
The Activist Role of Translation in Promoting Cultural Anti-Imperialism: A Historical Analysis of Translations Rendered by Ali Shariati

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ABSTRACT

The activist view regards translation as an influential instrument for furthering large programs of social and political change. Accordingly, this study aimed to investigate the activist role of translation in promoting attitudes against cultural imperialism in Iran with a focus on two translations carried out by Ali Shariati. To achieve this, a historical analysis of the translations was conducted using an exploratory-analytical approach. The data were collected from paratextual sources including the translator's foreword to translations, translatorial comments in sources other than the translated books, biographical records, and news or views about translations based on D'hulst's (2010) questions to investigate the history of translation. The data relevant to the translator and authors were collected and analyzed based on Chesterman's (2009) method of analyzing translators. The data were analyzed using Tymoczko's (2010) ideas on activism in translation. The results indicated that the translations were used as a means to develop ideas against cultural imperialism in Iran via a number of measures and attempts. Moreover, the translations seem to stand in the second stage of activism in a colonial or imperial context tending to reject and oppose imperialism and define an identity based on polarized thinking and binary opposites.

Keywords: Activist translation; Cultural imperialism; Translator studies

INTRODUCTION

Among numerous perspectives viewing translation from different angles, one view regards translation as an instrument of understanding various phenomena of the world. From this viewpoint, translation can be investigated as a means of furthering significant programs of social and political change (Tymoczko, 2010). This view reflects on various uses of translation in contemporary activism and brings translation to the center of social and political arena (Baker, 2015). The notion of activism in translation studies has sometimes been regarded with a negative sense and other times with a more productive and

positive one. The very definition paving the way for a number of investigations in the field of translation studies on activism was provided by Tymoczko (2010) as the manner through which, "translation has been used instrumentally to further large programs of social change, the affiliations translators have had with other social activists, the extent to which translators acting alone have had programmatic motivations for their translation choices, and so forth" (p. 14). One manifestation of the activist role of translation in political arena and bringing about social change is the opposition with imperialism. Cohen (1973) defined imperialism as, "any

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relationship of effective domination or control, political or economic, direct or indirect, of one nation over another". The term imperialism is sometimes used interchangeably with colonialism, however, there are certain differences between the two concepts. Imperialism is usually the attitude and practice of domination over a distant territory while colonialism is "implanting of settlement" and the physical presence of a central power in a periphery (Gilmartin, 2009). Therefore, colonialism mostly refers to physical control but imperialism to the political and financial control whether in a formal or informal manner and is mostly related to the ideological realm. As Young (2015) clarified, imperialism usually operates from the center and it has both ideological as well as financial reasons but colonialism is "simply the development for settlement" (p.54). Accordingly, modern imperialism is no longer defined by borders of the empire but by the imperial relations of domination whether within or outside a nation. Therefore, the new players of power in the modern world build their politics on the basis of different forms of imperialism but are mostly focused on apparently subtler forms including cultural imperialism (Gudova, 2018). As one of the first scholars and the strongest voices to have undertaken the issue of cultural imperialism as the main focus of his studies and works, Schiller (1976) defined cultural imperialism as the processes through which a society, "is brought into the modern world system and how its dominating stratum is to be made into shaping social institutions to promote values and the structure of the dominating center of the system" (p. 9). It is named cultural as the dominating power exerts its authority over the life of those in the nondominant culture and influences their customs, traditions, religion, language and social and moral norms (Tobin, 2007). As French (2003) confessed, in some arguments against cultural imperialism, the role of translation as an essential node in the international network of production and consumption of opinions has been neglected.

Thus, few studies have investigated cultural imperialism in translation. For instance, Adrian (2007) reviewed what he called an anti-

Christian bias in the academy from long before considering translations of the Bible and Christian missions as following imperialistic goals and destroying the receiving cultures. Sometimes the cultural imperialistic studies of translation concentrated on literary translation as Buffery (2007) investigated a huge number of translations of the works by Shakespeare into Catalan and attempted to study the Shakespeare's impact on and reception in Catalonia by considering translation a complicated process of appropriation and reception. He asserted that the translations of Shakespeare's works into Catalan played a significant role in linguistic and cultural reforms of the 20th century and believed Shakespeare was linked to imperialism not for respecting the English empire but for forwarding cultural normality and also universalism.

