. In the following, I have singled out a handful of the
reactions (my translations).[14]

1. "We should not change Father our [*Fader vår*]."

2. "One should not change such an old and venerable prayer."

3. "Let us keep the old Father our – it must not be distorted."

4. "We should not change Father our. Christ taught his disciples how
   to pray it, and we should therefore hold on to it it also in the future."

5. "Jesus himself taught us Father our – from the gospel of Matthew,
   chapter 6, verses 9–16, we can learn the wording of the prayer. There
   is thus no need whatsoever to change it in the future."

6. "In the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 6, Jesus teaches his disciples how to pray, and that text coincides [*sammanfaller*] with the old Father Our translation."

7. "Do not change Father our. Do not tamper with and dilute the texts of the Bible."

8. "The new translation is mad [*galen*] – and it is not at all faithful [*trogen*] to the Bible. Every word of the beautiful prayer Father our, the prayer of Jesus himself, is essential and must not be changed."

The most common reaction seems to be that the old translation of the prayer should not be changed (1–5, 7–8), or, more specifically, that the old *prayer* – and not just a specific version or translation of it – should not be changed. In other words, no distinction is made between Matthew 6:9–13 in Swedish and in New Testament Greek; the text in Matthew 6 *coincides* with the traditional translation into Swedish (6). Therefore, to change the prayer would be tantamount to "tampering with and diluting the texts of the Bible" (7), where the generic concept of "the Bible" apparently equaled the traditional Swedish translation of the biblical texts. This may be compared with the editorial in *Svenska Dagbladet*, October 25, which held that changing the prayer would be comparable with revising the work of Shakespeare (an original work, and not a translation). This illustrates not only the religious, but also the cultural value that many among the public apparently attributed to a specific translation of the Bible. Furthermore, the traditional Swedish version seems not to have been apprehended not primarily as a text but as a prayer, as evidenced by several reactions (2, 4–6, and 8). This suggests that the public (as represented by the above reactions) related to Matthew 6:9–13 as a liturgical and devotional artifact, and not as a mere text to be read. There should be no question that this is the case among the reactions testifying to the presumably divine origin of the traditional Swedish translation of the prayer (reactions 4–6 and 8), connecting the prayer in its traditional Swedish form with Jesus ("Jesus himself taught us Father our"). The reader's letter to *Göteborgs-Posten* (October 22), referred to above, similarly held that "we have received it [the prayer] from God himself." It should again be emphasized that it is a specific target text version of the prayer that is considered of divine origin, as opposed to the retranslated version that was published in 1977.[15]

With this summary of the reactions, in the following section I will return to Jauss's concept of horizon of expectations. As indicated above, I will

employ the concept as a framework for explaining the reactions surveyed above and the mechanisms behind the public sentiments against the 1977 retranslation of the Lord's Prayer.

Discussion: expectations, effect, and "aesthetic distance"

The present section is divided into three subsections: "Expectations," "Effect," and "'Aesthetic distance' and new meaning." In the subsections, I summarize and discuss the expectations of the readers confronted with the retranslation in 1977, the effect this translation had upon them, and the "aesthetic distance" which was an outcome of the divergence between expectations and effect.

Expectations

As discussed in the beginning of the chapter, the horizon of expectations can be described as a "mind-set" (Thiselton 1992, 34) which informs the way readers apprehend and interpret a text. The horizon of expectations is itself contingent upon the "cultural assumptions" and "reader expectations" of previous generations (Cadera and Walsh 2022, 11–12). When it comes to the traditional Swedish translation of Matthew 6:9–13, I have argued that earlier generations experienced it primarily as a prayer, that is, as a liturgical and devotional text. The psychologist of religion Bernard Spilka (2005, 369) has noted that "divine power and authority is vested in the officials who conduct worship services." The fact that the priest both in the Latin mass and in post-Reformation services recited the Lord's Prayer (whether alone or together with the congregation) therefore likely imbued the specific textual form of the prayer that was being recited with an institutional authority.[16] This institutional authority was equally advanced by the Swedish school system from 1842 onwards, as the local church organized the schooling. When the school system was gradually "secularized" around the turn of the 20th century (see Tegborg 1969), an institutional authority—albeit a "secular" one—still promoted a specific textual version of the prayer assigned for pupils to learn. This should have been the case up until the 1960s, when the position of Christian religion in the Swedish school system was substantially weakened (see Kittelmann Flensner 2015, 33–35). Given this time frame, all of those who made their voices heard in October and November 1977 should have been thoroughly exposed to the traditional

translation of Matthew 6:9–13. In sum, the fact that people over time received a particular target text version of the prayer in contexts that vested it with institutional authority (church and school) should gradually have led them to acknowledge this specific version as authoritative. Such an understanding thus informed the horizon of expectations of the public, and people hence *expected* the Lord's Prayer to be identical with the traditional Swedish translation of Matthew 6:9–13.

Effect

Even if the traditional translation of the prayer was deemed authoritative by the public, there are reasons to believe that such an apprehension remained largely unarticulated. Since there was for a very long time only one Swedish translation of the prayer in public or official use,[17] people had no reason to reflect on whether this version was authoritative or not – simply because they had no other translation to compare with. With the emergence of the retranslation in October of 1977, such a point of comparison suddenly emerged.[18]

According to Jauss, when the horizon of expectations is confronted with "a new work," the reception of this work may result in a "horizon change" since the new work "negates familiar experience or articulates an experience for the first time" (Jauss 1970, 14). I submit that what Jauss describes here aptly captures what happens when the public is confronted with the retranslation of Matthew 6:9–13 in 1977. The traditional Swedish translation of Matthew 6:9–13 constitutes the "old work," to paraphrase Jauss, and when readers are confronted with the "new work" (the retranslation of Matthew 6:9–13), their "familiar experience" is negated. Moreover, "the new work" not only negates a familiar experience, it also "articulates an experience for the first time." I suggest that the specific experience articulated is the notion that the traditional translation of Matthew 6:9–13 is a text which coincides with this passage in the Greek New Testament text, and thus with "the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray." The public may have experienced the traditional Swedish translation of Matthew 6:9–13 as an authoritative version of this prayer for several centuries, but it was only now, when confronted with a retranslation of the same text, that such an assessment could be overtly articulated.

"Aesthetic distance" and new meaning

As briefly discussed in the beginning of the chapter, the divergence between a given horizon of expectations and a "new work" leads to what Jauss (1970, 14; 1982, 44) terms "aesthetic distance." Such a distance may result in a change of horizon, and if the horizon changes, then the way readers interpret and interact with a text or a work also changes. Ultimately, then, since meaning is a function of the relationship between reader and text, the true meaning of the text or the work changes. This is a natural outcome of Jauss's contention that literary history, which was his main interest, is not possible to construe on "literary facts" (Jauss 1970, 27), but only on the response of readers to literary texts. As Jauss says:

> A literary work is not an object which stands by itself and which offers the same face to each reader in each period. It is not a monument which reveals its timeless essence in a monologue. (Jauss 1970, 10)

Thus, it is from the perspective of the readers that we can say that the meaning of a work or a text changes—even if *the actual text itself* does not change. Indeed, the traditional Swedish translation of the Lord's Prayer remained unchanged during the work of the Bible Commission, as their task was to produce a fresh retranslation and not to revise the old version.[19] However, in light of the retranslation, the public suddenly regarded the traditional version in a new way, whereby the meaning of this text did in fact change. One consequence of the "aesthetic distance" was that the public could now articulate their identification of the traditional Swedish translation of Matthew 6:9–13 with "the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray." Again, such an articulation was only possible in the light of a new translation of the same work. The traditional translation was now deemed authoritative, to the extent that it was by some considered to be of divine origin ("we have received it from God himself," and "Jesus himself taught us [the prayer]"). It is noteworthy that the authority ascribed to it was not only "religious," but also cultural and historical. This is evident for example when the traditional translation of the prayer was compared to the work of Shakespeare (*Svenska Dagbladet*, October 25, 1977). Thus, as an outcome of the "aesthetic distance" between the readers' horizon of expectations and the effect of the retranslation, the historical, cultural, and religious value that the public ascribed to the traditional translation was acknowledged and openly articulated.

Conclusion

The relationship between the readers and the two texts – the traditional version and the retranslation publicized in 1977 – has enabled me to trace the history of the Lord's Prayer in Swedish. Hans Robert Jauss's concept of horizon of expectations has served as a framework for explaining the divergence between *expectations* and *effect* when it comes to the public reactions to the retranslated prayer. I have argued that the traditional form of the prayer (which apart from minor revisions remained the same from the late 15th century to the 1970s) combined with the institutional authority of the contexts of its reception contributed to the horizon of expectations of those who was confronted with—and indeed themselves confronted—the retranslation in 1977. The retranslation negated the "familiar experience" of their horizon of expectations and "articulate[d] an experience for the first time" (Jauss 1970, 14). Whereas the traditional rendering of the prayer may have been deemed authoritative by earlier generations, I have argued that it was only from the vantage point of the retranslation that the traditional translation could be articulated as "the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples to pray" (an assessment that was not only voiced from a "religious" perspective, but also from cultural and historical perspectives). Beyond the specific case study of the present chapter, I would like to stress the need for a continued exploration of the ways in which different kinds of readers interpret and interact with (re)translated religious texts. This would entail a further investigation of that which lies at the heart of reception: the relationship between texts and human beings.

Notes

1. One may note that these contributions either analyze the reception of a specific *retranslation* (e.g., Bladh 2019), or the reception of a specific literary *work* through consequent retranslations of it over time (e.g., Cadera 2017). In the present chapter, I take a middle position, investigating the reception of a specific work (i.e., the Lord's Prayer) in one specific textual form (i.e., a draft retranslation of Matthew 6:9–13 publicized in 1977).

2. It is telling that the first volume dedicated exclusively to retranslation and reception (Cadera and Walsh 2022) contains no contribution on religious texts, whether Christian, Jewish, Muslim, or other. See, however, Dievenkorn and Levin (2022), with several contributions that touch upon the subject. On "audience expectations" and Bible translation (however not from a retranslation perspective), see also Wendland

(2007). I thank one of the anonymous reviewers for bringing Wendland's paper to my attention.

3.   To be sure, the debate on the retranslation of the Lord's Prayer did not end in 1977 (see, e.g., Åsberg 1983), and the debate studied in this chapter therefore constitutes a mere snapshot of a larger, ongoing debate. The fact that the 1977 debate still comprises a rich and representative material (cf. note 14) justifies the delimitation.

4.   Anthony Thiselton's description of the horizon of expectations as something that "characterizes the reader's finite viewpoint amidst his or her situatedness in time and history" (Thiselton 1992, 34) pinpoints the simultaneously *diachronic* and *synchronic* nature of Jauss's concept (see also Jauss 1982, 37–39).

5.   As many contemporary translations, the NRSV lacks the doxology at the end of v. 13 ("For the kingdom is yours, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen"). The doxology is lacking in the earliest Greek manuscripts (Ekenberg 2007, 38).

6.   See also Ejder (1978, 110–113), who apart from several 15th century versions records a late 14th century translation of the prayer into Swedish. I thank Anders Ekenberg for bringing my attention to Ejder's paper.

7.   This follows the word order of the text form as used in the state Church of Sweden services, as can be seen for example in the missal of 1811 (*Kyrkohandbok*, 14).

8.   Similar observations have been made by Ekenberg (2007, 8) and Ejder (1978, 118).

9.   I do not claim to be able to assess *how* people experienced the prayer, but merely *that* they experienced it, and, most importantly, that they experienced a specific textual form of the prayer.

10. The most famous Swedish edition of Luther's Small Catechism was published by Archbishop Olof Swebilius in 1689. The translation of the Lord's Prayer included in the Catechism (see Herbertsson 2017, 58–62) coincides with the one of the slightly later 1703 Bible edition, with its revision of the word *himlom* in v. 9 and the reversed word order in v. 10. However, the doxology of v. 13, which Luther included in his Small Catechism (1529) was omitted in the Swedish translation of Luther's Catechism included in the Svebilius edition; only the "Amen" was retained (see Herbertsson 2017, 62). This was still the case in the official 1878 edition of the Small Catechism, which was used for religious instruction in schools for several decades.

11. In the Swedish word *Bibelkommissionen*, the ending marks the definite form, and not, as in German, the plural.

12. The interview was mentioned by Christer Åsberg, secretary of the Bible Commission, in a letter to the commission's board (28 October, 1977). The interview was also mentioned by several newspapers that reported on the new translation of the Lord's Prayer (e.g., *Arbetet*, October 20, 1977; *Aftonbladet*, October 1, 1978). Unfortunately, however, I have not been able myself to locate any copy of the magazine *Söndags*, either at the National Library of Sweden (Stockholm) or elsewhere.

13.   Interestingly, the "old text" printed in *Expressen* is identical with that of the 1917 Bible, but also includes the doxology (v. 13). Whereas the doxology was omitted in the 1917 Bible, it continued to be a part of the text used in church services from the 1811 missal onwards (Martling 1992, 238). This strongly suggests that the perception of the "old text" had been shaped by the liturgical (and not only the biblical) form of the text. Cf. Pennarola (2020) who compares the French with the traditional English and Italian versions of the prayer, stating that the latter versions "seem to have been more closely anchored to the liturgical tradition and more resistant to change." (4)

14.   I have chosen these reactions because I deem them to be representative for the kind of public sentiments against biblical retranslations that have been noted by other scholars (e.g., Leutzsch 2019, 50–51; Åsberg 1983, 60–61).

15.   As Nida (1997) suggests, ascribing such an importance to the specific wording of a text is especially common in religions claiming "verbal inspiration of historical texts, because the words themselves are regarded by many as being essentially dictated by deity" (194).

16.   This is also illustrated by the fact that the "old text" printed in the *Expressen* article of October 20 coincides with the text used in church services, and not with the one printed in the 1917 Church Bible which lacks the doxology of v. 13 (see note 13).

17.   At the end of the 19th century, we find several translations of the New Testament into Swedish by free church ministers, among them P. P. Waldenström and Helge Åkeson (Johnson 1991, 40). These translations, however, were only intended for private (devotional or educational) use.

18.   There is an analogous argument in Thuesen (1999) on the publication of the Revised New Testament in 1881. As Thuesen (1992, 42) notes, the appearance of this translation meant that there existed for the first time a vantage point from where it was possible to seriously question the King James ("Authorized") Version. With two versions, the public was now able to compare one version with the other.

19.   As noted in the section on the Bible Commission, the translation brief contained some ambiguities in this sense, but there are clear indications that these ambiguities were ignored by the translators, who consistently worked towards a retranslation without consideration taken to earlier translations (see Pleijel 2018, 112 n. 286).

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Retranslation of the Bible
in Muslim idiom

Andy Warren-Rothlin

Abstract

Modern Muslim-idiom Bible translations are characterized and contrasted
with historic Christian-idiom Bible translations, showing that it is in fact the
latter which diverge from translational norms. The broad range of contexts
of Bible retranslations in general are then surveyed, including the reasons
why they may be produced and reactions they may provoke; this provides the
background—and in fact counterpoint—to our consideration of the contexts
of Bible retranslations for Muslims. Some conclusions are drawn with respect
to Chesterman's "Retranslation Hypothesis". In the second half of this paper,
case studies in Hausa, Chadian Arabic and Pashto reveal distinctive local issues
raised by the publication of retranslations with MIT features

Keywords: Bible translation, Muslim-idiom translation, retranslation, revision,
anthropomorphism, Hausa, Chadian Arabic, Pashto

Introduction

The retranslation of the Bible for Christians and of the *Qur'an* for Muslims
may provoke great sensitivities. But the retranslation of the *Bible* for *Muslims*
(our primary focus here) and of the *Qur'an* for *Christians* typically provokes
even greater and more complex sensitivities. These two religious communi-
ties typically consider themselves as custodians and primary audiences
of their respective texts, and even when they are eager to share their text
with outsiders, they may have very mixed feelings about how much of their
own cultural frame should be carried with it and how much it can or should
be contextualized or domesticated to the cultural frame of the intended
audience. Muslim-idiom Bible translations invariably have, in addition
to their primary audience of outsiders (Muslims), a secondary audience
of insiders (Christians), with the potential that elements of the outsider
contextualization may thus enter the insider community (bridges, after all,
allow two-way traffic). Many additional factors may exacerbate Christians'

sensitivities, including a deep-seated commitment to a historic 'canonical' translation key to the community's identity and sense of legitimacy (a factor of particular importance for Christian minority communities in Muslim-majority contexts), fears of innovation and theological error (fears often distinctive of the brand of Christianity first brought to the region), fears of Islamization and the imposition of sharia, and even Islamophobic conspiracy theories (*e.g.* on the origins of the terms *Allāh* and *ʿĪsā*, and the meaning of the 'number of the beast'). As a result, outward-looking translation approaches, with their great positive potential, may inadvertently provoke community-internal anxieties and conflicts, and even protectionist backlashes.

This paper first characterizes modern Muslim-idiom Bible translations (MITs), contrasting them with historic Christian-idiom Bible translations (CITs) to show that it is in fact the latter which diverge from translational norms. Then we consider the broad range of contexts of Bible retranslations in general, including the reasons why they may be produced and reactions they may provoke. This provides the background—and in fact counterpoint—to our consideration of the contexts of Bible retranslations for Muslims (MITs). Some conclusions are drawn with respect to Chesterman's "Retranslation Hypothesis".

In the second half of the paper, case studies in Hausa, Chadian Arabic and Pashto reveal distinctive local issues raised by the publication of retranslations with MIT features.

Bible translations in Muslim idiom and Christian idiom

MITs are being produced by Christians and Muslims (usually together) across the world, from Senegal to Indonesia and beyond, at an unprecedented rate. Such translations may read, for example, as follows:

> **Hazrat Simeon [pbuh] and Hazrat Anna [pbuh] prophesy about ʿĪsā al-Masīh [hpbuu]**
>
> [25] There was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon. He was righteous and devout, and he was waiting for Allah to bring comfort to the Ban-i Isrā'īl, and the Holy Spirit* was upon him. [26] The Holy Spirit had also made known to him that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Masīh. [27] Led by the Spirit, Simeon went to al-Bayt ul-Muqaddas, just as the parents were bringing in the child ʿĪsā, to do for him what was required according to the custom of sharī'ah (revealed to Prophet Mūsā), [28] Simeon took the child in his arms and praised Allah, saying: …

[Footnote:] * Rūh ul-Quddus or Allah's Spirit, in this instance not to be confused with Hazrat Jibrīl (pbuh) or another angel …
(Koinónia 2017, 2019)

As can be seen from this example, such translations may be characterized by Arabic (usually *Qur'anic*) terms:

– personal, place and ethnic names, e.g., *Mūsā, al-Bayt ul-Muqaddas, Bani Isrā'īl*
– divine titles, e.g., *Allāh*,[1] *al-Rabb, Taʿālā*
– honorifics, e.g., *Hazrat, Nabī*, 'pbuh'/'peace be upon him', and innovative forms such as 'hpbuu'/'his peace be upon us'
– key terms, e.g., *sharīʿah, al-janna, zakāt, Injīl* (Warren-Rothlin f.c.)

MITs may avoid anthropomorphism (Ciccarelli 2016, Warren-Rothlin 2017)[2] and familial metaphors with reference to God and Jesus ('Divine Familial Terms'). A particular concern may be the avoidance of rendering Greek *huios tou theou*, 'Son of God' (e.g., Mark 1:1) with Arabic *ibn Aḷḷāh*,[3] since that term is proscribed in *Qur'an* 9:30 (Brown 2005a; 2005b; Brown, Gray and Gray 2011a; 2011b; Tauberschmidt 2016; Miller-Naudé and Naudé 2016; Editor 2022). MITs employ many euphemisms, especially for reference to alcohol, body parts and sexuality, and aim to use thoroughly natural local Islamic idiom, discourse structures and framing of text portions and of the entire product (*TBT* 2023). Paratextual elements may include special kinds of introductions, footnotes (as in the example above) and glossaries; key Islamic formulae (e.g., *basmala, tawḥīd, tahlīl*,[4] *takbīr, ḥamdala* and *inshaḷḷāh*); quotations from the *Qur'an* attesting to the *Tawrāt, Zabūr* and *Injīl* (e.g., Al-Mā'idah 5:46-47 cited in (Robinson 1894) as presented in (Warren-Rothlin 2009)); and images of ancient Hebrew, Greek, Syriac and Arabic manuscripts. Publishing features may then include Arabic script in digraphic situations; special fonts and typesetting, including graphic honorific ligatures; special graphic design, including text borders and heading cartouches; and production on off-white paper, with divine titles printed in red etc. (Brown 2018). These various features appear of course to varying degrees in Bible products, such that a given translation and publication may be described as more or less MIT or CIT.

MITs constitute cross-cultural retranslations when—as is most often the case—they are done in contexts where there is an already well-accepted CIT, used by established churches, in the same language or a closely related one. And they may provoke for Christian-culture speakers of otherwise

Muslim-majority languages like Arabic, Persian and Urdu the same sense of dissonance as experienced by most Christian-culture English speakers at the above example, which was produced for Pakistani-heritage Muslims in Scotland. The Christian secondary audiences of MITs typically regard MITs as adaptations, appropriations or even distortions of 'their' Bible. However, in fact it is their own historic CITs that are anomalous in their *lack* of the contextualization and naturalness that characterize all good translation, their extensive loanwords and calques from Hebrew, Greek, English, French etc. (e.g., Arabic *nāmūs*, 'law', Hausa *baftisma*, 'baptism' and Swahili *askofu*, 'bishop', all from Greek), their many incomprehensible literalisms,[5] their resultant effective formation of a new Christian idiom, their being based on an idiosyncratic and archaic textual tradition,[6] their having been done sometimes solely by foreigners, their following a 'formal equivalence' or 'literal' translation principle (a peculiarity of historic Christian Bible translations) and hence their being clearly documentary by nature though instrumental in intended function (Nord 2005, 79-81). Understandably, such translations, published in black books without explanation of their textual basis or response to the *taḥrīf* doctrine, have not typically proven attractive to Muslims. As a result, even where a Bible translation has been available for 150 years or more, it may have achieved next to no national profile. In most cases, such Bible translations have not been widely opposed by Muslims but have been instead simply ignored.

Such situations pertain in several major world languages, including Arabic (historic CIT Bustani-Van Dyck (1860/1865),[7] MIT *Al-maʿnā al-ṣaḥīḥ* 'The True Meaning' (2008/2016)),[8] Urdu (historic CIT W. Yates (1745/1843), MIT *Urdū Jiyū* 'Urdu Geo Version' (2010)), Russian (historic CIT *Sinodal'nyĭ Perevod* 'Synodal Version' (1822/1876), MIT *Svi͡ashchennoe Pisanie, Vostochnyĭ Perevod* 'Central Asian Russian Scriptures' (2013)), and even Thai (historic CIT 'Thai Standard Version' (1846/1894), MIT Thailand Bible Society (f.c.)).

The context of Bible retranslations

Bible translations globally are typically instrumental in intended function. They are a key tool of Christian churches in their own idiom and of churches' communication of their message to others—ideally, in the idiom of the intended outsider hearers/readers. And yet revisions and new translations usually have to justify their existence in a market which is not generally receptive to innovation. Some characteristic features can be identified (Werner 2018):

Revisions are typically made in three distinct contexts:

– *A first whole Bible translation including a revision of a first New Testament published 10-15 years previously.* Typically, today, a New Testament managed by a foreigner is revised by native speakers, sometimes reducing accuracy if the speakers have had less training but usually increasing naturalness, and the orthography and other formal elements are harmonized with the new Old Testament translation. Periphrastic renderings may be simplified, as the audience may have significantly increased in their Bible knowledge, engagement and use. And key terms may need to be revised (e.g., for 'holy', New Testament-based renderings of which typically prove unusable in the Old Testament), though this may prove difficult, because the audience may have become very attached to the terminology which they now use in their prayers and songs.

– *The revision of a modern Bible translation* undertaken by major publishers every 20 years or so, or in view of a copyright being about to expire. Such light revisions are standard and only newsworthy when, e.g., the evangelical English *New International Version* (1984) was revised to include gender-neutral language as *Today's New International Version* (2002/2005), and the evangelical *English Standard Version* (2001)[9] was published as a 'Permanent Text Edition' (2016; the promise never to revise again was reversed within a month).

– *The light revision of a historic translation*, sometimes over 100 years old (e.g., German Zürcher Bibel (1531), German Lutherbibel (1534), English King James Version (1611), Arabic Van Dyck (1865), French Segond (1880)). This typically applies only where a historic translation has gained such a high status that a revision is desired, alongside more modern translations. More substantial revision, even of a very old product, may be strongly resisted (e.g., Urdu Protestant Bible, still used today in a version close to that of Henry Martyn himself (1815/1846)).

Justification for such standard types of revision may be provided in a preface.

New translations typically require even greater justification. As the authors of the German *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* (2001/2006) write:

A new production of a classical play never causes anyone to ask what was so bad about the last production that a new one is needed, and yet a new Bible translation is apparently taken as a criticism of those that are already available. (BGS 2006, 26)

Such justifications may usually involve reference to specific parameters of *skopos* or Translation Brief (Werner 2018):

– a younger audience (e.g., 'children's Bibles')
– a culturally outsider audience (e.g., German *VolxBibel* (2005/2012), English *The Message* (1993/2002))
– more modern language (e.g., French *Nouvelle Français Courant* (2019))
– more formal equivalence (usually legitimated theologically e.g., English *English Standard Version* (2001))
– more functional equivalence (usually legitimated pragmatically e.g., English *Contemporary English Version* (1991/1995), intended for reading aloud)
– new exegetical insights (e.g., from the Dead Sea Scrolls)
– a distinct theological emphasis (claimed, of course, to be inherent in the original, e.g., English *The Passion Translation* (2002), German *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* (2001/2006)).

Typically, Christian-majority western audiences, conservative though they may be, have a fair degree of tolerance for poetic license in such products, especially when they are for their own children, as long as they do not seem to be claiming canonical status in Church life.

The context of Muslim-Idiom Bible retranslations

MITs may differ quite fundamentally from other Bible retranslations.

The *audience* is not usually a younger minority, but the historic majority. Whilst several of the retranslations referenced above aspire to the language and values of young people, formal Muslim idiom may be most attractive to *older* readers and hearers, and in conventional contexts.

The *language* chosen may be not more 'modern' than the nineteenth-century Christian religious idiom of an existing CIT, but rather a more historic Islamic idiom, even sometimes intentionally archaic, modelled on what is considered *Qur'anic* idiom.

The *translation principle* may be presented as 'meaning-based', in line with the audience's concepts of a *tafsīr* (rather than a *tarjamah*) of the *maʿnā* of the *Qur'an* ("an interpretation of its meaning(s)"), allowing for more dynamic equivalents and even normally disallowed features such as anachronism (e.g., *al-Quds* for Jerusalem before the arrival of the Ark of the Covenant, *hijra*

for the exodus etc.). However, such a *tafsīr* may need to be accompanied by the ultimate in *formal equivalence*—an interlinear (e.g., Balochi, Urdu)—as a response to the audience's ideas about the integrity of biblical transmission (*taḥrīf*, "corruption") and the translatability of inspired texts (*ʾiʿjāz*, 'inimitability')).

As for *theological* emphasis, contrary to the claims of many conservatively minded Christians, MITs are usually no different from an existing CIT, though they are of course more outsider-focussed. One famous MIT of the Old Testament describes itself as having a consciously 'Christotelic' *skopos*, meaning that certain texts are rendered particularly consciously as pointing forward to Christ (Arabic *The True Meaning* (2008/2016)).

In broader conceptual terms, we may describe the distinctive features of MITs in terms of Ownership, Concepts, Paradigm and Register.

Ownership

Translation may be described in terms of a taxonomy of relationships between translators, text and audience. Typically, *insiders import* to their *own* language and community a *translator/audience-foreign* text. However,

- In *Christian-audience Bible translation*, *insiders import* to their *own* language and community a *translator/audience-owned* text.
- In *Missionary Bible translation*, *outsiders export* to *another* language and community a *translator-owned* and *audience-foreign* text.
- In *Christian-to-Muslim MIT*, *outsiders export* to *another* language and community a translator-*owned* and audience-*related* text.
- In *Muslim-to-Muslim MIT*, *insiders import* to their *own* language and community a *translator/audience-related* text.

Seen in this way, Christian-to-Muslim MIT is a most unusual form of translation, differing from the norm in both the translator-audience relationship in that outsiders export the translation, and in the audience-text relationship in that the Biblical text is neither entirely foreign to, nor owned by, Muslims.

The *translator-audience* relationship has seen a major shift in even just the last decade from "outsiders exporting" to "insiders importing", that is, from the initiative of foreign and national missionaries to that of local Muslims and Muslim-background Christians. This has happened largely due to ideological forces like those witnessed in controversies around the translation of Amanda Gorman's poem, "The hill we climb".

The *audience-text* relationship is central to the MIT concept. The Bible is "audience-owned", or appropriated, in the formation of most Christian communities' identity, and even the Old Testament, though referred to in rather similar ways in the New Testament and in the *Qur'an*, is much more deeply owned by Christians (even often to the point of failure to recognise its foreignness) than by most Muslims (to whose worldview it is nonetheless very closely "related"). This "related" or ambiguous status of the text to most Muslims presents both a striking potential for communication and a frustrating obstacle. The *Qur'an* clearly refers positively to the *Tawrāt*, *Zabūr* and *Injīl*, and yet the doctrine of *taḥrīf* has led many to see the modern Christian Bible as something quite different from those concepts. Such audiences may not be able to perceive the Bible as canonical, but may, through constructive translation strategies, be enabled to see it as at least a "benevolent" text alongside their own.

Concepts

A similar ambiguity can be seen in the relationship between biblical and *Qur'anic* conceptual and linguistic norms. At many points there is literary and linguistic continuity—in shared narratives, ethics and theology, and shared Semitic idiom. But there are also many questionable equivalences, such as *Qur'anic* names which may or may not correspond to the biblical Enoch, Jethro or Ezekiel. Linguistic mismatches may involve interpretations of *iḍāfa* constructions in Hebrew and Arabic, and the assumption that names ending in *-ā* are feminine. Conceptual mismatches may appear in the domains of holiness and cleanness, *ḥalāl*, *ṣalāh/du'ā'* and prostration. "False friends" include "Holy Spirit", "priest", "sacrifice", *Injīl*, *al-Masīḥ* and "Son of God". Alternative associations are made with credal formulations, the biblical Divine Name and the Islamic 99 Names. Modern political sensitivities may be evoked by terms such as "Egypt", "Babylon", "Israel", "Jew" and "Palestine". And distinct theological associations may be attached with such linguistic forms as emphasis, repetition and litotes (Warren-Rothlin 2017). The translational mediation of these texts which are neither entirely foreign nor entirely familiar involves complex negotiation.

Paradigm

Granted the challenges of an audience's sense of ownership of the product and their use of particular terms and concepts, there remains for most

audiences a substantial shift in paradigm or 'frame of reference' (Wilt 2002). This is the audience's collaboration with the translators in the work of *domesticating* and *localizing* the texts.

Localization or contextualization occurred within the formation of the biblical text, as Old Testament and Jewish ideas were reframed in the largely Greek-speaking, Christian, imperial, urban New Testament Church. Now, in MIT, Christian ideas are again localized among Muslim communities in West Africa, the Middle East and South and Southeast Asia. And just as Christians apply a New Testament or Christian hermeneutic when they read the Old Testament, so Muslims apply a *Qur'anic* or Islamic hermeneutic when they read the Bible as a whole. This goes beyond the issues of ownership and individual concepts to mean the interaction of two historically closely related but now increasingly polarized worldviews, inseparable from history (*dhimmī* "protected non-Muslim" status, the *Reconquista* and Crusades, 9-11 and the "war on terror" etc.). The shift of paradigm is for translators and readers certainly no less than that experienced by late first-century Jews encountering the by then largely gentile Jesus movement (Ostler 2016).

Register

A final distinctive feature of the context of MITs involves linguistic register. Bible translations are typically expected to be "Accurate, Clear, Natural and *Acceptable/Appropriate*" (Barnwell 2020, 29-30). The relatively recent addition of the last of these criteria is likely related to the influence of *skopos* theory and a recognition that many historic translations have failed to achieve broad acceptance outside Church circles.

In MIT, acceptability is key (compare Simms 1997), often requiring the avoidance of anthropomorphism, extensive euphemism, and the use of honorifics in reference to known prophets and their wives. Euphemism relating to negative taboos is of course present in all major Bible translations, with what appear to be rude words in the Hebrew and Greek text typically being sanitised in translation (Ellingworth and Mojola 1986; Pope 1992; Warren-Rothlin 2013), but most Islamic communities also hold strong *positive* taboos with respect to God and prophets. A particular repugnance is reserved for any connection of God with sexuality, and though Christians of course share this sentiment, Muslims may go further and see it as implied by the biblical expression *huios tou theou*, 'Son of God', *ibn Aḷḷāh*. It is, therefore, among many Muslims a very high acceptability criterion that this term be avoided. However, it is equally important to many Christians that a recognizable form of the term be retained.[10]

Conclusion

From the above, it seems clear that MITs in several ways *contradict* Chesterman's 'Retranslation Hypothesis' (Chesterman 2000, 23). MITs are in fact usually *less* source-text-oriented than existing translations, indeed they may be far at the receptor-audience-orientation end of the scale because of their strongly instrumental *skopos*. In no way do they claim to be better representations of the source text in any ultimate sense but are rather ultimate contextualizations or domestications of it. And this contextualization happens in an Islamic paradigm, which the translators (whether Muslims or Christians) may consider as having little continuity with the source text. The contextualization may be so great that MITs may be styled by some as "scripture-*based* products" (as distinct from "scripture products"), with an expectation that they will have canonical status for neither Christians nor Muslims.

Historical trajectories

Some of the social dynamics of Bible translation and retranslation in Muslim-majority contexts are illustrated here by means of three examples from the postcolonial contexts of Nigeria (Hausa), Chad (Chadian Arabic) and Pakistan/Afghanistan (Pashto). Though the contrasts between historic CITs and modern MITs are here not always as stark as in the Arabic, Urdu, and Russian cases referred to above, and Divine Familial Terms are in these cases rendered with formal equivalents (*e.g.* 'Son of God'), several sometimes quite subtle elements of retranslation have had great importance.

Hausa (Nigeria)

There have been four Hausa Bible translations, two of which have been revised:

- BFBS 1932, revised as Bible League 2003/04
- BSWA NT 1965, then BSN Bible 1979
- BSN NT 2000, then BSN Bible 2014, revised in Arabic script as Bible-AS 2021
- Biblica 2020

In the course of this history (Koops 2010; Horlings 2015), the center of Hausa linguistic and literary culture shifted from Sokoto in 1932 to Kano by 1979, and on to the Middle Belt by 2000, where Hausa had become very widespread as a second language; this is of course reflected in the respective translations. In that time, too, among the potential audience, many second-language speakers of Hausa in the Nigerian Middle Belt had become Christians, with a deep-seated loyalty to BFBS 1932 or BSN 1979. This later posed a challenge for the acceptance of BSN 2000/2014.

The first retranslation, BSWA NT 1965, provoked a storm of objections, especially from foreign missionaries, due in particular to the use of the traditional Islamic *tambarin arewa*, "northern knot", symbol on the cover; this symbol is now used many times on the cover and on every page in the design of the 2020 Arabic-script Bible, and there have been no objections. Certain linguistic choices, too, proved controversial in 1965, like the Arabic term *Linjila* itself and the use of the common honorific greeting *Ranka ya dade*, "May you live forever" when addressing Jesus (it now appears only on the lips of the mocking Roman soldiers, e.g. Matthew 27:29).

The (unauthorized) revision Bible League 2003/2004 added section headings, replaced traditional Hausa terms with the anglicisms "deacon" and "church", and most strikingly, replaced the traditional regional rendering for "wine", *ruwan inabi*, "juice of grape", with the term *giya*, "alcohol". The latter change quickly resulted in the revision being publicly rejected by several major Christian denominations, even though it was being sold at a cheaper price and in a more attractive format than other Hausa Bibles. Both Muslims and Christians in Nigeria traditionally taboo alcohol and so generally prefer the ambiguous traditional rendering.

Biblica 2020 was preceded by fifteen years by a Luke portion which, following English and Arabic models, had an innovative format, with inline study notes intended for Muslims printed in square brackets and in a different color. No other Hausa translation has this level of paratextual support. It is unclear why it was discontinued.

As for the more recent BSN products, after the formal 1932 translation and the secondary (based on the *Good News Bible*) 1965/1979 translation, the 2000/2014 translation was a functionally equivalent direct translation by a team of three qualified Nigerian translators and a foreign exegete. Its most noticeable feature is the transliteration of the Old Testament divine Name as *Yahweh* (as distinct from the euphemistic substitute *UBANGIJI*, 'LORD' used in all previous translations).[11] Such a practice is increasingly common in Bible translations globally (reflecting an increasing awareness of the biblical source text on the part of both translators and their audience),

though it remains rare in MITs. It remains to be seen how this will affect Christian and Muslim religious idiom.

BSN 2000/2014 was intended for second-language speakers in Nigeria's "middle belt", most of whom are culturally Christian. However, since it was clearly exegetically better than the previous versions and had proven popular for its clarity even among native speakers, it was chosen as the base for the Muslim-audience Bible-AS 2021. In this version, *Qur'anic* forms of personal names were used (including *Isa* in place of *Yesu* for 'Jesus'), but few changes were made to key terms.

The most distinctive feature of Bible-AS 2021 is unquestionably the graphic design, including a custom font ("Alkalami Hausa") clearly marking it out as intended for Sufis (Tijaniyya, Qadriyya) and an orthography corresponding to the Warsh *qirā'ah* of the *Qur'an* (including the distinctive umlaut character *imāla*). Arabic script was the normal medium of Hausa (also in Bible portions) until the unilateral romanization decision of Lord Lugard, Governor of the Protectorate of Northern Nigeria in 1900 (Philips 2000; Warren-Rothlin 2009, 2014). It has continued to be used by Muslims. Bible portions in Arabic script appeared during the twentieth century, based on both BFBS 1932 and BSN 1979, but Bible-AS 2021 is the first full Arabic-script Bible.

