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Translating Faith: A Scopus-Theory Analysis of Cultural Shifts in The Message (1976)

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Abstract

The research analyzes Moustapha Akkad's 1976 *The Message* which shows Islamic early history through his Arabic-English bilingual film using Skopos theory. The film presents an audiovisual translation through its dual-language Arabic and English presentation which adapts cultural and theological and linguistic elements to meet different audience needs. The Arabic version centers on Qur'an citations while it teaches Islamic law through theological arguments to Muslims. The English version focuses on base moral principles through its broad narrative which promotes intercivilizational relationships. The study applies qualitative comparative analysis to similar scenes which include the Negus meeting and the Farewell Sermon to show how each version achieves its goals through different rhetorical and thematic and character elements. The study finds that Arabic language serves as a teaching tool which develops Islamic identity while English language functions as a cultural bridge which makes Islamic content easier for non-Muslims to understand through its process of simplification and omission and re-contextualization. The research investigates how religious films serve to connect different cultures through their function as translators of sacred stories which share elements with Translation Studies and intercultural communication.

ترجمة الإيمان: دراسة تحليلية للتحويلات الثقافية في فيلم الرسالة (1976) وفق منظور

نظرية الهدف

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المستخلص

يحلل هذا البحث فيلم الرسالة (1976) للمخرج مصطفى العقاد، الذي صُوّر بنسختين عربية وإنجليزية، من منظور نظرية الهدف (Skopos Theory). يُعد الفيلم نموذجًا فريدًا للترجمة السمعية البصرية التي صيغت وفق اعتبارات ثقافية ولاهوتية ولغوية لتلبية توقعات جمهورين مختلفين. تُبرز النسخة العربية الاقتباسات القرآنية الصريحة، والطرح اللاهوتي المفصل، والمبادئ الفقهية الإسلامية لجمهور مسلم، بينما تركز النسخة الإنجليزية على القيم الأخلاقية العالمية، والسر الميسر، والدبلوماسية بين الثقافات. ومن خلال تحليل مقارن نوعي لمشاهد محورية — مثل لقاء النجاشي، وخطبة الوداع — يحدد البحث تحولات في الخطاب والموضوعات وبناء الشخصيات تعكس الأهداف الوظيفية لكل نسخة. أظهرت النتائج أن النص العربي يعمل كوسيط تعليمي يعزز الهوية الإسلامية، في حين تؤدي النسخة الإنجليزية دور جسر ثقافي، معتمدة استراتيجيات التبسيط والحذف وإعادة السياق لتعزيز تقبل الجمهور غير المسلم. يسهم البحث في توسيع فهم دور السينما الدينية كوسيلة لنقل الإيمان عبر الثقافات، رابطاً بين دراسات الترجمة والتواصل بين الثقافات وتمثيل السرديات المقدسة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نظرية الهدف، الترجمة السمعية البصرية، التكيف الثقافي، فيلم الرسالة (1976)، السينما الدينية، التواصل بين الثقافات.

1. Introduction

The process of translating religious narratives into audiovisual media faces difficulties because translators must handle both the language transfer task and the task of translating between two different languages which contain cultural and theological and ideological differences. The international distribution of films has made audiovisual translation essential for delivering religious and cultural content to international audiences. Translators of religious content must go beyond finding equivalent words because they need to adapt the content to different cultural situations while maintaining message understanding and cultural acceptance and content accessibility. Translating sensitive religious histories together with religious belief systems becomes extremely difficult because these two elements require special handling.

The Message (1976) which is directed by Moustapha Akkad presents a complex depiction of Islam's early historical development. The film was uniquely produced in two separate versions: an Arabic version which targeted Muslim viewers and an English version which targeted non-Muslim international audiences particularly those from Western countries. The bilingual production process required more than technical translation work because it needed cultural and communicative modifications to convey the original content. The film serves as a valuable case study for translation examination because its two versions demonstrate different audience needs and religious beliefs and its two versions show different methods of achieving cross-cultural communication.

The Message has received extensive research about its historical accuracy and its cinematic aspects and its audience response, yet scholars have not studied the film from a translation studies perspective. The bilingual versions require additional analysis according to Skopos Theory, which states that translation choices depend on the specific communication goals of the translation process. The research gap exists because understanding the film through its purpose-driven translation process helps researchers study Islamic religious discourse across various cultural groups. The study investigates how different communicative purposes led to translation strategies that affected the cultural and theological and linguistic presentation of Islam in both the Arabic and English versions of the film.