To the researchers' knowledge, no study has so far been conducted in Iran on the role of translation in cultural imperialism possibly since Iran has apparently never been imperialized. However, it should be taken into account that the country is prone to the effects of subtler forms of imperialism like the cultural one. Hence, the present study attempted to partially fill this gap by analyzing the potential role of translation in developing attitudes against imperialism with a focus on Ali Shariati as a prominent figure of opposing imperialism in Iran part of whose activities were translational. There have been conducted some studies on the translational activities of Shariati but none has considered his taking of translation as a means against imperialism. Farahzad (2017), for instance, in covering the Persian section of reviewing translations of Frantz Fanon in various languages and cultures, investigated the role of Shariati as one of the translators of Fanon and depicted him more as an Islamic revivalist than as a figure against imperialism. Gholami and Abdi (2021) also analyzed translations carried out by Shariati from French into Persian done by an author named Chandelle and proved such author did not exist and Shariati used pseudotranslation to be able to publish his ideas by hiding his identity in the political conditions of the time.

Given that no study has investigated the role of translation in cultural imperialism in Iran and studies of Shariati's translational activities were not also focused on his opposition to imperialism and considering the significant role an activist translation can play in furthering programs of political and social change, this study aimed to investigate the activist role of translation in promoting attitudes against imperialism in Iran focusing on two translations carried out by Ali Shariati. To achieve this objective, the present study sought to answer the following question:

What activist role the two translations made by Ali Shariati attempted to play in promoting ideas against cultural imperialism in Iran?

METHOD

This study was a qualitative descriptive one, which explored the activist role of two translations carried out by Ali Shariati in development of attitudes promoting anti-imperialism in Iran through an exploratory-analytical approach. The data of this study were collected from the translator's introductions to the translations, translatorial commentaries, biographical records, and comments and news on the works. This study used a triangulation of methods for collection and analysis of data including D'hulst's (2010) set of questions to analyze history of translation, Chesterman's (2009) method of analyzing translators and Tymoczko's (2010) ideas on activism in translation.

The set of questions proposed by D'hulst (2010) included (1) *Who*, (2) *What*, (3) *Where*, (4) *With whose help*, (5) *Why*, (6) *How*, (7) *When* and (8) *With what effect*. In accordance with the objective of this study, "what", "who", "where" and "when" questions from this list were used for collecting data and "why" and "with what effect" questions were addressed in data analysis. Accordingly, the information relevant to the title of the original work, the title of the translated work and if the translation was a highly circulated one (what), the biography of the author and the biography of the translator (who), the date and place of publication of the original work and the date and place of publication of translation (when & where) were

collected. The data relevant to "who" question were analyzed using Chesterman's (2009) method which included sociological, cultural and cognitive dimensions of the study of translator. Due to lack of access to the translator, the cognitive dimension was excluded. As far as the cultural branch was concerned, the values, ethics, ideologies and traditions that help analyze the role and influence of translators were investigated. For the sociological branch, the observable behavior of translator, his social network, social status, working processes, relations and affiliations with other groups and schools of thought and so on were investigated. Data analysis was carried out based on the reason(s) why the work was translated (why) and the way translation was received in target culture (with what effect).

Finally, the information relevant to anti-imperialist stance of the original work was analyzed using Tymoczko's (2010) model on activism in translation manifested through three stages. Based on her model, in the initial stage, the dominated or as here applies the potentially imperialized culture incorporates the ideas and values of the imperializing culture. In the second stage, these very values and ideas are gradually rejected and the culture exposed to imperialism tries to define its identity albeit in accordance with the polar oppositions to the imperializing culture. Eventually, in the final stage, resistance to imperial power starts and manifests itself most importantly through defining an autonomous identity beyond the binary opposites and polarized thinking.