Through these several small steps (*tambarin arewa, Linjila, Isa*, Arabic Script), the Hausa Bible has come to communicate much better with its Muslim-majority Hausa-speaking audience.

Chadian Arabic (Chad)

There has been one Chadian Arabic New Testament translation with revision and one full Bible translation:

– TBS RS 1967, revised as IBS RS 1997
– ABT NT AS/RS 2012, then ABT Bible AS/RS 2019

In the course of this history (Lee and Issa 2020), foreign ownership has greatly decreased. The first translation project was led by the British Brethren missionary Charles Marsh (best known for his work in Kabyle Berber (Marsh 1970) and the revision by the Alsatian Mennonite Raymond Eyer. By contrast, the 2019 Bible was translated by two Chadians (with foreign exegetical support)—a Christian woman and a Muslim man, representing the two halves of the intended audience.

The 1967/1997 translations were not widely distributed or used, due to the small size of the Chadian Arabic-speaking Christian community, low levels of literacy, and a preference among more highly literate people for reading the Bible in French. As a result, ABT 2012/2019 suffered little comparison with its predecessors. It uses a significantly different Roman script orthography (some of the technical advisors to the project having also been involved in advising the Chadian government on the development of the *Alphabet national du Tchad*), publishing formats (including digital) and distribution channels. These external features have likely aided the acceptance of new terminology.

For "Jesus", all editions use the *Qur'anic* form *Isa*, as also the neighboring Nigerian Kanuri, Nigerien Dazaga and Arabic-script Hausa, but in contrast to Roman-script Hausa, Cameroonian Fulfulde, Nigerian Fulfulde and scores of smaller Christian-majority languages in the region that use *Yesu* or similar. This distinction is related to a historic and cultural fault line, but also to mission history; the form *Isa* has not been well accepted by the Roman Catholic Church in Chad.

The form used for the Name of God in the Old Testament is distinctive. ABT Bible AS/RS 2019 follows the influential Sharif Arabic Bible translation policy of rendering the Name of God, יהוה *YHWH*, as الله *Aḷḷāh*. This stands in contrast with the traditional use of a euphemistic substitute such as Κύριος *Kyrios*, *Dominus*, LORD, L'ÉTERNEL or الرَّبّ *al-Rabb*, but does have a precedent in the Massoretic Hebrew vocalization tradition's use of אלהים *ĕlōhîm*, 'God', when יהוה *YHWH* occurs after אדֹנָי *ădōnāy*, 'Lord'.[12] Correspondingly, the term אלהים *ĕlōhîm*, 'God', is rendered إِلـٰهْ *ilāh*, 'God', or الرَّبّ *al-rabb*, 'the Lord'. These renderings represent functional equivalence—the use of each source-text and receptor-language term as a name, as a title, in a genitive (e.g., 'my God', 'the God of Israel'), in a vocative, and so forth.

This policy has the consequence that מִי־אֵל מִבַּלְעֲדֵי יהוה *mî-ʾēl mibbalʿădēy YHWH*, 'Who is God but the LORD?' (2 Sam 22:32) and יהוה הוא האלהים יהוה הוא האלהים *YHWH hû' hāʾĕlōhîm YHWH hû' hāʾĕlōhîm*, 'The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God.' (1 Kgs 18:39) and similar expressions are rendered with the *tahlīl* لَا إِلـٰهْ إِلَّا اللهْ *lā ilāh illā allāh*, 'There is no god but Allah'. This expression, together with the *basmala* and *takbīr*, appear in the Bible's introduction, framing the translation—as does the cover design—as a local religious product.

The policy on the rendering of Old Testament יהוה *YHWH* as الله *allāh* has also resulted in changes in the New Testament where the Old Testament is cited—where Κύριος *Kyrios* represents יהוה *YHWH*. In such cases, whilst

the first New Testament and its revision read *arRabb*, ABT 2012/2019 reads *Allah* (*e.g.* Rom 4:8).

These issues have provoked strong objections from some foreigners (mostly from the same North American evangelical constituency which had stoked controversy over Divine Familial Terms in MITs in various languages a decade before), who have considered this an "Islamization" of the text, an attempt to conform not only the wording, but also the message to the audience (Lee and Issa 2020; Simnowitz 2020). Among the mostly quite conservative Chadian Christians, however, there has been no specific reaction.

The new full Bible translation with its much wider distribution and use can be expected to achieve a higher level of ownership and hence make future retranslations less easily accepted than it has been itself.

Pashto (Pakistan/Afghanistan)

One Pashto New Testament translation has been revised and supplemented as two separate Bibles:

– Pashto NT 1996
– revised as Pakistani Pashto PBS 2019
– revised as Afghan Pashto PBS NT 2023, OT f.c.

In the course of this history (Robinson 2019), the Northern Pashto language has become increasingly divided by the national border, resulting in a need for a Pakistani Yousafzayi translation and an Afghan Nangarhari translation. Bible translation work in the region has also become more difficult, and much foreign support has been required by the translators, who have been in exile abroad since 2021.

The ongoing Afghan Pashto project, standing between the Christian text and their Muslim audience, the Persian west and the Urdu east, and the Dari western neighbour and Pakistani Pashto eastern neighbour, is repeatedly faced with decisions about key terms. The influence of the traditional Persian and Urdu Bibles is great in the region, as is the pressure from conservatively minded Christians. The Dari Bible (following Persian tradition) renders almost every occurrence of Κύριος *Kyrios*, 'Lord', referring to Jesus as خداوند *khudāwand*, 'Lord (God)' (equivalent to Arabic الرَّبّ *al-rabb*). This is being reconsidered by the current Dari revision project, and سَروَر *sarwar*, 'Master', is being used in several places, in the face of much resistance.

The Pashto project itself has given much consideration to literary form in the face of the Pashto literary tradition, which is so shaped by Islamic norms, particularly a *Qur'anic* elevated register. This frequently results in a tension between the needs of the intended audience of young and not highly-educated people on the one hand, and, on the other, the requirement that a poetic register be achieved—especially in the Old Testament, where many wisdom and prophetic texts, as well as Psalms and songs in narrative contexts, are in poetic form (particularly in metrically balanced parallel cola). Poetic texts which previously appeared in a prose format now appear in a stichometric layout and with careful meter and even rhyme.

A further distinctive issue has been the Pashto love for hendiadys, which often results in one Hebrew or Greek term being rendered with two in Pashto (e.g., שלום *šālôm* / εἰρήνη *eirēnē* rendered as سولي او سلامتۍ *sawlē aw salāmtəy*, "peace and security" (Prov 3:17; Luke 1:79). This has significantly raised the literary quality of the text and thus its acceptability as a religious product.

Conclusion

In the course of the last 150 years or so, Bible translation projects in Muslim-majority contexts have gone from being managed by individual foreign missionaries and staffed by "language helpers" to being managed by such specialist national organizations as the Bible Societies and staffed by qualified translators with training in Hebrew, Greek, exegesis and digital research tools (though often still with foreign exegetical support). Translation briefs and exegetical and linguistic decisions are generally owned entirely by national translators who are well informed on issues of equivalence of meaning, cross-cultural communication, and so forth. And the need for genuinely communicative, functionally equivalent Bible portions or whole Bibles with instrumental function for Muslim-background Christians and interested Muslims themselves (MITs) is widely agreed.

However, wherever a historic first translation has achieved a canonical status in a Christian community, there remains the possibility of tensions between the communicative norms of the primary Muslim audience and those of the secondary Christian audience. It may be hoped that translators and consultants can be equipped to assist communities constructively through these negotiations.

Notes

1.   Exceptions occur where Muslims themselves use another term, *e.g.* Persian *Khuda*, Swahili *Mwenyezi Mungu*.

2.   The one clearly linguistic element in the doctrine of *taḥrīf*, 'corruption (of the biblical text)', as expounded by Ibn Hazm in the eleventh century.

3.   This avoidance can be seen in the earliest ninth-century Arabic MITs (Riley 2021).

4.   The first half of the *shahādah*, or Islamic creed, which may also appear in the translated Bible text, *e.g.* 1 Cor 8:4 Good News Arabic, Jesuit Arabic Bible, True Meaning Arabic (Simnowitz 2020).

5.   A modern glossary to the van Dyck Arabic translation (1996 سعيد مرقص إبراهيم) reportedly contains 3,000 items!

6.   The New Testament *textus receptus* also used by the English King James Version.

7.   Publication dates in this form refer to the publication first of the NT then of the whole Bible.

8.   For the history of Arabic Bible translations, see (Griffith 2013).

9.   Itself a light revision of the *Revised Standard Version* (1952).

10.   This is usually due to their own misunderstanding of the term as signaling divinity—in fact it is in most New Testament occurrences largely synonymous with *Messiah* and *Christ*, 'anointed King'.

11.   The tradition of rendering the holy divine Name with English 'LORD' in capital letters derives from a Hebrew Old Testament reading tradition, reflected also in later Old Testament texts and New Testament usage; similar conventions are followed in most languages in the world.

12.   Hence English translations typically render יהוה *YHWH* as 'LORD', but אֲדֹנָי יהוה *ʾădōnāy YHWH* as 'Lord GOD'.

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Part 4

CURRENT DEBATES ABOUT RETRANSLATING THE QUR'AN

Retranslations of the Qur'an by women: motives, strategies and distinctive features

Rim Hassen

Abstract

For four hundred years the translations into English of the Qur'an were exclusively undertaken by male translators. However, in the last three decades there has been a noticeable increase in women's participation in the retranslation of the sacred text of Islam. Drawing upon recent theories on retranslation advanced by scholars like Antoine Berman and Kaisa Koskinen, this chapter presents a study of four individual retranslations of the Qur'an by Muslim women from different religious backgrounds (Sunni, Shia and Sufi). It investigates their motives, strategies, and relationship with previous versions. Another important thread is the role of gender and gender-related issues. For example, are these retranslations undertaken with the aim of challenging conservative interpretations of gender-related contents, like verse 4:34 (also known as the wife beating verse)? The study of the textual and paratextual elements shows how women's retranslations of the Qur'an were carried out under various influences and for different reasons, including addressing specific audiences, challenging previous versions, and introducing women-sensitive interpretations.

Keywords: Retranslations of the Qur'an into English, motives for retranslating religious texts, women's translations of the Qur'an, Islamic feminism, women-sensitive reading of the Qur'an

Introduction

The translation of the Qur'an dates to the seventh century AD, the first renditions were into Persian, Latin, and then French. Since then, the Qur'an has been translated and retranslated into various languages. English translations were first undertaken by orientalists like Alexander Ross, George Sale, and J. M. Rodwell with the purpose of discrediting the messenger of Islam. Their renditions are representative of the misconceptions, perceptions, and

assumptions about Islam in the West. In response, Muslim intellectuals such as Abdullah Yusuf Ali, Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall, and Mohammed Asad published their own translations of the sacred text. For almost four hundred years, the race to produce a standardised English version exposed the multitude of strategies, ideologies, and sectarian bias driving the translation of the Qur'an. However, despite their differences, these translations shared an unmissable common point; they were all exclusively translated by men. It is only in the 1990s that women emerged first as co-translators and then as independent translators of the sacred text. This long absence could be explained by religious restrictions, social norms, and the lack of women's access to education.

To date there are five mixed gender collaborative English translations of the Qur'an,[1] which appeared in a very close time span and in different parts of the world including Pakistan, the United Kingdom, and Egypt. It is, however, beyond the scope of this chapter to study collaborative renditions of the Qur'an as it would require dealing with complex issues like determining the role of each translator, the challenges of working as a team, and their decision-making process. It would also involve approaching them from different angles to understand their motives and reasons not only for retranslating the sacred text, but also for working as a mixed gender team. Moreover, considering that most Qur'an translations were individual efforts, it would be necessary to determine whether the translators made a conscious and deliberate decision to form a male-female team. If so, does their decision mirror their gender-egalitarian views or is it a reflection of patriarchal influence, where women need approval from men to present their work to the public?

This chapter, therefore, focuses on individual retranslations of the Qur'an by women and aims to study the motives, strategies, and the key distinctive features in the following renditions: *The Quran, Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meaning* (1997) by Umm Muhammad (under the pseudonym Saheeh International), *The Light of Dawn* (1999) by Camille Adams Helminski, *The Holy Quran: Translation with Commentary* (2001) by Tahereh Saffarzadeh, and *The Sublime Quran* (2007) by Laleh Bakhtiar. Like collaborative versions, these retranslations appeared in a very close time span and were published in different countries, namely, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United States.

The term "retranslation" in this chapter is used to refer to "a new translation produced in the same language where a previous translation of the same text already exists" (Koskinen 2018, 317). Retranslations are often presented and introduced as new, updated or revised older versions, and

marketed as translations, rather than retranslation. Therefore, the two terms are used here interchangeably. While retranslation of the same text may be viewed as an unnecessary repetitive act, new versions are often motivated by different reasons and influenced by various factors. Antoine Berman (1990), for instance, listed two possible motives: the wish to provide a "better" translation (which inspired the so-called "retranslation hypothesis") and the aging character of translations. These motives might be applicable to Qur'an retranslations. However, given the close temporal proximity between women's translations of the Qur'an, their works cannot simply be explained away in terms of "aging." Moreover, Translation Studies scholars such as Kaisa Koskinen (2004, 34) challenged the "aging" hypothesis by asserting that "retranslations are affected by a multitude of factors, relating to publishers, intended readers, accompanying illustrations and – not least – the translators themselves." Koskinen's stance highlights the agency of the translator and the influence of the wider socio-cultural context, in which retranslations are produced. Another important thread is the nature of the relationship between the new and the old versions. Since retranslation involves a triangular relation between the original, previous translations and the retranslation, it will be necessary to investigate how women's translations interact and relate to other English renditions of the Qur'an. Anthony Pym (1998) and Laurence Venuti (2004) describe this relationship in different terms but present rivalry and differentiation as central to the production of retranslations. In Pym's view, retranslations are motivated and marked by rivalry and their appearance often undermines the validity of previous versions "introducing a marked negativity to the relationship" (Pym 1998, 83). Similarly, Venuti describes retranslation as an act of differentiation which aims to introduce and inscribe particular social, cultural, and religious values into a specific work. Retranslations are, therefore, characterized by a "crucial awareness [of other renditions] and justify themselves by establishing their differences from one or more previous versions" (Venuti 2004, 25). This raises questions on whether women's translations of the Qur'an are produced with the aim to complete or compete with previous versions and what distinctive features do they present to justify, market, and present their retranslations to their intended readers. The main focus will be on the elements explicitly mentioned by the translators rather than on textual and intertextual connections with previous versions.

Moreover, since these retranslations are undertaken by women, we need to consider the role of gender or gender-related issues, especially that in recent years, translations of religious texts, including the Qur'an, have

come under continuous attack from feminist theologians, translators, and linguists, for their use of male-dominated language, male imagery, and patriarchal interpretation of gender-related verses. To address this criticism and adjust to the changing role of women in society, a number of Bible and Qur'an translations opted to introduce various measures including using inclusive language, replacing male-centred readings with gender-sensitive interpretations and highlighting women's role in religion (Strauss 1998; Hassen 2012). This raises the question of whether feminist criticisms of religion, language, society, and even translation practices are among the reasons that gave rise to women's retranslations of the Qur'an. If so, what strategies did women translators adopt to incorporate gender-related issues in their versions? Women translators must also deal with the challenges, pitfalls, and sensitivities associated with translating the sacred text of Islam, believed by Muslims to the direct word of God and for that reason the Qur'an's content, and form, cannot be revised, edited, or updated. The most challenging aspect lies, however, in its multi-layered language which combines both poetry and prose. Even though some verses are easy to understand, others require the help of supporting materials such as *Sunnah* and *tafsīr*.[2] To ensure the accuracy of transferring the meaning of the sacred text several Islamic religious institutions like Al-Azhar, the Saudi Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Endowments, and King Fahad Complex for Printing the Holy Qur'an, consider these supporting materials a fundamental requirement in the translation of the Qur'an. Some translations risk being rejected, censored, and even banned if they do not fulfill this requirement.

The question here, then, is whether women translators relied on these supporting materials to translate key gender-related verses particularly verse 4:34, considered as the most controversial and contested passage in the Qur'an as regards gender roles in Islam.[3] Also known as the "Wife Beating Verse," it is found in the *al-Nisā'* or women chapter and covers two main themes: male superiority over women and husbands' right to discipline their wives. Interpretations of this verse vary from conservative, moderate to feminist. Islamic conservative commentators, on the one hand, use this verse to support the idea that men are superior to women and that husbands have the right to discipline their disobedient wives. Islamic feminists, on the other hand, view this verse as an instruction for men to support women financially and reject the interpretation that husbands have the right to beat their wives. It would be interesting to see how women translators rendered this verse and how their retranslations reflect the differences in their motives, their connections with previous translations and influences from their various religious backgrounds.

The Qur'an, Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meaning (1997)

This translation was undertaken by Umm Muhammad or Aminah Assami (1945-2010), an American Southern Baptist preacher and a feminist, who converted to Islam in 1977, while working on converting Muslim students to Christianity. She studied Arabic in Syria and then moved to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where she taught religious subjects. She later became a national Muslim community activist and the director of the International Union of Muslim Women. She presented various public conferences on Islam, authored, and revised several Islamic books in English under the pseudonym "Saheeh International," mostly for Abul Qasim publishing house. According to the publisher's website, this pseudonym also refers to a group of three American female converts, namely Umm Muhammad (translator and author), Amatullah J. Bantley (director), and Mary M. Kennedy (English editor), who translated, revised, and edited various Islamic religious books for the same publisher. *The Quran, Arabic Text with Corresponding English Meaning* was distributed by Abul Qasim publishing house in 1997 and later by Al-Muntada al Islami in 2004. It was printed in a bilingual edition with Arabic text alongside to the English. The book cover is green with some shades of blue and white. Umm Muhammad's translation comprises an extensive subject index, a preface, and a foreword, which are written in a plural form, probably to reflect the idea that it was a teamwork and to downplay the translator's feminine gender. There is also a noticeable absence of any information about the translator and her background, which is remarkable given that she is the first woman to translate the Qur'an into English. Instead, Umm Muhammad begins the preface by drawing the reader's attention to other translations of the Qur'an:

> In recent years there have appeared a number of English translations of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an, or more accurately, the revisions of existing ones – usually the well-known works of Abdullah Yusuf Ali or Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall. The stated purpose behind these works has most often been the correction of certain errors found in previous editions. It is generally conceded that to date, the most comprehensive and successful of these efforts has been that of Dr. Muhammad Taqi ud-Deen al-Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan. (Saheeh International 1997, i)

The translator's opening statement gives an initial insight into her concept of retranslation and reveals how she perceives other translations of the Qur'an, which she describes as "revisions of existing ones," especially of the popular versions by Abdullah Yusuf Ali and Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall. This suggests that recent translations are not based only on the source text but are closely connected to previous popular renditions. Umm Muhammad does not elaborate on the reasons for this popularity and focuses on the motives presented by recent translations. The most common or "stated" reason, she argues, is the correction of errors found in previous editions. In a footnote, the translator explains that by "errors" she does not mean linguistic errors, but rather "those pertaining to meaning when measured against the *aqeedah* (tenets) and *Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamaah*" (Saheeh International 1997, i). In other words, revision of errors concerns the correction of meanings and readings that do not conform to Islamic conservative interpretations.

Interestingly, despite acknowledging the popularity of Yusuf Ali's and Pickthall's translations, Umm Muhammad expresses a preference for Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan's rendition, which is in her view "the most comprehensive and successful" attempt at revising previous versions. This translation is titled *Interpretation of the Meanings of The Noble Quran in the English Language* and was first published in 1977. It is popular among readers who seek a literal and traditional approach to the sacred text, which is based on early Muslims' exegesis (Nassimi 2008, 87). Umm Muhammad's praise for al-Hilali and Khan's translation is a first indication of her conservative position and association with Islamic religious institutions. This becomes clearer when she presents the motives for her translation:

> As a distributor of Islamic books in languages other than Arabic, our publisher receives feedback from readers, in various parts of the world. As a result, he submitted several valid points which, after consideration, proved to be the directive for this project. (Saheeh International 1997, i)

As mentioned above, Umm Muhammad has revised, translated, and edited various works for her publisher Abul Qasim publishing house. Before revealing the reason for her retranslation of the sacred text, she first highlights the publisher's role as a distributor of Islamic books globally, probably to reassure the reader about their experience and credibility. Umm Muhammad then explains that readers' feedback received by the publisher is the main

motivation for her work. This highlights the role of publishers in the process of retranslation of religious texts. Indeed, by collecting and responding to readers' feedback, the publisher was able to identify the gaps and the need for a new translation as Umm Muhammad points out:

> There is clearly a need for a presentation of the meanings of the Holy Qur'an which is precise enough to be useful as a reference for Muslims and students of Arabic yet also suitable for *da'wah* purposes for non-Muslims. (Saheeh International 1997, i)

In addition to pinpointing the gaps in previous Qur'an translations, Umm Muhammad identifies a wide-ranging target audience, which includes Muslims, students of Arabic and non-Muslims. Interestingly, before declaring the objectives of her work, Umm Muhammad resumes her discussion of previous versions, particularly al-Hilali and Khan's translation, but this time, instead of praising their efforts, she exposes their mistakes and drawbacks. She criticizes their "English rendering" which "leaves something to be desired." She disagrees with their decision to focus on rendering the meaning of the sacred text and overlooking the clarity of language. She also criticises their insertion of explanatory additions and insertion of their transliteration of Arabic words (Saheeh International 1997, ii). To address these shortcomings, the translator presents three main objectives, which have served as guidelines for the translation:

> To present correct meanings, as far as possible, in accordance with the '*aqīdah of Ahl as-Sunnah wa al-Jamā'ah*
> To simplify and clarify the language for the benefit of all readers
> To let the Qur'an speak for itself, adding footnotes only where deemed necessary for explanation of points not readily understood or when more than one meaning is acceptable (Saheeh International 1997, ii; my emphasis)

To achieve these objectives Umm Muhammad adopts a communicative translation approach, where she consistently translates the same Arabic word with the same English equivalent, throughout the translation, to make it easier for readers to learn Arabic. She also includes over 2,000 explanatory notes and adds footnotes only where the explanation of points is necessary or when more than one meaning is acceptable. She also provides a brief introduction to some chapters in footnotes and avoids the use of modern Arabic dictionaries. Instead, she relies heavily on Islamic religious classical

sources "according to the beliefs of *Ahl as-Sunnah wal-Jamaah*" (Saheeh International 1997: ii) which is reflected in her translation of verse 4:34. One of the most debated verses in the Qur'an. Conservative readings of this verse claim that men are superior to women and suggest that they are therefore allowed to discipline and beat their wives. Islamic feminists, like Amina Wadud (1992) and Asma Barlas (2002) have challenged these patriarchal interpretations by arguing that the key word *ḍaraba* has more than 12 meanings in Arabic, but because of patriarchy "beating" became the dominant definition. Umm Muhammad translates this verse as follows:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۖ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيرًا

> Men are in charge of women by [right of]* what Allah has given one over the other and what they spend [for maintenance] from their wealth. So righteous women are devoutly obedient, guarding in [in the husband's] absence what Allah would have them guard.* But those [wives] from whom you fear arrogance –[first] advise them; [then if they persist], forsake them in bed; and [finally], *strike them.** But if they obey you [once more], seek no means against them.
> * This applies primarily to the husband-wife relationship
> * i.e., their husband's property and their own chastity
> * As a last resort. It is unlawful to strike the face or to cause any bodily injury.
> (Saheeh International 1997, 105; my emphasis)

Umm Muhammad adopts a conservative interpretation by translating the key word *qawwāmūna* as "in charge of," which means that men have the right to control women. She then renders the key word *iḍribūhunna* as "to strike them" giving men the permission to beat and discipline their wives. In the footnotes, Umm Muhammad provides more explanations to limit and warn against this measure, but she makes no attempts to introduce a gender-sensitive interpretation. Her rendition of this verse is in line with al-Hilali and Khan's translation:

> Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allâh has made one of them to excel the other, and because they spend (to support them) from their means. Therefore, the righteous women are devoutly obedient (to Allâh and to their husbands), and guard

in the husband's absence what Allâh orders them to guard (e.g. their chastity, their husband's property). As to those women on whose part you see ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly, if it is useful); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance). Surely, Allâh is Ever Most High, Most Great.[4]

While al-Hilali and Khan translated the key term *qawwāmūna* as "protectors and maintainers," Umm Muhammad's choice for the term "in charge of" sounds more conservative and could be interpreted as giving men absolute control over women's affairs. Even though she opted to translate the word *iḍribūhunna* as "strike them" while al-Hilali and Khan as "beat them," they both adhere to conservative interpretations giving men the right to discipline their wives. These similarities reflect the connection between the two versions and suggests that Umm Muhammad's praise and then criticism of al-Hilali and Khan could be interpreted as an attempt to give her retranslation authority and to justify the revisions and changes she brought to their rendition.

Interestingly, even though prior to her conversion to Islam she was a radical feminist and later became a director and defendant of women's rights in Islam, Umm Muhammad's translation of gender-related verses does not reflect her interest in women's rights and her own achievement as the first woman translator of the Qur'an. This indicates that her retranslation could have been influenced, not only by al-Hilali and Khan's version, but also by the requirement of the Abul Qasim publishing house, one of the major distributors of Islamic conservative books worldwide. Moreover, Umm Muhammad published her translation, while working and living in Saudi Arabia, a predominantly Muslim conservative country, where she would have faced censorship and sanctions for deviating from conservative interpretations supported by Islamic religious institutions. In fact, her translation is widely available thanks to the Saudi government's financial support and religious endorsement by numerous recognized Muslim scholars like Dr. Jamal Badawi, an Egyptian-born Muslim Canadian author, preacher and speaker, who authored and presented a television series on Islam, aired in Canada, the US and other countries, and Sheik Yusuf Estes, an American convert to Islam, who was a Muslim Chaplain for the United States Bureau of Prisons and a Delegate to the United Nations World Peace Conference for Religious Leaders held at the U.N. in 2000. They both adhere to conservative interpretation of the sacred text, which explains their support for Umm Muhammad's translation. For the book cover the translator opted

for a prominent color in Arab-Islamic arts and the flags of many Muslim countries, including Saudi Arabia and Iran. Its religious importance may have originated from the various references in the Qur'an which depict paradise to be green (Qur'an 15:45, 55:62, 47:15). The green color signals the happiness, peace and success that are believed to be the reward of living as a devout Muslim by following the *Sunnah* and *tafsīr*, which was the message conveyed by Umm Muhammad's translation.

Finally, this translation was motivated by the need to revise and update al-Hilali and Khan's version and fill in the gaps found in previous renditions. Umm Muhammad's view of previous versions was based on differentiation rather than rivalry and conflict. As she explained, her retranslation was commissioned with the aim of overcoming deficiencies in earlier renditions, correcting their mistakes and offering better solutions to the problems they encountered in the translation of the sacred text. The translator used the preface to justify the reason for this new rendition. However, the main distinctive feature that makes her work stand out from previous translations, being the first to be undertaken by a woman, was omitted from the paratexts. Her conservative translation of verse 4:34 could be explained by different factors including the influence of the previous version, the requirement of the publisher and the fact that she was living in a predominantly conservative Muslim country.

The Light of Dawn (1999)

This translation was undertaken by Camille Adams Helminski (1951) an American convert to Islam and translator of several Sufi books into English. She is also the co-founder and co-director of the Threshold Society, an educational foundation based on the teachings of the famous Sufi poet Jallaluddin Rumi. *The Light of Dawn: Daily Readings from the Holy Qur'an* was published by Shambhala Publications in 1999, two years after Umm Muhammad's work. It is, however, a partial translation that contains 365 spiritual verses. selected for daily payers and meditation, such as verse 24:35 from chapter *al-Nūr* (The light) This verse takes a central place on the white book cover and is presented in Arabic calligraphy.[5]

The translation is offered only in English and contains a preface, a note on translation and an introduction by the translator's husband, Kebir Helminski. Like Umm Muhammad, Helminski starts her preface by discussing previous and existing translations:

> I owe an inestimable debt of gratitude to those who have previously
> completed translations of the Quran into English whose work has
> brought me great sustenance and who have been my mentors in the
> process of rendering these selections, especially my mentors Muham-
> mad Asad and Yusuf Ali. It is with the help of their translations and that
> of others, as well as the original Arabic, that I have sought to render
> some of the verses of the Qur'an that I have found to be of greatest
> nourishment (Helminski 2000, xiv).

Helminski acknowledges the role of previous translations in her rendition of
the sacred text and highlights the triangular relationship between the source
text, her version, and previous translations. Like Umm Muhammad, she
expresses her preference for specific translations especially those by Muham-
mad Asad[6] and Yusuf Ali.[7] The versions chosen by Helminski are slightly
different from those mentioned by Umm Muhammad, which illustrates
how preferences of Qur'an translations differ from one person to another,
and how each translation could become popular among different groups of
readers. Interestingly, Helminski describes previous translators as "mentors,"
projecting a positive identification and relation with those translators who
have preceded her. As she pointed out their works have provided guidance,
motivation, and support, which is an interesting view of retranslation that
is based on collaboration rather than confrontation and rivalry.

In the introduction written by Kebir Helminski, we find, however, some
criticism of previous translations of the Qur'an, which are subject to "strik-
ing distortions" (Helminski 2000, xxviii). The author presents examples
from Yusuf Ali's and Muhammad Asad's translation to reveal how the
differences in reading and understanding the same verse are motivated
by the translator's "ideology and sectarian bias" (Helminski 2000, xxviii).
The purpose of this criticism is not only to give Helminski's retranslation
authority, legitimacy, and credibility, but also to show how studying previous
versions could lead to better retranslation by identifying their pitfalls,
drawbacks, and gaps. In her preface, Helminski points out one of these gaps:

> As the Qur'an, the Holy Book of Islam proclaims over and over again
> at the commencement of each chapter or surah, *Bismillahir Rahmanir
> Raheem*, in the Name of God, the infinitely Compassionate and Most
> Merciful [...] this message is coming to us from the compassionate
> womb of Creation. The root to the words *Rahman* and *Raheem* is the
> word for womb. (Helminski 2000, x)

The terms '*raḥmān*' and '*raḥīm*' are derived from the Arabic root '*r-ḥ-m*' which could mean "to have mercy on someone" and, as Helminski explains, this root could also mean the "womb," a body part specific to women. The link between the expression "*Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*" (*bismillāhi al-raḥmāni al-raḥīm*) and women became a significant symbol of gender equality in Islam, as several Muslim scholars, particularly Islamic feminists, are using this link to highlight women's position in the Qur'an. For instance, Amina Wadud in her 1994 sermon, used the same expression to draw attention to the similarities between God's relationship to human beings and mother's love for her child. The centrality of the root *r-ḥ-m* is also highlighted by Annemarie Schimmel, an influential German Orientalist and scholar who wrote extensively on Islam, especially Sufism. In her book *My Soul Is a Woman: The Feminine in Islam*, she notes the fact that the Arabic word *raḥmah*, "mercy" is derived from the same root as the word for womb (*raḥm*) (Schimmel 1995, 21). Despite its significant importance, Helminski is the first Qur'an translator to discuss the gender symbolism embedded in the expression "*Bismillahir Rahmanir Raheem*" and to devote a major part of her preface to defending women's rights and position in Islam. Her focus on gender-related issues is also reflected in her translational decisions. Unlike Umm Muhammad, Helminski does not go into detail about her translation strategies and mentions briefly that her aim is to stay as close as possible to the original and to render the meaning faithfully. However, she does provide some explanation for her innovative approach to pronouns:

> Regarding the use of pronouns [...]. in some cases, I have used the feminine pronoun rather than the masculine for both the human being and occasionally in reference to God so that those reading these selections may have a reminder that within the Universe and understanding of the Qur'an, God is without gender [...] In God's sight men and women are equal. (Helminski 2000, xiv)

Helminski is, once again, the first Qur'an translator to use feminine pronouns with reference to God and humans to convey the idea that "God is without gender" and that "men and women are equal." She also introduces a new pronoun *Hu*, which she borrows from Arabic. In a footnote she explains:

> Hu: the pronoun of Divine Presence. All words in Arabic have a gender grammatically ascribed to them as they do in French and Spanish, etc. Although *Allah* is referred to with the third person masculine pronoun Hu (Huwa), it is universally understood that *Allah*'s essence is beyond gender or indeed any qualification. (Helminski 2000, 5)

Introducing the pronoun *Hu*, is another indication of Helminski's focus on gender-related issues, which concern not only women's position in Islam, but also the perception of God as a gender-neutral entity. Because she focused on spiritual verses and essential excerpts that are used for meditation, Helminski did not translate verse 4:34 in her selection, and for that reason, it would not be possible to examine how her strategies impacted on the interpretation of this verse. This is, however, an example of her rendition of verse. 6:102-104, where she uses different pronouns to refer to God:

> Such is God, your Sustainer: there is no god but Hu,
> the Creator of everything: then worship Him/Her alone –
> for it is He/She who has everything in His/Her care.
> No vision can encompass Him/Her,
> but He/She encompasses all human vision:
> for He/She alone is Subtle Beyond Comprehension, All-Aware.
> (Helminski 2000, 27)

Helminski's use of pronouns differs from her mentors Yusuf Ali and Asad, who in their renditions used the masculine generic "he" to refer to God and human being. Like many other translators of the Qur'an into English, they did not use gender-inclusive or gender-neutral language. In fact, Helminski is the only translator of the Qur'an to use mixed feminine and masculine pronouns to refer to God. It is also worth pointing out that Helminski's approach to pronouns is very similar to strategies employed in feminist Bible translations. Plaskow, for instance, revealed that, to re-stablish the gender neutral image of God, several feminists are replacing masculine pronouns with gender-neutral and explicitly feminine terms. God is now referred to as "She," "She/He", "S/He," or by alternating "He" and "She" in different paragraphs (Plaskow 1990, 141-142). Moreover, Helminski's use of the pronoun *Hu*, is a reminder of Mary Orovan, Marge Piercy's and many other feminists' attempts to replace the generic "he," viewed as a symbol of silencing and invisibility of women, with more inclusive options. These similarities suggest that Helminski's approach could have been influenced by feminist critique of language, concept of God and women's position in society. Another major influence on her work stems from the Sufi tradition advocated by the thirteenth-century Persian scholar, poet, and Sufi mystic Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi, who in his poetry, described woman as "not created" but "creator" to elevate her status and highlight her position in Islam (Jaffer 2007). This is reflected in the translator's use of feminine pronouns to refer to God, such as "He/She alone is Subtle Beyond Comprehension."

This Sufi influence can also be seen on the book cover, where the white color is used to symbolize light, purity, and femininity (Hassen 2012, 120-122).

Finally, compared to Umm Muhammad, Helminski did not explicitly state the motives for her partial retranslation. Her rendition seems to be motivated by her spiritual experience and her own reading of the sacred text rather than by publishers, commissioners, or Islamic religious institutions. This corresponds with Venuti's view that the decision to retranslate "may be motivated by no more than the retranslator's personal appreciation and understanding of the foreign text, regardless of transindividual factors" (Venuti 2004, 30). Instead of negativity, Helminski's relationship with previous versions projects a positive view and is marked by cooperation and appreciation rather than rivalry and conflicts. Unlike Umm Muhammad, Helminski did not mention the *Sunnah* and *tafsīr* or any other traditional Islamic texts, probably from a desire to distance herself from any religious restrictions and requirements. This allowed the translator to focus on incorporating gender-related ideas and introducing innovative concepts in support of women, while, at the same time, putting her translation at risk of being criticised, rejected and even censored. Because it is printed and published in the US, Helminski's translation has not been censored, but it has a limited popularity and is distributed mostly within the Sufi circle.

The Holy Qur'an: Translation with Commentary (2001)

This translation was undertaken by Taheereh Saffarzadeh (1936-2008), an Iranian poet, writer, translator, feminist, and researcher. In addition to various published social articles, essays, and interviews, she produced several collections of stories and books on the principles of literary, religious and Qur'an translation. She studied in UK and US and then moved back to work and teach in Iran. *The Holy Qur'an: Translation with Commentary* was published in 2001, in Iran, five years after Umm Muhammad's version. To this date, it is the first and only bilingual translation of the Qur'an by an Iranian woman. The book cover is in green with floral design in the middle. The translation is presented with English text alongside the Arabic scripture and contains an introduction and a note by the publisher detailing Saffarzadeh's academic background.

The translator provides a comprehensive introduction, which she divides into various sections, one of them is titled "translators and translations of the Qur'an." In this section, she presents a critical review of previous translations; she first places translators of the Qur'an into two distinct

categories: non-Muslims and Muslims and then identifies the best translation in each category:

> The translation known as the best among non-Muslim translators belong to Arthur John Arberry (1955) about two centuries after George Sale (1734) who is well known but the one who produced unfair and rough material for Christian missionaries. Mr Arberry has reproduced in English language an eloquent, poetic and literary text rather than a comprehensive translation of the Holy Qur'an. (Saffarzadeh 2001, 1200-1201)

Even though she praises Arberry's translation for its eloquent and poetic style, Saffarzadeh is very critical of other translators including J. M. Rudwell, Henry Palmer, and Richard Bell, who are "excused for literal or distorted free translations due to their lack of required knowledge of the text as well as their being biased and prejudicial (Saffarzadeh 2001, 1201). In the next phase of the review Saffarzadeh focuses on Muslim translators including Marmaduke Pickthall, who is criticised for treating the text economically and not providing explanations and notes related to the text (Saffarzadeh 2001, 1201). Interestingly, despite belonging to different sects of Islam, Saffarzadeh and Umm Muhammad praised al-Hilali and Khan as well as Yusuf Ali's translations for providing full commentary and detailed explanations. She ends her review by giving praise to Ahamad Ali, a Shia translator from Pakistan, for not neglecting "any necessary information in translation" and showing "his devotion to *Ahle Bait*" (Saffarzadeh 2001, 1202). This sums up Saffarzadeh's view of previous translations which wavers between praise and harsh criticism especially of translators who sacrificed meaning for form:

> Some translators confined themselves to the word-for-word translation to uphold the holiness of the Words of God as it happened with the Bible in earlier times; and some have tried to preserve the utmost eloquence and literary skill in their translations (Saffarzadeh 2001, 1202).