The bilingual translation of *The Message* (1976) serves as an audiovisual translation demonstration which Skopos Theory examines through its different communicative objectives. The research aims to analyze the translation and cultural adaptation strategies used in both versions, identify the theological, cultural, and linguistic differences between them, and evaluate how these differences reflect the intended purpose of each version. The study investigates how audiovisual and cultural limitations impacted translation decisions which then determined how Islam would be presented to specific audience groups.

The study demonstrates its value through its development of Skopos Theory which extends to religious audiovisual translation research that lacks sufficient exploration in the field. *The Message* serves as a translation project which the research investigates to show how translation functions to transfer religious stories between different cultural groups. The research shows how religious films act as cultural conflict resolution spaces which gives translators and filmmakers essential knowledge to create media that blends different cultures and religious traditions.

2. Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

The review studies scholarly texts and audiovisual translation work to examine how religious content is culturally represented through *The Message* (1976). These texts supply theoretical and contextual foundations which the researcher uses to study the movie's bilingual editions. The review begins with Skopos Theory as its main theoretical framework which demonstrates functionalism to examine how different cultures and multilingual settings impact translation of viewer behavior. The section proceeds to explain AVT cultural adaptation methods which production teams use to manage audience expectations and multimodal constraints together with religious vocabulary in their ideologically sensitive content. The third part discusses how Islam is represented on international screens, with *The Message* serving as a counter-narrative to Orientalist stereotypes, and finds a gap in comparative studies on its Arabic and English versions. This model permits Skopos-directed research into the way religious content is brought in by the film to cross-linguistic and cultural boundaries.

2.1 Skopos Theory as an Analytical Framework

Original framework of this research is based on Skopos theory as originally proposed by Hans J. Vermeer (1978) and then formalized along with Katharina Reiss (1984). The Greek word for purpose, Skopos, reconceptualizes translation as a targeted, goal-directed process rather than a strict equivalence concerned with languages alone (Vermeer 2000:221). Functional text typology Reiss defined for the first time in 1971 grouped texts-such as informative, expressive, operative, and audio medial-with regard to their communicative function, thereby forming a basis for effort at alignment of the translation choice with a particular socio-cultural environment (Nord 1997:37).

Skopos Theory turns the translator's focus away from fidelity toward purpose, inquiring the critical questions of: What purpose should this translation fulfill? How is that purpose negotiated in the target culture? and What type of textual strategies accomplish it best? The theory is grounded on four interrelated principles: the Skopos rule (the translation decisions are made in accordance with the target purpose), orientation towards the target audience (translation is determined by norms and expectations of the addressees), the coherence rule (the translation must be coherent and easy to understand for the audience), and the fidelity rule (offering a sense connection with the original text rather than literal equivalence) (Vermeer, 1989; Nord, 1997).

In audiovisual translation (AVT), Skopos Theory has been used extensively, particularly in subtitling, where cultural and linguistic adaptation is crucial. Some of the previous studies include Chen and Wang's (2019) research on the culturally loaded terms in *Friends*, which identified that paraphrasing and cultural adaptation approaches need to be employed to meet the skopos rule as literal translation fails in the conveyance of humor and cultural references. Sheng et al. (2019) also had the same conclusion when they conducted a study on Chinese comedy *Hello Mr. Billionaire* and concluded that paraphrasing and reduction are more appropriate for the target audience compared to literal translation. Gong (2020) illustrated the concept of fansub translation in *Why Women Kill*, emphasizing how incoherence results as a product of cultural unadaptation. Al-Dahmashi (2021), applying Skopos Theory to the Arabic subtitling of *Thirteen*

Reasons Why, also took into account the requirement of functional equivalence in a culture-sensitive manner. A more recent research is that of Alsager and Almohizea (2023) and it is about the subtitling of *Mulan* (2020) into Arabic. Skopos Theory, they proved, could allow the middle easternization of that film without compromising its core message. These researches demonstrate the applicability of the theory to evaluate AVT both for its desired goals and to its audiences.

Although Skopos Theory has been applied extensively in almost all branches of translation, there is relatively little research on the study of religious movies made in double versions for different religions. The gap between existing knowledge and required expertise is important because it demonstrates how religious content challenges need to be treated with extreme caution. The bilingual film *The Message* serves as an ideal example for Skopos analysis because it functions as a correction to improper depictions of Islam and the Prophet Muhammad's life as an outdated character who lacked contemporary human traits. The evaluation process permits all language orientation decisions to be assessed based on their purpose rather than their actual accuracy. The evaluation process permits all language orientation decisions to be assessed based on their purpose rather than their actual accuracy.