RESULTS

This study investigated the activist role of translation in development of ideas aimed to oppose and showed his opposition via various means and given that some of his affairs to further his anti-imperialist stance were translational, this study focused on two activist translations carried out by Ali Shariati to oppose imperialism. For this purpose, the data relevant to these two translations were collected from paratextual resources and presented here.

‘What’, ‘Where’ and ‘When’ Questions: Overview of Translations

The following two translations were selected for analysis in this study due to their probable anti-imperialist theme and reasons behind translation. Moreover, both translations were among the highly circulated works in Iran attracting the attention of a wide audience as would be further clarified below.

Abouzar Ghaffari, Socialist faithful (‘*Abuzar-e Ğāfāri Socialist-e Xodāparast*’) translated from Arabic into Persian

Author: Abdal Hamid Judah Sahhar

Date of publication of original: 1921

Title of the Original work: *Abouzar Ghaffari Salman the Pure* (‘*Salmān-e Pāk*’) translated from French to Persian

Author: Louis Massignon

Date of publication of original: 1934

Title of the Original work: *Salman pak et les pre'mices spirituelles de l'Islam Iranian* (‘*Salman Pak and the Spiritual Beginnings of Iranian Islam*’) (*Salmān-e Pāk va Noxostin Šokufehā-ye M'anavi-ye Eslām dar Irān*)

The translation of *Abouzar Ghaffari* by Ali Shariati is regarded among the highly circulated works of translation in Iran as it has been published by more than 10 publications including Center for Islamic Truth Dissemination in Mashhad (1353), Pegah Publications in Mashhad (1958) reprinted four times, Toos Publications in Mashhad (1958), Shahadat Publications in Tehran (1969) reprinted four times, Elham Publications in Tehran (1982) reprinted 14 times and Shariati Cultural Foundation in Tehran (2012) reprinted 16 times. Moreover, the book has been published by different names like *Abouzar a Man of Rabatha* published by Roodaki Publications in Tehran (1977) or as research articles like the one published in Payām-e Dānešju (1995). The book has also been adapted into a play and performed two times in 1970 and 1972 the script of which has been published in 2003 in a book containing an interview with Iraj Saghiri, the Iranian director and actor, who cooperated in turning the book into a play.

Shariati’s translation of *Salman the Pure* is also among highly circulated translations as it has been reprinted several times under two titles, *Salman the Pure* and *Salman Pak and the Spiritual Beginnings of Iranian Islam*, by a number of different publications. It has first been published in 1964 by Toos Publications in Mashhad and has been reprinted in Qom by Hor Publications. Iran Javan Publications has republished the translation in 2010 and Chapakhsh Publications in Tehran has reprinted this translation three times since 2006. It is worth noting that the book has also been translated by Ebrahim Khalili (*Salman the Pure* in 1977) and Ali Alavi (*Salman the Persian*, n.d.).

‘Who’ Question (Author)

Abdal Hamid Judah Sahhar

Sociological dimension

Abdal Hamid Judah Sahhar (1913-1974) was an Egyptian writer, literary figure, playwright and screenwriter. He has written a number of great stories and short stories mostly with a focus on Islam and the life of great Islamic figures including the Holy Prophet most of which have been translated into Persian. In his modern social novels, he attempted to extensively and purposefully depict his protagonists as truly religious and positive rather than reactionary, naïve and without any positive social influence (Saber & Yegani, 2013). His other works translated into Persian were mostly of a religious theme like *Cain and Abel*, *Battle of Uhud*, *Battle of the Ditch* (*Al-Khandaq*), *Birth of the Prophet*, etc. His famous work *The Economic Foundations of Islam*, was translated into Persian by Mohammad Taghi Shariati, the father of Ali Shariati, who also encouraged him to translate *Abouzar Ghaffari* into Persian in his youth as his first translation.

Cultural Dimension

Concerning his ideologies, governing beliefs and values, what is manifest from his ideas depicted in his books is his fierce opposition with his country, Egypt, being under the colonial rule. In his attempts to condemn the colonization of Egypt, he wrote, “Since I was born, Egypt has not experienced any time of relief. It suffered the disasters of the First World

War, and as soon as the war ended, Britain imposed its protectorship over the country” (as cited in Osman, 2014). His anti-colonial views have always been intertwined with his anti-Jewish stance as he strongly reprimanded his Jewish countrymen for feeling proud of being under the colonial rule of France or Britain.