Saffarzadeh describes mistakes, drawbacks, and shortcomings in previous versions as a "type of carelessness" which contributed to confusion and misunderstanding due to lack of knowledge (Saffarzadeh 2001, 1204). Compared with Umm Muhammad's and Helminski's approach to previous translations, Saffarzadeh projects a less positive relation and does not build any connection between these renditions, except when she accuses M. M. Shakir, a Shia translator, of plagiarism. Moreover, Saffarzadeh does

not make it clear whether she relied on previous versions in her work. In another section titled "About this translation," Saffarzadeh details her strategy and her view of translation. Religious texts, she argues deserve a different approach which focuses on conveying the meaning of the message. After detailing her strategy, she reveals the motives for her retranslation of the Qur'an:

> While making preparation for my class (Comparative Revision of the Islamic Translated Texts)[...] I had to read translations both in Persian and English and make [a] comparative collation and this delicate job was to be done with utmost precision and accuracy; it was through intensive thinking that I became decisively convinced that certain Qur'anic equivalents and terminologies should be revised in both languages, so again I arranged a program for reading translations and interpreted meanings of the Holy Qur'an; and gradually collected notes which comprised my critical views as well as new proposals for a would-be book (Saffarzadeh 2001, 1215)

This indicates that revision and correction of previous translations are the key motives for Saffarzadeh's retranslation of the Qur'an. She explains that she spent 27 years to produce this translation, which allowed her to include her corrective suggestions and proposals. Her strategy is based on the interpretive approach that gives priority for meaning over the stylistic features of the source text. In her rendition, Saffarzadeh makes no attempts to reproduce the Arabic rhetorical patterns and gives a central position to classical Islamic sources. She declares that she studied thousands of pages of different classical religious interpretations, and that she relied on Shia *tafsīr* entitled *Majma' al-Bayān*. This is reflected in her conservative translation of 4:34:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۖ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيرًا

Men are *overseers and maintainers* of women because Allah has made one of them excel to the other, and because they, [the husbands] provide the livelihood of the family, therefore righteous women are obedient and guard in the husbands' absence what Allah orders them to guard as to those women on whose part you see ill conduct, admonish them [first], [next] refuse to share their beds, [and last] *beat them lightly*,

but if they return to obedience, do not seek against them means of annoyance. Verily, Allah is the sublime Great. (Saffarzadeh 2001, 142-143; my emphasis)

Like Umm Muhammad, Saffarzadeh's rendition of this verse conforms with patriarchal interpretations where men oversee and control women's affairs. In rendering the key word *ḍaraba*, Saffarzadeh attempted to find a "softer" option by translating it as "beat them lightly." This option, however, still gives men the right to discipline and beat their wives. The green color of the book cover reflects the importance of this color in Islam and serves to remind believers of the eternal rewards for their devotion, a similar message conveyed by Umm Muhammad's book cover. However, the floral motif in the middle, suggest that Saffarzadeh encoded some feminine elements in the book covers. In Iranian culture, the roses can symbolize divine perfection and beauty and according to some Islamic traditions, the beautiful women of paradise resemble the rose (DelPlato 2002, 138). Interestingly, Saffarzadeh was a very well-known feminist, who defended women's rights through her poetry and stories. It is remarkable that in her introduction she made no references to women's position in Islam or to gender-related issues. This silence is even more striking when we consider Saffarzadeh's own achievements, not only as the first Iranian woman to translate the Qur'an into English, but also as an award-winning writer, a researcher, and a scholar. It is only when we read her biography and discover that she was dismissed from her job and placed under house arrest several times for disagreeing with the authorities and with her superiors, that we can begin to understand her translation choices. In fact, Saffarzadeh spent parts of her house arrests working on this translation.

Finally, this retranslation is mainly motivated by Saffarzadeh's academic career as a translator and theorist, who identified shortcomings in previous translations. She seems to have gone to great lengths to underscore the errors of her predecessors to highlight their differences on the one hand and to give validity to her own rendition on the other. Unlike Helminski, Saffarzadeh's relationship with previous versions is marked by rivalry and conflict which reveals the retranslators' different subjective readings of the sacred text and the level of differentiation they convey against translations that have come before. Distancing her work from previous versions also allowed Saffarzadeh to apply her own theory of religious text translation. She however did not challenge conservative interpretations of verse 4:34 and remained silent on gender-related issues, except for the feminine elements she encoded in the book cover. Rather than present her

own reading, she relied heavily on Islamic religious resources to produce a new translation from a Shia perspective, which is the dominant Islamic sect in her country, Iran. Saffarzadeh would have probably faced censorship, rejection, and sanctions if she had challenged or deviated from the conservative interpretations, which are highly preserved and monitored by Iranian Islamic religious authorities and institutions.

The Sublime Quran (2007)

This translation was undertaken by Laleh Bakhtiar (1938-2020), born Mary Nell Bakhtiar to an American mother and Iranian father. She was brought up by her mother as a Christian but drifted away from Catholicism to convert to Islam while studying Sufism and Qur'anic Arabic at the University of Tehran. She is the author and translator of several books on Islam and Islamic beliefs on Sufism, psychology, architecture, and other topics. *The Sublime Quran* was published in 2007 in the United States, by Kazi foundation, six years after Saffarzadeh's rendition. The book cover has a colourful floral design with bright red roses. The translation contains only the English text and has a preface and an introduction. Like her predecessors, Bakhtiar begins her preface by reviewing previous translations of the Qur'an:

> After having spent many years studying the various English translations of the Quran and realizing the sincere efforts of the translators in this great, divinely blessed task, it became clear to me that English translations lack internal consistency and reliability. Clearly no translation of the Quran can compare in beauty and · style with the original Arabic. (Bakhtiar 2007, xii)

Bakhtiar acknowledges the contribution of previous Qur'an translators and appreciates their efforts in rendering the sacred text into English. She, however, notes that she has identified a gap within these versions, more specifically, "a lack of internal consistency and reliability." To support her claim, Bakhtiar presents a review of what she considers as "the most popular and successful translations" by Yusuf Ali and Arberry. She first compares their renditions of selected Qur'anic verses and then highlights their flaws and shortcomings. Bakhtiar's approach is very similar to Saffarzadeh's criticism of previous versions as they both project a relation based on challenge and rivalry. After reviewing other translations, Bakhtiar focuses on her own work and the strategies she adopted:

> This translation is one of formal equivalence in order to be as close to the original as possible. This is the most objective type of translation as compared to a translation using dynamic equivalence, where the translator attempts to translate the ideas or thoughts of a text, rather than the words, which results in a much more subjective translation. (Bakhtiar 2007, xlii)

When declaring her choice for formal equivalence, Bakhtiar contrasts her translational strategies to other renditions. The purpose behind highlighting these differences is not only to give her work legitimacy, authority, and credibility, but also to distinguish her work from others:

> Another distinction between this translation and other present English translations arises from the fact that this is the first English translation of the Quran by an American woman. Just as I found a lack of internal consistency in previous English translations, I also found that little attention has been given to the woman's point of view. ...Clearly the intention of the Quran is to see man and woman as complements of one another. (Bakhtiar 2007, xliii).

Bakhtiar elaborates further that the woman's points of view as been suppressed for over 1440 years since the revelation began and goes on to emphasize the problem of male bias in the interpretation and translation of the Qur'an. She stresses the need to re-evaluate gender relations in Islam and states the purpose and the original contribution of her work:

> Let it also be said that this translation was undertaken by a woman to bring both men and women to equity so that the message of fairness and justice between the sexes can be accepted in Truth by both genders. (Bakhtiar 2007, xlviii)

Compared to the above-mentioned women translators of the Qur'an, Bakhtiar does not shy away from declaring her intention to focus on gender-related issues in the sacred text. In fact, she presents this point as a distinctive feature in her retranslation. In another section titled "a note on the translation," Bakhtiar discusses the "gender balance" challenge and the patriarchal tone of the sacred text and explains the use of the letter "f" in the English text to ensure feminine visibility. She also discusses her translation of verse 4:34 and explains how her rendition challenges traditional patriarchal interpretation. She translated this verse as follows:

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَىٰ بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ ۚ فَالصَّالِحَاتُ
قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ ۚ وَاللَّاتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَاهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي
الْمَضَاجِعِ وَاضْرِبُوهُنَّ ۖ فَإِنْ أَطَعْنَكُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيًّا كَبِيرًا

Men are *supporters* of wives
Because God has given some of them an advantage
Over others
And because they spend of their wealth
So the ones (f) who are in accord with morality
Are the ones (f) who are morally obligated,
The ones (f) who guard the unseen
Of what God has kept safe.
But those (f) whose resistance you fear,
Then admonish them (f)
And abandon them (f) in their sleeping place
Then *go away from* them (f);
And if they (f) obey you
Surely look not for any way against them (f);
(Bakhtiar 2007, 94; emphasis added)

Bakhtiar's translation of this verse reflects her focus on women's rights and
equal position in Islam. The presence of the letter (f) maintains the gender
balance in the target text and ensures that the feminine gender of words is
visible. She also renders the word *qawwāmūna* as "supporters" to challenge
the interpretation that men are the overseers and maintainers of women.
Bakthiar's most significant contribution is her translation of the word
iḍribūhunna as to "go away from them," a rendition that does not involve
or infer any forms of violence against women. Bakhtiar explains that she
arrived at this interpretation through her own research of various Islamic
and Arabic resources. She also relied on the complex scientific methodology
she has developed based on the *Concordance of the Sublime Qur'an* that she
had previously compiled. Bakhtiar does not, however, mention traditional
supporting materials including the *Sunnah* and *tafsīr*, which contain con-
servative interpretations. The floral motifs in her book cover could also
be interpreted as an indication of her focus on gender-related issues and
women's position in Islam. As mentioned earlier floral motifs, especially
in Iranian culture, could be a symbol or abundance, but also of women in
paradise. This means that Bakhtiar, like Saffarzadeh and Helminski encoded
feminine elements in the book cover (Hassen 2012, 120-122).

Interestingly, despite her focus on gender-related issues, Bakhtiar did not use gender-inclusive language or alternative pronouns to refer to God and humans. Neither did she attempt to challenge the male-centred concept of God, which is an important element in asserting gender-equality. Her translation remains, nevertheless, the only version that openly challenges patriarchal interpretations of gender-related Qur'anic verses and offers women-sensitive alternatives. When it was published, Bakhtiar's retranslation was met with mixed reviews; moderate Muslim scholars and Islamic feminists welcomed and praised her innovative reading while conservative Muslims criticised it harshly and questioned her eligibility to translate the sacred text. Moreover, the heated debate around Bakhtiar's new interpretation of verse 4:34 was reported in different media outlets and discussed in online forums, blogs, and scholarly articles. Ali Eteraz was among the first to point out the "feminist" elements in Bakhtiar's work in an article published in The Guardian, entitled "Beyond Islamic Enlightenment" (2007). In this article, the writer draws a strong link between Islamic feminism and Bakhtiar's translation by arguing that Wadud's seminal book *The Quran and Woman* gave rise to the first feminist translation of the sacred text of Islam (2007)[8]. In another article in the New York Times titled "Verse in Koran on Beating Wife Gets a New Translation"[9] (2007), Neil MacFarquhar focuses on Bakhtiar's critics who questioned her knowledge of the Arabic language and Islam. These different reactions may have contributed to the marketing and the popularity of Bakhtiar's translation, which released more than 15 editions in the span of just over ten years since it was first published.

Finally, Bakhtiar's retranslation of the Qur'an was motivated by the gaps she identified in previous translations and by her intention to render the sacred text from a woman's perspective. To justify her retranslation of the sacred text, she exposed the shortcomings of previous versions, especially the lack of women's perspectives and distinguished her work by claiming that she is the first American woman to present a critical translation of the Qur'an. Like Saffarzadeh, her relationship with previous versions is predominantly marked by conflict and rivalry conveyed by her criticism and focus on differentiation from other translations. This could be interpreted as an attempt to legitimize her work and to invite readers to place confidence in her new version, especially that she introduced a gender-sensitive interpretation of verse 4:34. Her translation strategy based on formal equivalence allowed her to remain close to the sacred text and to introduce the letter (f) as a solution for gender marking differences between English and Arabic. All these measures contributed to making

her translation stand out from other versions, including those translated by Umm Muhammad, Helminski and Saffarzadeh.

Conclusion

The study of women's English translations of the Qur'an reveals that there are various motivations that gave rise to their retranslations of the sacred text, which are not always related to the 'aging' of translations. Umm Muhammad's version, the first English rendition by a woman, was commissioned by her publisher who was responding to readers' feedback. Because her own translation was a revision of a previous translation, Umm Muhammad defined retranslation as "revision" and built a positive relationship with translators who preceded her, despite some criticism which served to justify her own work to their target audience. The main distinctive feature of Umm Muhammad's version, being the first woman to translate the Qur'an into English, was however omitted from the paratexts, which illustrates the role and agency of publishers, commissioners, and religious institutions in the process of retranslation and in determining the strategies, decisions and choices made by the translators.

In Helminski's translation, the motives were not explicitly discussed in the paratexts. But given the content of the preface and introduction, it may be safely concluded that, in addition to her personal beliefs and convictions, the translation was motivated by her interest in gender-related issues in Islam. In producing this partial translation, Helminski, admits that she relied on previous versions and projects a very positive relationship when she describes other translators as "mentors." Even though these selected verses were meant for daily meditation, the translator was able to insert and incorporate various ideas in support of gender equality, particularly through introducing gender neutral and feminine pronouns to refer to God. Helminski's unique and innovative approach to the sacred text, could be interpreted as an influence of the Sufi tradition, Islamic feminism and feminist critique of language. Despite its significance for gender equality, this version remains largely unknown, because it is mainly distributed within the Sufi circle.

The motives for retranslation took another different turn in Saffarzadeh's version, which was produced and published in Iran and motivated by the translator's academic career and study of Qur'an translations. The translator devoted a major part of the introduction to review, criticize and expose the shortcomings of previous translations, except for few that received modest

praise. Through this criticism, Saffarzadeh has distanced her transla-
tion from previous versions and applied her own theory of religious text
translation. Despite being a well-known feminist, she made no reference to
gender-related issues in Islam, because she relied heavily on Shia conserva-
tive interpretations and was probably avoiding censorship. Bakhtiar was
the only translator to openly declare the gender-related motives for her
retranslation of the Qur'an. Through her study of previous translations,
she identified a lack of consistency and the absence of the woman's point of
view. To address these gaps the translator distanced herself from previous
versions by highlighting their flaws, while at the same time stressing the
distinctive features of her work. Bakhtiar's focus on gender-related issues
is visible in her preface and in her re-interpretation of verse 4:34. While
both Umm Muhammad and Saffarzadeh failed to provide a woman-sensitive
reading of this verse, Bakhtiar presented a new interpretation in support
of women's rights.

Moreover, the four translators differed in their approach to previous
translations, Umm Muhammad and Helminski projected a more positive
relation, while Saffarzadeh and Bakhtiar insisted on the element of differ-
entiation. However, even though their relations with previous translations
differ, it is interesting that none of the translators made the decision to
consult only the source text and cut off any links and connections with
their predecessors. It is possible also that the translators were not aware of
each other's work, their translations are, nonetheless, somehow connected
through previous versions they consulted in the process of retranslation
(which is why the most popular translations kept being mentioned in every
introduction).

Finally, the motives behind women's retranslations of the Qur'an differed
as a result of the translators' own subjective readings and also because of
the fact that they are all based in different countries: Umm Muhammad was
in Saudi Arabia, Helminski and Bakhtiar in the US and Saffarzadeh in Iran.
They all have different religious backgrounds and belong to different schools
of thoughts. The content of their paratexts, their translation strategies and
distinctive features are reflections of these differences and of the various
influences, demands and expectations from publishers, intended readers
and religious institutions. This study is merely an attempt to understand
some of the motives behind women's retranslations of the Qur'an, which
cannot be simply explained by "aging" or "revision of old translations." In
addition to the motives discussed here, there are a multitude of hidden and
ever-changing factors that include norms, perspectives, and expectations,
which will continue to drive the need for further retranslations. As an

avenue for further research, it would be interesting to study how male feminist and reformist translators approached gender-related issues in their retranslations of the Qur'an.

Notes

1. These translations are: *The Glorious Quran: Text and Translation* (1991) by Ahmad Abdul Munim Zidan and his wife Dina Al Zahraa Zidan, *The Koran, Complete Dictionary and Literal Translation* (1994) by father and daughter Mohamed Ahmed and Samira Ahmed, *The Holy Quran: Arabic Text and English Translation* (1997) by husband and wife Abdul Mannan Omar and Amatul Rahman Omar, *The Noble Quran: A New Rendering of its Meaning in English* (1999) by husband and wife team Hajj Abdalhaqq Bewley and Aisha Bewley, *The Quran: A Reformist Translation* (2007) by a group of scholars including one woman, Martha Shulte-Nafeh, and two men, Layth Saleh al-Shaiban and Edip Yuksel.

2. The *Sunnah* and *tafsīr* were developed to set up guidelines on how to interpret the Qur'an. The *Sunnah* consists of various narratives about the Prophet Mohammed's life and of statements. The *tafsīr* is the exegesis or the science of interpreting the Qur'an.

3. Other key gender related verses include the Degree Verse (2:228) regarding men's superiority over women, The Creation Verse (4:1) which deals with human creation, verse 2:282 deals with women's testimony in court, verse 4:3, deals with the right to practice polygyny with up to four wives and verse 4:11 deals with the inheritance rights of women (see Hassen 2011, 215).

4. https://quranenc.com/en/browse/english_hilali_khan/4#34

5. God is the *Light* of the heavens and the earth. / The parable of His *light* is, / as it were that of a niche containing a lamp; / the lamp is enclosed in glass, the glass like a radiant star; / lit from a blessed tree – an olive tree / that is neither of the east nor of the west – / the oil of which would almost give *light* / even though fire had not touched it: *light* upon *light!* / God guides to his *light* the one who wills to the be guided; / and God offers parables to human beings, / since God has full knowledge of all things (24:34).

6. Muhammad Asad (1900-1992) born Leopold Weiss was an Austro-Hungarian-born Jew and convert to Islam. His translation of the Qur'an into English is titled *The Message of The Qur'an* and was first published in Gibraltar in 1980.

7. Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1872-1953) was a British-Indian Islamic scholar and barrister. His translation *The Holy Qur-an: Text, Translation and Commentary* published in 1938, is one of the best-known and widely referred to renditions.

8. https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/oct/11/beyondislamicenlightenment

9. https://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/25/world/americas/25iht-koran.4.5017346.html

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The Untranslated Qur'an: Retelling the Surah of Joseph

Sohaib Saeed

Abstract

This chapter plays on the trope of the Qur'an's "untranslatability" to highlight aspects which are translatable, yet remain untranslated. Specifically, it concerns meanings and interpretations attested in the exegetical genre of *tafsīr* which have been overlooked by successive translators of the Qur'an. It is argued that exegesis comprises a rich resource which, though it has been used by many, has much more to give – even in terms of the meanings of words and constructions. Such works also provide further possibilities in the form of the canonical readings (*qirā'āt*), which remain largely unconsidered by translators. The Chapter of Joseph (Q 12) is taken as an extended case study, showing what the English translation corpus has overlooked both in *tafsīr* and the Arabic of the Qur'an itself. Translations analyzed include the very latest to be published, including the author's collaborative effort in the Bayyinah Translation.

Keywords: Qur'an, translation, exegesis, Arabic, grammar, *qirā'āt*, errors, originality, Joseph

Introduction

The trope of the "untranslatability" of the Qur'an has often been invoked on the basis of the scripture's miraculous inimitability (*iʿjāz*), a doctrine which could be taken to render faithful translation an impossibility – and even the very attempt illicit. Scholars of this persuasion may cite its revelation as "an Arabic recital" (*qur'ānan ʿarabiyyan*, Q 12:2) to deny that any other language could carry its message and impact. Some allowed grudgingly for "translation of the meanings" (*tarjamat al-maʿānī*)[1] – a redundancy that, nevertheless, highlights the important reality that translation deals with meanings. However, the expression implies a stronger claim: that these translations have encompassed the many meanings within the Qur'an.

Translators themselves have invoked "untranslatability" by way of excuse after undergoing the hardship of rendering into another language "that inimitable symphony," to quote Marmaduke Pickthall, "the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy" (Pickthall 1930, vii). The shortfall may comprise things those translators observed in the source text, but failed to capture and convey in their own words. Even if not *untranslatable*, these aspects have been left *untranslated*. This includes things which the translator failed to see, and goes beyond eloquence and style to the very substance and meaning of the text, especially its polyvalent expressions.

The present chapter concerns meanings which have remained largely, or wholly, untranslated in the ever-growing corpus of English renditions of the Qur'an. It is clear that translators must work as interpreters, like exegetes (known in Arabic as *mufassirūn*), first deciding what they understand from the Arabic and then selecting words which express that meaning in the target language. In this task, they may depend upon some works of exegesis (the genre called *tafsīr*), or at least claim to; but translation by its nature cannot incorporate the diversity of interpretations found in the voluminous tradition. A translator has to choose a reading and rendering of the text, and any alternatives would, at best, be relegated to a footnote and likely overlooked by most.

The classical exegetes, of course, were readers of the Quranic text who attempted to convey their observations firstly in the same language, providing Arabic near-synonyms and grammatical terms to make the vocabulary and syntax clear to anyone schooled in that language and its structures. This aspect of their work is much the same as the translator attempts to achieve in a different language, albeit with those grammatical explanations replaced by – or used as a guide to construct – equivalent sentences. As such, a translator must possess the same skill as an exegete at least in these linguistic aspects; or they should be expected to depend upon those sources and be skillful in using them.

In reality, the translators have seldom been credentialed exegetes. Those who list the names of great Arabic works in their introductions display varying levels of conformity to their contents. The central issue for our consideration here is the diversity of meanings which exegetes have long noted in many Quranic verses, and the extent to which the plethora of English translations reflect and display that diversity. The fact is that there are many cases in which translators are unanimous in reading the verse in a particular way, while one or more plausible alternatives are present in Arabic exegetical works. While this can be explained in terms of each translator opting for the most obvious reading, the effect of imitation should

not be overlooked as a factor: why fix what is not broken? Moreover, each translator presumably expects you to read his or her translation alone; they do not work collectively towards documenting the meanings of the Qur'an comprehensively.

In what follows, I will highlight just how much remains to be translated, with my focus squarely on substance (i.e. meanings) rather than style. I am looking at the text as though it "carries" these meanings, even several possibilities at once; but the reader need not agree with this perspective to see the value in presenting in translation the various ways the scripture has been read and understood by great minds over the centuries. I will be looking back at the cumulative English corpus to look ahead; I will show how a *retranslation* of the Qur'an can bring out interpretations and even text variants (i.e. *qirā'āt*) which have, hitherto, been overlooked. This amounts to a demonstrable gap in the existing output: a finite gap observable by comparison with *tafsīr*, which can certainly be filled with a little effort; that is quite separate from the belief that it is impossible to exhaust the subtle meanings of the Qur'an.

To identify interpretations and possibilities, I draw mostly upon *Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī* by the Ottoman Baghdadi exegete al-Ālūsī (d. 1854), who lays out a stunning proportion of the diversity and debate of the preceding millennium of scholarship.[2] I will quote from some translated works to highlight the value of translating *tafsīr*, in addition to the importance of translators consulting this genre to inform their deliberations (see Lucas 2014). Alongside that, I use a bespoke tool drawing upon a database of more than sixty translations which allows verse-by-verse comparison.[3] Naturally, I cannot rule out that a meaning absent from my list was indeed translated by someone, somewhere, in some language. As such, my analysis of past translations should be taken as indicative and not conclusive.

This chapter also serves to showcase a recent collaborative project, the Bayyinah Translation, in which Nouman Ali Khan and I have attempted to retranslate the Qur'an based on some of the observations presented here.[4] We have paid close attention to its linguistic structures and their subtle implications, and studied carefully the possibilities discussed by classical and contemporary scholars. While fluency is a common goal of translators, we have aimed also for *freshness*, opting where possible for alternatives to well-worn terms and phrases. However, we are limited like those before us: the main translation must reflect our preferred reading of the text. At times, that turns out to be an exegetical possibility that has never before been adopted by a translator.

The Best of Stories?

> Alif Laam Raa! Those are the divine signs of the clear and clarifying
> Book. It is We Who brought it down as an Arabic Recital so that you
> might reason and understand. We are going to lay the story out for
> you (O Prophet) in the finest way, since We have already inspired you
> with this Recital; whereas before it you had certainly been one of the
> unaware. (Q 12:1-3, *Bayyinah Translation*)

The Chapter of Joseph (Sūrat Yūsuf) was the first to be completed of this new
rendition, and it provides highly instructive cases to study in the history of
Qur'an translations. The opening itself invites several key observations and
reflections on translation as a concept and practice. The first point of note is the
opening letters, the meanings of which are commonly said by Muslim scholars
to be inaccessible; on that basis, they must also be untranslatable, unless
providing equally mysterious English letters ("A.L.R.") counts as translation.

Second, it is worth pondering the significance of the description of this
Qur'an (the name translated above as "Recital") as an *Arabic* one. While
this is sometimes taken as an anti-translation verse, its placement should
not go unnoticed: at the opening of a *sūrah* unique in the Qur'an in being
almost fully dedicated to a single, detailed story. Of course, the story of
Joseph was well known to communities before the Quranic revelation,
and comparisons with Genesis 37-50 can readily be made. The languages
spoken by the figures within that story, and by the scriptural communities
that circulated it, were certainly not Arabic. Therefore, the point may be
to highlight the very fact that this is a retelling of the story, indeed a kind
of *translation*: but one which does better than any which has preceded.

Next, we have two cases in which exegetes have noted complementary
meanings, or alternative possibilities, for Quranic words or phrases – and
we shall see how the translators dealt with these. First is the term *mubīn*,
a form IV active participle which al-Bayḍāwī (d. 1286) explains as either
intransitive, hence "clear" in its message and miraculous eloquence; or
transitive, hence it "makes clear" to anyone who studies it that it comes from
God, or clarifies for the Jews the details of the story they asked the Prophet
about (al-Bayḍāwī 2021, 7:444).[5] In this case, each of the two basic meanings
is well represented in the English corpus, with "clear" and its variations
(such as "perspicuous", "manifest," and even "luminous") in the majority.[6]
Muhammad Asad is noteworthy for combining the two, as in the translation
above: "clear in itself and clearly showing the truth" (Asad 1984, 336).[7]

With this mode of analysis established, let us consider the case of *aḥsan al-qaṣaṣ*, which is far more interesting from the perspective of "untranslated" meanings present in exegesis. If you survey the translations of 12:3, you will find a multitude of variations on the same expression: "the best/fairest of stories/narratives". For exegetes such as al-Bayḍāwī, that is only the second of two possible ways of reading it:

> **3 aḥsana l-qaṣaṣi.** ⌜Either⌝ "the best sort of storytelling" because it is related in the finest of styles; or "the best kind of thing related" because it includes marvels and aphorisms and signs and instructive examples. (Beeston 1963, 1–2)

One might have reason to prefer this second interpretation (as if it said *aḥsan al-maqṣūṣ* as a direct object) and take it as highlighting the beauty and instructive power of Joseph's story which is being told here once again in Arabic. However, an argument can also be made for the other interpretation: that it is more powerful to understand this as an assertion that the story is now being told in the best way, as part of the miraculous eloquence of Quranic revelation. Crucially, however, the exegetes who listed these meanings treated them as equally plausible – while the same cannot be said for the translators. How many of them were even aware of the sense of *aḥsan al-iqtiṣāṣ* (as cognate accusative)? The only case I have found is Asad, who rendered it: "We explain it to thee in the best possible way," slightly changing the sense of the verb.[8] The clearly attested interpretation as "best storytelling" had therefore, it seems, remained untranslated until the Bayyinah Translation.[9]

No Exaggeration

Next we consider an example which is less attested in *tafsīr*, and more comprehensively absent from translations of the Qur'an. In 12:65, al-Rāzī (d. 1210) outlines the various possibilities in the phrase *mā nabghī*, which Joseph's brothers say to their father upon finding that what they had used to pay for food in Egypt had been restored to their bags. In my translation of the passage, square brackets provide an indicative translation of the verse according to the meaning described. While the explanations draw upon several senses of the root *b-gh-y*, the question is framed here around the particle *mā*:

It may be for **negation**, which gives rise to several possible meanings:

a. ['We are not lying/exaggerating']: they had described Joseph's generosity and kindness, saying: 'We came to a man as generous as can be. He gave us lodgings and gave us a level of hospitality we could not have expected had he been from the Family of Jacob.' Thus they were denying that their description was exaggerated or contained anything other than truth.

b. ['We want for nothing']: they meant that Joseph (peace be upon him) had been so generous that they would not seek anything beyond it.

c. 'Since he returned our money to us, we do not want anything from you in terms of further payment. What we have is sufficient [for the next trip].'

It may also be the **interrogative** particle. When they saw that their money had been returned to them, they asked [rhetorically]: 'What more could we want?' After receiving food and its price over and above that, what else could they desire?[10]

From al-Rāzī's presentation, it is understood that the interrogative sense of the particle is merely one of the possibilities. From a survey of English translations of the verse, it is seen to be the clear preference of the translators, as there is near-consensus on a version of "What more could we want?" This raises the question of whether those translators considered the various options, and whether they consulted exegetical works before discarding the possibility of negation. An exception to the norm is M.A.S. Abdel Haleem, who renders it: "We need no more [goods to barter]" – what is more, he cites al-Rāzī for this meaning, which we have listed as (c) above. However, none of the translators – as far as I have seen – opted for the sense of lying or exaggeration which al-Rāzī describes here for *baghy*.[11]

A Tale of Two *Lawlās*

In the preceding examples, the translators have mostly opted for a plausible reading of the verse, while collectively neglecting other possibilities affirmed by the exegetes. Now we turn to cases where all or most translators have overlooked the clear explanations provided in *tafsīr* and written something which does not fit the language of the Qur'an. In such cases, it may be said that the specific verse has remained untranslated – in the sense that nobody has yet published an accurate translation of it.

In his 2020 paper on translating omission/ellipsis in the Qur'an, Ahmed Al-laithy (2020, 2648–2656) provides a breakdown of how the English translations reproduced on Islamawakened.com dealt with the question of the apodosis (*jawāb*) of the conditional particle *lammā* in the following Quranic verse:

> So when they finally took him away and gathered resolve to get him into the dark hole of the well–; Meanwhile, We communicated to him…
> (Q 12:15, Bayyinah Translation)

The difficulty in this verse concerns two phrases which would be candidates for the apodosis, were it not for the conjunctive *wāw* preceding them. Most translators ignored this problem and read this to say: "When they took him… we inspired him," or "When they took him, they resolved." As Allaithy notes, this interpretation of the syntax exists in *tafsīr*, but has been criticized and dismissed. The question remains as to whether those translators drew upon the authority of those who permitted it, like al-Ṭabarī (d. 923), or whether they drew their own conclusions. Some cancelled the conditional effect of *lammā* altogether.

Allaithy also criticizes two translations – Sale's and Usmani's – which clearly recognized the issue and supplied a parenthesis;[12] but it appears that his preferred strategy of merely noting the ellipsis was not implemented (at least in English) in a published translation until after Allaithy's paper, in *The Quran Beheld* by Nuh Ha Mim Keller, which draws upon his *tafsīr* discussions with the Jordanian scholar ʿAlī Hānī al-ʿAqrabāwī: "So when they took him away with them, and concerted to put him in the darkest depths of the cistern–. And We…" (Keller 2022, 237). The rhetorical effect of this ellipsis is not addressed by Allaithy, and the exegetes tended to provide a dry, grammatical apodosis. In our view, as expressed in the footnote to the Bayyinah Translation, the effect is to say: when the brothers got around to implementing their plan, the events that transpired are too shocking to express in words.[13]

With these issues in mind, we turn to the case of the conditional particle *lawlā* which appears twice in the Chapter of Joseph: 12:24 and 94. While the second of these is our actual case study, it is instructive to consider the first to illustrate the meaning and usage of *lawlā*, and how the translators understood it there. The primary denotation of this particle is "non-occurrence due to occurrence," as though to say "*Lawlā* (were it not for) X, then Y." There are two exegetical opinions concerning its position in 12:24; the first is that it begins a new sentence, after *hamm* (desire or

intent) has been ascribed to Joseph. Muhammad Asad (1984, 340) is one of the few translators to opt for this:

> And, indeed, she desired him, and he desired her; [and he would have succumbed] had he not seen [in this temptation] an evidence of his Sustainer's truth.[14]

The meaning is clearer with a minor adjustment: "had he not seen, he would have succumbed" – where the latter phrase is the implied apodosis. The other opinion treats the preceding *hamma bihā* as the apodosis or as indicating its content. In that respect, the Bayyinah Translation is typical:

> She wanted him for sure; and he would have wanted her, had he not already seen his Master's convincing proof.

The distinction between the two is not as great as it may appear at first, since those who affirmed Joseph's *hamm* may simply explain it as a natural feeling of attraction with no ill intent.[15]

We may now examine 12:94, in which some translators attempted to read the clause preceding *lawlā* as its apodosis, despite the fact that this is unsustainable. A greater number make it seem they had forgotten what *lawlā* means altogether, as though they decided upon the verse's meaning quite independent of its wording. The first type can be illustrated by Keller (2022, 246) whose rendering does not match the exegesis it is based on (in this instance, that of al-Biqāʿī, d. 1480):

> And as the caravan left that land, their father said: 'Verily I find the scent of Joseph, were you not to deem me witless with age.'[16]

Unlike in 12:15 above, there is no em-dash indicating an ellipsis, so the phrase preceding *lawlā* is being treated as the apodosis. Reconstructed, this is "Were you not to deem me witless, I find the scent of Joseph" – which is ungrammatical and incoherent: does Jacob smell Joseph's shirt or not, according to this sentence? Recall that *lawlā* denotes the non-occurrence of Y, in this case smelling Joseph. The Arabic wording *innī la-ajidu rīḥa yūsufa* – with its imperfect tense and emphatic particles – does not allow for this negation, nor does it allow for the smelling to be conditional upon what comes after *lawlā*.

The story in *tafsīr* is quite clear from al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1143) onwards: the apodosis is to be read as implied: "Were it not for the fact that you consider me senile, you would have believed me," or "I would have said that he is alive/nearby."[17] The only English translation I have seen to adopt this understanding from the exegetes is that by a team of American Muslim women – Emily Assami, Mary Kennedy and Amatullah Bantley – in which the apodosis is placed in parenthesis and brought forward (Saheeh International 1997, 323):

> And when the caravan departed [from Egypt], their father said, 'Indeed, I find the smell of Joseph [and would say that he was alive] if you did not think me weakened in mind.'

Inspired by Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn ʿĀshūr's (d. 1973) brief account of the implied apodosis,[18] we presented another perspective in the Bayyinah Translation:

> Then, as the riders made their way out, their father exclaimed: 'I can actually pick up Joseph's scent. If not for the fact that you call me senile, (you would realize)!'

The idea may be that Jacob was chastising those around him for their lack of faith, particularly in him, which prevented them from experiencing the miracle of Joseph's scent being carried across that great distance. If only they would put their doubt aside for a moment and open their hearts and their noses, they might pick it up, too.

In my survey of published *tafsīr* works, I noted a few exegetes who explained this verse contrary to the standard approach described above; some of these correspond somewhat to strategies adopted by various translators. I provide those references for transparency, even though I argue that these explanations are faulty, and I doubt that the translators based their renderings on those sources. Nevertheless, there may be overlap in how each has interpreted the wording, particularly the sense of *lawlā* in the verse. In the following table, I have grouped the approaches taken to the verse into several categories.

Table 1. Selected translations of 12:94

Translation	Interpretation/Strategy
Asad: 'Behold, were it not that you might consider me a dotard, [I would say that] I truly feel the breath of Joseph [in the air]!'[19]	This implies doubt, or that he was sure but decided not to say. However, the Arabic word order makes clear that Jacob actually asserts that he detects his son's fragrance before adding the *lawlā* sentence.[20]
Arberry: 'Surely I perceive Joseph's scent, unless you think me doting.' Study Quran: 'Truly I sense the scent of Joseph, if you think me not senile!'[21]	This makes the smelling conditional on them not thinking him senile; but this is contradicted by the emphasis. *Lawlā* is not an exception particle.[22]
Sale: 'Verily I perceive the smell of Joseph: although ye think that I dote.' Abdel Haleem: 'You may think I am senile but I can smell Joseph.'[23]	This is to interpret *lawlā* as something like 'despite', which is not among its meanings.[24]
Yusuf Ali: 'I do indeed scent the presence of Joseph: Nay, think me not a dotard.' Hilali-Khan: 'I do indeed feel the smell of Yûsuf (Joseph), if only you think me not a dotard.'[25]	This is to take *lawlā* as forbidding, or hoping that they would not call him senile. Neither is among its meanings.[26]

In this case, it is the singular interpretation explained clearly by the famous exegetes which has gone almost untranslated in English; it would be instructive to compare with other languages. The bewilderment exhibited by the majority of translators could have been remedied by consulting the works they list in their introductions, from the *Kashshāf* to the *Jalālayn*. If they had any justification for their alternative readings, they did not provide such in their footnotes.