2.2 Audiovisual Translation and Cultural Adaptation

The audiovisual translation (AVT) of a film such as *The Message*, which adheres to particular religious principles, represents a distinct form of linguistic evolution and ideological exchange. Movie translation, as compared with more traditional text-based translation, means transferring meaning through a series of semiotic channels - spoken language, on-screen text, body language, visual image, and soundtrack - which does pose special technical and cultural challenges (Díaz Cintas & Remael, 2014:2). It thus requires that translators pay attention to factors such as timing, lip-sync (where there is dubbing), screen space (where there is subtitling), and word-with-image coordination, thus film translation turns into a constrained and concerted process (Pérez-González, 2014: 12). The stakes escalate on the subject of religion as in such scenarios, even a word or image may be construed controversial.

Such situations require cultural adaptation. In translating source texts into target languages, specific aspects must be critically remade to allow better understanding and emotionality with the target audience, like converting religious ideas which do not have lexical equivalence, deleting culturally alien references, or changing them to culture-wise equivalents. Translations must be theologically sensitive and semantically precise because terms such as Salah (ritual prayer) , Hijrah(migration), and Tawheed (oneness of God) which are so heavily defined, in their meanings not only in spiritual but in sociohistorical contexts (Alhumaid 2015: 48).

Skopos Theory gives an appropriate account of these translation choices. The Skopos Rule says that any translation methods need to be aligned with that of the purpose or function (skopos) of the target text (Vermeer, 1998). It is very pertinent in the case of *The Message* (1976), where it was produced as a bilingual film for two culturally different audiences, namely: Muslim audiences of the Arab world and non-Muslim Western audiences who were ignorant of Islam. Its English version was meant to inform and create understanding and empathy among audiences who were non-Muslim as an intercultural bridge, while the Arabic translation reaffirmed Islamic identity and cultural heritage.

The two versions show their main differences through their different methods of presenting historical and religious material. The English translation system of Arabic honorifics requires that the complete form of the phrase "Peace be upon him" (ṣallā Allāhu ‘alayhi wa-sallam) should not be used because it exists in the Arabic text throughout but its translation would create issues with reading and comprehension. The religious term Jahiliyyah which means pre-Islamic ignorance translates into two different expressions which help non-Muslim audiences understand the cultural background of the Islamic faith.

The English text in the study showed a higher frequency of altered sentence structures which used more detailed explanations to match educational purposes because the film presented both historical events and religious commonality between different faiths. The Arabic translation uses ellipsis and allusion and sacred quotations without additional explanation because it assumes that all readers share the same cultural and theological background.

The practical, contextual work of Skopos Theory has been demonstrated through these three specific instances. But every rendering has its own specific and particular communicative purpose and is none of the above in a prescriptive or literal sense. The reading experience requires a balance between maintaining text integrity and producing accurate religious audiovisual material translations. The Message translators engage not merely linguistically but culturally in gatekeeping narrative effectiveness, cultural authenticity and religious sanctity. The translation process in these situations reaches beyond language because it involves deep cultural and ideological disputes which make translation extremely difficult.

2.3 The Representation of Islam in Global Cinema

Movies have used their different ideological values to show religious beliefs throughout their history. The Ten Commandments (1956) and The Passion of the Christ (2004) demonstrate how religious beliefs can come together with visual storytelling to create powerful emotional and spiritual experiences for audiences (Lyden, 2019:130). The films function as cultural interpreters because they use sacred stories to create new versions that fulfill different audience needs while maintaining successful balance between their artistic freedom and religious beliefs(Nolan, 2009:22).

The effectiveness of mediation has become questionable because researchers show mixed opinions about its results, since some believe that religious films enable wider public access to religious talks (Mitchell, 2015: 120), while others think that these films weaken the strength of divine messages (Wright, 2006: 56). The Last Temptation of Christ (1988) serves as a case study which faced criticism because its depiction of Jesus as a human character exposed conflicts between popular storytelling methods and the subtle details of theological beliefs (Baugh, 1997:104).

Islam has been particularly misrepresented in world cinema. Edward Said's Orientalism (1978) theory condemns the Western media's tendency to project Muslim society as aggressive, irrational, or inferior. Shaheen's (2001: 45) analysis of more than 900 films indicates recurring Islamophobic stereotypes in which Muslims tend to be portrayed as terrorists, evil characters, or fanatic oil magnates.

These representations intensified post-9/11, in films such as *Body of Lies* (2008) and *American Sniper* (2014), which represented Muslims as threats to Western civilization (Ejiaz, 2018:23). Once more, Sutkute's (2020) study on *Submission* (2004) and *The Kite Runner* (2007) underlines how frequently Islam is represented as inherently violent and thus generates cultural misconceptions and prolongs binary oppositions between the modern West and the "savage" East (Sutkute 2020:33).