Louis Massignon

Sociological Dimension

Louis Massignon was born on July 25, 1883 in Nogent-sur-Marne, Paris, France and died on October 31, 1962. He was a Catholic scholar of Islam. Since he was a schoolboy, Louis Massignon became interested in the “Orient” and after finishing high school in 1901 had his first trip to Algiers which was the beginning of his acquaintance with the Islamic world. His later travel to Morocco in 1904 was also a motivation to studying the Arabic language. He continued his studies at the Sorbonne and was mostly interested in history and geography with a focus on the East including India, the Arab world and the Islamic world. He also had the chance to visit Cairo in 1906 and study at the French Archeological Institute there which led to the strengthening of his thirst to understand the Islamic world. His next travel to Iraq in 1907 for historical research provided him with the opportunity to more extensively study the Arabic texts and manuscripts and also explore Baghdad and its Islamic culture. There, he experienced a critical situation of physical illness together with moral despair which later became his most significant spiritual life experience helping him discover God (Waardenburg, 2005). As he rediscovered God in a Muslim context and within the Islamic spirituality, he became more interested in Islam and in his return to Paris was appointed as the chairman of Muslim Sociology and Sociography at the Collège de France and conducted a number of researches on subjects relevant to Islam (Francesca, 2011). He even wrote his doctoral thesis on Hallaj, an Iranian Muslim accused of and executed for heresy and became particularly interested in Islamic mysticism. Most of his research on Islam continued on mysticism but he also wrote some booklets on Islam for a wider public audience. His articles on Islam and spirituality revolved

around certain figures besides Hallaj like Salman, the first Persian Muslim, and Fatima, the daughter of the Prophet of Islam, and or around certain events like Mubāhelah, the trial by ordeal, which was the cornerstone for his further ideas on reconciliation among Muslims and Christians. Moreover, he actively cooperated with a French journal dedicated to the studies of Islam and Muslims, *Revue du Monde Musulman*, and also published an encyclopedic handbook of the Muslim world which contained precise information on Muslim countries specially colonized ones (Waardenburg, 2005). After World War II, his scholarly attempts to conduct research on Islam were more inclined toward political actions taken to help Muslims. He committed himself particularly to support Arabs in Palestine, political prisoners in Madagascar and the colonized populations in Algeria.

Cultural Dimension

Louis Massignon is regarded as one of the great scholars and at the same time political activists of his time. His attempts to fight against imperialism and injustice and specially those aimed at bringing peace to Algeria accused him as “anti-French” and even led to his imprisonment (Gude, 1996). Massignon was also known for his stands in support of the Palestinians as well as the movements for independence from French colonialism in Maghreb. He became “a strong supporter of decolonisation because of his commitment against injustice in [France’s] colonies and protectorates” (Pénicaud, 2020, p. 432). As confessed by one of his closest friends, Henri Laoust, he was among the first, to be concerned with the problem of labor in contemporary Islam at a moment when the old corporations were being carried away by the disintegrating influence of Western penetration (Laoust, 1964, p. 304). Although Louis Massignon was originally French, he supported Algerian War of Independence at times even against his country of origin. In the translator’s introduction to translation of *Salman the Pure*, Shariati who was a student of Massignon at Sorbonne University, asserted Massignon’s contributions to raising awareness among and encouraging Algerians imprisoned in France to

fight for their independence by personally meeting the Muslim prisoners.

His main concern was the destiny of poor Muslim nations and he took his powerful pen, like the sword of the great warriors of early Islam, against the accusations of western biased politicians and priests to defend the truth of Islam and the reputation of the East (Massignon, 1964, p. 14).