The *Bashīr* and the Shirt

So far in this study, we have noted the value of exegesis as a corpus, but also the role of a translator as an exegete. It is, therefore, not impossible that a translator posits a meaning in the text which he or she did not find documented in the tradition. Here I share an example of my own practice as an interpreter.

In this sequence of verses, Joseph has instructed his brothers to take his shirt and cast it over his father's face, restoring him to sight (12:93). The shirt

lingers in the background of the following verse, in which Jacob detects his son's fragrance. It is only natural to assume that when the party arrived, they did as Joseph asked.

> So when the bearer of good news finally arrived, he cast it over his face and was restored to sight. He said, "Didn't I tell you that I know from God things that you don't know?" (Q 12:96, Bayyinah Translation)

However, a few questions arise: who is this singular *bashīr* who casts the shirt over Jacob's face? Exegetes state that one of his sons ran ahead of the others, possibly one who felt guilty for causing him pain with the shirt covered in fake blood (12:18). For translators, the question regards the pronoun in "cast it": it must be for the shirt, but is that clear enough three verses since its last explicit mention? Some opted to add the word "shirt" in parenthesis or even without.[27]

When pondering this verse for the Bayyinah Translation, we were struck by the difficulty of this guilty party (who had yet to apologize) being lauded as "bearers of good news." The seeds of an alternative reading of this verse and incident were found in al-Rāzī's commentary: "*Alqāhu ʿalā wajhihi* means that the bearer of good news cast the shirt over Jacob's face; or it could be said that Jacob cast the shirt over his own face" (al-Rāzī 2012, 9:401; see also al-Ālūsī 2010, 12:491). It was only another step for me to wonder: what if the *bashīr* is not a person at all, but in fact a description of the shirt itself? After all, it was literally bearing the scent which gave Jacob the good news ahead of its arrival.[28]

Look again at the translation above. Like numerous others, it is flexible enough to accommodate this interpretation: when the shirt arrived, Jacob took it and put it over his own face, enjoying that intimate moment with his lost beloved before turning to hear from his guilty sons. Despite our personal preference for this interpretation of the *bashīr*, we had to reckon with the lack of attestation in the *tafsīr* corpus – as far as available sources provide. This is why we have left the translation open, expressing our understanding in a footnote. In this way, our preferred meaning is both translated (implicitly) and untranslated (explicitly).[29]

Translating the *Qirāʾāt*

The final frontier which this chapter will set out for Qur'an translation is a vast one, since diversity exists not only in the field of interpretation, but in a significant proportion of the words themselves. This is manifested today in ten variant reading traditions (*qirāʾāt*) which are deemed canonical and authoritative, or more specifically in their twenty sub-narrations (*riwāyāt*). The narration of Ḥafṣ from ʿĀṣim has been dominant in most regions for the past several centuries, and written copies and translations of the Qur'an mostly adhere to it.

The story of this multiplicity begins in revelation and the Prophetic era, as described in the traditions of "seven letters (*aḥruf*)"; while the exact nature of these letters is debated, it is fair to say they represented different vocalizations of the text, which were then limited – to an extent – by the standardization of the Quranic orthography at the instruction of the third Caliph ʿUthmān. Thereafter, any accepted reading would have to conform to the written copies: but these still allowed for variety in pronunciation and even how certain letters in the skeletal text (undotted and unvowelled) were interpreted. Ibn Mujāhid (d. 936) began another limiting process by identifying the most reliable readers and widely-attested readings of the main Muslim regions, resulting in seven key readings, which would incorporate three more via the work of Ibn al-Jazarī (d. 1429). These are now the Canonical Readings of the Qur'an, known as the *qirāʾāt mutawātirah*, which Islamic scholarship assumes to be equally authoritative and relevant to interpreting the revealed text.[30]

The vast majority of differences between Readings are solely about pronunciation, akin to dialectal variants. Alongside these recurrent issues (described as *uṣūl*, principles), works on the Readings provide a list (*farsh*) of individual word variants. Of these, many impact on meaning, and these semantic differences are often the kind to affect translation of those words. There is a genre of early works known as *tawjīh al-qirāʾāt* (among other names) which analyze the variant readings in terms of grammar and meaning, and these matters are discussed in the more detailed works of *tafsīr*. However, in practice, there is a widespread phenomenon which I have described as 'Ḥafṣonormativity':[31] not only is the Ḥafṣ sub-reading the only one known by most common people in the world today, but much modern analysis of the Qur'an assumes its specific vocalizations to represent the Quranic text wholly and exclusively.

When it comes to translating the Qur'an, most translators simply deal with the Ḥafṣ text without seeing a need to declare or justify that choice. A

rare case of making the point explicit is Ahmad Zaki Hammad's introduction (Hammad 2007, 2:97):

> SOURCE TEXT OF THE QURAN: The interpretation of the Quranic Text has depended upon the impeccable *Muṣḥaf al-Madînah Al-Munawwarah* edition of the renowned Mujammaʿ Malik Fahd printing complex of Madinah, in accordance with the transmission of the Quran by the esteemed recitation experts universally known by the single names Ḥafs [sic] and, before him, ʿÂṣim, as conveyed by the third Caliph of Islam, the illustrious Companion, ʿUthmân ibn ʿAffân. This is the authenticated, undisputed, normative recitation of the Quran and the Prophet ﷺ read it publicly, had it transcribed, and taught it personally to thousands of his followers.[32]

A **normative** approach to translating *qirāʾāt* is certainly valid, and it is very justifiable to stick to the Reading which is dominant in a particular region or through most of the world. A rare diversion from Ḥafṣ in the English language is the translation by Abdalhaqq and Aisha Bewley, based on the Reading of Nāfiʿ of Medina which remains dominant in the Maghreb.

It is also possible to adopt a **critical** approach, which means to decide at each juncture which Reading will inform the translation. This resembles the practice of early exegetes like al-Ṭabarī, who would present the various readings and sometimes express a clear preference for one of them based on its wide attestation and/or linguistic clarity. I am not aware of a translator who has adopted this strategy throughout their work, but occasionally a translator will resort to an alternative if they find the primary text (i.e. Ḥafṣ) difficult to interpret. Abdullah Yusuf Ali, for example, did this twice in Sūrat al-Anbiyāʾ, 21:4 and 112, where he rendered the perfect verb *qāla* as the imperative "Say," citing the existence of the reading *qul*.[33] At 34:19, Abdel Haleem takes the unusual step of translating according to the Reading of Yaʿqūb, hence: "Our Lord has made the distance between our staging points so long!" – taking the phrase as *rabbunā bāʿada* (perfect tense) rather than the imperative *rabbanā bāʿid* with Ḥafṣ et al.[34] He remarks in the footnote: "This seems to make better sense than the other reading 'Lord, make our journeys further apart'" (Abdel Haleem 2010, 273).[35]

A translator's strategy to account for the Readings is naturally affected by his or her conception of those Readings in terms of their origin, nature and purpose. The basic doctrine I have highlighted is that no one Reading (as a compiled tradition) has semantic priority over the others; but it is also the case that earlier scholars (including the Readers themselves) selected

particular realizations of a word, and may have criticized others. One key question is the extent to which the divine plan for variation is emphasized vis-à-vis the scholarly process of criticism and canon construction. With this in mind, let us consider a final pair of approaches. The **inclusive** approach would be to consider the range of variants at every juncture, and choose (ambiguous) wording in the target language which incorporates all their meanings. This is in the spirit of the scholarly principle that Readings should be considered equivalent by default.[36] However, there are many junctures at which the meanings are irreducible, and a suitably broad target word is unavailable. The **pluralist** approach is to highlight divergent meanings as far as possible by presenting meanings and translations side by side: this is the basis of a Japanese multi-translation published in 2014, and another in English from 2020.[37] Contrary to traditional scholarly methods of harmonization and reduction, some pluralist projects are built on the assumption that each word variant is intended by God in its own right, and that the collocation of variants at each juncture invites its own kind of reflection and explanation.[38]

My own contention is simply that there is a plethora of meanings to be found in the Canonical Readings beyond Ḥafṣ which remain largely untranslated; and though some projects have attempted to address this gap, there is room for improvement based upon the *tafsīr* and *tawjīh* literature. I will demonstrate the gap with some examples from Sūrat Yūsuf, which contains as many as eighteen junctures at which the Readings arguably affect the translation. The table below displays the Reading according to Ḥafṣ (keeping in mind that there are usually others which agree with it) alongside the variant and how each could be translated. This is followed by some comments about existing translations of these verses.

Table 2. Selected *qirāʾāt* in Q 12

Ḥafṣ (et al.)	Alternative Reading
12:12 – *yartaʿ wa-yalʿab* he will enjoy/eat and play	*nartaʿi wa-nalʿab* we will graze and play[39]
12:24 – *al-mukhlaṣīna* purified/chosen	*al-mukhliṣīna* sincere
12:49 – *yaʿṣirūna* they will press	*taʿṣirūna* you (pl.) will press
12:56 – *ḥaythu yashāʾu* wherever he (Joseph) willed	*ḥaythu nashāʾu* wherever We (God) willed

12:109 – *nūḥī ilayhim*[40]	*yūḥā ilayhim*
whom We inspire	who receive inspiration
12:109 – *a-fa-lā taʿqilūna*	*a-fa-lā yaʿqilūna*
Won't you understand?	Won't they understand?[41]
12:110 – *annahum qad kudhibū*	*annahum qad kudhdhibū*
that they had been lied to	that they had been belied/rejected
12:110 – *fa-nujjiya*	*fa-nunjī*
whomever We will was saved	We save whomever We will

The table above illustrates the potential variety that exists at nearly a thousand junctures in the Qur'an, stemming not only from the translators' stylistic choices, or even from the substantive interpretations of the exegetes, but from flexibility within the text itself. The meanings in the left and right columns are mostly irreducible to a single translation, even though they are clearly complementary. For example, when Joseph delivers the instructions to survive the famine foretold in the king's dream, it is natural enough that he says either "Then will come a year in which the people will be replenished with rain, and in which *they* will press" or "*you* will press" (12:49) – the latter in line with the preceding discourse. God says that Joseph could settle wherever he willed, but it is simultaneously true that this would be in accordance with His divine will (12:56). The messengers are described as men who received inspiration, and the sub-reading of Ḥafṣ makes the Inspirer explicit (12:109).

The column on the right presents meanings and renderings which are absent from the corpus of English translations. At least, that is the theory. In reality, a number of translations have "sincere" in 12:24, which may be justified by noting that sincerity is the outcome of being chosen by God to be purified (the passive participle of *akhlaṣa*). The active participle denotes making one's religion purely for God, hence sincerity and devotion. However, there are some popular translations which cannot be so easily reconciled with the Ḥafṣ text upon which they are supposedly based. This can be seen particularly clearly if we return to Hammad and his rendering of 12:110:

> ⸢For⸣ when finally the messengers approached despair–and deemed that they had been resolutely belied ⸢by their people⸣– Our help came to them...

This juncture is remarkable because very few translators have successfully conveyed the meaning of *kudhibū* as with Ḥafṣ et al. Exegetes explain that

it means that the messengers thought that their own hopes had lied to them;[42] or that the subject pronoun of "they deemed" (*ẓannū*) refers not to the messengers, but to their people. However, translators have mostly assumed that this Form I passive verb can be read as meaning "belied" etc., as though it were Form II. If they based their translation on the other Reading, they did not state as much. One wonders whether they consulted exegesis; the exegetes would have found the *kudhibū* reading much easier if it could simply be understood as *kudhdhibū*!

The same verse is the site of another translation anomaly, albeit less widespread. Many[43] have rendered the passive *fa-nujjiya* as though it were an active verb with first person plural pronoun, "We saved" (which would require *anjaynā/najjaynā*). However, they could certainly opt to translate the other Reading, hence "We save".[44] Ironically, this should have been found with the Bewleys in their translation of Nāfiʿ, but they rendered it according to Ḥafṣ: "and those We willed were saved" (Bewley & Bewley 2013, 228).

Conclusion

The above examples have shown, firstly, that there are meanings contained in the Qur'an, at least according to recognized exegetes, which have yet to appear in the corpus of Qur'an translations. These arise from the flexibility inherent to its Arabic vocabulary and ambiguity frequently present in its grammar and syntax – features embraced by Muslim scholars, who have tended to list multiple possibilities at such junctures in their commentaries. Neglect of this tradition has sometimes led translators to err in their interpretations and renderings, sometimes to a shocking degree. The usual lack of transparency about their methods and specific choices further disempowers the reader who depends on these translations to understand the Qur'an.

Underlying the analysis in this chapter is a call to move past tropes of "untranslatability" and focus on *translating the translatable*, specifically those possibilities which exist within the text and its Arabic commentaries. A key question for any would-be retranslator of the Qur'an is: what can I add to all these preceding efforts and contributions? The following are some recommendations which I am presently working to implement. First, create a report for each juncture where Canonical Readings affect meaning, describing how they may be translated and perhaps harmonized, with reference to authoritative sources.[45] Second, create a systematic account of the translation possibilities provided by *tafsīr*, based upon at least one

encyclopedic work.[46] While these could conceivably be achieved in the printed book format, there is much more potential to create and display such detailed presentations through the latest digital and web technology. Finally, analyze translations and categorize them according to their correspondence with those exegetical options.

The bulk of this chapter has been about urging Qur'an translators to make best use of the exegetical literature, but the examples have also shown the value of surveying existing translations and being in effective scholarly dialogue with them. Sometimes, the meaning present in exegesis has been missed by most translators but documented by at least one; so, while there may be safety in following the crowd, it may be necessary to find and cite those who have brought greater clarity to particular verses.

Notes

1. This is printed on translations issued by the King Fahd Complex in Medina. Cf. the Azhari scholar Muḥammad ʿAbd al-ʿAẓīm al-Zurqānī (d. 1948), who argued in *Manāhil al-ʿIrfān* (not without its own conceptual problems when it comes to translation) that *tarjamat maʿānī al-Qurʾān* is incoherent because the term "translation" can only ascribed to the words, though necessarily it analyzes those words in terms of meaning (al-Zurqānī 2006, 2:484).

2. The significance of this work is described in Saeed 2019, 657–661.

3. The tool was developed by Hamzah Hassan with translations extracted from Islamawakened.com, to which I added several more translations.

4. The Yūsuf translation is available to download (PDF) from: www.ibnashur.com/sohaibsaeed. The project is on hold as I work separately on a translation based on the exegesis of Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir Ibn ʿĀshūr (*The Light of Assurance*).

5. Beeston renders the first set of explanations by al-Bayḍāwī: "obvious [*ẓāhir*] in incomparability" and "plain [*wāḍiḥ*] in meaning": the exegete's use of near-synonyms is evident. The second set he renders as "which makes plain [*mubayyinah*]" to the various groups (Beeston 1963, 1). One of the reasons I am quoting this particular *tafsīr* is that many translators include it in their list of references, starting with George Sale.

6. The presence of what I call "outliers" (translations which do not seem to correspond to any identified exegetical opinion) can also be noted, like "veritable" (N.J. Dawood), "profound" (Rashad Khalifa) and "immaculate" (Ahmed Ali). See Islamawakened.com.

7. His reasoning is explained in a footnote: "In the consensus of authoritative opinion, both these meanings are comprised in the above instance; consequently, a compound phrase is necessary in order to render the term appropriately."

8. For this he cites al-Zamakhsharī (d. 1143) and al-Rāzī (d. 1210), both of whom are sources for al-Bayḍāwī. Asad mistakenly implies that both exegetes indicated their preference for this interpretation. He defends his own verb choice by arguing that "the two opening verses…state, in effect, that the Qur'an is self-explanatory" (Asad 1984, 337): hence the continued revelation of the Qur'an constitutes that explanation. This is a clear case of a translator performing exegesis while drawing upon classical sources.

9. It may be that some translators have indicated this interpretation in a footnote, but it is notably absent from *The Study Quran* (Nasr et al. 2015, 591).

10. Al-Rāzī 2012, 9:364, and see al-Ālūsī 2010, 12:401. This translation is from my forthcoming volume of *Al-Rāzī's Great Exegesis* (Saeed 2025b).

11. In terms of outliers, Laleh Bakhtiar seems to take it as a relative *mā*: "This is what we desire."

12. Muhammad Taqi Usmani has: "So, when they went away with him and were determined to put him in the bottom of a pit, (they did accordingly). And We…" (Usmani 2020, 327). Allaithy assumed that George Sale inserted words without parenthesis, as it appears on Islamawakened.com and indeed in some printed copies of the work. However, in the scan of the 1734 edition provided on quran-archive.org, it can be seen that the phrase here in italics was already thus in Sale's rendition, indicating parenthesis: "And when they had carried him with them, and agreed to set him at the bottom of the well, *they executed their design*: And We…" (Sale 1734, 188).

13. Al-Ālūsī provides a similar explanation alongside the view that the omitted phrase is obvious (Al-Ālūsī 2010, 12:235).

14. Asad attributes this view to al-Zamakhsharī, but does not mention that the same exegete also permits the other view.

15. Another explanation found among exegetes is displayed in the translation of Malik Ghulam Farid (parentheses are his): "And she made up her mind with regard to him [to seduce him] and he made up his mind with regard to her [to resist her]."

16. Keller's team kindly shared with me the relevant audio in advance of it being edited and posted on quranbeheldtafsir.com, which allows researchers to hear the Arabic discussions that preceded the work of translation. The explanation provided by ʿAlī Hānī in this verse was that of al-Biqāʿī, which could arguably give rise to a translation like Asad's, or alternatively like Sale's (see the table below). Directly translated, al-Biqāʿī's first account of the apodosis is: "I would have said this without shame or hesitation"; then he further glosses it: "I am saying this despite knowing that you won't agree with me" (al-Biqāʿī 2011, 4:96).

17. To survey published translations, I used the digital tool *al-Jāmiʿ al-Tārīkhī* at Mobdii.com.

18. He glosses it as *la-taḥaqqaqtum dhālika* (Ibn ʿĀshūr 2021, 6:38). It appears that Sayyid Quṭb had a similar view, though his wording is unclear.

19. Asad 1984, 352. This is equivalent to inserting the word *la-qultu* before *innī la-ajidu*.

20. The reading "were it not that you might" is reasonable, though in the Bayyinah Translation we have preferred to understand it as "were it not for the fact that you do." Al-Ṭabrisī (d. 1153) and, much later, al-Shawkānī (d. 1834), imply that Jacob doubted his senses. As noted above, al-Biqā'ī proposes an apodosis *la-qultu* but with the crucial qualifier *ghayra mustaḥin wa-lā mutawaqqif*.

21. Arberry 1980, 1:264, and Nasr et al. 2015, 611; the lead *Study Quran* translator for Yūsuf was Maria Dakake. See also (e.g.) Muhammad Ali, Taqi Usmani, Ali Quli Qara'i, Laleh Bakhtiar.

22. Al-Māwardī (d. 1058) describes this clause as *i'tidhār*, perhaps intending "caveat" rather than the more obvious sense of "apology". Later, al-Qāsimī (d. 1914) and Abū Zahrah (d. 1974) both use the word *illā*, but it seems they only intended it like *but*, as if to say: "You would believe me, except that you actually think me senile" – which is essentially the standard view. The Shi'i commentaries of al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī (d. 1981) and al-Shīrāzī seem to be reading *lawlā an* as though it said *law an-lā*; the latter glosses the phrase as *idhā lam tattihimūnī bi-l-safāhah*. This may have influenced Sayyed Abbas Sadr-Ameli ("unless you think me doting").

23. Sale 1734, 198, and Abdel Haleem 2010, 151. See also (e.g.) Pickthall, A.Z. Hammad, Mustafa Khattab.

24. Cf. *wa-law* in e.g. 12:17. As well as al-Biqā'ī's second gloss (see note 16 above), a similar explanation is found with al-Qushayrī in his *Laṭā'if al-Ishārāt*.

25. Yusuf Ali 1938, 1:585, and al-Hilali & Khan 2000, 317; also al-Amri 2023, 735. If used differently, *if only* is viable: "If only you didn't think me senile (you would...)."

26. However, al-Māturīdī does claim that it could be for forbidding (*nahy*), i.e. *lā tufannidūnī*. He then describes a second possibility as negation (*nahy*), citing 10:98 as a parallel (al-Māturīdī 2005, 7:359); this is particularly unclear, as it suggests that what is being negated is either their disbelief in Jacob or his ability to smell Joseph. Perhaps he intended to say that the implied apodosis (which he does not mention) is negated. Negation is not a primary sense of *lawlā* but is entailed by its usages for urging or rebuke, where it is like *hallā*: see al-Suyūṭī's *Select Chapters of Itqān* (Saeed 2023, 161).

27. Examples of parenthesis: Yusuf Ali, Asad, Hilali-Khan, Usmani. Examples without: Dawood, Sher Ali, Abdel Haleem, Khattab.

28. More subtly: the word *bashīr* shares a root with the Arabic terms for "skin" (*basharah*) and "direct contact" (*mubāsharah*). An even subtler connection (for which I thank Hussan Mahmood) might be made with the earlier appearances of this root within the *sūrah*. The first was the cry of the water scout *yā bushrā* (12:19), upon discovering Joseph in the well; he had been stripped of his shirt. The second was the Egyptian women's exclamation *mā hādhā basharan* (12:31), at which point they sought to remove his clothing and dignity. While the running theme of the shirt(s) has often been noted, the appearance of the *b-sh-r* root at these junctures has not.

29.   Note that "and was restored" restricts the wording to our view that Jacob cast the shirt over his own face. The point that has not been spelled out is whether the *bashīr* is a son or the shirt.

30.   See Nasser 2012. The term *tawātur* can be understood here in terms of the broad acceptance of the Canonical Readings (Ibn ʿĀshūr 2021, 1:62).

31.   I first used this term at the 2020 conference of the American Academy of Religion; an extended version of my talk, "Towards a 'Canonical Translation' of the Qurʾan" is available on the YouTube channel of the Global Qurʾan project, Freiburg: https://youtu.be/RLAWkmdnUuc.

32.   The translator may simply have intended that ʿUthmān's text is the normative one, but the wording implies that the Prophet recited according to Ḥafṣ – which is absurd and ahistorical.

33.   The footnote has been altered in some later editions, so I reproduce the translator's note in full (Yusuf Ali 1938, 822) along with my comments. "Notice that in the usual Arabic texts printed in India the word *qāla* is here and in xxı. 112 below, as well as in xxııı. 112, spelt differently from the usual spelling of the word in other places (*e.g.*, in xx. 125-126)." Comment: Yusuf Ali is noting that the orthography accommodates both readings. "*Qul* is the reading of the Baṣra Qirāat, meaning 'Say thou' in the imperative." Comment: it is actually the majority Reading, since *qāla* is only transmitted from the Kufans, excluding Shuʿbah from ʿĀṣim. "If we construe 'he says', the pronoun refers to 'this (one)' in the preceding verse, *viz*., the Prophet. But more than one Commentator understand the meaning in the imperative, and I agree with them. The point is merely one of verbal construction. The meaning is the same in either case." Comment: I doubt that the commentators he refers to intended that the perfect verb should be read to denote the imperative; however, it is fair to say that the meanings are complementary.

34.   Along with this majority reading is one with Form II verb instead of Form III: *rabbanā baʿʿid* (Ibn Kathīr, Abū ʿAmr, Hishām from Ibn ʿĀmir), with equivalent meaning (Khārūf 2002, 430).

35.   This is an unnecessarily dismissive remark against the majority readings. Abdel Haleem has not explained in his introductions how he sees the Readings, and how he means to interact with them as a translator. He has sometimes adopted an alternative to Ḥafṣ without explaining that it is deliberate, as we shall note concerning 12:110. Cf. his co-authored *Arabic-English Dictionary of Qurʾanic Usage* which is "based upon the interpretations by classical Qurʾanic commentators…according to the widespread reading of Ḥafṣ" (Badawi & Abdel Haleem 2020, xvi). This is despite the fact that early commentators and lexicographers were not limited to that Reading. Hence some explanations do appear based on others, such as *adraka* (in 27:66), a point which is acknowledged in the same work (ibid., 304).

36. This principle is found with the likes of Abū ʿAlī al-Fārisī (d. 987), a student of Ibn Mujāhid and a founder of the *tawjīh* genre. A contrary approach is advocated by the Andalusian exegete Abū Ḥayyān (d. 1344), who appears to be the forerunner of modern pluralistic approaches (Ibn ʿĀshūr 2021, 1:57).

37. The appendix by Mujāhid Yōhei Matsuyama in *Nichi-A Taiyaku Kuruān* provides a scholarly background to the *qirāʾāt* and displays a high level of accuracy in rendering the Ten Readings in Japanese. Like the later *Bridges Translation* by Fadel Soliman and team, it maintains Ḥafṣ as the default, but unlike its English counterpart, the *Kuruān* also provides the Arabic variants (in transliteration) along with their translations. I am grateful to Marijn van Putten for his insights on the Japanese work and much besides, as part of our collaborative paper: "Sources and Strategies in Translating the Canonical Readings." A preliminary presentation is available on the YouTube channel of the Ibn 'Ashur Centre: https://youtu.be/mnX6suqbcls.

38. An example is 12:90, where the brothers exclaim "Is it really you, Joseph?" – the majority have *a-innaka*, while Ibn Kathīr and Abū Jaʿfar have *innaka* without the interrogative particle. Following the principle of default agreement, the minority Reading can be understood in the same way, just as in English we may ask in this form: "It's really you?" The *Bridges Translation* accentuates their divergence by rendering them, respectively: "Can it be that you really are Joseph?"/"You really are Joseph!" (Soliman 2020, 162). The pluralist approach is taken to its extreme in the book *Ittisāʿ al-Dalālāt* (Mihannā & Wādī 2017, 2:137), where it is suggested that the brothers first asked the question, then became fully sure of themselves and made it as a statement! They also mention an alternative view (previously mentioned but called unlikely by Abū Ḥayyān) to the effect that some of the brothers asked, and others declared.

39. There are four permutations among the Canonical Readings, but I have selected just one alongside Ḥafṣ for maximal contrast. The Bewleys have "so he can enjoy himself and play about" (Bewley & Bewley 2013, 219), which is correct for Ḥafṣ but not for their chosen reading of Nāfiʿ which has *yartaʿi* with final *kasrah* vowel. This is generally taken to be derived from the verb *irtiʿāʾ* (Form VIII of *r-ʿ-y*) in contrast with the unvowelled ending, where the verb is Form I of *r-t-ʿ*. Bridges (Soliman 2020, 156) also ignores this well-attested distinction, rendering both as "eat well" (one interpretation of *r-t-ʿ*) and reducing the four permutations to two. While it is possible to interpret "grazing" in this way so that the two verbs reduce to one meaning (Ibn ʿĀshūr 2021, 5:650) that is contrary to Soliman's overall methodology.

40. This is an example of a variant found only in one sub-reading, making it very much a minority in this particular way (the present-day ubiquity of Ḥafṣ notwithstanding).

41. Sale, Rodwell and Palmer have this pronoun. It should be noted that Orientalist translators before the 'Cairo Edition' of 1924 became the standard may well have adopted non-Ḥafṣ readings at various junctures. Their renderings would also be affected by the exegetical sources they consulted, such as al-Bayḍāwī and the Jalālayn, which are

not based upon Ḥafṣ but largely upon Abū ʿAmr. The same explanation cannot be extended to the likes of Asad and Irving, who also have "they" in this verse. The most recently published translation renders it: "Do they heed not!" (al-Amri 2023, 742); this is particularly incongruous when presented alongside the Arabic text of Ḥafṣ.

42.   Along these lines is the translation: "Until, when Our messengers gave over and thought they might be left unaided…" (Keller 2022, 248). This is a translation of the implication, as it contains no corresponding word to *kudhibū*. In the recording provided to me by Keller's team, ʿAlī Hānī explains the *ẓann* as certainty, but then explains *kudhibū* as indicating that these messengers felt that they had been wrong in supposing (i.e. their own selves "lied to them") that they were deserving of receiving God's aid at that specific moment. He rules out the possibility (which could be inferred from this translation) that they supposed that God would not provide the aid He had promised.

43.   Like Sale, Abdel Haleem, Khattab, Kaskas, W. Khan, Qaraʾi and Tahir-ul-Qadri. It is certainly possible that some or all of these translators simply preferred an active construction in English to a passive one, but this does impact on precision.

44.   Ibn ʿĀshūr provides an interesting explanation of the combination of past/present tense in the Ḥafṣ reading. This amounts to a condensed expression for: "Whoever We willed was saved, and whoever We will—in the future—will also be saved" (Ibn ʿĀshūr 2021, 6:51).

45.   At present, hundreds of 'Qirāʾāt Fact Files' are being created by Ibn ʿAshur Centre for display at Quran.com.

46.   For the specifications of a "master-guide exegesis", see Saeed 2025a.

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Retranslating the Qur'an in Saudi Arabia

Yazid Haroun

Abstract

This chapter delves into the underexplored relationship between the Saudi state and the Wahhabi movement through the lens of Qur'an translation. While many address the shared history of Saudi Arabia and Wahhabism, few spotlight the strategic use of Qur'an translation in solidifying their bond and enhancing Saudi Arabia's global religious and political standing. By analysing retranslations approved by the Saudi state, the chapter reveals that this involvement surpasses religious duty, aiming to project Saudi Arabia as the guardian of faith and propagate Wahhabi principles globally. An examination of the initial and newer versions of the popular English translation, *The Noble Qur'an* by al-Hilali and Khan, shows the ideological motivations in these translations. Notably, changes in the post-9/11 edition demonstrate how global events can influence religious texts, underscoring Qur'an translation's role in geopolitics and interfaith dynamics.

Keywords: Ideological, manipulation, Qur'an translation, retranslation, Saudi Arabia, Wahhabism

Introduction

It is now widely accepted in Translation Studies that retranslating texts often aligns with prevailing literary conventions. For instance, Venuti (2004, 34) highlights how the neoclassical aesthetic in 18th-century Britain led to the retranslation of classical epics. Although retranslations frequently reflect dominant ideologies, like Laleh Bakhtiar's *The Sublime Qur'an* challenging patriarchal readings, comprehending the role of ideology in retranslation is essential.

Numerous studies within Descriptive Translation Studies, influenced by Toury's framework, have explored retranslation through the lens of ideology and norms (see e.g. Du-Nour 1995; Kujamäki 2001). These studies emphasize evolving norms and ideologies within specific systems (Deane-Cox 2014, 20). However, research on Qur'an retranslation remains limited, often focused on surveys.

While the ideology/norms approach offers insights, it can oversimplify by concentrating solely on societal trends. This approach may imply deterministic hierarchical dynamics, overlooking contexts where relationships are more balanced (Brownlie 2006, 155). Thus, a nuanced perspective is vital.

Viewing distinct periods as having unique ideologies/norms can oversimplify translation evolution. Challenging this notion reveals that a single period might see multiple translations emerge, and historical boundaries do not necessarily align with ideologies/norms. This underscores the role of "unbounded textuality" and the translator's agency within possibilities (Brownlie 2006, 157).

To refine discussions, the focus should shift from overarching societal forces to specific contextual influences on commissioners and translators. Financial incentives, as seen in a team at McGill University (Collombat 2004), can drive retranslations, highlighting the importance of contextual specifics.

Objectives

This chapter delves into the politics of Qur'an retranslation in Saudi Arabia, aiming for two objectives. First, it examines how Saudi Arabia's political evolution since the modern state's inception has impacted Qur'an translation. Second, it underscores that Qur'an retranslations mirror contextual factors and evolving political climates in Saudi Arabia. These aims challenge the quest for universal retranslation motives, emphasizing contextual specifics driving individual retranslations. In the case of the chosen translation, it is argued that Saudi-sponsored Qur'an retranslations function as an Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), promoting the state's endorsed image.

The dynamic nature of the Qur'an allows diverse interpretations. Reinterpretation stems from new contexts, whether a different exegete, an altered historical era, a revised conceptual framework, shifting institutional goals, emerging interest groups, or a changed intertextual landscape—each demonstrating the role of context in driving reinterpretations that shape retranslation (Brownlie 2006, 153). Thus, the study of retranslation should pivot toward the "local" context, often crucial in shaping retranslation, and the involved actors like commissioners, translators, and so on. As Paloposki & Koskinen (2010, 46) emphasize, multiple variables interact in complex ways, making simple cause-and-effect explanations inadequate.

For instance, retranslations that heavily draw from past translators' work raise issues of copyright and plagiarism (see Şahin et al. 2019), especially in terms of integrity and authorship. The concept of "trans-piracy," coined

by Ljuba Tarvi (2005, 137), comes into play. Additionally, publishers may feel to have a moral duty to preserve older translations (Paloposki and Koskinen 2010, 46).

Theoretical framework

Translations are intrinsically linked to historical contexts, acting as reflections of originating cultures. These translations thrive within evolving hierarchical institutions (Venuti 2005). Cultures shape every stage of translation, from source text selection to strategies and target audiences (Venuti 2013, 105–106; also 2005). Consequently, contemporary literary trends significantly influence the choice of source texts and genres for translation (Venuti 2013, 105–106; also 2005).

Retranslating a work into another language is viable when it deviates from the target language's literary norms, allowing for fresh interpretations and potential canonicity (see, e.g., the case of Grazia Deledda and Sibilla Aleramo in Venuti 2013, 98). Such retranslations highlight the influence of specific institutions, compelling translators to align with particular source texts and approaches that reinforce specific ideologies. For instance, a commercial publisher might release retranslations of canonical works because of their market appeal. These works are less costly to publish than copyrighted ones, which require purchasing translation rights from ST (source text) authors or their assignees. This economic ideology influences the source text selection and informs approaches to enhance translations for sales. Conversely, publishers driven by financial considerations might reissue earlier successful translations, even if altered, to avoid commissioning a retranslation (see e.g. the case of Random House and the Vermont-based Steerforth Press in Venuti 2013, 100).

By downplaying overarching societal forces, a more nuanced analysis emerges. Retranslations can often be explained by factors beyond the scope of general society, like specific contextual circumstances that significantly influence commissioners and translators (Aaltonen 2003, 147). In this chapter, I focus on a specific historical context because of the challenge of drawing universal conclusions about the motivations behind new translations of particular literary works. Rationales for retranslation vary depending on socio-historical context, and decisions about retranslation are intricately linked to a complex system involving publishers, translators, and writers. Understanding the retranslation of certain works can shed light on how a writer's perception evolves across different historical contexts (Sánchez and Rodríguez 2007, 86).

When examining retranslations of a specific work within a given culture and language, it is crucial to consider the timeline of retranslations and the historical backdrop. Historical events are not only connected to societal shifts but also to ideologies. As societies continually evolve, the translation process must take into account the specific social and historical context of the time. The differences between translations of the same source text encompass more than just linguistic variations; languages constantly change, which is a key driver behind retranslation (Berman 1990, 1; Hurtado Albir 2001, 599; Venuti 2004, 26).

With the premise that retranslations arise from diverse causes, it is essential to analyze the specific reasons behind retranslations in distinct contexts—whether they are historical, cultural, or social. As a result, a comprehensive and systematic approach to retranslation emerges as particularly intriguing for Translation Studies: "[T]here are so many factors involved in translation that causation is more likely to be diffuse and multiple than focused and unitary" (Pym 1998, 144). This might explain why seeking universal explanations for retranslation does not yield reliable results.

In exploring retranslations, Paloposki and Koskinen (2010) highlight challenges of classifying retranslations and revised editions, acknowledging the potential hybrid nature of some texts that blend revised earlier translations with segments of retranslation (Şahin et al. 2019, 80). Revision is often seen as a precursor to retranslation, involving changes to an existing Target Text while retaining its structure and tone (Vanderschelden 2000, 1–2). However, since most revised materials do not undergo retranslation, and retranslation seldom involves only revision, framing revision as a "first step" towards retranslation is misleading (Paloposki and Koskinen 2010, 46).

The boundaries between editions, revisions, and retranslations are fluid, raising complex issues, including "the number and type of intervening texts for retranslation" (single interlingual retranslation; compilative inter- and intralingual retranslation; single/compilative intralingual retranslation), the relevance of intervening texts (status: primary vs. secondary; process: frequent vs. occasional; presentation: overt/explicit/open or covert/implicit/hidden retranslation; labels: "new translation", "new version", "new edition"; competition: active vs. passive retranslation; time: hot vs. cold retranslation; retranslator status: team vs. single retranslator, frequent retranslator vs. one-time retranslator, and textual/contextual voices) (Alvstad and Rosa 2015, 17–18). In this chapter, I will concentrate on edition/revision as a category of retranslation.

Focus

This chapter undertakes an analysis of the inaugural and recent editions of the widely disseminated English Qur'an translation, *The Noble Qur'an* by Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali (*Muḥammad Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī*) and Muhammad Muhsin Khan (*Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān*), which was initially published in 1978 but formally republished in 1989 under the auspices of Saudi Arabian sponsorship. Over a span of almost forty years, this translation has reached multitudes of believers, disseminated with intent by Saudi Arabia. Through various revisions, with the most conspicuous being the post-9/11 edition—an event-specific version assumed to have been issued post 9/11 (Wild 2015, 174)—these two editions (1989 and post-9/11) stand as focal points for investigating the mechanisms of ideological operation within retranslation, both within the text itself and its accompanying paratextual elements. The selected locus of analysis is Q 1:6-7, a verse resonating in social interactions with non-Muslims and assuming even greater pertinence due to its daily recitation by Muslims.