Akkad's *Message* (1976) was a milestone, indeed, as it was the first feature film to use cinematic devices respecting the Islamic tradition to depict early Islamic history in the absence of the Prophet Muhammad onscreen (Bakker 2006: 78). The *Message* established Muslim perspectives and thoughts with all seriousness and respect rather than merely relegating them to secondary roles, as in other films, such as *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962).

In producing his own Arabic (*Al-Risala*) and English (*The Message*) versions of the tale, therefore, Akkad increasingly adapted the passage to specific audiences. Such a way of upping the game for religious films, as it were, could be analyzed under Skopos Theory. The *Message* is a religious epic par excellence; it opens up a new path for further Muslim directors who want to rebrand themselves on the global screen.

2.4 Previous Studies on The Message (1976)

The 1976 film *Al-Risalah* (*The Message*), directed by Moustapha Akkad, has attracted interdisciplinary scholarly attention, although research remains relatively limited, particularly from a translation studies perspective. The film represents Muhammad through visual techniques which Bakker (2006) analyzed to show their theological effects. The film demonstrates Islamic aniconism through its use of off-screen narration and point-of-view shots according to his research. The analysis reveals how the film represents religion through its visual techniques, but it fails to treat the film as a translation product or investigate how the different purposes of communication affected the changes between its Arabic and English versions.

Gugler 2011 positions *The Message* within the greater framework of Middle Eastern cinema to demonstrate its extensive cultural and historical value as a major

Islamic historical film. His research helps reveal the film's political and cultural positioning yet fails to examine how translation and intercultural adaptation and bilingual production differences function.

Aldualimi and Almahasees used their audiovisual translation approach to study the film because they wanted to examine how subtitlers handled Islamic terms when creating English subtitles. The study shows how techniques, which include borrowing and explication and omission, help audiences understand the content better. The study only examines subtitling practices but the research should include all aspects of audiovisual translation, which includes audience-based communication strategies used in the film's two different versions.

The complex production history of the film reflects delicate political and religious issues it wanted to address. The Message, conceived as a motion picture epic chronicling the birth of Islam, was funded by Moroccan King Hassan II and Libyan Colonel Muammar Gaddafi, each perceiving the undertaking as part of a large-scale pan-Islamic cultural movement (Aldualimi & Almahasees 2022:1055). However, due to aggressive theological complaints from Saudi Arabia, Akkad was compelled to relocate filming to Libya. The film's international release was also met with controversy, especially the 1977 Washington, D.C., hostage crisis when Black Muslim militants took hostage members of a Jewish group in protest against what they perceived as blasphemy.

The style would satisfy both Arab and Western audiences; it has one Arabic version with Egyptian actors and another in English, featuring Anthony Quinn (Bakker 2006: 79). Careful and thorough editing would ensure that ideological and theological subject matter would conform to Muslim educational guidelines while giving an interesting and attractive recounting of the origins of Islam. The news of translation of religious concepts to the public audience created an extra touch of sophistication. According to Aldualimi and Almahasees (2022:1053), translators adopted different strategies ranging from borrowing, explication and omission to clarify concepts such as Salah (prayer), Hijrah (migration) among others to the audience that has very little knowledge of Islam or Arabic culture.

Despite these valuable contributions, there remains in academic discourse a wide gap: no systematic comparative analysis has been conducted applying

translation studies to both official versions—the English *The Message* and the Arabic *Al-Risalah*. Although the translators of the Arabic version for Western audiences have been examined previously, that both these versions were not translations but were separately scripted, cast, and shot as per the requirements of the respective target audience's differing cultural expectations has not been discussed so much before. The current study seeks to answer its main research questions through a comparison between Arabic and English historical narratives and their rhetorical styles and religious vocabulary. The study will examine how the differences between the two versions function as intentional translation decisions which serve the movie's specific cultural-linguistic communication objectives (skopos).

3. Case Study

The Message 1976 serves as an excellent example to evaluate Skopos Theory because it presents a bilingual film which demonstrates its communicative goals through its viewing less common. The film made its Arabic version Al-Risalah through independent production which used different actors and created separate scripts and storylines for its two target audiences who spoke different languages and belonged to different cultural backgrounds. The film utilized Arabic dialogue which famous Arab writers A. B. Jawdat al-Sahhar and Tawfiq al-Hakim and A. B. Rahman al-Sharkawi and Mohammad Ali Maher and Abdel Hamid Gouda created together as dialogue for the film which gave the movie its authentic Islamic cultural and religious elements that Muslim audiences desire. The English script written by British author H. A. L. Craig was specifically designed to explain Islamic beliefs and the life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Westerners who have no prior knowledge of Islamic customs.