The manifestation of ideological manipulation resides in textual modifications that guide readers toward specific interpretations. Employing cross-edition textual analysis, one can gauge the depth of this ideological manipulation (Fairclough 1992, 214; Flowerdew 1999; Titscher et al. 2000, 188). By contrasting the Source Text and Target Text, one can elucidate lexical transformations that are subsequently interpreted in the context of the socio-historical setting and core tenets of the underlying ideology. This contextualized textual analysis situates and explicates the texts within the realm of power dynamics (Fairclough 2003, 9). To grasp the motives behind the retranslation of *The Noble Qur'an*, a scrutiny of translation criticism and predicted outcomes is warranted (Alvstad and Rosa 2015, 16).

The chapter unfolds in three interwoven sections. Initially, it delves into the intricate relationship between the state and Qur'an translation, unraveling the trajectory leading to Saudi Arabia's patronage of al-Hilali and Khan's rendition. Subsequently, the focus shifts to the interplay between translation, state, and ideology, disclosing the contextual forces that inform the decision to retranslate the Qur'an. The third section appraises Q 1:6-7 within the selected editions, thus revealing the extent to which ideological manipulation is exercised.

Why retranslate the Qur'an in Saudi Arabia?

The Saudi state agenda espouses the mass production of literature disseminated abroad to convey Saudi Arabia's self-proclaimed image as the guardian of Islam (Commins 2006, 155; Al-Rasheed 2007, 6; Noorhaidi 2008, 267; Jones 2009, 111). As observed by Madawi al-Rasheed (2005, 150), the kingdom exports its advocated variant of Islam besides oil and gas and "has taken the responsibility to propagate faith more seriously than have other Muslim governments, thanks to its wealth, its quest for legitimacy and its symbolic significance as the land of Islam and its holy shrines".

To facilitate this domination, the Saudi state established the most prodigious printing plant and Qur'an distributor worldwide, Medina's King Fahd Complex, inaugurated in 1984 by King Fahd bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (*'Abd al-'Azīz Āl Sa'ūd*, 1921–2005) and overseen by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da'wah and Guidance (MIEDG). This plant offers translations in diverse languages, besides printing the Qur'an in the original, and has hitherto published Qur'an translations in over 70 languages (39 Asian, 16 European, 17 African; 13 others currently in progress, e.g., Danish, Dutch, and Serbian amongst other languages). The Complex employs some 1,700 staff (scholars, managers and technicians; no details given about translators) and has a printing capacity of an average production of ten million copies per year, which can rise up to threefold when required, according to the Complex's website. By 2019, the Complex's cumulative output reached over 300 million copies, most of which were donated across mosques, religious and educational institutions, libraries, hotels and charity shops worldwide. This scale of activity is sustained by state investment; the Complex's 2005 annual budget was estimated at over $106 million (Taji-Farouki 2015, 49–50). In fact, the Complex's annual budget is part of the MIEDG's budget allocated by the state. There are no figures on either the Complex or the Ministry's websites pertaining to the Complex's 2022/2023 allocated fund; the only state figures available are about the number of copies so far produced by the Complex.[1]

Note that such a keen interest in religious hegemony (expressed by distributing Qur'an translations and financing religious institutions where Qur'an translations are largely disseminated) was the result of changing circumstances, namely, the immediate crisis of the Mecca Mosque siege and the rise of Shiism in the region in the late 1970s. In fact, Saudi Arabia for decades utilized religion to distinguish itself from other regional actors advocating pan-Arabism: the union of all Arab states. In so doing, Saudi Arabia had aimed to discredit pan-Arabism and instead emphasized pan-Islamism. With the demise of the pan-Arabism project following the War of

1967, Saudi Arabia crowned itself as the cradle of Islam and the legitimate ruler of all Muslims (Al-Rasheed 2002, 5). The rise of the Iranian Islamic model, however, threatened Saudi Arabia's authority and its distinct Islamic identity, which was developed in relation to other regional identities. To re-establish itself, the Saudi state narrowed its identity from pan-Islamism to a variant of Sunni (*sunnī*) Islam, thus reducing Iran to the Shi'ite Other. This was the context in which the King Fahd Complex was built to reassert the Saudi state as "the last bastion of Islam".

The Complex first endorsed Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation into English, *The Holy Qur'an: Translation and Commentary* (1934): a translation highly acclaimed for its poetic language though it contains some "serious" problems, viz., reproducing "the exegetical material from mediaeval texts without making any effort at contextualisation" (Mohammed 2005). The Complex favoured Yusuf Ali's translation owing to "its distinguishing characteristics, such as a highly elegant style, a choice of words close to the meaning of the original text, accompanied by scholarly notes and commentaries" (as noted in the preface to Yusuf Ali 1985, vi). The Complex made this decision after having considered a number of translations which failed to "imitate the diction or the style of the Book of Allah" and were greatly influenced by prejudices (Yusuf Ali 1985, vi). This decision is hardly surprising because such Muslim-majority states as Syria, Libya and Qatar had already reprinted Yusuf Ali's translation (Khan 1986, 97).

However, the Complex abandoned Yusuf Ali's translation in 1989 for three possible reasons: (i) Scholars viewed Yusuf Ali's oeuvre as "polemic" against Jews because he was writing "at a time both of growing Arab animosity toward Zionism and in a milieu that condoned anti-Semitism" (Mohammed 2005); (ii) he belonged to the Bohra Shi'a, a sect within the Shi'ite branch of Islam opposed by Saudi Arabia (Wild 2015, 172); and (iii) he was not considered a scholar of Islam because the "pseudo-rationalist spirit of his time" informs some of his footnotes in the translation (Kidwai 1987, 68).

The Complex then decided to support Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan's translation: *Explanatory English Translation of the Holy Qur'an: A Summarized Version of Ibn Kathīr Supplemented by al-Ṭabarī with Comments from Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, first published in 1977 and followed by a second edition in 1978, republished in 1989 as *The Noble Quran*. The Complex commends al-Hilali and Khan's translation for three possible reasons:

(i)   The translation reflects the conventional views of Ibn Kathir (*Ibn Kathīr*) and Tabari (*al-Ṭabarī*), celebrated Sunni exegete and historians, which are "very much needed for Qur'anic studies"

(Khan 1986, 103). Although Khan suggests that studying the views of these two commentators is required in Qur'anic studies, he gives no link between the Saudi state religion and these two exegetes. In fact, these two exegetes have been used to support Wahhabi views, as noted by Commins (2006, 124): when it comes to Qur'anic exegesis, Wahhabis teach the works of Ibn Kathir and Tabari primarily.

(ii)   Al-Hilali was a professor of the Islamic faith at the Islamic University of Madinah, distinguished for his particular erudition in the field of linguistics and for his teaching experience in languages. Though Khan was not a religious scholar by training (he was a cardiologist and served as the director of the Islamic University of Madinah), he nonetheless translated *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* into English, a translation which gained him wide currency (Lauzière 2016, 202).

(iii)   The Islamic University of Madinah approved the translation (Schwartz 2004). It is worth noting that the Islamic University of Madinah and also the Imam Mohammed Ibn-Saud Islamic University are seminaries "for the training of clerics in Wahhabism", according to Stephen Schwartz (2004), a Wahhabism expert.

The Complex's decision to sponsor a new translation brings to the fore a central theoretical question regarding the illusory nature of translation: can translation exist at all? This question relates to the idea of translation as an intertext and essentially the motive behind the retranslation, that is, "the act of translating a work that has previously been translated into the same language" (Tahir-Gürçağlar 2009, 33; Pym 2011, 90). Indeed, a great many motives may drive the retranslation of the Qur'an in general – like the perceived poor quality of existing translations (Venuti 2004, 1), the archaic language of older translations, the ideological nature of past texts, the financial rewards of translating the text, or simply the translator's appreciation of the original text (Tahir-Gürçağlar 2009, 235). However, al-Hilali's translation typically highlights the desire to interpret the text according to a different set of values, "so as to bring about a new and different reception for that text in the translating culture" (Venuti 2004, 3), an issue I will return to below when considering the ideological workings of al-Hilali's translation at both the textual and paratextual levels.

Al-Hilali's life trajectory demonstrates how translation is always influenced by social circumstances; it is never free of influence. From 1968 to 1974, al-Hilali served as a professor of Islam at the Islamic University in Madinah. In this vocation, he was noted for his particular erudition in the field of

linguistics. In fact, he devoted considerable time throughout his life to the study and teaching of Arabic and other languages. These skills were noted by Saudi clerics who hoped to disseminate their religious ideas worldwide to reach distant communities who had little or no command of Arabic. Thus, al-Hilali, together with Khan, was entrusted with the task of translating the Qur'an into English under the auspices of the Saudi religious establishment.

Though it might seem that al-Hilali's interest in languages might have led him to accept and retranslate the Qur'an, his life trajectory indicates otherwise. In the 1930s, taking a similar stance to Rashid Rida (*Rashīd Riḍā*), a prominent Islamic reformer and scholar of the early 20th century, known for his efforts to reinterpret traditional Islamic texts in light of modern challenges, he opposed the translation of the Qur'an. He both appreciated the Ahmadiyya movement for its ability to preach in a foreign language yet devalued its translation as totally against the rule of Islam (al-Hilālī 1932, 232). However, in the 1970s, the ambition of the Saudi state clerics to disseminate their understanding of Islam helped to override al-Hilali's prior objection to translation. In fact, al-Hilali did not hesitate to comply with the will of the religious establishment, even though he believed that translation would not generate emotion and spur conversions to Islam, as does the original Qur'an (al-Hilālī 1971, 57).

This change in his position towards Qur'an translation demonstrates how the defining feature of retranslation rests on the figure of the first translator/translation who/which influences the retranslation process. That is, the new translator is forced to develop a critical stance towards past translations, an unavoidable feature in the retranslation process. It is clear that most retranslations take into account their predecessors. This must not be taken as an axiom, or a fact, as some retranslations are passive, having been produced under no direct or prior influence or even the knowledge of earlier versions (Pym 1998, 82). However, the fact that the Qur'an has been translated into English over 70 times suggests that most translators may have had prior knowledge of at least some earlier translations. This allows us to conjuncture that translators, unless proven otherwise, are in one way or another responding to their predecessors (Paul 1989; Paloposki and Koskinen 2010).

Al-Hilali's rejection of Sayed Ahmed's English translation, sponsored by the Ahmadiyya movement, and his later acceptance of the task of translating the Qur'an, is a useful reminder of how retranslation is influenced by prior translations. In addition, the Complex's abandonment of Yusuf Ali's translation for the reasons outlined above is also reminiscent of what Koskinen and Paloposki (2015, 29) called "the story of retranslation," which goes something like this: "the first translator is the 'bad' guy, who is, however,

often generously regarded as having tried his best but who was unable to produce anything with lasting value. The *re-translator*, in turn, is the hero: the modern, well-read, balanced and cultured translator who 'finally' gives the readers the unbiased, faultless, faithful rendering of the original."

Indeed, a polemical approach is an ineluctable fate (Koskinen and Paloposki 2015, 32). To find his/her own voice, the translator must revisit aging translations, which triggered the desire to make the classic new. It should be noted that the idea of "aging" is very contentious and has been challenged in Translation Studies by several scholars. Since numerous instances of the same ST have been translated more than once in a short period of time, the passage of time and the necessity for retranslation do not appear to be directly related (see Susam-Sarajeva 2003; Pym 1998; 2005; Hanna 2016; Jenn 2006; Tahir-Gürçağlar 2009, 234). Additionally, it is thought that neither the language in which a translation was produced, nor the translation itself age; rather, it is the modern language use which makes the translation look archaic (Ladmiral 2011, 38 cited in Sánchez and Rodríguez 2007, 160).

If one considers translation a performative act embedded in structures of power that occasion interpretations – an idea reiterated by, amongst many others, Roman Jakobson (in his concept of intersemiotic translation as connected to non-verbal sign systems) and George Steiner (in the argument that "*inside and between languages, human communication equals transla-tion*" [Steiner 1998, 49; italics in the original]), it could well be said that retranslation operates as an antithesis complementing or rather objecting to the precursor who failed or fell short of conveying the original meaning of the book (Bloom 1973, 49–76). Thus, the value of retranslation lies in its potential to open up ways of thinking about the operation of translation in the wider framework of beliefs and assumptions, especially in relation to the operation of translation as an ideological apparatus, a tool to legitimize power relations, emerging as most successful in making the voice of the Saudi religious establishment heard and the state's voice extremely noticeable.

Paratextual analysis

In the context of translation, the Saudi state grants *The Noble Quran* the authority to communicate Islam's message on behalf of the state and, therefore, simultaneously delivers the state's self-conferred image as the guardian of Islam. In a certificate of authentication which bears his stamp as the then grand mufti of Saudi Arabia, Ibn Baz (*Ibn Bāz*) grants clearance to publish and reproduce the translation (al-Hilālī and Khān 1989/2000, I).

According to the certificate, The General Presidency of Scholarly Research and Ifta (*iftā*', a process of formulating a fatwa) accepts the translation after having decided that the translators correctly rendered the Qur'an into English during their time at the Islamic University of Madinah. The certificate's original version goes as follows:

Figure 1. Ibn Baz's Letter

Transcription

بِسْم الله الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيم

المملكة العربية السعودية

وزارة الشؤون الإسلامية والأوقاف والدعوة والإرشاد

مكتب الرئيس

الرقم: 3/1335

التاريخ: 21/11/1404هـ

المرفقات: -

الموضوع: -

إلى من يهمه الأمر

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته، أما بعد:

فإن الرئاسة العامة لإدارات البحوث العلمية والإفتاء والدعوة والإرشاد بالمملكة العربية السعودية تقرر أن الدكتور محمد تقي الدين الهلالي والدكتور محمد حسن خان قد قاما بترجمة معاني القرآن الكريم وصحيح الإمام البخاري وكتاب اللؤلؤ والمرجان فيما اتفق عليه البخاري ومسلم إلى اللغة الإنجليزية ترجمة صحيحة وذلك عملهما في الجامعة الإسلامية بالمدينة المنورة، فلا مانع من فسح هذه الكتب بالدخول إلى المملكة وتداولها لعدم الحضور فيها والله ولي التوفيق.

وصلى الله وسلم على نبينا محمد وآله وصحبه.

الرئيس العام

لإدارات البحوث العلمية والإفتاء والدعوة والإرشاد

عبد العزيز بن عبد الله بن باز

In the Name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

To Whom It May Concern

God's peace, mercy and blessings be upon you

The General Presidency of Scholarly Research and Iftā in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia confirms that Dr Muhammad Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī and Dr Muhammad Muhsin Khān have correctly translated into English the meanings of *The Noble Quran*, *Sahīh al-imām al-bukhārī*, and *Kitāb al-lu'lu' wa-al-marjān*. Therefore, there is no reason to forbid these books from entering and circulating in the Kingdom.

Blessings and peace upon our Prophet Muhammad and his companions

General President of Scholarly Research and Iftā

Signature

'Abd al-'Azīz ibn 'Abd Allāh Ibn Bāz

Figure 2. Ibn Baz's Letter (my translation)

There is no question that this certificate supports the state's broader campaign of proselytism. Having the certificate attached as the first page in the translation is not a coincidence as it informs the reader how the translators earned the authorities' approval, namely, that of Ibn Baz, one of Islam's most authoritative figures in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The certificate also aims to bring to the reader's attention the status of religious authority through an appeal to authentication by an authoritative figure who ironically spoke no English yet considered the translation as "correct".

In fact, the translation was authorized not only by Ibn Baz but also by the then Minister of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da'wah and Guidance, 'Abd Allāh Ibn 'Abd al-Muḥsin al-Turkī. In the foreword to the translation, the Minister conveys to the reader Saudi Arabia's commitment to delivering Islam's message by supporting the translation and transferring knowledge to Muslims abroad (see al-Hilālī and Khān 1989/2000, III). The Minister situates the state's role in a broader context, showing how translation is vested with the power of not only the religious authorities but also the state itself, embodied in the king's image. The king, as a symbol of the highest authority, seems to have championed Qur'an translation to support the country's religious structure and its political agenda. This illustrates that retranslations of the Qur'an are the product of contextual factors and the changing political and regional climate in Saudi Arabia.

These peritextual materials legitimize the state's role in the development of the project. Legitimation demonstrates how the state comes to secure from readers a tacit consent to its self-conferred image as the guardian of Islam, and to its authority to provide readers with the "correct" rendition of the Qur'an. However, legitimation means "establishing one's interests as broadly acceptable" (Eagleton 1991, 54). In other words, the retranslation seems to be fighting to secure credibility for the state's image, thus operating as an ideological state mechanism.

In addition, the translation also includes some addenda which are intended to epitomize the state's efficiency and the King's input to the project. For example, the addendum written in Arabic calligraphy in Figure 3 and supplemented with a translation in Figure 4 expresses gratitude to Saudi Arabia's King for his efforts to disseminate the translation. Precisely, it aims to inform the reader of the King's support and generosity towards the development of the project. This example once again manifests how the state backed not only its religion but also its own image as the center of Islam and the guardian of the "true" faith.

Figure 3. The addendum written in Arabic calligraphy (al-Hilālī and Khān 1989/2000, 958).

Transcription

إنَّ وَزَارَةَ الشُّؤُون الإسْلامِيَّةِ وَالأوْقَاف وَالدَّعْوَةِ وَالإرْشَادِ

فِي الَمَمْلَكَةِ العَرَبيَّةِ السُّعُوديَّةِ

الُمشرِفَةُ عَلَى مَجْمَعِ الَملِكِ فَهْد

لِطبَاعَةِ الُمصْحَفِ الشَّرِيفِ في الَمدِينَةِ الُمنَوَّرَة

إذْ تَشْرُفُ أَنْ تَصْدُرَ الَمجْمَعَ هَذِهِ الطَّبْعَةَ مِنَ القُرْآنِ الكَرِيم

وَتَرْجَمَتُهُ مَعَانِيَهُ إلَى اللُّغَةِ الإنْجِلِيزيَّةِ

نَسْأَلُ اللهَ أَنْ يَنْفَعَ بِه دُعَاةَ الُمسْلِمِينَ

وَأَنْ يَجْزِيَ

خَادِمَ الحَرَمَيْنِ الشَّرِيفَيْنِ الَملِكِ فَهْدِ بنِ عَبْدِ العَزِيزِ آلِ سَعُود

أَحْسَنَ الجَزَاءِ عَلَى جُهُودِه الُمطيِّبَةِ فِي خِدْمَةِ كِتَابِ اللهِ الكَرِيمِ

وَاللهُ وَلِيُّ التَّوْفِيقِ

The presence of these addenda to the translation highlights the state's role and its quest for legitimacy. Since they aspire to provide the state's self-conferred image as the guardian of faith, they are the embodiment of the status quo and the tenets of the historical alliance between the state and Wahhabism, in which the state vows to support the campaign of religious proselytism. The inclusion of these addenda and the certificate of authentication demonstrates how the state finds new opportunities to assert
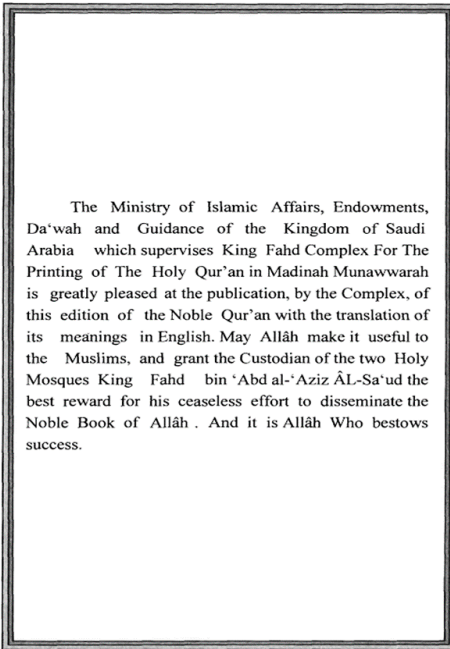
The Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da'wah and Guidance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which supervises King Fahd Complex For The Printing of The Holy Qur'an in Madinah Munawwarah is greatly pleased at the publication, by the Complex, of this edition of the Noble Qur'an with the translation of its meanings in English. May Allâh make it useful to the Muslims, and grant the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques King Fahd bin 'Abd al-'Aziz ÂL-Sa'ud the best reward for his ceaseless effort to disseminate the Noble Book of Allâh . And it is Allâh Who bestows success.

Figure 4. Translation expressing gratitude to Saudi Arabia's King (al-Hilālī and Khān 1989/2000, 959).

Transcription
The Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Endowments, Da'wah and Guidance of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which supervises King Fahd Complex For The Printing of The Holy Qur'an in Madinah Munawwarah is greatly pleased at the publication, by the Complex, of this edition of the Noble Qur'an with the translation of its meanings in English. May Allah make it useful to the Muslims, and grant the Custodian of the two Holy Mosques King Fahd bin 'Abd al-'Aziz Āl-Sa'ud the best reward for his ceaseless effort to disseminate the Noble Book of Allāh. And it is Allāh Who bestows success.

itself and its ideology and how it has been a powerful agent in shaping its own image abroad. Thus, the translation becomes a form of monarchical legitimacy used to enforce the state's image. Note that it is not only about enforcement but also about the universalization of such an image beyond linguistic borders.

Indeed, central to *The Noble Qur'an* is the status of the state as crucial for the service of Islam. The peritexts' role is obvious: enforcing the state's desirable image. The translation excels in praising the state's efforts embodied in the King's image, thereby granting the state greater visibility and expanding its favourable image as the guardian of faith. The translation operates thus as

an ideological state apparatus aspiring to universalize the state's piety by means of addenda which reflect the state's input to producing and distributing *The Noble Quran*.

The King's name also appears designed in Arabic calligraphy (followed by a plain translation), taking up nearly an entire page by itself. At the same time, the dedication at the end is typically more uncommon in translation. This highlights the significance of patronage in translation agendas, particularly those of translations of religious text—the term "patronage" describes "the powers (persons, institutions) that can further or hinder the reading, writing, and rewriting of literature" (Lefevere 1992, 15). This is not the first religious text to be translated under royal patronage; there are many instances of state-sponsored translations in various historical situations. Examples include the King James Bible, as well as the Sui and Tang Chinese dynasties' support for the Chinese translation of Buddhist sutras (Hung 2005), and the initiative led by Thai King Rama I, who oversaw the creation of a Thai version of the Rama story known as *Ramakien* in the eighteenth century (Reynolds 1991), not to mention Kemal Atatürk's 1924 administration, which actively supported a Qur'an translation effort in the early years of the Republic of Turkey (Wilson 2009). They all point to strong connections between the patronage of institutional powers and translation of sacred texts.

However, it is significant to highlight that King Fahd, the dedicatee who appears in the first edition, vanished from later editions after his death in 2005 and was replaced by King Salman (see the 2017 edition). The purpose of the dedication is thus to promote the Saudi King as a royal patron or symbol of support for divine matters. He is thought to have served as inspiration for the translation project as a whole rather than to single out a particular ruler. Since the Complex always appears responsive to changes in the Saudi Arabian political structure and promptly takes them into account, the replacement of the dedicatees denotes the transition from one political authority to another.

Textual analysis

As noted above, the 1980s were characterized by Saudi Arabia's intention to spread an Islamic worldview through the mass production and exportation of literature to promote its self-proclaimed image as the guardian of Islam (Commins 2006, 155; Al-Rasheed 2007, 6; Noorhaidi 2008, 267; Jones 2009, 111). With the support of the state, Saudi Arabia's brand of Islam, Wahhabism, became pervasive. Because of its affluence, the state gave the religious

establishment more freedom and support to spread Wahhabism more seriously than ever (Al-Rasheed 2005, 150). One of the ways the Saudi-adopted ideological meanings are spread is undoubtedly through Qur'an translation.

One of the most prevalent examples of ideological manipulations can be found in the first chapter of the Qur'an, which Muslims of all creeds obligatorily recite during daily prayers. In Q 1:1–6, the prophet Muhammad asks God to direct Muslims to the correct path, not the one taken by those who have angered Her/Him or wandered off. The verses read as follows:

> Guide us to the straight path, the path of those whom You have blessed, not of those who have incurred Your wrath, nor of those who are misguided.[2]

The Noble Qur'an offers the following translation:

> Guide us to the Straight Way / The Way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger (such as the Jews), nor of those who went astray (such as the Christians) (al-Hilālī and Khān 1989/2000, 1–2).

In this passage, the target text departs from the source text in terms of lexical choice. Jews and Christians are not mentioned in the Arabic text; *The Noble Qur'an* adds them between brackets. By doing this, it fixes the meaning of "those with God's wrath upon them" and "those who went astray", suggesting that God denounces Jews and Christians; as a result, they are without Her/His guidance.

The worshiper's only concern in this translation is the folly of Jews and Christians. The translation is employed to understand Q 1:6-7, even though the Qur'an is intended to be recited in Arabic during prayers. In this way, the translation essentially "trains the ears and minds" of readers who use *The Noble Qur'an* to understand "angered" and "astray" (Sells 2006, 5). Moreover, it serves as an ideological inoculation of a pejorative understanding of Islam for those who recite Q 1:6-7 every day as part of their spiritual exercise.

What is overlooked is that this addition derives from the Wahhabi exegesis of the two verses, particularly evident in the writings of Ibn Baz, who served on the Saudi Arabian Council of Senior Ulama before becoming the country's grand mufti. Today, Salafi communities regard Ibn Baz as one of the Wahhabi tradition's most staunch interpreters (Al-Rasheed 2007, 32). During his tenure on the Council, Ibn Baz and other Council members provided the essential religious discourse that confirmed the state's subjection of

religion. Under his reign, Wahhabism expanded as an institutional religious discourse inextricably linked to political power. He had a tremendous impact on public life, particularly in regard to matters of public morality and the international transmission of Wahhabi literature and media.

isBaz praised al-Hilali's translation, calling it an accurate and understandable presentation of the Qur'an (al-Hilālī and Khān 1989/2000, I). His interpretation of the text supports Wahhabism's intellectual genealogy, which holds that God's guidance does not apply to Jews and Christians. According to al-'Uthaymīn, a prominent Wahhabi exegete, the main traits that lead to the loss of God's light are obstinacy and ignorance. Jews and Christians share these traits because they both disregarded the truth (Islam) and, as a result, aroused God's wrath (Al-'Uthaymīn 2002, 1: 20). These ideas are a replica of those medieval exegetes held in high regard by the Wahhabis, specifically Ibn Kathir. Ibn Kathir also interpreted Q 1:6-7 to mean that Jews are those who have triggered God's anger, and Christians are those who have strayed from the straight path (Ibn Kathīr 1358/2004, 1: 140–43). It should be emphasized that these opinions have strong roots in the *tafsīr* tradition and are even presented in *Tafsīr al-Jalalayn*, a well-known exegetical work frequently utilized in religious education throughout the Muslim world.

To support their interpretation, the translators accompanied Q 1:6-7 with a footnote from a hadith—a tradition based on the prophet's sayings and deeds. In this note, they refer to the prophet's alleged response to Adi bin Hatim's query about the identity of "those who earned God's anger" and "those who went astray". According to bin Hatim's account, the prophet replied: "Jews" and "Christians," respectively (al-Hilālī and Khān 2000, 1–2). This can be viewed as a way to dehistoricize/naturalize certain beliefs and deny their historical specificity, which can sometimes influence the course of translation. Eagleton (1991, 59) pointed out that naturalization aims to detach ideas from history and transform them into something that looks, sounds and reads just natural.

The hadith, together with the Qur'an, is a significant source of instruction for most Muslims. It has always been regarded as the second source of law and historical continuity and carried a certain amount of authority as a symbol of divine guidance, which has persisted due to customary usage in exegetical literature and out of habit. Over time, theologians have discovered that some hadith collections are genuine while others are fabricated. Sunni and Shi'ite tradition each have established their own primary canons of the most reliable hadith accounts.

By choosing this specific hadith, the translators attempt to portray Jews and Christians as homogeneous groups in contrast to the true believers

who follow God's commands. The translators follow a similar approach throughout the translation. Their ideological stance requires such an approach. Though it is beyond the scope of this chapter to delve into detail, it is noteworthy that the King Fahad Complex consistently employs the same approach in other languages, demonstrating how translation has become an extension of the state ideology. For instance, the translation in Indonesian is comparable to the English: *bukan (jalan) mereka yang dimurkai (Yahudi), dan bukan (pula jalan) mereka yang sesat (Nasrani).* Back translation: *not (the way of) those who have drawn wrath upon themselves (the Jews), and (also) not (the way of) those who go astray (the Christians)* (see detailed discussion in Pink 2015, 113).

However, the events of September 11, 2001 brought Wahhabism under scrutiny. Western critics, who in the past had commanded a degree of respect for the movement that gave rise to Saudi Arabia, charged the movement and its adherents with supporting terrorism, intolerance, and fostering a culture of conflict, warfare and confrontation. In addition, Wahhabism was accused of fostering bigotry against Shi'as and adherents of other religions, such as Christianity and Judaism. These critics took a proactive part in the discussion of the movement and its goals. After making significant attempts to pinpoint the causes of terrorism, they came to the conclusion that Wahhabism encouraged violence against the West as a whole, a conclusion shared by both Saudi political activists inside and outside Saudi Arabia (Al-Rasheed 2007, 9).

The criticism also targeted *The Noble Qur'an*. As early as in 1987, Abdur Rahim Kidwai (1987) had regarded it as one of such translations that "do not rank as significant ventures in the field". It was described as an "ultra-traditional interpretation" by Ahmad Zaki Hammad (cited in al-Amri 2010, 104), an Azhar scholar and Qur'an translator, a translation that "unnecessarily and detrimentally distracts from the timeless message of the Qur'an and the belief in the possibility of human harmony under God's Oneness, which is the essential inspiration the Qur'an's universal call seeks to instil in the human heart". Khaled Abou El Fadl (2006, 194) calls it a "Trojan-horse translation", "a faithful reproduction of Bin Baz's views" (i.e. referred to as Ibn Baz above). Muslim Americans have also recently demanded that the translation be taken out of US mosques (see Musaji 2006).

Therefore, the Saudi state was forced to restrain the movement and moderate its interreligious rhetoric. The state moved swiftly to repair its image. As can be seen below, Q 1:6-7 has been revised to read as follows:

> Guide us to the Straight Way. The Way of those on whom You have be-
> stowed Your grace, not [the way] of those who earned Your anger [i.e.,
> those whose intentions are perverted; they know the Truth, yet do not
> follow it], nor those who have lost the [true] knowledge, so they wander in
> error, [and are not guided to the Truth] (al-Hilālī and Khān post/2001, 2).

The new retranslation deviates drastically from the earlier one. No "Christians" or "Jews" are mentioned in the translation, and the footnote has disappeared. In addition, a parenthesis was added in the text to clarify its meaning in a far less exclusive way. As noted in the preface to the new edition, the goal behind such revision is to enhance the English translation and get the reader as close as possible to the "right" meaning of the ST (al-Hilālī and Khān post-2001, XVIII).

The new translation offers an odd combination of a very new and an extremely old character. It contains the interpretations that the inernational community requires and excludes those that are considered incompatible. It attests to the effectiveness of control and *The Noble Qur'an's* function as an ISA. Though this demonstrates the use of retranslation as an ideological tool to stifle resistance, it attests at the same time to the effectiveness of forcing a changes in translation.

Again, one of the most troubling features of *The Noble Qur'an* comes into play: the mechanism that links the translation to its rulers has changed, and translation control is now based on the new wants and interests the global society has created. The dominant modes of control are both local and global. There are two sides to the struggle to determine the Qur'an's meaning, with which the Saudi state, as the main sponsor, tries to deal.

Thus, a pattern of control emerges where the views of the ruling state clash with those of the religious establishment. In this pattern, the position of the religious establishment is either rejected or expressed in alternative ways, such as in the footnotes. In Saudi Arabia, the religious establishment operates within the parameters set by the state's interests, with the latter granting the former freedom in religious matters as long as it does not conflict with its own interests (see discussions in Al-Rasheed 2007; 2002; 1996; Commins 2006; Ayoob and Kosebalaban 2009). However, the international regulations that Saudi Arabia must abide by also challenge the state's socio-political and religious interests, such as teaching an ultraconservative version of Islam (Prokop 2003; Sharon 2016—a recent US review of Saudi textbooks). The trend may be tied to the state's aim to adhere to international standards, and, as a result, the common approach is to handle meanings that are viewed as dangerous by the world community through retranslation.

It is undoubtedly not new for the state to intervene in translation. A number of studies in Translation Studies demonstrate a startling contrast between active state intervention in translation and the inclusion of divergent readings in translation to maintain a specific image (see e.g. Thomson-Wohlgemuth 2003; 2005; Mazi-Leskovar 2003; 2006; Dimitru 2006; Tarrend 2005; Thomson-Wohlgemuth 2009; Vandaele 2007).

It is also undoubtedly counterintuitive to force the state's interests on translation; however, one can question the extent to which the state transforms translation into a subject of total domination. This is, in fact, the idea that one wishes to avoid in the ideologies/norm approach, as noted in the introduction, to avoid deterministic conclusions.

Conclusion

This chapter examined the role of Qur'an retranslation as an Ideological State Apparatus, revealing its adaptability to shifting contextual factors within Saudi Arabia. The study highlighted how *The Noble Qur'an* adjusts to changing circumstances to portray the Saudi state as progressive and responsive to evolving reader expectations, with translators and editors modifying their approach to passages like Q 1:6–7.

A significant limitation of this study pertains to its predominant focus on political causes, potentially overshadowing other noteworthy dynamics. Contemporary Saudi Arabia is demonstrating "increased" openness to inclusivity and humanism, particularly evident through the influence of Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. These aspects warrant further exploration to provide a comprehensive understanding of forces impacting Qur'an retranslation.

The examination of the interaction between the Saudi state and Wahhabism within the context of Q 1:6–7 serves as a foundational point for future inquiry. Investigating the extent of state officials' impact on retranslation and the decision-making processes within their spheres of authority would deepen insights. Additionally, the expanding distribution of Qur'an translations necessitates an exploration of the motivations driving this dissemination and the potential roles of benevolence and patronage. Analyzing power dynamics between editors and high-ranking figures, along with the criteria guiding retranslation approvals and agent selection, could unveil unexplored dimensions.

To attain a more holistic understanding, future research should encompass a broader spectrum of contextual factors, including socio-cultural,

religious, and economic influences. This chapter's effort to elucidate the social function of Qur'an (re)translation aims to stimulate discourse, prompting scholars and readers to unravel the intricate relationship between ideology and translation.

Notes

1.   For further detail, see http://qurancomplex.gov.sa/Tree.
        asp?section=7&TabID=13&SubItemI D=1&l=eng&SecOrder=13&SubSecOrder=1.
2.   All back translations are mine unless mentioned otherwise.

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Negotiating a Slovene Qur'an: Retranslating for a dual readership

Marija Zlatnar Moe[1] and Christian Moe

Abstract

The number of Qur'ans in Slovene went from zero to three complete translations plus a partial one in a decade (2003–2014), though Slovenian Muslims might read them all as retranslations in the broader context of previous translations into Serbo-Croat/Bosnian. We explore questions of translation policy and reception: why so many translations were launched, how they were domesticated for what target audience, and why none has gained authoritative status. In particular, the first complete, direct translation from Arabic (2014) was negotiated between three languages and two intended readerships but became controversial both to the Islamic Community and the Slovene literary public. We suggest that in the presence of an immigrant Muslim community with their own translation history, both the definition of retranslation and the meaning of source- and target-oriented nature in retranslation are complicated by center–periphery relations in both the religious system and the translation system.

Keywords: sacred texts, Qur'an, translation, retranslation, translation policy, peripheral languages, Slovenia, Slovene

Introduction

In this chapter, we look at the sudden proliferation of Slovene Qur'ans in 2003–2014, when three complete translations and one partial selection appeared in book form. This abundance is notable considering that Slovenia is one of Europe's smaller countries and Muslims make up a small share of the population. It raises questions of translation policy and reception: what motivated so many simultaneous translations, what different strategies were followed and for what target audience, and whether any gained the status of an authorized version.

The three first publications were published in a short span of time (Jelinčič 2003; Krševan 2004; Majaron 2004) and did not refer to each other, so only

the fourth (Alhady and Alhady 2014b), which sparked controversy, is a retranslation in the sense of relating to predecessor translations into Slovene. If we relax the common definition of retranslations as occurring within the same language (Gürçağlar 2009, 233), however, we can argue that most Muslims in Slovenia could approach all of these as retranslations: they mostly had roots in other parts of the former Yugoslavia and spoke a language (Bosnian, formerly known as Serbo-Croat) closely related to Slovene. As we discuss below, this perspective could shed light on the troubled genesis and reception of the latest Slovene translation. Further relevant factors that we consider below include the internal dynamics of the Muslim organization, the linguistic and theological concerns cited by Muslim reviewers, the translators' revisions and arguments for their solutions, and how broader concerns with identity and autonomy are tied to a heated debate on how to spell Allah. We discuss these developments based on textual comparisons of the four translations, comparison of the last translation with an early draft, and a survey of the reception of the translation in the press, supplemented with personal observations by one of the authors from participation at an early stage in the translation/publishing process.[2]

Recent studies have questioned both the retranslation hypothesis that source-orientedness increases over time (Berman 1990; cf. Paloposki and Koskinen 2004), and even the definition of retranslation itself as pertaining to the same target language (Alevato do Amaral 2019). Taking migration into consideration both complicates the picture and suggests directions for research. In the case of European translations of the Qur'an, a canonical text central to an immigrant religion, it is relevant to consider the horizon of previous translations into the languages of non-Arab Muslim minorities. These translations shape the expectations of potential target readerships. However, such readerships tend to have little political, economic or cultural capital to realize these expectations, given the relatively marginal position of Muslims as immigrant minorities in Western European societies, and the peripheral position of their countries of origin in the world. We take our cue here from the literature on center–periphery relations in translation, which looks at how power differentials not only shape translation flows (which in the Qur'an's case is relevant only for indirect translations), but also influence features of the translations themselves, like source- or target-orientedness (for a recent overview, see Zlatnar Moe, Žigon, and Mikolič Južnič 2019, 18–38). However, center–periphery relations between languages are not always that clear-cut, for example, because of the role of some globally peripheral languages as regional centers. The picture is further complicated if we posit a *religious* system with its own center–periphery relations as well.

We illustrate this point by examining how the 2014 Slovene retranslation of the Qur'an was negotiated between three languages (Slovene, Arabic, and Bosnian) and two intended readerships (Slovenian Muslims and the non-Muslim Slovene educated public).

The Slovenian case study is motivated by ethno-linguistic characteristics of the Slovenian Muslim community, which is unusually homogeneous, administratively united, and ethno-linguistically close to the majority population (compared to most Muslim communities in Western Europe). Slovenia was the geographically westernmost and economically most prosperous republic of the former Yugoslavia, from which it became independent in 1991. The Catholic-majority, relatively secularized population is mostly ethnically Slovene, but some 15% trace their roots to other parts of the former Yugoslavia: They came to Slovenia largely as a result of internal economic immigration from the 1960s onward, and also partly due to displacement in the wars of the 1990s. Muslims, who are concentrated in cities, particularly industrial towns and transport hubs, made up less than 3% of the population in the 2001 census. In ethnic terms, these Muslims are mainly Bosniaks from Bosnia-Hercegovina and surrounding areas, with a smaller number of Albanians and Roma and only a smattering of Iranians, Turks, Arabs, and others. They are thus indigenous to the Balkans, and their Islamic culture is rooted in centuries under Ottoman rule, whereas Slovenia belonged to the Habsburg empire. The Habsburg occupation of Bosnia-Hercegovina in 1878 brought the Muslims under the same rule as the Slovenes, and after 1918 they would both remain in Yugoslavia until it broke up. The large majority of Slovenian Muslims are represented by a single organization, the Islamic Community in Slovenia, which is a branch of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Hercegovina, headed by its own Mufti (Moe 2021).[3] Its imams are typically graduates of the Faculty of Islamic Studies in Sarajevo, Bosnia, assigned to congregations in Slovenia. While a minority speak Albanian, the majority identify as Bosniaks and are more or less bilingual in Slovene and Bosnian. Bosnian is distinct from, but closely related to Slovene. From the Slovene viewpoint, Bosnian and the other former Serbo-Croat languages can have both central and peripheral characteristics: peripheral and stigmatized as the language of an immigrant working class; but historically central as the dominant language of the former state (Yugoslavia), and still central as the language of larger nearby countries with which Slovenes maintain close relations. Before the Slovene translations, there had been at least four translations of the Qur'an into Bosnian, the most influential being those of Besim Korkut (1977, with various later editions), and Enes Karić (1995), a leading contemporary Bosnian scholar of Qur'anic studies who also

appears as an actor in the events discussed below. The Bosnian tradition thus naturally informs Muslims' reading of Slovene translations.

Indeed, Bosnian Muslims can reasonably think of the Bosnian tradition as central to the religious system of Islam in the wider Western Balkans region. Bosnia is in turn peripheral to the centers of the Muslim world, but in this regard, Slovenia and the Slovene language are merely the periphery of the periphery. This sets the stage for a clash of expectations between the non-Muslim majority and the Muslim minority as to whose conventions a Slovene Qur'an should follow. The potential clash is all the more salient because Islamic heritage and Slovene language are arguably the main ethno-national identity markers that separate Bosniaks and Slovenes respectively from neighboring nations (as Bosnia is surrounded by other speakers of the former Serbo-Croat, while Slovenia is surrounded by other Catholics). Nonetheless, Bosnian too has gained importance as an identity marker since its recent recognition as a separate national language. Slovene is closely identified with Slovene national identity from its beginnings as a literary language in the Reformation, through the national awakening of the nineteenth century, to controversies over the dominance of Serbo-Croat in the 1980s that helped trigger the drive for national independence.

Slovene translations of the Qur'an: an overview

The number of published Qur'ans in Slovene went from zero to three complete translations plus one selection in the space of a decade (2003–2014), even if we were only to count published translations in book form.[4] We give a brief presentation of each below before discussing the last translation in more detail.

(1) *Koran; o Koranu, Bogu, islamu ...* ("The Qur'an; on the Qur'an, God, Islam, etc." by Kerševan and Svetlič (2004) is a thematic reader clearly intended to improve public understanding of Islam in the aftermath of the terrorist attack on New York in 2001, by giving direct access to texts under debate. It includes introductions by the editor and the translator, excerpts from the Qur'an, footnotes, a list of translated verses and a list of references. The selected verses were translated directly from Arabic, and include topical controversies ("jihad," "women") as well as more theological topics.

It was translated directly from Arabic by Nina Svetlič, a philosophy graduate who has, inter alia, worked on Avicenna's *Metaphysics* and translated Ibn Khaldun's *Prolegomenon* (*Muqaddimah*), a pioneering work of social thought. It was edited by Marko Kerševan, a professor in the sociology of religion,

who also wrote the introduction. The translator's introduction focuses on language and translation, presenting some facts about the Arabic language, its evolution, variations, and transliteration. Svetlič explicitly accounts for the source text used (Al-Azhar's Cairo edition of 1924). Her footnotes provide often detailed explanations of Arabic terms and their context, making the book a useful resource for academic study. Serševan's introduction briefly but carefully discusses the Qur'an, its status among Muslims, some pillars of Islamic theology, relations between Islam and other religions, and the themes covered in the selections. This translation was published by Cankarjeva založba, a large publishing house that specializes in literature, mostly Slovene and international classics, besides textbooks and academic volumes.

(2) *Koran*, translated by Klemen Jelinčič (2003), is the first complete Slovene translation of the Qur'an, but not a direct translation. According to a statement on the last page, he translated it from Karić's 1995 Bosnian translation while also consulting Pandža and Čaušević's translation (1937, into what was then called Croatian), as well as Boguslavsky's Russian translation.[5] In interviews, Jelinčič connected his affinity for Arabic to his knowledge of another Semitic language, Hebrew, which he learned while staying at a kibbutz in Israel, but it is not clear to what extent he consulted the Arabic text.[6] Jelinčič (now Jelinčič Boeta) is a member of the Slovene society of literary translators, working with English, Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian, Hebrew and Slovene; he obtained his PhD with a study of medieval Judaism in the Slovene lands, based on which he has published several texts. He translates prose and poetry, and is himself a published poet.

The titles of the suras are in Slovene and Arabic. The only apparatus is a list of Arabisms and names (pp. 605–609) with brief explanations, Old Testament parallels and references to the verses (sometimes only the suras) where they appear. The spelling of the Arabic words is adapted from Bosnian. Physically, the volume is a large hardback with pseudo-Oriental ornamentation in pink, purple and gold on the cover, blue and green inside.

Curiously, this translation was published by a small right-wing press, Atilova knjiga, and edited by the translator's father Zmago Jelinčič, the leader of a small Slovene nationalist party, who had in previous years vocally opposed the building of a mosque in Ljubljana. The copyright page does not list any copy editor, and the quality of the text suggests that none was involved.

(3) *Koran*, translated by Erik Majaron (2004), was the second complete, indirect translation to appear. The source languages listed are English and Bosnian. According to the back-cover blurb, "the professional translation

with more than 270 footnotes is modern and conserves the poetic elements of the original." Majaron's translation was published by a publisher specializing in best-sellers, both fiction and non-fiction, as well as picture books. Unlike the other two complete translations, it was not published in a standalone edition betokening its lofty status, but rather as the sixty-second volume in a mass-market paperback series that included some much less pious titles.[7] According to his bibliography, Majaron is a practicing translator working with English and Sanskrit, and he has translated a number of books on religion, spirituality, esotericism, healing foods and so forth. While his translation has not gained any special recognition by Slovenia's Islamic Community, Majaron has in recent years translated several other books for their educational and cultural branch, the Averroes Institute, including Enes Karić's *Kako brati Kur'an* (How to read the Qur'an).

Apart from the 270 footnotes, Majaron has included a short introductory remark. Here he emphasizes how both the Qur'an and the Pope testify that Christians and Muslims worship the same God, and argues that this justifies his decision to use Biblical names for persons known to both traditions. The translator's experience with New Age-oriented texts perhaps colors his assertion that the appellations "Allah" (which he renders as *edini Bog,* "the one God") and "the Lord" should be "understood exclusively as the rule of a formless, intelligent force or energy" (Majaron 2004, 9).

(4) *Korán: prevod iz arabskega izvirnika* (The Qur'an: a translation from the Arabic original), translated by Mohsen Alhady and Margit P. Alhady (2014b), appeared a decade after the others. It was the first complete direct translation from Arabic into Slovene, carried out by a Yemeni-Slovene couple with experience in translation from Arabic: Mohsen Alhady has a degree in engineering, but works as a translator; Margit P. Alhady, who has a degree in psychotherapy, has published extensively as a literary translator, not least Arab and Indian fairy tales in children's magazines. Together or individually, the translators have published several papers on Arabic literature and on translation of the Qur'an; their most recent translation is a hefty edition of *1001 Nights.*

This publication also has the distinctions of being funded by the Slovenian Ministry of Culture; published by Beletrina, one of the biggest publishing houses for literature and popular humanities; and edited by well-known Slovene poet and literary editor, Aleš Šteger. It was intended for a dual readership; in addition to the educated Slovene public, it was explicitly meant to be endorsed by the Islamic Community and marketed to Muslims, and the translators explicitly endeavored to produce an "orthodox" translation.

However, after long delays it was rushed into print without the endorsement and without the Arabic text, on the pages facing the translation, that was originally planned.

The Slovene translation is preceded by an introduction by Enes Karić, "The Qur'an in Islam." The back matter includes 34 pages of translators' endnotes, translators' commentary, and a comparative table of proper names in different translations and languages, with more detailed explanations of some key names. In their commentary (Alhady and Alhady 2014a), the translators discuss the special features of Qur'an translation, the history of its translation, the exegetical traditions, and so on. They support some translation choices that have proved controversial with evidence from the Muslim interpretive tradition and Arabic lexicology, translations into other languages, conventions of language and style, and rules of the target text and culture.

In sum, the different Slovene translations were all planned to be published at roughly the same time; with the exception of the Alhady translation, they were probably carried out independent of each other. One selection and one complete translation are directly from the Arabic; two complete translations are indirect. None was published by a publisher specializing in religion, and the translators' experience and qualifications varied widely. Their apparatus varied from almost nothing (Jelinčič) via notes (Majaron) to extensive notes and essays in the two direct translations. The most immediately obvious difference between the texts was the treatment of proper names, from the domesticating (Biblical) solutions of Majaron and Svetlič, to the retention of Arabic names by Jelinčič and the Alhadys; and the differences in spelling, from Jelinčič's borrowing of Bosnian spellings, to Svetlič's academic transliteration and the Alhadys' simplified transcription, both of which were foreignizing in keeping the Arabic forms, but domesticating in bringing them closer to Slovene orthographic conventions.

Market demand

The simple explanation for the number and timing of the translations is that several publishers concurrently spotted a market opportunity due to increased interest in Islam. There were both global and local reasons for this interest: the global media storm after the 9/11 attacks in America, the debate over plans for Slovenia's first purpose-built mosque, and the generally increased visibility and assertiveness of the Islamic Community, which for the first time was headed by its own Mufti, Osman Đogić, who regularly featured in the media.

Demand for information about Islam greatly exceeded the available supply: Slovenia had had little tradition for Islamic studies[8] or Arabic philology. There had been some literary use of Islamic motifs, including Qur'anic verses, like the nineteenth-century poetry of Anton Aškerc and Vladimir Bartol's novel *Alamut* (1938), but there was no Qur'an to refer to. One may speculate that if even a single complete translation had existed before 2001, regardless of its status or quality, there might not have been such a rush to publish new ones.

This explanation also holds for the 2014 translation, which was started around the same time as the others, but two circumstances distinguished it. First, the Slovenian government, through the Ministry of Culture, played an active role in 2001–2002 by funding this project to publish a direct translation of the Qur'an. This was uncharacteristic, as Slovenian governments of a liberal cast have since mostly pursued a laicist, hands-off policy of separation of state and religion. Second, it was also meant to be approved by the Islamic Community. This condition was in tension with another aim that was present from the outset, namely, to produce the definitive translation for the educated Slovene public. The competition for the grant was won by the publisher Študentska založba, later Beletrina. Clearly, however, the other publishers were not discouraged by the fact that this competitor was set to produce the state-funded and religiously endorsed version. If they gambled that they could beat it to market, they turned out to be right, by a ten-year margin.

In addition to the Alhadys, the publisher gathered a small working group that met more or less regularly, including an experienced proofreader; a representative of the Islamic Community, the Mufti himself; the publisher's editor and an experienced external editor brought in to assist; and as mentioned above, one of the present authors (Moe), a historian of religion familiar with contemporary Islam in Bosnia, took part in the early phase of the project.

Features of the translations

Apart from the rush to market, did these translations have limitations that warranted continued re-translation by others? Aging of the translations obviously was not a factor, but quality and reader-friendliness might be.

The case for retranslation could plausibly be argued in terms of the quality added by direct translation, a point underlined by the subtitle of the fourth book, "Translation from the Arabic original." The translators' competence in Arabic, and explanatory notes and introductions, could also be selling points. While the first two complete translations aimed at the Slovene public, and

the partial translation could be marketed as a reader for higher education, the fourth book was the first to target explicitly also a Muslim audience that would set store by the Islamic Community's endorsement. Even without that endorsement, Muslims might be more comfortable displaying it on their shelves than either the cheap commercial paperback-series edition or the one connected to a nationalist politician and mosque opponent.

A new edition could also meet a need for a navigable, quotable edition to serve as a user-friendly reference. The Alhady translation was published with running headers indicating the number of the current sura, a seemingly trivial detail that makes it easier to navigate than the two previous complete translations, where looking up verse 4:34, for example, required turning many pages to make sure one was in the right place.[9] The Alhady edition also has the most extensive supporting apparatus (some 350 notes plus essays and tables), though Majaron's somewhat fewer notes have the advantage of being footnotes, while the Alhady endnotes are not even indicated in the text in any way. The Svetlič/Kerševan book arguably has the most informative apparatus for its selected verses, and its thematic approach uniquely facilitates study of the topics it covers, but again looking up a verse by number is difficult.[10]

We carried out a comparative textual analysis of selected passages from the four translations to look for differences in the translations themselves that might promote interest in producing additional translations. For our sample, we relied on Svetlič and Kerševan's selections, for two reasons: firstly, because we wanted to be able to compare material from all four translations, not just the three complete ones; and, secondly, because the topics of controversy on which they focused seemed likely sites for any ideological differences between the translations. We focused on four categories: proper names; other culture-specific terms; religiously salient terms; and controversies, including gender relations, fighting, and anthropomorphisms (i.e., how the translations deal with passages of the Qur'an that, taken literally, seem to ascribe a body to Allah).

Regarding proper names, we find a clear division between foreignizing solutions (Alhady and Jelinčič) and domesticating ones (Svetlič and Majaron). The two foreignizing translations follow different transcriptions, differing as to whether short "a" is transcribed "e" following Bosnian conventions influenced by Ottoman Turkish, or "a" as is more frequently the case in Slovenian orthography (Toporišič et al. 1990, 188–90). Majaron stands out by using not only Biblical proper names but also other Christian terms, like *postava* ("the law") for *tawra* (the Torah).

Apart from the proper names, it is hard to discern any strategy in any of the translations – it seems that decisions were made on a case-by-case basis, or possibly changed in the editing process.

We did find some differences. Majaron's translation, for example, stands out as the one with the fewest anthropomorphisms, probably due to following Korkut's Bosnian translation (see further below). Jelinčič's terms describing lives of women sometimes make no sense,[11] and his solution for religiously salient terms is often simply to capitalize the term and add exclamation points. Svetlič is blunt about gender conflict in 4:34, where others tone it down, but otherwise it is hard to detect specific biases in verses about women or fighting. Svetlič daringly throws in a term like *logos*, with all its philosophical baggage (13:2, following Rudi Paret, see Kerševan 2004, 56 n. 61). Overall, however, these differences do not seem to be a systematic or conscious ideological choice; rather, they represent the translators' individual interpretations and solutions for conveying meaning to the target reader, passage by passage.

Inaccuracies may be found in the use of Slovene in all four translations, whether on the level of meaning (like using an inadequate near synonym), syntax (changing relations between phrases or clauses), or grammar (especially regarding verbal number).

From the point of view of the reader, the Majaron and Alhady versions are the most accessible. The Majaron version has the disadvantage of being an indirect translation, and indirect translations are not well regarded in Slovene literary circles (Zlatnar Moe, Mikolič Južnič, and Žigon 2021). However, Majaron's domesticating version uses familiar names and spellings, whereas the Alhady version uses Arabic forms and breaks convention by transliterating the name Allah with a double "l", on which we will expand below. It also uses acute accents to indicate the "correct" pronunciation of Arabic names and terms, for example *Korán* and *Mohámed*. This use of diacritics is not typical for Slovene; neither is the pronunciation it seeks to promote (these words are typically stressed on the first syllable). These solutions may look odd to the reader and make the Alhady translation somewhat less attractive as a source of quotations (though certainly preferable to the Jelinčič translation's myriad idiosyncrasies of capitalization, punctuation and wording).

Reception of the Alhady retranslation: orthodoxy and orthography

As noted above, the Alhadys explicitly sought to make an "orthodox" translation, and the project was advised by Mufti Đogić, to ensure that the Islamic Community would be able to endorse the outcome. This team effort, the state's financial support, and the distinction of being the first

direct translation that was also complete, all suggested that this could also become the established translation for non-Muslim readers.

However, the Alhady translation failed to gain the endorsement of the Islamic Community as planned. In fact, the Islamic Community withdrew from participation twice. The immediate reception of the new translation among the Slovene literary public was also dominated by controversy. On the surface, the controversies revolved around *orthodoxy* and *orthography*.

Concerns of the Muslim expert review

Below the surface, internal dynamics in the Muslim community likely played an important role in their reaction. The working group had made important assumptions about the acceptability and negotiability of the translation in the early years when Mufti Đogić represented the Islamic Community. Though Đogić repeatedly voiced misgivings about the translators' approach to names, which was initially far more domesticating, he did not object very strenuously. Having graduated in Religious Studies in Australia, he also readily agreed to have a non-Muslim colleague write introductory material for the non-Muslim readership.[12] In 2005–2006, however, Đogić effectively lost control over the community, and was dismissed as Mufti. The new Mufti was Dr Nedžad Grabus, previously a professor at the Faculty of Islamic Studies, Sarajevo. Though Đogić and his supporters officially registered their own Islamic religious community, this was a very small group; meaningful endorsement of the translation would thus depend on the new leadership of the Islamic Community. The new leadership had no ownership to the project as it had developed. It was concerned to assert itself as the sole authoritative voice of Islam in the country and steward the brand of Islam with great care, and was not about to accept any *fait accompli* where the Qur'an was concerned.

On 9 August 2007, one of the authors of this paper called on the publisher to deliver some draft apparatus for the book and found a shaken editor holding a fax that had just come from the Islamic Community: They would not participate in the publication. In the fax,[13] Mufti Grabus referred to the lack of participation by the experts from the Islamic Community in the translation and the writing of the accompanying text. He further attached a critical review of the draft translation by Enes Karić, the preeminent Bosnian expert on Qur'an translation. Karić had not been involved in the working group meetings, but he had been supportive of the project at the outset, and the general tenor of his scholarly writings, which stressed the multiple

interpretive possibilities of the Qur'anic text (e.g. Karić 2005), suggested that translators should enjoy relatively wide latitude. Nevertheless, Karić found that the translation was meant for the Slovene literary public, and that it had not been carried out in accordance with the Sunni interpretive tradition. Karić suggested two possibilities for the Islamic Community: withhold endorsement, or hold out for a revision with extensive additional notes written from the Sunni viewpoint.

The Islamic Community chose to call off its participation in the project with no further dialogue. The project was deferred until June 2009, when a new initiative was made under a new editor, Šteger, who brought all parties together, including the translators, Mufti Grabus, and Professor Karić. Cooperation was agreed and revisions made.

Karić had summarized his concerns in three main points:

1 "Biblicizing"/"Christianizing" terminology and nomenclature.
2 An "anthropomorphizing approach", i.e. a too literal translation of expressions such as the "face" or "hand" of Allah, as if he had a body like a created being.
3 The transcription of Islamic/Arabic words, e.g. *Alah* with one "l".

To begin with the theology, the charge of "anthropomorphizing" was a serious one. Not only did it question the "orthodoxy" of the translation over an issue that goes back to the very beginnings of Islamic theology, it might also touch on a controversy in contemporary Islam: anthropomorphizing (*tashbīh*) is a tendency associated with Salafism, an Islamic movement with very rigid views that raised deep concerns in the mainstream Islamic Community. (It should be noted that the translators were *not* Salafis.)

At the same time, the charge was subtle and debatable, and Karić did not explain precisely what had been done wrong or should be done differently. Comparing the Alhady draft to Karić's own Bosnian translation (1995), we find only seemingly subtle differences in the textual treatment of such terms as the "face" or "hand" of God; where the Alhadys used the literal wording, Karić had often done so too, but sometimes suggested a metaphorical reading by capitalizing the words or adding a note.[14] By contrast, Korkut's Bosnian translation (1977) rather consistently interpreted the anthropomorphic passages metaphorically, influenced by the *tafsīr* of al-Zamakhshari (*Zamakhsharī*, 1074–1143), whose rationalism appealed to an important strand of Muslim opinion in Bosnia at the time. However, Zamakhshari notoriously leaned toward the *Muʻtazilī* movement, rejected by the Sunni mainstream, which serves as a reminder that orthodoxy also has a problem

with too metaphorical an approach. In a book on interpreting the Qur'an, Karić notes the dangers both of denying the utterly transcendental nature of God, on the one hand, and denying the obvious sense of the word of God, on the other (Karić 2005, 149–54).

The charge of heterodoxy spurred the translators to pen an essay defending their approach to translating the anthropomorphic passages in the Qur'an: such passages were best left literal and could be spelled with initial capitals or not; since these words generally went together with "Allah" or a capitalized pronoun, capitals were not required (Alhady and Alhady 2010). However, by the time the translation was published they nevertheless opted to capitalize them "so that the well-known human face is particularly and clearly distinguished from the face of God/Allah, of which we do not know what it is like" (Alhady and Alhady 2014a, 591).

In the revised version, then, the Alhadys capitalized "Face" (2:115, 28:88, 55:27); they also capitalized "Hand" in some cases (39:67, 48:10, 67:1), but not systematically (23:88, 36:83, 38:75, 57:29), and they did not annotate these verses. Nonetheless, the charge of anthropomorphizing did not feature in the Islamic Community's public criticism after the publication, and one explanation might be that these subtle revisions had in fact solved the problem to the theological satisfaction of the Muslims.

The other problems would prove more sensitive. The draft translation had indeed used Slovene Biblical names for persons where available, e.g. *Izak* (Isaac), *Jakob* (Jacob), *Noe* (Noah), *David*, *Salomon* (Solomon), *Job*, *Jožef* (Joseph), *Mojzes* (Moses) and *Aron* (Aaron) (6:84). Other names were transcribed from Arabic following the translators' system, without regard to Bosnian spellings. This might be described as a target-oriented approach making use of established Slovene forms and prioritizing Slovene non-Muslim readers as the target readership. This had been discussed in the working group, which mostly favored it: this was to be a Slovene Qur'an, not a Bosnian one, and it was to be accessible to the reader, not exotic and alien. Moreover, the translation was not for Muslim "liturgical" purposes, as only the Arabic would be acceptable in prayer anyway, leaving the translators at greater liberty to domesticate the translation. However, this was always a negotiable point, and in the revised version, the translators substituted Slovene transcriptions of the Qur'anic, Arabic forms, e.g. *Ishak*, *Jakub*, *Nuh*, *Davud*, *Sulejman*, *Ajub*, *Jusuf, Musa* and *Harun* (6:84). They also changed "Hell" from the Slovene *pekel* to *Džahanam*, *satan* to *šejtan*, and so on.

The third issue Karić raised, the spelling of names, would continue to trouble the project. The translators' transcription system, following dominant conventions in Slovene orthography, used *a* in several places where

Bosnian has *e*, and avoided double consonants. In Slovene orthography, Allah is rendered as *Alah* with one "l"; it is pronounced with the stress on the first syllable. Bosnian Muslims knew it as *Allah* with double "l" and a stressed long second syllable. The Alhady draft had *Alah*, interspersed with the occasional *Bog* (God).

The translators eventually came around to the Islamic Community's view and used *Allah* in the revised version, earning them the fury of Slovenists. At the same time, they did not simply adopt Bosnian spellings wholesale either. They changed Mary to *Marjam* instead of *Merjema*, the peculiar Bosnian form that adds a Slavic feminine *-a* ending. Adam remained *Adam*, not *Adem*, not for Biblicizing purposes but for the same orthographic reasons as the draft version's *Ahmed* became *Ahmad*. Other names that differed from Bosnian tradition included *Ajub* (Bos. *Ejjub*), *Uzajr* (*Uzejr*), *Kurajš* (*Kurejšije*), and so on, and terms like *zakat* rather than *zekat* for the alms-tax. Exceptions from this pattern, however, included the use of the established Slovenian spelling of *Meka* (Mecca) and *Medina* with *e*; *Sulejman* for Solomon, using an established form for the Turkish sultan by the same name; and *šejtan*, for no obvious reason. *Ramadan* was spelled with a *d* instead of *ramazan*, the Bosnian form.

Publication without Muslim approval

In February 2014, the Islamic Community formed a committee to assess the new version. At this point, however, the Ministry was demanding either that the book published or that its money be returned. This put pressure on the Islamic Community to conclude its assessment and agree on a compromise version. At the same time, the Islamic Community felt unwanted after the Minister failed to show up for a scheduled meeting with the Mufti (Porić 2018, 176–77).

The book was duly published in July 2014. The translation had been revised and was published with apparatus by the translators and an introduction by Karić, as originally envisaged, but without facing pages in Arabic, as planned. And without the approval of the Islamic Community, which made a brief statement that they had assessed it negatively, had not taken part, and were thinking of publishing their own translation (Bratož 2014a). They were criticized for this move, and a few months later, they made a more extensive statement to the press (Islamska skupnost 2014). In their assessment, the translators did not meet all the requirements for Qur'an translation, had not been up to the demanding task, and despite

their efforts and many good solutions, this translation could not serve as a basis for ritual purposes, as it had many errors.

The reference to "ritual purposes" is odd since the translation was never meant to replace Arabic for such purposes. It seems significant, moreover, that the only[15] error the Islamic Community pointed out in this press release was, quite literally, the size of a gnat. In the verse (2:26) asserting that Allah is not embarrassed to make a parable or example even of a gnat, the translators had gone on to say "… or anything larger," when according to the Islamic Community it should read "… or anything tinier," as in Korkut's Bosnian version (… *ili nešto sićušnije od nje*).

This stimulated the translators to pen an eight-page rebuttal showing that their interpretation of 2:26 was well-attested in the tradition. They concluded that it lay well within the interpretive possibilities of the Qur'an, and they added for good measure that the Islamic Community was too uneducated and hidebound to assess the translation properly (Alhady and Alhady n.d.). The IC rested their case (Porić 2018, 189).

The other problem the Islamic Community continued to have with the translation was the nomenclature. As discussed above, Biblical names had been replaced with Qur'anic ones, but the spellings did not all conform to the Bosnian tradition, and this was clearly an issue that affected the translation's acceptability in the community. The Alhadys' polemical point about education might also be invoked to explain why Muslim reactions consistently seized on this seemingly trivial issue: first-generation Muslim immigrants to Slovenia were overwhelmingly working-class, Slovenia has no institutions of higher Islamic learning, and the few individuals with the Islamic education to assess the finer points of a Qur'an translation were quite busy with a large mosque-building project.

The polemic over Al(l)ah

Other explanations must be sought, however, as the spelling of a name was also the only thing about the new Qur'an translation that provoked reactions among the educated Slovene public: the spelling of *Allah* with a double "l", similar to how it is spelled in most Western European languages, but contrary to long-standing Slovene literary convention[16] and contrary to Slovene orthography, which abhors double consonants and decrees that they should be omitted in transliterations from Arabic. *Allah* was unique in being the only word the translators spelled with a double consonant; they did not do so with another central name, *Mohámed* (Muhammad). On the

other, they did not add an accent (*Alláh*) to correct Slovene pronunciation, as they did with *Mohámed* and *Korán*. The translators, who had originally insisted on the Slovene single "l" despite the reservations of the Islamic Community, had changed their mind, and now bravely defended the double "l". The debate largely took place in the SlovLit on-line discussion forum and the major Slovene daily *Delo*; we focus on the latter.

At the end of July, *Delo* presented the new *Korán* as the first direct translation from the Arabic "original" in the last official EU language to lack one. The journalist accurately covered the project's lengthy history, its contributors and contents. He noted the publisher's claim that the translators had "sought to combine a literary translation with a dogmatic[17] one, in accordance with the tafsirs, i.e., the interpretations of the Koran, and had set a new standard for the Slovenization of names and expressions," and mentioned the translators' choice to spell Allah with a double "l" and Mary as Marjam (Bratož 2014a). A follow-up article (Bratož 2014b), which focused entirely on the spelling of *Allah*, quoted an intimidating array of authorities on Slovene who roundly condemned it. A fierce exchange followed in the newspaper's letters column between Margit P. Alhady, others involved in the publication, and the guardians of Slovene spelling.[18]

To summarize, the translators argued that this was a careful choice. They noted the centrality of this name to Muslims and claimed that an "orthodox" translation had to spell it this way. From a descriptive point of view, it was already the everyday usage of tens of thousands of people in Slovenia and made up some 6% of the spellings in Slovene corpora. It also had the advantage of avoiding confusion with a word for "tool" (Arabic *ālah*, Bosnian *alat*) – a point not obvious in Slovene, which does not have this Oriental loan word. Of 27 translations into 13 languages, only one Spanish translation spelled it with one "l". True, *Allah* broke with Slovene tradition, but 150-year-old solutions could be and had been improved on in the Slovene language. Accommodating this alternative spelling would be culturally enriching, as well as a test of the cultural level of Slovene society. In any case, Slovene was a vital enough language that it could survive one additional "l".

To the critics, however, *Allah* was nothing more than a spelling error. It betrayed a lack of confidence in the Slovene language. Slovene literary tradition was not to be broken with to accommodate Muslim demands. After all, there was no debate over the Slovene spelling *Jezus* (Jesus). Indeed, Slovene language tended to assimilate foreign names and words to its own spellings, and chaos would ensue if they all had to be spelled according to the original. Since the translation was not intended for ritual purposes, it was

pointless to worry about the "orthodoxy" of the spelling. The critics noted what they saw as the irony that the translators had made this concession to the Islamic Community, yet still had not gained their endorsement.

The debate at times turned ugly. One professor stated that one might find some excuse for the translators, living as they did "under the impression of the Yemeni-Arab environment," but the publisher deserved a sound beating (Janez Dular, quoted in Bratož 2014b). After the translators defended their choice, however, the professor admitted he had been mistaken: *he had been too soft on the translators*.[19] The spelling discussion also took up the whole conversation, with few critics pausing to note the cultural importance of the translation project, let alone to subject it to any more thorough critical evaluation.

Concluding discussion

It is difficult to say that any of the four translations has gained the status of the standard or reference translation. One is incomplete, two are indirect, and the complete direct (re)translation was unfavorably received by both its target audiences.

The main problem with the Alhady translation, as a project, lay in trying to target two readerships with quite different expectations – as an experienced Bible translator had pointed out at the outset.[20] Moreover, as conceived, the project required Muslim approval, but failed to ensure adequate Muslim ownership and representation. This was partly due to internal dynamics of the Muslim organization, but given that the project started out prioritizing domesticating strategies for the Slovene non-Muslim readership, over cautious Muslim objections, problems might have been foreseen.

In the process, Muslim partners raised objections both over the orthodoxy and the orthography of the translation. Perhaps surprisingly, the religious objections, over the handling of anthropomorphic descriptions of Allah, appear to have been of less concern, or at least easier to resolve through subtle revisions. The spelling of names, however, was not only a persistent problem for the Muslims, who were not satisfied by an attempt at a more foreignizing, compromise solution; one revised spelling in particular, "Allah" with a double "l", was also the focus of the Slovene non-Muslim literary public to the exclusion of all other dimensions of the work.

Both audiences objected to the way the spelling broke with their respective national tradition. To understand this, it is important to recall that Muslim

religious identity in Slovenia is closely identified with Bosniak ethnicity, as the large majority of Slovenian Muslims come from that background, and to note the salience of Islamic religion and Slovene language as ethno-national identity markers to Bosniaks and Slovenes respectively. The official Slovene orthography (*Pravopis*) is treated with great reverence in general, not only in the case of Allah.[21] At the same time, the Bosnian language does play a role in Bosniak national identity, and preserving it is an acute concern in Bosniak communities outside Bosnia. Muslims in the region take pride in the Islamic tradition of Bosniaks as an indigenously European way of being Muslim, sometimes contrasted favorably with Arab ways; so even the translators' foreignizing use of forms directly from Arabic (rather than filtered through Bosnian) was not guaranteed to please.

We would further argue that Muslim representatives, presented with a Qur'an translation that was intended for them, approached it less as a new Slovene (re)translation than as another retranslation in their own extensive history of retranslations – and found it wanting to the extent it differed from those precursors. This approach was possible due to the relatively homogeneously Bosniak identity of Slovene Muslims, the extensive history of Bosnian (re)translations of the Qur'an, and the linguistic closeness of Bosnian and Slovene. Its assertiveness was encouraged by the fact that Muslims, though a marginal group in the Slovenian context, speak a central language of the former Yugoslavia, which is also the language of the regional center of Islam. Conversely, Slovenes are protective of their language not least because of its peripheral status relative to the dominant former Serbo-Croat languages. The conflict over a single letter "l," seemingly an issue "the size of a gnat," therefore ties into larger issues of power differentials between center and periphery in translation.

Notes

1. Marija Zlatnar Moe acknowledges financial support from the Slovenian Research and Innovation Agency (research for funding No. P6-0265).
2. Christian Moe was originally under contract to contribute to one of the publications discussed here, but did not participate for the last five years of the project, is not represented in the final publication, received no remuneration, and hence declares no conflict of interest.
3. Formally, the Islamic Community (*Islamska skupnost RS*) is one of three officially registered Muslim religious communities, but the others are very small.

4.   There exist earlier partial translations, including one of the eighty-first sura by Barbara Arayn, which has been anthologized in various readers of world literature, cf. Podvornik-Alhady (1991). Other translations appear on the internet, like the site https://kuran.si, which at the time of writing contains suras 1–42 with annotations and is an anonymous team effort to produce a direct translation without the errors they believe existing translations to have (correspondence on file with the authors).

5.   D. N. Boguslavsky, a Russian general working in Istanbul in 1871, the first to translate the complete Qur'an from the Arabic into Russian.

6.   One journalist reported in passing that his translation of the Qur'an was from Hebrew (Tomažič 2014).

7.   The titles in the series, listed overleaf from sura 114, included Oriana Fallaci's Islamophobic manifesto *The Rage and the Pride* as well as less spiritual works like de Sade's *Incest*, Tasso's *Diary of a Nymphomaniac* and Millet's *The Sexual Life of Catherine M.*

8.   Exceptions include Marijan Mole (1924–1963), an expert on Persian religion and Islamic mysticism, but he became better known in France.

9.   The Jelinčič and Alhady translations both use a center-justified layout that makes it harder to take in the verse numbering at a glance, but the latter compensates with spacing and a different font color for the numbering.

10.   An index of verses would have helped; we had to compile our own to aid the analysis.

11.   One example is *mesečno pranje* (monthly washing) instead of *mesečno perilo* (monthly laundry), where only the latter has the idiomatic meaning of menstruation (2:228) in Slovene. Another is "your wives from whom you part with your backs" (33:4) – this is admittedly a difficult passage and is entirely garbled here.

12.   Personal observations (Moe).

13.   Copy on file with the authors.

14.   The Alhadys had not envisaged annotating these verses; Karić annotated only a few. The Alhadys had followed Karić very closely in translating the "face" of Allah: sometimes literally, more often as a metaphor for His favor. Karić additionally capitalized the "Face" in the literal translations. The Alhadys consistently translated "hand(s)" and "right hand" literally. Karić mostly did the same, most often capitalizing them (not quite systematically), and annotated one of the verses to say the whole expression involved was a metaphor for power (39:67). In a single case, he rendered "the companions of the right hand" metaphorically as "the Companions of happiness/good fortune" (56:8).

15.   In a later paper on Slovene Qur'an translations (Porić 2018), the then secretary of the Islamic Community noted another error: in verse 2:107, "… to Allah belongs dominion over the heavens and the Earth …", the translation omitted "dominion" (Arabic: *mulk)*.

16.   However, Porič has found an old edition of Aškerc with "Allah" (Porić 2018, 182–83).

17.   "Dogmatic" is an odd choice of words; the translators called it "orthodox."

18.   *Delo*, letters column, August 7, p. 16 (Alhady, Šteger, Bjelčevič); August 12, p. 16 (Dular, Bajt); August 20, p. 17 (Alhady), and August 27, p. 17 (Müller), after which the editors closed the debate.

19.   Dular in *Delo*, August 12, p. 16.

20.   Personal observation; cf. comment by Gorazd Kocijančič in Bratož (2014b).

21.   This is also evident from the extensive public consultations and events organized by the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts for the eighth revision of the *Pravopis*, ongoing as we write.