Akkad's expressed aim was to "correct Western misconceptions about Islam" and to represent respectfully the life of the Prophet. This makes the film an exemplary case study for exploring how translation and adaptation strategies are developed in reaction to a particular skopos (purpose). In line with the Skopos Theory (Vermeer 1989: 182) that privileges the target function of the target text over source loyalty, the Arabic version serves an affirmational purpose for Muslims, while the English version serves an educational and intercultural communicative purpose for non-Muslims. The general research question is: How

does the variation in language, culture, and narrative between the Arabic and English versions of *The Message* give clues about their differing skopo? In contrasting the two independently developed versions of this work, this research investigates audiovisual translation as a conscious act of intercultural communication due to audience expectation and ideological contexts.

3.1. Methodology

Within the scope of this study, there will be a qualitative comparative study on the Arabic and English versions of Moustapha Akkad's *Cultural, Linguistic, and Ideological Shifts in The Message* (1976). Skopos Theory (Vermeer, 1989) of the investigation demonstrates that the beneficiaries should also participate in the investigation of an audiovisual translation that achieves communicative purposes that are different from those of other people based on cultural specific contexts and expectations of the audiences. The methodology employed in the study is hence discourse analysis of two major scenes -the Negus Scene and the Farewell Sermon- given their theological and symbolic significance. This would involve an analysis and comparison between the Arabic dialogue (composed by five Arab writers) and the English script by H.A.L. Craig where lexical choice, rhetorical tone, narrative voice, and pragmatic purpose would also be the fate of the two.

primary data considered were the original Arabic and English versions of the films, with special reference to the dialogue and subtitles. Some secondary structures from translation studies will inform the analysis: Nord's (1997) loyalty hypothesis, Hatim and Mason's (1997) ideological filtering, Venuti's (1995) domesticating vs. foreigning, and Chaume's (2012) audiovisual translation model. The Qur'an and Hadith serve as Islamic theology sources which will verify doctrinal accuracy through their use as evidence. Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions theory will help in understanding audience-specific adaptations.

The analytical examples can be classified into five thematic groups which include brotherhood, human rights, equality, anti-racism, economic justice, scriptural authority and eschatology. The study of each example shows how religious content has been handled during translation because it examines the preservation of content and the changes made and the content that was removed from the original text. The study focuses on English translation changes which

include simplifications and omissions because these changes demonstrate the process of cultural and narrative accommodation at a deeper level.

The comparison needed two languages for film production because both Arabic and English required separate independent versions instead of using direct translation from one language to another. The Skopos Theory provided a functionalist framework for analyzing translation as a text which shows how translators choose their translation paths according to their specific target audience needs. The interdisciplinary analysis, which includes translation studies and Islamic theology and cultural communication studies, examines audiovisual translation to see how it creates cross-cultural understanding and religious cinema functions as either a bridge or obstacle between cultures.

The researcher employed a qualitative comparative discourse analysis method to conduct their study. The analysis proceeded through three primary stages. The Arabic and English versions of *The Message* were viewed multiple times to enable the transcription and alignment of selected scene dialogues for comparative analysis. The researcher identified key translation units which contained religious and cultural and theological references because they had to track their shifting content which occurred through three specific processes: retention and adaptation and omission. The researcher evaluated how translation decisions achieved the respective functions of each target version through their analysis of Skopos Theory-based shifts. The researcher selected the Negus scene and the Farewell Sermon based on three factors: (1) their high theological significance in Islamic tradition, (2) the presence of clear differences between the Arabic and English versions, and (3) their relevance to intercultural and communicative functions. The selected data fulfilled criteria that enabled researcher to investigate translation objectives and cultural adaptation processes.

3.2 Analysis of Cultural and Religious Shifts

3.2.1 Comparative Analysis of the Negus Scene

The Negus scene in *The Message* (1976) provides an important focus for interfaith dialogue, putting an asylum request by early Muslims before the Christian king of Abyssinia. The Arabic and English translations show deep theological exegesis differences, cultural representation differences, and different narrative styles

which authors created to appeal to their distinct audiences. The assumption here is based on the translation to the perceived purposive end for the target audience, i.e., Skopos Theory (Vermeer 1989: 174). The section will demonstrate how the filmmakers made adaptations that served either to affirm Islamic identity among Muslim audiences or to sow seeds of cross-cultural understanding among non-Muslims.

3.2.1.1 Theological Nuance and Audience Adaptation

Theological nuance and audience accommodation stand as one point of departure. Ja'far establishes an architectural defense of Islam through his Arabic text which includes a direct quotation of Surah Maryam (19:16-21) in its retelling of the Qur'anic narrative about Jesus' birth. The text establishes its target audience as Muslim readers who possess theological knowledge while it mandates conformity through its depiction of 'Isa as a holy prophet who lacks divine status, which the Arabic text presents as "عبد مثل باقي البشر" ("a servant like other humans") to show his human identity according to Islamic belief. The simplified English version is spoken. The verses which paraphrase the content of the text establish three main themes which include humility and virgin birth and divine mission through their summary of the biblical passage that states "God cast His holy spirit into the womb of a virgin named Mary." The adaptation is polemic-free and in line with that model by Nord (1997:4). The translated English text achieves interfaith understanding through its complete scientific message because all doctrinal wrinkles have been smoothed (Abdul-Raof 2005: 169).

3.2.1.2 Gender Ethics and Human Rights Discourse

The bold demonstrations of gender ethics in the two versions encompass the great cultural distance that separates them. In the Arabic version, Ja'far focuses on Islamic reforms by using expression as: "لهن ما لنا وعليهن ما علينا" (those have what we have; against them we owe what we owe), referring directly to Qur'anic jurisprudence (Quran 4: 32) in order to show how reforms came about in Islam. The Arabic translation directly criticizes pre-Islamic misogyny through its statement that "نبيعهم إذا أبينا الطاعة" ("We sell them if they disobey") which presents Islam as a movement that establishes equal rights for all genders. The Arabic script

contains emotionally persuasive rhetorical appeals through the phrase "أُثْهِينُ الْمَرْأَةَ" ("Do you degrade the woman who carried you in her womb?") which establishes Islamic moral principles for respecting mothers while rejecting patriarchal beliefs. In contrast, the English version rephrases this message within more general human rights rhetoric, stating: "She is different but equal," and foregrounding respect for motherhood in the sentence: "respect in all woman the womb that bore you." These lexical and rhetorical transformations address the Western feminist values (Badran, 2009), as well as Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimension of contrasting strategies of persuasion, which must match the cognitive and moral frameworks of a target audience in that dimension.

3.2.1.3 Depiction of Jesus and the Shared Abrahamic Heritage

And this, in fact, will reflect the calculated comportment of the film to its audience with respect to the portrayal of Jesus and the wider Abrahamic tradition. Ja'far lists the prophets in a sequence according to the Qur'an, encapsulating the statement "إبراهيم، موسى، زكريا، يحيى، والمسيح" which is meant to show Islam's continuation with former revelations. In contrast, the English version treats the statement as "Abraham, Noah, Moses, and Jesus Christ," using terms better known to the Christian audience. The name change from 'Īsā ibn Maryam' (Jesus, son of Mary) to 'Jesus Christ' signifies not just a lexical separation but a theological reposition of diffuse significance-theological pedigree associating with the name as pointed out by Abdul-Raof (2005: 165): religious names are not ideologically neutral but contain intrinsic theological connotations. People from various groups can create better communication through this approach because it helps them understand each other better instead of using it to prove their religious doctrines are superior.

3.2.1.4 Rhetorical and Narrative Shifts

Structures of rhetoric and narrative also differ dramatically. The Arabic version uses official, solemn language in accordance with Islamic oratory practices. Ja'far's description of the pre-Islamic period is filled with rich and evocative language: "كنا أهل جاهلية، نعبد الأصنام، ونأكل الميتة، ونأتي الفواحش، ونقطع الأرحام، "ويأكل القوي منا الضعيف" ("We were a people of ignorance, worshipping idols, eating the flesh of dead animals, committing immoralities, severing family ties, and the

strong among us oppressed the weak"). The English translation is a softer, more narrative version: : "We lived in ignorance of God. We had few earthly laws and no heavenly laws. The strong among us exploited the weak. We lived in corruption... we worshipped idols, and we lived in impurity." Therefore, the consideration of such generalization avoids culturally or idiosyncratically specific criticisms and allows the Islamic message to transcend into a more universal, more palatable moral evolution. Hatim and Mason (1997: 119) refer to such strategies as "ideological filtering," which means that the sociocultural needs of the audience prescribe making translation decisions.