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Allah's and Muhammad's co-author: Kader Abdolah and his 'novelizing' translation of the Qur'an

Helge Daniels

Abstract

This chapter focuses on Kader Abdolah's unconventional Dutch translation of the Qur'an. Abdolah not only abbreviated some of the suras, but he also arranged the verses chronologically rather than adhere to the arrangement of the verses in the Uthmanic codex of the Qur'an and added a 115th sura. He also included contextualizing introductory remarks to the verses and small visual tokens, which most would recognize as "cultural icons of the Netherlands" (the cow, the tulip, the windmill, the rain, and the wooden clog). Drawing on Bakhtin's distinction between the epic and the novel (Bakhtin 1981, 3-40), it is argued that Abdolah's idiosyncratic interventions establish a "novelizing dynamic" and that his translation can be read as a literary translation that is "novelizing" in a Bakhtinian sense. The second part of the analysis focuses on the ambiguities that are generated by the subtitle "een vertaling" (a translation) and other paratextual elements that frame the text.

Keywords: Dutch Qur'an translation, novelizing translation, Bakhtin, paratext

Introduction

Kader Abdolah's translation of the Qur'an is not a translation in the traditional sense of the term. In comparison to three of the most acclaimed Dutch Qur'an translations, Kramers (1956, revised by Jaber and Jansen, 1992), Leemhuis (1996) and Verhoef (2016), Abdolah's translation stands out. I consider these three translations traditional religious translations (Naudé 2010), in the sense that (1) the translators try to strike a balance between a source-oriented approach and readability (albeit in different ways),[1] and (2) they conform to a mainstream Sunni frame of reference.[2] From a normative perspective, these translations would be considered "faithful" in terms of equivalence, and "orthodox", in the sense of being acceptable
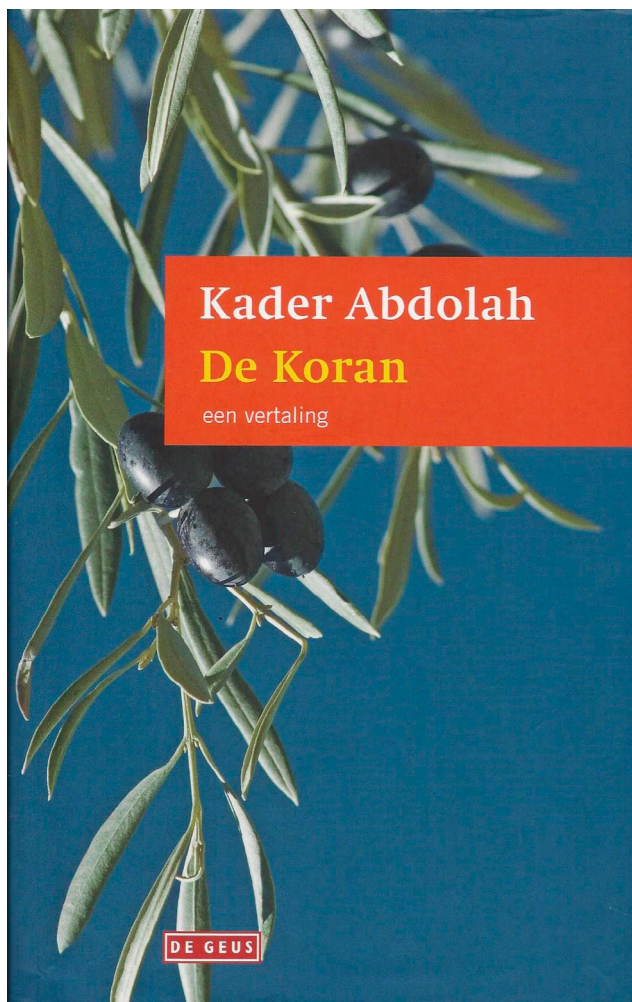
Figure 1. The book cover of *De Koran*

for Muslim authorities.[3] Approached in this way, Abdolah's translation is neither. To bring the Qur'anic text closer to the Dutch reader,[4] which makes his text, in inverting Naudé's phrasing, primarily (but not totally) target oriented.[5] Abdolah not only abbreviated some of the suras, but he also rearranged them chronologically, rather than adhere to the arrangement of the verses in the Uthmanic redaction of the Qur'an, and he also added a 115th sura. Apart from this, he added contextualizing introductory remarks to the suras, as well as small visual tokens, which most would recognize as "cultural icons from the Netherlands": the cow, the tulip, the windmill, rain, and the wooden clog (see figure 3). By means of these
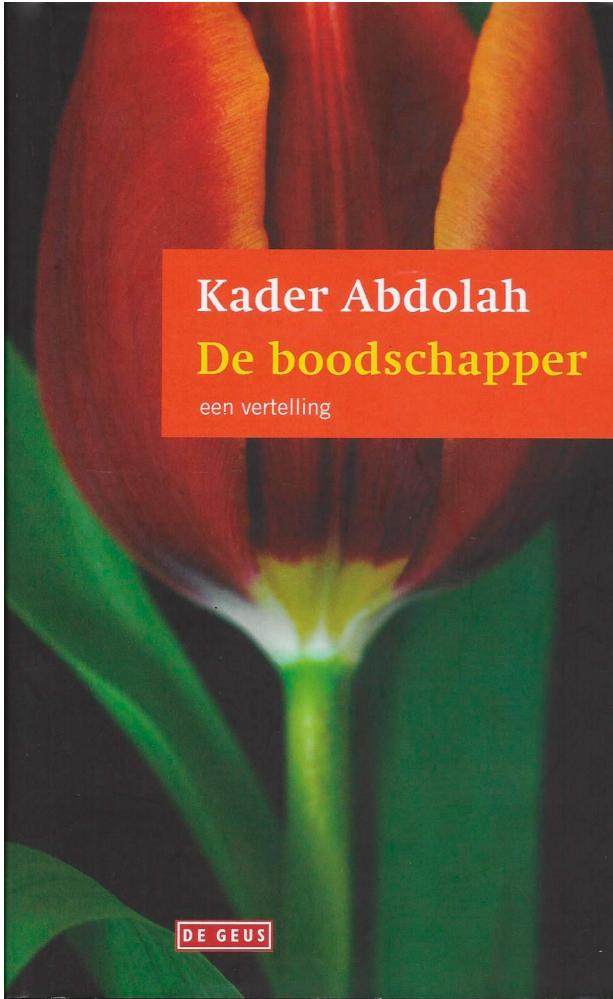
Figure 2. The book cover of *De boodschapper*

idiosyncratic interventions, Abdolah's translation establishes a dynamic relation between the original Arabic text, the Persian literary tradition, and the Dutch reader, "opening up [the Qur'anic text] to a foreign culture" (Naudé 2010) more drastically than traditional religious translations tend to do. In this sense, Abdolah's text can also be approached as a literary translation, or even a transcreation,[6] rather than a religious translation. However, many reviewers criticized Abdolah's interventions and seem to have approached his text as a traditional religious, rather than a literary, translation, taking the subtitle "een vertaling" (a translation) on the jacket at face value.[7] In the paratextual analysis, I will argue that this subtitle is

Figure 3. Visual tokens included in *De Koran*

indeed ambiguous, and that Abdolah's Qur'an translation can be read as
a literary translation that is "novelizing" in a Bakhtinian sense. (Bakhtin
1981, 3-40) Rather than focusing on translation choices at the microlevel
of the text, my arguments will be based on an analysis of textual elements
at the macro-level, as well as some of the paratextual elements that frame
the text. Apart from comparing Abdolah's text with the three translations
referred to above, the English translation of the Dutch original will be taken
into consideration to further sustain my arguments.

A "novelizing" translation: Bakhtin revisited

In this section, I will first explain what I mean by a "novelizing" translation,
by drawing on Bakhtin's distinction between the epic and the novel on
the one hand, and, on the other hand, by pinpointing some of Abdolah's
translational choices and interventions, which are in my opinion novelizing.
In "Epic and Novel", Bakhtin (1981, 3–40) discusses what distinguishes epic
texts from novels. To summarize, Bakhtin states that as a genre the epic is
characterized by having an absolute, and therefore distant and untouchable
past as a subject, a closed circle, so to say: "the epic past is absolute and
complete. It is as closed as a circle; inside it everything is finished, already
over." (Bakhtin 1981, 16). This entails that the characters, the epic heroes, are
also whole and closed, in the sense that they have no internal contradictions
and that they are static and not subject to evolution. Bakhtin adds to this
that the epic has a sacrosanct (national) tradition as its source and that it is
"high" literature, which means that it is the literature of dominant social
groups and is further underpinned by "canonic monoglossia"[8] in its literary
language use. Because of its intrinsic wholeness, and therefore closedness, the
epic has no rigid plotline in terms of beginnings and ends, nor a chronology:

> The epic is indifferent to formal beginnings and can remain incomplete
> (that is, where it concludes is almost arbitrary). The absolute past is closed
> and completed in the whole as well as in any of its parts. It is, therefore,
> possible to take any part and offer it as the whole. (Bakhtin 1981, 31)

The novel, on the contrary, is dynamic and is described by Bakhtin as a perpetually changing and evolving genre that is characterized by its lack of fixed limits ("open-endedness") and its affinity with the familiar ongoing relative present. Novelization entails breaching the absolute epic distance (which keeps the epic out of reach for critical examination) and creating a "novelistic zone of contact" with contemporary reality (Bakhtin 1981, 31; 32; 33). This contact zone, which is alternatively described by Bakhtin as, "a zone where there is proximity and contact," "maximally close," "direct," and "even crude," (Bakhtin 1981, passim) opens the space for critical (self-)examination. Linguistically, the novel is characterized by a diversity of speech and voice, the use of popular spoken language and dialogue as well as "active polyglossia," in the sense of a multiplicity of languages, styles, registers and voices and languages interanimating each other. Artistically, the novel, in contrast with the epic, needs a tighter plotline, meaning that there is no room for arbitrariness at the level of beginning and ending, or in its chronology, due to the indefiniteness of reality and individuals, all of which is still evolving and therefore incomplete. (Bakhtin 1981, 3–40) Finally, it is useful to mention that Bakhtin also points out that in periods in which the novel is dominant, other genres are subject to "novelization": "In an era when the novel reigns supreme, almost all the remaining genres are to a greater or lesser extent "novelized": drama [...], epic poetry [...], even lyric poetry [...]." (Bakhtin 1981, 5–6) In what follows, I will try to demonstrate that this can also apply to translations.

If we take the Qur'an to be an epic text, at least on a literary level, and as being "remote from target readers in time and space" (Naudé 2010), than we can consider Abdolah's translation to be novelizing in the Bakhtinian sense described above. In other words, in his translation Abdolah drags the Qur'anic text out of its absolute epic past into the fluid, dynamic and tangible present of the novel. (Bakhtin 1981, 39) This present is in this case the post-9/11 context in the Netherlands. The attacks on the Twin Towers in 2001 not only had many political consequences, the American invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq being the most striking, they also provoked heated debates in the US and Europa on Islam, its supposedly inherent violent character in particular, and the so-called "deficit of multicultural societies", often resulting in the stigmatization of Muslims. Individuals with an Islamic background were unwarrantedly asked to adopt a position vis-à-vis the events and were quizzed for their opinions concerning Islam and the Qur'an. This was no different in the Netherlands. As he explains in a podcasted interview with The Guardian,[9] Abdolah, a leftist dissident of Iranian descent, experienced that after 9/11 he was being questioned on issues related to Islam and the Qur'an and that a Muslim identity was being projected on him: "They made me a Muslim." As a

result, he discovered that being a Muslim was part of his identity, whether he liked it or not. Even if the Qur'an was omnipresent in his childhood and youth in Iran, it was only in the early 2000s that he started to read it for the first time and decided to translate it into Dutch, albeit, in his own peculiar way. In so doing, Abdolah wanted to bring the Qur'anic text closer to the Dutch reading public and possibly nuance the image they might have of Islam. Additionally, being a political refugee who left Iran in the 1980s, he also discursively reconciles his childhood home country (Iran) with his adult home country (the Netherlands). In what follows, I will analyze the techniques by means of which Abdolah novelizes the (epic) Qur'anic text in his (novelizing) Dutch translation, by discussing subsequently how he (1) humanizes the Qur'anic text, (2) rearranges, deletes, and adds verses, and (3) creates a 'polyglossic novelistic contact zone' by creatively intermingling Arabic, Persian and Dutch.

Humanizing the divine text

From an orthodox Islamic perspective, the Qur'an is not only the literal word of God revealed to Muhammad through the archangel Gabriel (Ğibrīl), but also an uncreated divine attribute, eternally present even before the creation of time itself.[10] In this capacity, the Qur'an acquires a sacrosanct status, to the extent that it is considered to be a miracle (mu'ğiza) that is inimitable (i'ğaz al-qur'ān) and untranslatable.[11] As a result, it belongs to a distant, impalpable divine – epic in Bakhtinian terms – time and space. The question whether the Qur'an is an uncreated divine attribute or created, and thus historically contingent, was heavily debated in the early Islamic era.[12] Also the issue of translation, and especially the recitation of the Qur'an for liturgical purposes in languages other than Arabic, was a bone of contention. Kuru states that early generations of Muslim theologians were generally more openminded about Qur'an translations and their use in liturgical contexts than is presently the case. Abu Hanifa (Abū Ḥanīfa, d. 767), after whom the Sunni Hanafi doctrine (maḏhab) is named, authorized the recitation of the Qur'an in Persian in daily prayers, notwithstanding the person's knowledge of Arabic. His disciples made Qur'an recitation in languages other than Arabic in prayers dependent on a knowledge of Arabic. Only if someone did not know Arabic, were they allowed to recite the Qur'an in languages other than Arabic. (Kuru 2019, 210–211) This position was, however, rejected by most other Sunni jurists, including al-Shafi'i (al-Šāfi'ī, d. 820), after whom another Sunni doctrine is named. Their main argument was that, once translated into another language, the Qur'an loses its sacred status and that treating a Qur'an translation in

the same way as the Qur'an itself would breach the principle of inimitability. (Suleiman 2013, 63–64) As discussed by Holes (2010) and Naudé (2010), even if the Qur'an is in practice translated into many languages, the doctrine of the inimitability and untranslatability of the Qur'an constrains translational choices along with translation as such and the circulation of translations, which are considered by some Islamic authorities as blasphemous if the purpose is other than making non-Muslims acquainted with the Qur'an. In order to overcome this doctrinal obstacle, some translators will frame their work as an interpretation of the Qur'an or a commentary rather than a translation, which is often underscored by publishing the Arabic text interlineally or mirrored with the translation. By means of such strategies, in combination with source-oriented translation choices, such translations aim to be considered "orthodox" and acceptable for Muslim authorities.[13] As the discussion will illustrate, Abdolah's approach is far from orthodox.

First of all, Abdolah breaches the absolute epic distance and brings the Qur'an to the tangible here and now, the Bakhtinian novelistic zone of direct contact. He does so by detaching it from its epic status – its absolute divine past and its sacrosanct and therefore untouchable position and hence its dogmatic inimitability and untranslatability[14] by interweaving the divine Word with Muhammad's "fiction" and ultimately his own.[15] Several paratextual elements sustain this claim. In the introduction and the intermittent commentaries of "De Koran. een vertaling", Abdolah more than once refers to the Qur'an as "Muhammad's word", "Muhammad's language," and "Muhammad's prose". (see Abdolah 2016, 9; 10; 12; 85; 185; 276; 320)[16] Abdolah also states explicitly: *"It would be an insult to Muhammad to say that the prose of the Qur'an is not from him but from Allah."* (Abdolah 2016, 85, italics original)[17] Furthermore, in the podcasted interview with The Guardian, Abdolah states that the Qur'an is a book, "not a holy book of the sky", but "a masterpiece of Muhammad", and repeatedly refers to the Qur'an as "high quality fiction" and "a masterpiece of fiction".[18] Here, I must point out that these statements are at loggerheads with claims regarding the divine source of the Qur'an in some of the translated Qur'anic verses themselves, such as in Sura 51 Yunus:

It is not true that this Qur'an is not from Allah; that someone else has devised it.
[...]
But the unbelievers say, 'Muhammad made it up himself.'
Muhammad, say to them, 'Show me a text like the Qur'an, if you speak the truth.' (Abdolah 2016, 135–136)[19]

And in Sura 52 Hud:

> Or they say, 'Muhammad made up the Qur'an.' Say to them, 'Bring ten forged suras that are equal to those of the Qur'an. And call out for help to everyone except Allah if you speak the truth. But if you cannot do it, know then that Allah sent down this text with His knowledge. And there is no other God than He.' (Abdolah 2016, 141)[20]

Abdolah does not explicitly deal with this ambiguity, he rather emphasises it, for example, by referring to "Muhammad's divine prose" (Abdolah 2016, 10)[21] in the introduction and by stating in one of the intermittent comments that Muhammad, when asked about where he got this language, said: "*It is not my own, [...] it is from the book* In the Beginning *which is with Allah. The verses are passed on to me, and I relate them in beautiful Arabic.*" (Abdolah 2016, 185, italics and roman original)[22] and "*Muhammad reframes the story in an Arabic form.*" (Abdolah 2016, 276, italics original)[23] These comments suggest that the Qur'an has a divine source, but that its concrete form is historically contingent and shaped by Muhammad.[24] Moreover, by means of these peritextual (the introduction and intermittent comments) and epitextual (the interview) elements, Abdolah creates the space for his novelizing translational choices that allow him to appropriate the text and hence state in the introduction: "The prose of this journey is the combined prose of Muhammad ibn Abdullah and Kader Abdolah." (Abdolah 2016, 12)[25]

Chronology, deletions, and additions

The (partial) desacralization or de-sanctification of the Qur'an (which is not necessarily a disrespectful act) described above is the first necessary step towards a humanizing (in the sense of making it less univocally divine) novelization of the Qur'anic text, namely, by suggesting that it is historically contingent and, at least partially, Muhammad's prose. Furthermore, this step allows Abdolah to interweave the revelation of the Qur'an with the biography of Muhammad, which he deals with in another volume, namely "The Messenger. A Tale Retold".[26] This fictionalized or novelized version of Muhammad's life story, told from the narrative perspective of Zayd, Muhammad's adoptive son and scribe, is presented to the public together with Abdolah's translation in a slipcase, suggesting that both volumes should be read in conjunction – this element will be revisited later. Connecting the Qur'an to Muhammad's life is of course not entirely new, as

the Qur'anic science of the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (the context of revelation) also connects the revelation of the suras with the biography of the Prophet (*al-sīra al-nabawīya*).[27] Nevertheless, by fictionalizing Muhammad's biography, while in the meantime suggesting that the Qur'an is "Muhammad's high quality fiction", Abdolah pushes this connection to another level: he not only novelizes Muhammad, the Qur'an's and Islamic tradition's "epic hero" so to speak, he also takes the further step in the direction of the de-sanctification, and hence novelization, of the Qur'an itself.

Interweaving the Qur'an and Muhammad's life has serious implications for the structure of the translated text. As mentioned above, Bakhtin referred to the lack of a rigid plotline as one of the artistic characteristics of the epic genre; if we take up Bakhtin's suggestion and consider epic texts to be closed circles, then they can start and end randomly. This applies to the Qur'an as well. The stories about the prophets, for instance, are not told in a structured way, rather the scattered fragments or pericopes remind the implied audience of what they already (are supposed to) know. Bakhtin's comment on the plotline of the epic (or rather the lack thereof), can be easily applied to the structure of the Qur'anic text as well, namely, "the absolute past is closed and completed in the whole as well as in any of its parts. It is, therefore, possible to take any part and offer it is a whole" (Bakhtin 1981, 31). This is also recognized by Abdolah in the introduction:

> The compilers of the Qur'an mixed the suras together in such a way that their chronological order was lost. As a result, a sort of chaos has taken hold, nevertheless that has given the book a divine character. I have restored the suras to their chronological order, to allow us to better follow the development of Muhammad and his Qur'an. (Abdolah 2016, 11)[28]

Abdolah, thus, rearranged the verses in chronological order and supplied a novelistic ending to his translation by adding a 115th sura[29] in which he describes how Muhammad passes away in the arms of his youngest wife Aisha. These interventions allow him to connect the Qur'anic text closely to his fictionalized version of Muhammad's biography and its chronology but note that these interferences do not necessarily give more structure to the tales about the prophets as such. On a deeper level, however, the reorganization of the verses, as well as the addition of the last sura, give Abdolah's Dutch version of the Qur'an a more plot-like structure and therefore these interferences can be considered as being part of Abdolah's novelizing procedures.

The same can be said about the fact that Abdolah deleted parts of the Qur'an, as he explains in the introduction:

> There are many repetitions in the Qur'an.
> Repetition is part of the character of the book. The Qur'an is a *recitation* that was *intended for illiterate* people. Repetition was essential for those days.
> I have removed a great deal of the repetition, but inevitably some of it has remained. (Abdolah 2016, 10-11, emphasis added)[30]

The deletion of repetitions can be seen as an additional novelizing intervention, since they inevitably transform the (epic) oral and auditory characteristics of the Qur'an, into those of a (novelistic) written text, a text "organically receptive to new forms of mute perception, that is to reading" (Bakhtin 1981, 3).

The deletions also have an impact on the content and the broader ideological implications of the text. Some reviewers criticized Abdolah, stating that, in the post-9/11 context (see above), he felt the need to stress the peaceful dimensions of the Qur'anic message rather than its combative elements and that his Qur'an translation is "unnecessarily pacifying" (Benali 2008).[31] This is also underscored by his translation of the *basmala* as "In the name of Allah. He is love. He gives. He forgives." (Abdolah 2016, passim),[32] which evokes a kind and compassionate God and is reminiscent of the Sufi image of God.

Furthermore, the emphasis on the peaceful character of the Qur'an is reinforced by the cover image on the dust jacket and the slip case, which displays an olive branch, a symbol of peace, with ripe black olives and a blue sky as a background (figure 1).[33] This image also interacts with another paratextual element, namely the comment on the back of the dust jacket of the Dutch version (but not the English translation): "De 114 soera's vertakken zich zoals olijfbomen dat doen."[34]

A polyglossic contact zone

The blurbs on the jacket and the slipcase of the Dutch version as well as the cover of the English version stress the accessibility of Abdolah's translation: "Met deze vertaling van de Qur'an maakt Kader Abdolah het boek inzichtelijk voor de Nederlandse lezer."[35] (Abdolah 2008, dust jacket) and "Kader Abdolah's vertaling maakt de Koran toegankelijk voor iedereen."[36] (Abdolah 2008, spine slipcase), as well as "Kader Abdolah makes the Qur'an

accessible to both Muslim and non-Muslim readers" on the cover of the English translation (Abdolah 2016, cover). These blurbs clearly refer to the direct reason for Abdolah's translation, namely, the global impact of 9/11, as well as the reactions the attacks triggered in the Netherlands, and more specifically Geert Wilders'[37] statement that he wanted to throw the Qur'an in the garbage. Abdolah's reaction to this was "read it and then throw it away!"[38] This and other paratextual (epitextual) evidence suggests that Abdolah's translation is meant to interact with the here-and-now, in the sense that it can be understood as an (implicit) comment the post-9/11 context, as being simultaneously shaped by it and trying to re-shape it.

In so doing, Abdolah's text generates a Bakhtinian "novelistic zone of contact" (characterized by directness, familiarity, maximal proximity, and accessibility) with "the inconclusive events of the present" (characterized by incompleteness, relativity, fluidity, and dynamism) (Bakhtin 1981, passim). This present is furthermore characterized by multilingualism and cultural diversity, which leads to "[c]ultural interanimation [and] interaction of ideologies and languages" (Bakhtin 1981, 29) or, in other words, "active polyglossia":

> The new cultural and creative consciousness lives in an actively polyglossic world. The world becomes polyglot, once and for all and irreversibly. The period of national languages, coexisting but closed and deaf to each other, comes to an end. Languages throw light on each other: one language can, after all, see itself only in the light of another language. (Bakhtin 1981, 12)

Concretely, in his translation Abdolah establishes a dynamic interaction between the Arabic source text and the Dutch reading public, and also with the Arabic and Persian literary traditions as a kind of mediating force. I argue that these elements can be understood as novelizing forces in the translation, in the sense that they help to bring the Qur'anic text to the here-and-now of the Dutch reader and make the text more palpable. This operation also entails such visual elements as the cover images on both the dust jacket and the slipcase, as well as the visual tokens that are inserted between the suras, on the one hand, and textual elements, on the other, like the introduction and intermittent commentaries in addition to the use of Arabic and Persian words and the ways in which they are transliterated. Each of these elements will be considered in greater depth below. As indicated above, Abdolah justifies his translation choices, the reorganization of the suras in their chronological order, the deletion of repetitions

and the addition of an extra (115th) sura in particular, by explaining that they familiarize the Dutch reader with the Qur'an. The introduction and intermittent commentaries that contextualize the suras are also intended to make the text more accessible. Apart from these elements, Abdolah briefly discusses his modus operandi in the introduction: he translated directly from his father's original Arabic Qur'an, while, after translating each sentence, consulting four Persian and five Dutch translations. When he did not understand something, he checked in turn the exegesis by Tabari[39] and elicited information from his elderly devout family members, especially his uncle Aga Djan (Abdolah 2016, 10).[40] This procedure places Abdolah's translation in an intertextual field that consists of the Arabic source text, existing Persian and Dutch translations, as well as the exegetical tradition in Arabic and Persian and the advice of beloved elderly family members. Moreover, it highlights Abdolah as the visible element in a network of interaction and knowledge of the topic at hand. It is also worth noting that the reference to Abdolah's father's copy of the Qur'an and the advice of his uncles and aunts discursively establishes a connection with his childhood home across space and time. The interaction between Arabic, Persian, and Dutch elements is further reinforced by the intermittent commentaries that precede some of the suras. Most are written by Abdolah himself, but some are inspired by sources from the Arabic, but mostly the Persian exegetical and literary tradition. Moreover, as Abdolah states in the introduction, his liberal interaction with the Qur'anic text is not entirely new but inspired by great classical Persian authors: "I confess from the outset that my work has its roots in the ancient Persian literary tradition. Great Persian masters such as Hafez, Saadi, Khayyam, and Rumi each disseminated the Qur'an in their own way" (Abdolah 2016, 11).[41]

By means of the intertextual interaction between Arabic, Persian and Dutch, Abdolah not only interconnects three literary traditions, he also establishes a dynamic connection between the three languages. Translation in itself brings at least two languages (or varieties) into dialogue, but, depending on translational choices, this dialogue can be made almost invisible (whispered or even silenced in auditory terms) or be turned into a vivid, multilingual, and in Bakhtinian terms, polyglossic conversation between two or more languages. This is what Venuti (1995) calls a domesticating and a foreignizing translation respectively. Needless to say, these translational approaches are not necessarily either-or, but can be combined into one text. Likewise, Abdolah tries to strike a balance between the three languages. This is a deliberate choice, as he mentions: "Ik gebruik bewust de ene keer de spelling van namen zoals ze in de Koran voorkomen en dan weer de

spelling van namen zoals ze in de Bijbel voorkomen" (Abdolah 2008, 377).[42] In practice this means, among other things, that Abdolah alternates between "God" and "Allah" throughout the text, even on the same page. Prophets and other main Qur'anic characters are referred to by using either their Qur'anic (Arabic) or Biblical (Dutch) proper names. Only in the case of Jesus, "Jezus" (Dutch) and "Isa" (Arabic, 'Īsā) are used alternatingly (Abdolah 2008, passim). "Joesef" is followed once by "Jozef" between brackets (Abdolah 2008, 27). Qur'anic heroes (most, but not all prophets) and tribes who are not mentioned in the Bible[43] are referred to by using their Arabic names[44] as well as some of the characters who are also mentioned in the Bible.[45] All the remaining persons are referred to by using their Biblical names in accordance with the Dutch spelling.[46] In some cases the Biblical name is used, however, in an idiosyncratic spelling which cannot be explained on the basis of the Arabic version of the name. The most remarkable example is "Ghabriël" (Ğibrīl or Ğabrā'īl/ Gabriël/Gabriel) (Abdolah 2008, passim).[47]

This brings us to the observation that the ways in which Abdolah transliterates Arabic terms, toponyms,[48] and proper names are at times so eccentric that is hard to recognize what the original Arabic word is.[49] It is difficult to explain why Abdolah opted for this way of transliterating, which seems sloppy on the whole, but I will discuss some of its possible effects on the reader. I will focus on the most salient examples on consonant level, leaving vowels out of consideration. For one, some of the transliterated words are written in a way an average non-specialist speaker of the Dutch variety of Netherlands would write the word or name, such as Zoleega.[50] This can be understood as a way to help those Dutch-speaking readers who are not familiar with Arabic to have an idea how the name or word is pronounced in Arabic. Other Arabic items, however, are written in a way that approximates the way an average speaker of Persian would pronounce them. The most salient example is the representation of the consonant *qāf* (/q/, a voiceless uvular stop in standard Arabic) as gh (/ġ/, a voiceless uvular fricative), which represents how the *qāf* is most often pronounced by speakers of Persian (both in Arabic and Persian), for instance "Ghadr" (*qadr*), "Ghoreish" (Q*urayš*), "Alghareto" (*al-qāri'a*), "Aghabe" (*'Aqaba*), "Aboeghis" (*Abū Qubays*), "Zolgharnain" (*Ḏū al-qarnayn*), "Ghebti" (*Qibṭī*), Ghabiel (*Qābīl*), and so forth.[51] (Abdolah 2008, 46; 48; 49; 59; 60; 216; 308; 355) In the sixth example ("Zolgharnain"), /ḏ/ is rendered as z, which again represents the Persian pronunciation rather than the standard Arabic one, which is also the case in "Haza Rabbi" (*hāḏā rabbī*) (Abdolah 2008, 161).[52] However, the *qāf* is also sometimes represented as g, for instance "galam" (*qalam*) and "alhagge" (*al-haqqa*) (Abdolah 2008, 12; 245; 246).[53] As a result, many Arabic words

become almost unrecognizable (such as Algharetto), and certain letters represent different sounds, depending on the word in which they are used.[54] Remarkably enough, Abdolah refers to the letter *qāf* as "Gha" and describes it and its pronunciation as follows: "*De Gha is de eenentwintigste letter van het Arabische alfabet en de vierentwintigste letter van het Perzische alfabet, en klinkt als 'Ghaf'*" (Abdolah 2008, 55, italics original). This is certainly not how it is pronounced in standard Arabic and most spoken varieties of Arabic.[55] It is worth noting that the English translators not only adapted this paragraph as follows in English: "*Q is the twenty-first letter of the Arabic alphabet and the twenty-fourth letter of the Persian alphabet. It is pronounced 'Qaf'*." (Abdolah 2016, 56, italics in original), but also systematically adapted the transliteration of the Arabic words throughout the text.[56]

Whether Abdolah's inconsistent transliteration choices are successful is debatable, but they undeniably give a Persian twist to his text by "Persianizing" the pronunciation of the Arabic words and names. This interference, in combination with the alternation between the Qur'anic Arabic and Biblical Dutch names of the Qur'anic heroes and the intertextual dialogue between the Qur'anic text and its Dutch and Persian translations, as well as the medieval and modern commentaries on the Qur'an in Arabic, Persian and Dutch, establishes polyglossia in the Bakhtinian sense mentioned above. By this I mean not only that Abdolah uses and mixes different languages, at times creating "hybrids" (for instance, Arabic words written in a spelling that represents their Persian pronunciation), but that he also integrates different voices into the text. For one, as mentioned above, Abdolah considers his text a co-creation made by God, Muhammad, and himself. We might add that these three voices are joined by the voices of Arab, Persian and Dutch Qur'an translators, exegetes, and literati. In so doing, Abdolah appropriates the "original"[57] Arabic source text and not only detaches it from Arab(ic) national[58] tradition by giving it a new combined Arabic-Persian-Dutch identity, but also brings it to the here-and-now. This new identity of the text is, as mentioned above, also visually highlighted by the small tokens preceding the suras: a wooden clog, a cow, a windmill, a tulip, and a raincloud (Abdolah 2008, 9), which can be seen as "cultural icons of the Netherlands" (figure 3).

All the interventions discussed above can be said to generate a novelizing dynamic that renders ambiguous the designation of Abdolah's text as a translation. As the analysis in the next section will demonstrate, this ambiguity is also engendered and sustained by several other paratextual elements.

Paratextual elements and genre indications

In the previous section, I referred to several paratextual elements, like the introduction, the intermittent introductory notes, and interviews with the author (verbal elements) as well as the visual tokens preceding the suras and the images on the jacket and the slip case (visual or iconic elements). In this section, I will analyze some of these and other paratextual elements more systematically, focusing mainly on those elements that entail explicit or implicit genre indications, like the title and the subtitle, the size of the book, the cover, dust jacket and slipcase, as well as the textual and visual elements on these. This analysis will elucidate in which ways these elements further render ambiguous the status of Abdolah's text as a translation, rather than dissolve its ambiguity. I will sustain my argumentation by comparing Abdolah's translation with the three Dutch translations of the Qur'an mentioned above, on the one hand, and the English translation of his translation, on the other. As we will see, the ambiguity is dealt with differently in the English translation.

Several authors, such as Genette (2009) and Mendelsund and Alworth (2020) and, more specifically on translations, Batchelor (2018) explain that the overall presentation of books can entail explicit and implicit genre indications which in turn (implicitly) generate a "horizon of expectations"[59] (Jauss 1982, via Kahf 2000, 148). Genette defines genre indication as follows:

> the genre indication is an appendage of the title, more or less autonomous, depending on the period or the genre; and [...] its purpose is to announce the genre status *decided on* for the work that follows the title. This status is official in the sense that it is the one *the author and the publisher want to attribute to the text* and in the sense that no reader can justifiably be unaware of or disregard this attribution, *even if he does not feel bound to agree with it*. (Genette 2009, 94, emphasis added)

This definition refers to the verbal expression of genre indication, often in the form of a subtitle, such as "a novel", "an autobiography", "a tragedy", and so forth. Genette (2009, 11) discusses the illocutionary force of several paratextual elements. This concept was borrowed from speech act theory, which was developed by John Austin, philosopher of language, and refers to the acts that are performed by certain utterances, such as giving information, announcing a commitment, making a request, and so forth. As Genette explains, the illocutionary force of paratextual elements, or, in other words, the speech act they perform, is not always as straightforward

as it might seem. While the publishing details in the colophon (such as the name of the publishing house, the publication date etc.) perform the act of giving information, other paratextual elements can entail a decision (for instance, the use of pseudonym in the case of the name of the author), advice, command, or permission (for instance, concerning the way(s) in which a book could or should be read), and so forth. Genette gives several other examples, but his example of the illocutionary force of genre indications in the form of subtitles on covers and title pages is the most relevant for our purposes here. He remarks that such genre indications do not define a book, but rather request that we consider it in a certain way. In analogy with his example that the subtitle "a novel" entails the request "please look upon this book as a novel", it is not too farfetched to presume that at least one of the meanings of the subtitle "een vertaling" (a translation) can be "please look upon this book as a [translation]" (Genette 2009, 11). This means that we can take the subtitle "een vertaling" on the front of the dust jacket, the back of the slip case and the second inner title page as a request or an invitation to read Abdolah's text as a translation, one that some reviewers took quite literally, for that matter. Genette, however, adds that "there is no lack of examples of official genre indications that the reader cannot accept without a mental reservation" (Genette 2009, 95). By this he refers to the possibility that there is a discrepancy between the title, the subtitle (or the genre indication) and the text (Genette 2009, 13) and that it is then up to the reader to deal with it.

As the textual analysis above demonstrates, it is indeed desirable that the reader has some "mental reservations" about the subtitle "een vertaling" and feels invited to engage with its ambiguity while reading Abdolah's text. Below, I will further elaborate on some of my reservations, by looking into other paratextual elements that generate more implicit genre indications that (partially) challenge or at least render ambiguous the illocutionary force of the subtitle. Note that the effect of the paratextual elements might go beyond the intentions of the author and/or the publisher. For this reason, I will analyze the paratextual items by means of an empirical bottom-up approach, namely, by describing them in detail and letting them speak as much as possible for themselves. In other words, I will analyze them in terms of their possible effects on the public and the readers, rather than their (theoretical) functions.[60] Therefore, a detailed description of the textual and visual elements on the slipcase, dust jacket, cover and title page is warranted. Because not all of these elements have the same degree of salience, also in terms of the distinction between public and readers,[61] I will work from the outside to the inside.

The overall presentation of the book: cover, dust jacket and slipcase

"De Koran, een vertaling"[62] (figure 1) comes as a luxury edition: a hard cover in a dust jacket, presented together with "De boodschapper, een vertelling"[63] (figure 2) in a slipcase. The slipcase's spine is bright yellow and displays the titles of the volumes in red lettering under the name of the author in black lettering, as well as a synopsis, also in black lettering, and the logo of the publishing house. The upper side of the slipcase displays a picture of the author and the lower side a sober stylized floral design. The front of the slipcase reproduces the front of the dust jacket of "De boodschapper" (see also below) and displays an image of a brownish red tulip, a red band in the upper half on the right side with the name of the author "Kader Abdolah" in white lettering, the title "De boodschapper" in yellow lettering of the same size and the subtitle "een vertelling" in smaller white lettering and without capitals. In the lower left center part, the name of the publishing house "De Geus" is mentioned in a small red band with a white frame. The back of the slipcase reproduces the dust jacket of "De Koran" and has the same layout as the front (displaying the name of the author, title "De Koran" and subtitle "een vertaling" in the same lettering and colors, this time with the website of the publishing house in white lettering in a red bar, together with the bar code and the ISBN) and displays an olive branch with black olives against a blue sky as a background. Presenting the volumes together in a slipcase suggests that they need to be read in tandem. This is reinforced by the statement on the spine of the slipcase: "De Koran en het leven van Mohammad zijn onlosmakelijk met elkaar verbonden."[64] Furthermore, the covers of the slipcase and the arrangement of the volumes in it suggest that "De boodschapper" should be read before reading "De Koran". Both volumes are protected by dust jackets, their fronts being identical to the respective front ("De boodschapper") and back ("De Koran") of the slipcase. The back cover of the jacket of "De Koran" is red with a synopsis in white lettering, a geometric floral figure in white and the ISBN, the bar code as well as the website of the publishing house in white lettering in a red band in the lower right corner. The red spine of the jacket displays the name of the author in white lettering, followed by the title "De Koran" in yellow lettering of the same size, as well as the logo of the publisher in a smaller size. Both flaps are white with black lettering. The first flap quotes sura 15, while the second displays information on the author, focusing mainly on his previous publications and mentioning his website. The layout of the front and back of the jacket of "De boodschapper" is identical to that of "De Koran" and uses

the same lettering and colors, except for the red tulip, the title and subtitle on the front, some minor differences in the floral design on the back, and the blurbs on the back and the flaps. The first flap displays a quote from the text, while the second flap shares the same information about the author. However, this time a picture of the author is displayed as well.