3.2.1.5 Qur'anic Recitation and Linguistic Fidelity

The recitation of Surah Maryam presents an important difference . The classical Arabic recitation of Qur'anic verses has remained unchanged since its inception, which enables listeners to experience the same rhetorical strength that exists between the two versions. The preservation of verbal content functions as a spiritual and artistic element which demonstrates the unique Qur-anic style as the core element of its miraculous qualities (Alhumaid 2015:99). In contrast, the English version paraphrases these verses thus: "Relate in the book the story of Mary... How we sent to her our angel, Gabriel, who said: 'I am a messenger from your God to announce the birth of a holy son to you.'" The psychological effects of the original text have been diminished through the translational process, which has restricted the rhythmic patterns and emotional expressions of the original work. The commentary about Qur'an translation limitations by Abdul-Raof (2005:162) demonstrates this point.

3.2.1.6 Shared Moral Anchors and Final Declaration

The climax in both versions is still same: Negus's words- "والله لا أسلمكم بجبل من ذهب" ("By God, I would not give you up for a mountain of gold"). The line serves as a moment of cosmic justice which transcends religious boundaries. The unchanged translation demonstrates that this moral value exists beyond the boundaries of different languages and religious beliefs. The film establishes its central purpose through this depiction of interfaith reconciliation.

3.2.1.7 Theological and Cultural Adaptation in the Negus Scene

The Negus scene's changes in the comparisons—everything from theology to rhetoric and gendered talk to naming habits—take place because translators use political translation techniques which they learned from Skopos Theory. The Arabic translation connects with Islamic tenets and identity while the English translation provides an inter-culturally accessible portrayal through its subsequent adaptations. The religious film audiovisual translation process shows that its execution goes beyond linguistic transfer because it needs to account for the different ways audiences understand religious content and their various ideological perspectives.

3.3.2 The Farewell Sermon Scene

The Farewell Sermon scene acts as a climax of *The Message* (1976), Prophet Muhammad giving his last public address. The last will of this sermon was pronounced at the period of the last pilgrimage, and it contains within its text Islam's ethical, legal, and spiritual principles. There was debate on the differences of the interpretations given in Arabic and English when they were compared. The differences contrast according to the language and tone of the versions presented, which can be justified in the framework of Skopos Theory (Vermeer, 1989). The sermon purports to provide the religious law and prophetic guidance to a Muslim audience in Arabic, while the English version deviates from that path and refers to it across ethical universality and emotional appeal in order to cater to a Western, presumably non-Muslim audience. The changes are not capricious but represent the communicative purpose of each version in line with Nord's (1997:127) definition of "loyalty" to both the source message and to the target culture.

3.3.2.1 Sanctity of Life, Property, and the Omission of Honor

One of the greatest transformations relates to the sanctity of life and property. The Arabic version emphasizes, "أيها الناس، اسمعوا قولي، فإنني لا أدري لعلي لا ألقاكم بعد عامي" هذا. دماؤكم وأموالكم وأعراضكم عليكم حرام كحرمة يومكم هذا، في شهركم هذا، في بلدكم هذا. This resorts to Qur'anic and Hadith-based discourse, appealing to the holiness of time and space to emphasize the ethical taboo against desecrating others' lives, wealth, and honor. The English version rephrases this as: "Oh, mankind! Listen well! I may not be with you much longer... Your lives and

property are sacred, as the sacredness of this day, this month, and this city,” abandoning the mention of honor ("أعراضكم"). Such reduction is a strategy of domestication (Venuti 1995: 19), in which religiously specific cultural language is replaced with more generic human rights language to receive greater comprehensibility and emotional resonance.

3.3.2.2 Anti-Racism and the Removal of Ethnic References

The anti-racist message of the sermon also shifts dramatically. The Arabic affirmation, "كلکم لأدم وأدم من تراب. لا فضل لعربي على أعجمي إلا بالتقوى," positively resists tribalism and presents a revolutionary spiritual egalitarianism. Here, the Arabic sentence is translated as, “You are all descendants of Adam, and the best of you is he who most fears God” The ethnic difference between Arabs and non-Arabs is suppressed, presumably for avoiding culture clash among Western audiences. This is in accordance with Nord's (1997:34) "cultureme" strategy that prefers to modify source elements which can be off-resonance in the target culture.

3.3.2.3 The Omission of Usury and Islamic Economic Reform

Another important example is the Prophet's announcement of a ban on usury. The Arabic sermon confirms: " وإن كل ربا موضوع، ولكن لكم رؤوس أموالکم، لا تظلمون ولا تُظلمون," which is a concrete Islamic legal reform. However, this idea of jurisprudence concerning riba (usury), is neglected in the English rendition, which again emphasizes justice between people: "Let all your feuds be abolished... Do not oppress and do not be oppressed." From these observations, the shift from economic jurisprudence to generalized moral principles can be observed, thus reinforcing the functional mode of translation cited by Abdul-Raof (2005: 172) who emphasizes that religiously sensitive terms have a high degree of theological and legal implication and are difficult to be transferred across cultural borders.

3.3.2.4 Scriptural Authority and the Omission of the Sunnah

Scriptural authority is another area where theological specificity is abandoned. The Prophet declares in Arabic: " وقد تركت فيکم ما إن اعتصمتم به فلن تضلوا " .بعدي أبداً: کتاب الله وسنة رسوله" This statement bears witness to the Qur'an and Sunnah as the two sources of divine guidance. The English rendering goes: "I have left you a book, revealed by God, the Qur'an, which is light and guide," omitting the

mention of the Sunnah. This might have been done out of a desire to avoid doctrinal complications and coincides with the functionalist aim of simplifying the message for broader reception (Nord 1997: 29).

3.3.2.5. Eschatological Warnings and Softening of Divine Judgment

In both renditions, the sermons keep their apocalyptic menace with slight variations. In the Arabic version, we find the words of menace: "إنكم ستلقون ربكم،" "فيسألکم عن أعمالکم" calling on God's accounting through a formal theological register. The English version-lightens this into a generic moral reckoning: "You will meet your God and He will call you to account for your actions". This change illustrates Venuti's (1995: 20) domestication principle wherein the religious message is translated in accordance with the cognitive and affective paradigms systematized by the receptor community.

3.3.2.6 Omitted Elements: Trust and Prophetic Invocation

Certain significant components were left out of the English translation, such as the Arabic statement, "فمن كانت عنده أمانة فليؤدها إلى من ائتمنه عليها" which reminds believers to return to others what is entrusted to them. This removal of amana from the translated sermon-a culturally and legally weighty term-must be a result of either time constraints or perhaps a sense of its inappropriate application in context. Another striking loss of rhetorical strength from the Arabic was the closing chant, "اللهم هل بلغت؟ اللهم فاشهد" which became an unimpressive "O God, have I delivered the message?" in English, stripping it of the formal overture and performative closure so stylishly inscribed in the original prophetic address.

3.3.2.7 Repositioning of the Qur'anic Verse (5:3)

The Quran 5:3 citation from this sermon, which people commonly relate to, shows its exact English translation as "This day I have perfected your religion for you and completed my favour to you and I have chosen for you Islam as your religion." The English version presents the statement as a narration which follows the sermon yet in Arabic it remained part of the Prophet's final words. The verse got transformed into an epilogue because of the mode changes which show the process of audiovisual translation into narrative rhythm (Chaume 2012: 148).

3.3.2.8. Ethical and Cross-Cultural Mediation in the Farewell Sermon

The Farewell Sermon from *The Message* actually presents a tight dialogue which guarantees both theological fidelity and cultural comprehension. The Arabic messages deliver a religious testimony which Muslim people base on legal and prophetic authority. The Arabic version will explain Islamic doctrines through universal principles which people can comprehend but the English version will show emotional ties and provide ethical guidance to practical knowledge. The developments establish that Skopos Theory treats translation as a target-driven process while audiovisual media uses its power to transform sacred words for the purpose of cross-cultural comprehension.

4. Conclusion

Research examined Moustapha Akkad's bilingual film *The Message* through Skopos Theory by assessing its function as an audiovisual translation. The Negus scene and the Farewell Sermon showed that the Arabic and English versions differed in their function because they contained more than just language differences. The Arabic version achieved its educational skopos through Skopos Theory by using cultural Islamic expressions and Qur'anic references and formal honorifics. The English version used a communicative and intercultural skopos by making theological concepts easier to understand and decreasing culture-specific references and presenting universal ethical values to help non-Muslim audiences comprehend the content. The findings demonstrated that translation decisions depended on the actual purpose of the translation work and the intended audience, which follows the Skopos Theory principle.

The research demonstrated that religious films use audiovisual translation because it allows them to operate at three different levels that include dialogue and narrative framing and character development for their functional adequacy requirements. The Skopos theory states that successful translation results from achieving its communicative goals in the target culture instead of producing identical linguistic translations.

Based on these findings, the study recommendates the translators and filmmakers requires that religious audiovisual content translation needs specific skopoi to be established which should consider the target audience's cultural and

religious background for achieving both accurate and accessible results. The researchers require that Skopos Theory should be tested on bilingual and multilingual religious films in upcoming studies to determine its power to explain purpose-driven translation. The future research on this film should use audience reception studies to determine whether each version successfully achieved its intended skopos.

The study demonstrates that Skopos Theory serves as an effective analytical tool to study how translators change religious narratives through audiovisual translation to create cross-cultural and cross-linguistic understanding.

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