The hard cover of the book is dark blue and is blind, apart from the name of the author, the main title, and the logo of the publishing house in golden lettering on the spine. This is also the case for the hard cover of "De boodschapper".

The size of the volumes (13 x 20.5cm) is slightly smaller than the most current format for novels on the Dutch market (A5, 14,8 x 21 cm) but larger than a pocket size (A6, 10.8 x 14.8 cm). However, it is considerably smaller than the three best known traditional Dutch translations of the Qur'an discussed above, namely, Kramers (1992, 17 x 24 cm), Leemhuis (1996, 17.5 x 24 cm) and Verhoef (2016, 16.5 x 24.5 cm). Most importantly, Abdolah's volumes have the same format as other hard cover novels published by De Geus. This means that, as far as format is concerned, the format of "De Koran" is that of novels, rather than that of traditional Dutch Qur'an translations, the latter being in line with Genette's (2009, 17–22) assessment that "serious" (religious, philosophical, and academic) works traditionally tend to have larger formats than novels.[65]

Also, the front cover design of "De Koran" differs considerably from that of most other Dutch Qur'an translations. These covers are for the most part quite sober and display geometric or stylized abstract designs against predominantly green and/or blue backgrounds.[66] In most instances, the name(s) of translator(s) do(es) not appear on the cover. If they do, they always appear under the title (sometimes, but not always, in the lower part of the cover) in lettering that is considerably smaller than that of the title.[67] This means that in all these cases, the title is the most salient verbal element on the cover. In contrast, Kader Abdolah's name is displayed above the title in white letters of the same size as the yellow letters of the title. Only the subtitle "een vertaling" is in smaller lettering and is displayed under the title. This means that the name of the author is given the same prominence as the title and even slightly more, taking its placement above the title into account. Without delving too deeply into the motives for the absence of the translators' names on covers, it is reasonable to assume that modesty, piousness and/or respect for the religious character of the text are among them. Nevertheless, the salient presence of Abdolah's name on the cover not only contrasts with the absence or discreet presence of the translators' names on the covers of the other Dutch translations of the Qur'an, it also

deviates from the prevalent practice of Dutch publishing houses, which entails that the names of translators of literary texts rarely appear on the cover. Given that the subtitle "een vertaling" also receives less emphasis because of the format of the lettering and the lack of capitals, this means that Abdolah's name is foregrounded in the same way as that of a well-known author of a literary text and accentuates his primary status as an author. If we moreover take the photographed image of the olive branch into account, which (despite its green and blue overtones) contrasts with the abstract figurative or geometric designs on the other Dutch Qur'an covers, we can conclude then that the cover of "De Koran" is more reminiscent of that of a novel or a literary text than that of a Qur'an translation.[68] As a result, the overall arrangement of the verbal and visual elements on the cover mitigates, or at least renders ambiguous, the "official" genre indication, as indicated by the subtitle "een vertaling" and underscores the ambiguous status of the text as a translation, content-wise, resulting from the idiosyncratic interventions discussed in the previous section. Furthermore, highlighting Abdolah's name on the cover can also be understood as an implicit paratextual claim to co-authorship with Allah and Muhammad, which Abdolah makes explicit in the interview with The Guardian (see above).

I will conclude this description with a reference to the hard covers, a paratextual zone that most of the public and probably even most readers rarely look at, because it is covered by two layers, namely, the dust jacket and the slipcase. Nevertheless, for the sake of thoroughness, I will briefly describe it. The hard covers of both volumes are dark blue and blind, except for the spine which displays the name of the author, the title (without the subtitle) and the logo of the publishing house in golden lettering. Together with the gold-colored ribbon bookmark, this sober design could easily be taken to underscore the luxury edition status of the volumes, which is reminiscent of literary classics, philosophical and religious texts, like Qur'an and Bible translations. However, except for the ribbon, this is the corporate style of De Geus for hard cover publications, including novels either originally written in Dutch or translated into Dutch. The hard cover, then, does not mark "De Koran" as being different from novels published by De Geus.

Connecting all the issues raised above, we can conclude that the subtitle "een vertaling", placed under the title "De Koran" on the slipcase and dust jacket of the volume, means a genre indication which places it in a broader "generic" context of Dutch Qur'an translations. Insofar as Qur'an transla- tions can be considered a genre, this opens up a "horizon of expectations" (at least at the level of the broader public), which taps into presuppositions concerning literalism and (academic) accuracy. These expectations are

further reinforced by the juxtaposition between the subtitles on the volumes in the slipcase, namely, "een vertelling" (a tale) versus "een vertaling" (a translation), keeping in mind that most non-specialists would take "een vertelling" to allow for more authorial liberty than "een vertaling". As demonstrated above, these assumptions are breached by Abdolah's novelizing interventions. Additionally, the paratextual elements on the dust jacket and slipcase described above also render ambiguous the genre indication suggested by the subtitle and forewarn the careful observer that this subtitle should not be taken at face value.

The "novelizing translation" translated

In this section, I seek to refine my analysis by briefly highlighting some of the significant changes Abdolah's text underwent in the English translation, without attempting to be exhaustive, however. As I hope to demonstrate, these changes further substantiate some of the claims I made above.

Working from the outside in, the first thing we notice is the fact that both volumes are presented separately[69] (not in a slipcase) as paperbacks of the same format as "De Koran" and "De boodschapper" and without dust jackets. However, the images on the front covers are exactly the same, namely, an olive branch with black olives ("The Qur'an") and a red tulip ("The Messenger"), respectively. Nonetheless, the verbal elements are arranged differently. They also come in a red band, but this time in the lower part of the cover. The title "The Qur'an" is placed in yellow lettering above the name of the author in white lettering, which is slightly smaller than that of the title. The most striking element, however, is the subtitle, "A Journey". This subtitle is based on the introduction which states "This *translation* can be seen as a *journey* through the Qur'an" (Abdolah 2016, 9, emphasis added)[70] and "The prose of this *journey* is the combined prose of Muhammad ibn Abdullah and Kader Abdolah"[71] (Abdolah 2016, 12, emphasis added). Even if Abdolah's text is still indicated as a translation in the introduction[72] as well as in the blurb on the back of the cover,[73] this genre indication is deemphasized by also using "journey" instead of "translation" in the introduction and particularly in the subtitle. As a result, "The Qur'an. A Journey" will not be perceived as a translation by that part of the public that only sees its cover and nor by those readers who do not read the introduction or the blurbs. This intervention on the part of the translators and/or the publishing house then transforms the genre indication and mitigates the status of the volume as a translation, while at the same time not denying it altogether. This means

that the ambiguity of the status of the Dutch source text discussed above is altered, albeit creating ambiguities of a new kind.[74] The adaptation of the subtitle of "The Messenger" into "A Tale Retold" also draws more attention to Abdolah's novelizing interventions in the biography of Muhammad[75] than the Dutch "een vertelling" (a narrative) because the insertion of "retold" emphasizes that the narrative has been adapted by Abdolah.

It is also worth noting that a simplified scientific transliteration is used for the title "The Qur'an," which can easily be read by Anglophone readers. This transliteration is also applied to Arabic terms and names (proper names, toponyms, etc.)[76] in the text, which become more recognizable as such to readers who know Arabic. The translators also added a list with the Arabic titles of the suras in the order in which they appear in the Egyptian edition of the Uthmanic codex in combination with the corresponding suras in Abdolah's text. All these translational interventions make the text more accessible; however, their "Arabicizing" character also mitigates the foreignizing "Persianizing" effects of Abdolah's idiosyncratic transliterations (whether intended or not) and give the text a more overall Arabic character.

Conclusions and avenues for further research

In the first part of this article, I have tried to demonstrate that "De Koran" is not a Qur'an translation in the traditional sense of the word, but rather a literary or "novelizing" translation. To do so, I revisited Bakhtin's work on the epic and the novel and traced the elements in the text that give it, in my opinion, a novelizing dynamic, such as the rearrangement of the verses into a chronological order, the deletion of verses and the addition of a 115th sura that provides closure or rather a novelistic ending. Moreover, by means of the introduction and the intermittent comments, Abdolah not only adds his own voice, but also the voices of Persian, Arab and Dutch Qur'an translators, exegetes, and literati. In combination with the alternation between the Arabic and Dutch versions of Qur'anic names, and by using a "Persianized" transliteration for the Arabic names, Abdolah establishes a polyglossic dialogue between these different voices. All these elements cannot only be understood as novelizing forces in the text, they also render ambiguous its status as a Qur'an translation. In the second part, I further scrutinized this ambiguity by analyzing several paratextual elements, mostly the verbal and visual elements on the slipcase and dust jacket as well as the overall presentation of the book, in light of the ambiguous genre indications they provide. The analysis demonstrated that, despite the subtitle "een vertaling"

(a translation), most paratextual elements index that Abdolah's text can be approached as a literary text as well.

Because of limited space, I deliberately chose not to enter into the minutiae of a textual analysis, or the translation choices in particular. It is to be hoped that my analysis can be used as a steppingstone for a more exaustive examination, however, one that also integrates other theoretical frameworks, by approaching the text as a literary translation or a transcreation, at which I only briefly hinted above. This analysis would involve a comprehensive textual analysis of the intricacies of translational choices at micro-level and the intermittent comments, in combination with a detailed mapping of deletions and additions and the overall arrangement of the text. After scrutinizing how these elements interact and mutually influence (reinforce, mitigate, nuance, etc.) each other, they can be examined in terms of readers' reception, for example, how they shape and direct the overall reading experience. An analysis of the intertextual relations between "De boodschapper" and "De Koran" could add extra depth to this analysis. It is needless to say that different readers will diverge in their interactions with Abdolah's idiosyncratic and unorthodox interventions. Some will probably only notice the most salient and not be bothered by the more elusive, while others will be caused to pause every so many words, and either be appreciative or highly critical of them. This was briefly illustrated by my reference to some of the criticisms leveled at Abdolah's translation. A more comprehensive and detailed analysis of press reviews (perhaps in combination with other epitextual material) could shed light onto how the translation was received by this special segment of readership and could be combined with a broader reception study. This is also relevant in light of the political and ideological implications of Abdolah's interferences with the Qur'anic text. For one, his humanizing interventions open the Qur'anic text to critical scrutiny, an enterprise that has been and is still being undertaken by reformist Muslim intellectuals as well. On another level, Abdolah's attempt to bring the Qur'an closer to the Dutch reading public was criticized for coddling the reader and presenting a translation that is unnecessarily pacifying in the post-9/11 context of the Netherlands. Whether this is indeed the case should be verified by means of the analytical procedures already mentioned above. Likewise, the ideological and political implications of adding Persian voices to the Arabic source text, notably the ways in which this enterprise detaches the Qur'an from Arab(ic) national tradition and evokes Arab-Persian dynamics and tensions in the early Islamic and present eras can disclose yet another interesting layer of the text.

Notes

1. This is made explicit in the peritext of all three translations. Verhoef (2016, 11) states in the preface: "Ik wilde een vertaling maken die prettig is om te lezen, maar die zo dicht mogelijk bij de oorspronkelijke Arabische tekst blijft." (I wanted to produce a translation that is pleasant to read, but as close as possible to the original Arabic text.) Leemhuis (1996, 426-427) says in the afterword that he opted for "een weergave van de betekenis van de Arabische tekst in een zo toegankelijk mogelijk hedendaags Nederlands" (a representation of the meaning of the Arabic text in the most accessible contemporary Dutch). Kramers (1992, I) takes a somewhat different approach by opting for "een bevreemdend taaleigen te ontwerpen dat bij de Nederlandstalige lezer zou oproepen wat de tijdgenoten van Mohammed, de apostel van de islam, moeten hebben gevoeld toen zij voor het eerst de Korantekst hebben horen voordragen." (crafting an alienating idiom that would evoke in Dutch-speaking readers what contemporaries of Muhammad, the messenger of Islam, must have felt when they heard the text of the Qur'an being recited for the first time). The latter is an interesting approach that cannot be further explored here.

2. Apart from being circumspectly framed as translations (discussed below), the three translations are based on the 1924 standard Egyptian edition of the Uthmanic codex and adhere to the arrangement of the verses in this version. Moreover, in all three cases, the translators state that they relied mainly on the exegesis of Ǧalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (1445-1505) and Ǧalāl al-Dīn al-Maḥallī (1389-1459), also known as al-Ǧalālayn, and that of Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī (d. 1319). The revisors of Kramers's translation, Jaber and Jansen, explain this by stating that these works are continuously referred to by Muslims (Kramers 1992, XIX). Moreover, Leemhuis (1996, 426) states explicitly that he wanted his translation to be consistent with mainstream Islamic views on the meaning of the text. Verhoef (2017, 10-11) confirms that he mainly adheres to "traditional" opinions, not necessarily because he agrees with all of them, but because he wanted to stay in line with opinions that are shared by the majority of Muslims.

3. From Naudé's perspective, then, these translations are "primarily (but not totally) source-oriented" and aspire to achieve "the closest natural equivalent of the source text", meaning that they could be considered "faithful" from a normative perspective. Even if they cannot be considered "regulated translations" in the strict sense of the word, e.g., being controlled on "who translates, what is translated, how it is translated, for whom it is translated, and whether and with whom the translation is shared and discussed", the translators obviously still wanted to ensure that their translations "will be viewed as orthodox". (Naudé 2010).

4. It is interesting to note that, in terms of orthodoxy, the Iranian embassy in the Netherlands did not seem to problematize Abdolah's translation, exactly because the target audience of this translation is the Dutch reading public, which it apparently takes to

be non-Muslim (as well as non-Arab and non-Iranian). Therefore, as they stated in a reaction to Abdolah, they considered his translation to be harmless. https://www.the-guardian.com/books/audio/2016/apr/01/kader-abdolah-a-little-life-hanya-yanagihara-books-podcast (last visited 12-2-2023)

5. This does not mean, as explained above, that the other three translations are not target-oriented. After all, their broad aim is to open up the text to the average Dutch reader. On the other hand, as we will see below, the "target-orientation" of Abdolah's text is blurred in several ways.

6. A transcreation is defined by Katan (2021) as "a recreation of a text in another lan-guage – in particular where translation is inherently creative, such as in [l]iterary translation […]". As a result, the text "will display elements of innovative intervention designed to maximize impact while closely recreating the underlying essence and feel of the original." Based on Benetello (2018: 29), he notably remarks that "transcreation-al" choices "would normally be regarded as errors if evaluated as 'a translation'". For religious translation, see Naudé (2010).

7. Some of these criticisms will be dealt with in more detail below.

8. This means that epic texts, in their capacity as "high" literature, are created in "closed, pure languages," which are in fact the product of standardization and canonization processes that "appropriated" linguistic diversity. (Bakhtin 1982, 12)

9. https://www.theguardian.com/books/audio/2016/apr/01/kader-abdolah-a-little-life-hanya-yanagihara-books-podcast (last visited 12-2-2023)

10. We could say that, in Bakhtinian terms, this is the highest degree of absolute epic distance.

11. The untranslatability of the Qur'an can be related to Bakhtin's (1981, 17) observation that "[e]pic language is not separable from its subject, for an absolute fusion of subject matter and spatial-temporal aspects with valorized (hierarchal) ones is characteristic of semantics in the epic."

12. Notably, the Muʻtazila claimed that the Qur'an in its form known to humans was cre-ated. After being institutionalized and imposed through force by the Abbasid Caliph al-Maʾmūn (r. 813-833), this position became marginalized. (See EI² Muʻtazila) Some modern reformist Muslim thinkers, notably Mohammed Arkoun (1928-2010) and Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd (1943-2010), revisited Muʻtazilite thought in the frame of critical Qur'an hermeneutics. (See EI³ Createdness of the *Qur'ān*)

13. This is the case with Leemhuis's translation, for example, which is not framed by the subtitle on the inner title page as a translation, but as "Een weergave van de betekenis van de Arabische tekst in het Nederlands door Fred Leemhuis" (A representation in Dutch of the meaning of the Arabic text by Fred Leemhuis) (Leemhuis 1996). In this translation, the Arabic text is presented in a column side by side with the translation. Both Kramers's and Verhoef's Qur'an translations are framed as translations by the respective subtitles on their inner title pages: "Uit het Arabisch vertaald […]" (Trans-

lated from Arabic by [...]) (Kramers 1992) and "Vertaald door [...]" (Translated by [...]) (Verhoef 2016). Note, however, that in the postface of his translation, Leemhuis (1989, 425–427) refers more than once to his text as a translation (vertaling) and that in their foreword, Jaber and Jansen state that a translation does not have the same authority as the source text and that there is a near consensus among Muslims that a Qur'an translation is a special kind of interpretation (*tafsīr*), which is permitted. (Kramers 1992, XV) In combination with the fact that in all three cases the translators refer to the Islamic doctrine of the inimitability and the untranslatability of the Qur'an, i.e., that in Islamic tradition the Qur'an is considered the literal word of God revealed to Muhammad, the circumventing framing of the translations can be seen as yet another way of remaining within the framework of Islamic orthodoxy.

14. See also Suleiman (2013, 51–89) for a discussion of the language ideological underpinnings of the (in)imitability and (un)translatability of the Qur'an.

15. In the interview with The Guardian Abdolah states about his translation: "Three people have written this book: Allah, Muhammad and Kader Abdolah." https://www.theguardian.com/books/audio/2016/apr/01/kader-abdolah-a-little-life-hanya-yanagihara-books-podcast (last visited 12-2-2023)

16. In Dutch: "Mohammads taal", "Mohammads vertelling", "Mohammads proza". See Abdolah (2008 7; 8; 10; 84; 183; 275; 318). To enhance readability, I will mention the English translation in the main text and the original Dutch in the footnotes. Unless stated otherwise, I will use the translation made by Nouri and Niusha Nighting. Elements in the Dutch text that do not appear in the published English translation will be mentioned in the main text with their English translation in the footnotes. All these translations are mine.

17. "*Het is een belediging van Mohammed als we zeggen dat het proza van de Koran niet van hem, maar van Allah is.*" (Abdolah 2008, 84, italics original) The original italics are maintained in order to keep the distinction made in the Dutch text and its English translation between the intermittent comments, on the one hand, and the Qur'anic verses, on the other, including the introduction (roman).

18. https://www.theguardian.com/books/audio/2016/apr/01/kader-abdolah-a-little-life-hanya-yanagihara-books-podcast (last visited 12-2-2023)

19. "Het is niet zo dat deze Koran niet van Allah is en dat een ander het verzonnen heeft. [...] Maar de ongelovigen zeggen: 'Mohammad heeft het zelf bedacht.' Mohammad, zeg tegen hen: 'Laat een tekst zien die gelijk is aan de Koran. Als je de waarheid spreekt.'" (Abdolah 2008, 135)

20. "Of zij zeggen: 'Mohammad heeft de Koran verzonnen.' Zeg tegen hen: 'Kom dan met tien verzonnen soera's die gelijk zijn aan die van de Koran. En roep dan iedereen buiten Allah aan om hulp! Als je de waarheid spreekt.'" (Abdolah 2008, 140)

21. "het goddelijke proza van Mohammad" (Abdolah 2008, 8).

22.   "'*Het is niet van mij, [...] het komt uit het Boek in den Beginne dat bij Allah ligt. Ik krijg de verzen door en ik vertel ze in de mooie Arabische taal.*'" (Abdolah 2008, 183, italics original)

23.   "*Het verhaal is door Mohammed in een Arabische vorm gegoten.*" (Abdolah 2008, 275, italics original)

24.   This position is reminiscent of the position in the Muʿtazila discussed above.

25.   "Het proza van deze vertaling is het proza van Mohammad ebne Abdollah en Kader Abdolah samen." (Abdolah 2008, 10) Note that the translators translated "vertaling" (translation) as "journey", which is also used for the subtitle on the cover and the inner title page: "The Qur'an. A Journey". This remarkable translation choice will be revisited below. In the podcasted interview with The Guardian, Abdolah states: "The last chapter is mine. Three people have written this book: Allah, Muhammad, and Kader Abdolah." (https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jul/04/rewriting-the-quran-kader-abdolah-and-his-controversial-interpretation-of-islams-holy-book , last visited 12 February 2023)

26.   "De boodschapper. een vertelling"

27.   Neither is the arrangement of the suras in their chronological order. Nouri and Niushi Nighting, who translated "De Koran. een vertaling" into English refer to the fact that Abdolah made use of an old list with the chronological sequence of the suras that was found in the family library. This list was made by the famous Qur'an exegete Tabari (see below) in his Persian translation of the Qur'an. (Abdolah 2016, 376) However, Abdolah does not mention this in the Dutch version. Other Muslim and non-Muslim scholars also tried to rearrange the suras in their chronological order, all of them reaching (slightly) different conclusions. This is partly because of the fact that most of them took the textual unity of the suras for granted, while there is evidence that not all verses in the same sura were revealed at the same time and that several of the segments should be considered as loosely connected pericopes. Moreover, the 1924 Egyptian standard edition, which is based on the Uthmanic codex and is the most widespread edition of the Qur'an, also mentions the chronological order of the suras as well as which verses within that sura date from a different period. (EI² al-Ḳurʾān)

28.   "De samenstellers van de Koran hebben alle soera's door elkaar gehaald, zodat de historische volgorde verdwenen is. Daardoor ontstaat er een soort chaos in het boek, maar die chaos creëert wel een goddelijke sfeer. Ik heb de soera's terug in hun historische volgorde gezet, opdat we de ontwikkeling van Mohammad en zijn Koran beter kunnen volgen." (Abdolah 2008, 9)

29.   Note that this sura is distinguished from the other suras by means of italics, in the same way as the introductory notes to the other suras.

30.   "In de Koran komen vele herhalingen voor. Dat hoort bij het karakter van het boek. De Koran is een vertelling, en hij was bedoeld voor analfabete mensen. De herhaling was

noodzakelijk in die tijd. Hoewel ik veel herhalingen heb weggehaald, bleef een deel van de herhalingen onvermijdelijk." (Abdolah 2008, 9)

31.   Benali (2008) specifies that Abdolah was criticized for trying to make the Qur'an less "violent" by allegedly deleting references to unbelievers going to hell and calls to exterminate them, which is in Benali's opinion self-censorship. He explains that Abdolah's obscuring translation choices are mainly related to the "terrorized era (geterroriseerde tijd)" we live in and that Abdolah wants to "open people's eyes to the other side of the Qur'an, its human side (Hij wil de mensen de ogen openen voor de andere kant van de Koran, de menselijke kant)." To what extent Abdolah deleted verses inciting violence against people of a different religion needs to be checked by a detailed textual analysis, which is not within the scope of this article. I will limit myself here to a few remarks. First, Kuru (2019, 22 fn 48) quotes Tim Berger stating that "Terms for killing and destruction were in 2.1 percent of the Qur'an," which is less than the Old Testament (5.3 percent) and the New Testament (2.8 percent). Second, a small preliminary sampling reveals that Abdolah did not delete the Sword Verse (*āyat al-sayf*, 9:5/the last paragraph of 113:1 in Abdolah's arrangement), for instance, which is one of the most quoted verses by those who want to legitimize violence against non-Muslims because, in their opinion, it abrogates more peaceful verses. Considering possible ideological shifts, translation choices should be scrutinized as well. This is best done after closely mapping which verses were deleted and which were not, in combination with an analysis of the contextualizing introductory remarks that frame the translations. It is noteworthy that Verhoef (2016, 10-11) also observes that the Qur'an is mentioned almost daily in the media, most often in relation to wars and terrorism, and this while the word 'Islam' has the same etymological root as 'peace'. He invites the reader to discover whether the Qur'an is really such a violent book and expresses his hope that his translation will stimulate intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

32.   "In de naam van Allah. Hij is lief. Hij geeft. Hij vergeeft." (Abdolah 2008, passim)

33.   The introduction mentions a brownish red tulip as the cover image, but this image is actually displayed on the cover of "De boodschapper. een vertelling", as well as that of the English translation "The Messenger. A Tale Retold").

34.   "The 114 sura's branch out in the way olive trees do".

35.   "With this translation of the Qur'an Kader Abdolah clarifies the book to the Dutch reader."

36.   "Kader Abdolah's translation makes the Qur'an accessible to everyone."

37.   Geert Wilders is a Dutch politician who is the founder and leader of the Freedom Party (PVV, Partij voor de Vrijheid) and who is known for his controversial statements about Islam, the Qur'an, and Muslims.

38.   https://www.theguardian.com/books/2016/jul/04/rewriting-the-quran-kader-abdolah-and-his-controversial-interpretation-of-islams-holy-book (last visited 12 February 2023)

39.   Abū Ǧaʿfar Muḥammad bin Ǧarīr bin Yazīd al-Ṭabarī (839 AD – 923 AD) is one of the
       most acclaimed historians and Qur'an exegetes. His most famous works are "Muḫtaṣar
       taʾrīḫ al-rusul wa al-mulūk wa al-ḫulafāʾ" (Abbreviated history of prophets, kings,
       and caliphs) most often simply referred to as "Taʾrīḫ Ṭabarī" (History by Tabari) and
       his commentary on the Qur'an: "Ǧamīʿ al-bayān ʿan taʾwīl āy al-qurʾān" (Collection of
       statements on the interpretation of the verses of the Qur'an), most often referred to as
       "Tafsīr al-Ṭabarī" (Exegesis by Tabari). (EI² al-Ṭabarī)

40.   For Dutch, see Abdolah (2008, 8).

41.   "Ik wil meteen bekennen dat mijn werk in de lijn van de oude Perzische literatuurtra-
       ditie ligt. Grote Perzische meesters als Hafez, Saadi, Khayam en Rumi hebben de Koran
       elk op hun eigenzinnige manier uitgedragen." (Abdolah 2008, 9–10)

42.   "I deliberately use the spelling of names as they appear in the Qur'an at times, and then
       again the spelling of names as they appear in the Bible." (my translation) This is fol-
       lowed by a list of the names as they appear in the Qur'an and in the Bible, respectively.
       In the English translation, this list of names precedes the general introduction without
       further comment (Abdolah 2016, 6–7). Note that the translators use a different trans-
       literation system for the Arabic names and the English spelling for the Biblical names.
       This will be further explored below.

43.   Some of these characters are associated with Biblical characters, but this is not
       completely undisputed in all cases. Nevertheless, I will mention their Biblical names
       between brackets after my transliteration.

44.   The first name between brackets is the Arabic name in scientific transliteration, the
       second and the third represent the way in which the name is most currently writ-
       ten in Dutch and English respectively (if applicable and if the English and/or Dutch
       names differ). Mohammad (Muḥammad/Mohammed/Muhammad), Thamoed (Ṯāmūd/
       Thamud), Hud (Hūd/Eber), Saleh (Sāliḥ/Shelah), Ad (ʿĀd), Logman (Luqmān), Shoeib
       (Šuʿayb/Jetro/Jethro), Edris (Idrīs/Henoch/Enoch), Zeëed (Zayd), Gezr (Ḫiḍr), Zolkafl (Ḏū
       l-Kifl/ Ezechiël/Ezekiel), Zoleega (Zulayḫa/Potifar's wife), Ismail (Ismāʿīl), etc.

45.   Noeh (Nūḥ/Noah), Loet (Lūṭ/Lot), Soleiman (Sulaymān/Salomo/Solomon), Dawoed
       (Dawūd/David), Taloet (Ṭālūt/Saul), Ibrahim (Ibrāhīm/Abraham), Azar (Āzar/Terach),
       Hadjar (Hāǧar/Hagar), Sara (Sāra/Sarah), Rahil (Raḥīl/Rachel), Ishaaq (Isḥāq/Isaac),
       Ajoeb (Ayyūb/Job), Jakoeb (Yaʿqūb/Jakob/Jacob), Joesef (Yūsuf/Jozef/Joseph), Joenes
       (Yūnus/Jonas), Haroen (Hārūn/Aaron), Habiel (Hābīl/Abel) en Ghabiel (Qābīl/Kaïn/
       Kain), Jahja (Yaḥyā/Johannes de Doper/John the Baptist) and Zakkaria (Zakāriyā/
       Zacharias/Zachariah), etc.

46.   Adam (Ādam), Eva (Ḥawwā/Eve), Ezra (Uzayyir), Benjamin (Binyāmīn), Elias (Ilyās/
       Elia/Elijah), Mozes (Mūsā/Moses), Maria (Maryam) and satan (šayṭān/Satan), etc.

47.   In comparison, Kramers (1992), Leemhuis (1996), and Verhoef (2016) consistently use
       the Dutch word God. The three translators applied different strategies concerning the
       rendition of Biblical names, though. A detailed analysis would lead us too far in this

context, but it suffices here to note that Kramers (1992) and Leemhuis (1996) use Arabic terms and personal names more extensively than Verhoef (2016), who translates the titles of the suras and Arabic names of Biblical characters into Dutch, for example. In contrast with Abdolah, however, all three translators pursue consistency in these choices. Arabic words and names are also transliterated consistently by means of a simplified (Leemhuis (1996) and Verhoef (2016)) or academic (Kramers 1996) transliteration system.

48. Saba (Saba'/Sheba), Medin (Midyan/Midjan/Midian), Habashe (Ḥabaša/Abessinië/Abyssinia), Iraq (al-ʿIrāq/Irak/Iraq), Jaman (al-Yaman/Jemen/Yemen), Sham (al-Šām/Syrië/Syria), etc.

49. The English translators, by contrast, use a simplified academic transliteration system that represents the Arabic spelling of the words more closely.

50. The consonant /g/ is pronounced in most parts of the Netherlands as a voiced fricative velar sound which approximates the consonant /ḫ/ in Arabic.

51. These names are transliterated in the English translation as follows: qalam, Qadr, Quraysh, Al-Qariʿa, Aqaba, Abu Qubays, Dhul-Qarnayn, Qibtiyya, Qabil (Abdolah 2016, 14; 47; 49; 50; 60; 61; 218; 310; 357).

52. In the English translation: Hadha Rabbi (Abdolah 2016, 162).

53. In the English translation: qalam and Al-Haqqa (Abdolah 2016, 12; 247).

54. For instance, depending on the word, g should be pronounced as [ġ]: "galam" (*qalam*) alhagge (*al-ḥaqqa*) or [ḫ]: Zoleega (*Zulayḫa*), Gezr (*Ḫiḍr*) and gh mostly as [ġ] (for Arabic /q/) but also sometimes as [ḫ], f.i. Ghadije (Abdolah 2008, 288) for Ḫadīǧa (Khadija). This should not pose a problem in itself, as in most languages there is no complete consistency between orthography and pronunciation, but if the purpose is to familiarize readers with a foreign language, consistency is highly recommendable. This is also exactly why a consistent transliteration system is used in most academic publications.

55. However, in some pre-Islamic and contemporary spoken varieties of Arabic /q/ is sometimes pronounced as [ġ], depending on the lexical item in which it occurs.

56. See previous footnotes for examples.

57. It is difficult to say what the "original" entails because the process by which the Qur'an came into being is highly complex. Moreover, the existence of different codices and redactions, the issue is further complicated by the different "readings" (*al-qirā'āt al-sabʿa*). For an overview of these issues, see EI² al-Ḳur'ān. Abdolah does not mention which version or redaction his father's copy of the Qur'an is.

58. I don't use the term "national" in its modern sense here, but rather to refer carefully to "the existence of a web of language-identity conceptualizations in the past that resonate with similar ones in the present in constructions of the nation as an aspect of modernity." (Suleiman 2013, 55) In this context, Arab(ic) national tradition refers to the strong sense of identity the Arab *umma* (community or nation) had since pre-Islamic times and to the fact that it had a strong linguistic basis, referred to by Suleiman (2013,

passim) as the "language-identity link." As Suleiman explains, the construction of Arab identity (*'urūba*) taps into the connectivity between the notions of intuitive linguistic excellence, purity, correctness and clear speech and people, which are imbedded in the root meanings of *'-r-b* (of which both *'arab* (Arab) and *al-'arabīya* (Arabic) are derived) and *f-ṣ-ḥ* (of which *faṣāḥa* (eloquence) and *fuṣḥā* (the most eloquent language and, in modern times, standard Arabic) are derived). The Arabic character of the Qur'an and the language-centered nature of the principle of the inimitability and the untranslatability of the Qur'an arising therefrom derive from these notions. (Suleiman 2013, 51–92) As Suleiman states, the inimitability of the Qur'an principle seems to have had an effect opposite to the intended one: "Instead of weakening the Arabs' feeling of exclusive belonging to their language of Islam, [it] seems to have done the opposite: it entrenched the language-identity link by making the Arabs its primary target. [...] In other words, inimitability added to the visibility of language as a cultural marker among the Arabs, rather than detracting from its visibility." (Suleiman 2013, 90) Abdolah's interventions challenge the idea of the unequivocal Arabic character of the Qur'an.

59.   Kahf (2000, 148) states that the "horizon of expectations" is formed by: "what the public already understands about a genre and its conventions" (Guerin, 338) and by "a reader's knowledge and assumptions about the text and literature in general" (Childers and Hentzi, 258).

60.   For a critical assessment of a functional definition of paratext and its focus on authorial intentions, see Batchelor (2018, 7–24)

61.   Note that the distinction between public and readers is substantial, as Genette (2009, 74–75) states: "For a book, however, it seems to me that the public is nominally an entity more far-flung than the sum of its readers, because that entity includes, sometimes in a very active way, people who do not necessarily read the book (or at least not in its entirety) [...]." Needless to say, also not all readers necessarily read a book in its entirety.

62.   "The Qur'an. a translation". Note that the title of the published English translation is "The Qur'an. A Journey". (Abdolah 2016) The implications of this translation choice will be revisited in the discussion of the title and the subtitle below.

63.   "The Messenger. a tale". The title of the published English translation is "The Messenger. A Tale Retold". (Abdolah 2016) The implications of this translation choice will be revisited as well.

64.   "The Qur'an and the life of Muhammad are inextricably intertwined." (my translation)

65.   Note that Kramers's translation in its revised version by Jaber and Jansen also appeared in a pocket edition, published by Rainbow in 1997. This is also the case for some Qur'an translations in French (e.g., Masson (1967), English etc. that are published as trade and luxury editions as well as pocket editions. The pocket format is a format

that can have the connotation of "popular" as well as "classic", e.g., an affordable well-selling trade edition. (Genette 2009, 17–22)

66. The colors blue and green evoke the fresh water and the lush greenery of paradise referred to, for example, in surat al-Kahf (18:31), in Abdolah's version: "We shall not forget the reward due to those who believe and do good deeds. They shall enter the gardens of happiness under which rivers flow. They shall wear garments of green silk and fine bracelets of gold, and they shall recline on couches. It is a fine reward and a fine place." (Abdolah 2016, 217) This must have been indeed an attractive promise for people living in the arid climate of the Arabian Peninsula. Moreover, apart from being the color of paradisiacal garments, green was allegedly Muhammad's favorite color. It has become the color most closely associated with Islam, think of the cloths covering Islamic shrines. It is also a prominent color in the flags of many Muslim majority countries (a dominant one in those of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan), and Islamic organizations (e.g., Hamas).

67. Of the fifteen covers of Dutch Qur'an translations I scrutinized, eleven did not display the name of the translator(s) on the cover, while in four cases the name(s) appeared, but always in lettering that is considerably smaller than that of the title. I also found one e-book, also without the name of the translator on the cover.

68. It is worth noting that the cover of the translation of the New Testament by Richmond Lattimore was intentionally designed to make it look like a novel and that this cover design provoked a great deal of controversy (Mendelsund and Alworth 2020, 192–193).

69. Later editions of the Dutch volumes can also be purchased separately. (see https://www.singeluitgeverijen.nl/de-geus/boek/de-koran/ last visited 13-2-2023)

70. "Deze vertaling kunt u zien als een wandeling door de Koran."

71. "Het proza van deze *vertaling* is het proza van Mohammad ebne Abdollah en Kader Abdolah samen." (Abdolah 2008, 10, emphasis added). Note that "vertaling" (translation) is translated as "journey".

72. Note, however, that these are Abdolah's translated words.

73. "Kader Abdolah makes the Qur'an accessible to both Muslims and non-Muslim readers. His *translation* can be seen as a journey through the Qur'an – he takes the readers with them to every corner of the book." (Abdolah 2016, back cover, emphasis added).

74. Due to the ambiguous status of Abdolah's text as a translation, it would be interesting to investigate whether the English translation can be considered a relay translation or a literary translation. It is obvious that Abdolah's text is the primary source text, as the inner title page mentions: "Translated from the Dutch by Nouri and Niusha Nighting" (Abdolah 2016, 3), but we could wonder, for example, if the translators resorted to one or more Arabic versions of the Qur'an and if so which ones.

75. Discussion of these is beyond the scope of this article.

76. See footnotes above for examples.

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* A note from the series editors, Jack McMartin and Sara Ramos Pinto: "In May 2024, we took the decision to update the series' name from *Translation, Interpreting and Transfer* to *Translation, Interpreting and Mediation (TIME)*. By replacing 'transfer' with 'mediation', we seek to more explicitly foreground the situatedness of translation, the interpretive and social agency of translators, and the media-specific constraints and affordances involved in conveying meaning in new forms. At the same time, we want to move away from the traditional notion of translation as the conveyance of invariant and stable meanings across languages and cultures, a notion often associated with 'transfer'."

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