As part of his later researches on Islam, Massignon was particularly focused on Salman and Fatima two central figures of Shiism. It was attempted by a number of scholars to show Salman was not a genuine figure and his character was so made as a legend to fulfill certain goals of Shia ideology. Massignon, however, resorted to scientific methods and wrote *Salman the Pure* to prove Salman and also praise his way of living and character (Barani & Hossein Ouf, 2018; Laoust, 1964). Investigating the life and character of Fatima was also one of his concerns as he found it interesting that the Prophet associated her with Mubāhela which led to the first compromise between Christians and Muslims. Despite his efforts, his research on Fatima was not completed and he recommended a number of his students and friends to continue these studies (Laoust, 1964). Ali Shariati reported the results of Massignon's studies on Fatima, with his own collaboration, as a series of lectures to which he added his own ideas. The lectures were later published as a book entitled *Fatima is Fatima (Fātemeh Fātemeh Ast)*. As the alienation of the imperialized nations from their own identity was a policy adopted by imperial and colonial powers, Massignon always urged Muslims, specially the young ones who were his students, to defend their identity against cultural invasion of the west and asked them to profoundly study their own religion, civilization and history (Barani & Hossein Ouf, 2018). He defended people who were not of his own origin or religion and followed Gandhi as a role model. The last years of his life, he became a public protest figure shouting for justice in defense of the Palestinians, the Moroccan Sultan exiled to Madagascar and the Muslim prisoners in Algerian war against

France, his country of origin (Waardenburg, 2005).

'Who' Question (Translator)

Ali Shariati

Sociological Dimension

Ali Shariati was born in 1933 in Mazinan, a village in Razavi Khorasan Province, north-eastern Iran. His father, Mohammad Taqi Shariati, was an Islamic scholar and the founder of the Centre for the Propagation of Islamic Truths in Mashhad who encouraged Shariati to carry out his first translation of the life of Abouzar Ghaffari (Rahnema, 1998). He started publicizing his ideas and reflecting the thoughts under the influence of modernist scholars of the world by writing articles for *Khorasan*, the daily newspaper of Mashhad. In 1952, when he was a school teacher, he founded the *Islamic Students' Association* for which he was arrested. Afterwards, as he joined the National Front during the Mosaddegh's nationalization movement, Shariati was arrested again (Khosrokhavar, 2020). Nevertheless, he could gain the scholarship for France and was a student of Louis Massignon at the Sorbonne university. There, he cooperated in founding the Freedom Movement of Iran as an opposition circle. He attempted to establish ties between Freedom Movement of Iran and similar movements for freedom and independence in other countries. For instance, he wrote articles for the Algerian newspaper, *El Moudjahid* and participated in a demonstration in honor of Patrice Lumumba, the politician and independence leader of Congo (Krais, 2021). In 1964, he returned to Iran and was arrested for his political activities in France. After a few weeks he was released from the prison and then started teaching at the University of Mashhad and lecturing at Hosseiniyeh Ershad, a religious institute in Tehran. Through these lectures he redefined Islam and depicted it as a revolutionary religion and attained immense popularity particularly among young university students. These lectures, though enormously popular among people, led to his frequent arrests and imprisonments as well as exile (Akhavi, 2018). His books and articles as well as lectures mostly collected and turned into

books, have been translated into a number of languages including French, English, German, Italian, Arabic, Turkish etc.

Cultural Dimension

One of the main contributions of Ali Shariati was his proposal of the theory of “the Return to the Self” which was posed as a reaction to or a preventive means against imperialism. This ideology formed the basis of some of his translations taken as an activist tool to promote the anti-imperialist attitudes. As the name suggests, this theory mainly focuses on “returning to self by reviving and revitalizing the native culture and relying on the historical and spiritual origins of one’s own society” (Shariati, 1978, p. 243). To achieve this, it is essential to fight against western cultural invasion or Westoxification by stopping mere blind imitation from the west. One of the principles of returning to self is, “we should not do exactly what the foreigners do, or accept as truth what they say. We ourselves need to think and feel independent” (Shariati, 1978, p. 243). Shariati (1978) believed the fight against imperialism is possible only if a nation’s cultural identity is discovered and established. In Iran, this cultural identity has been intertwined with Islam and thus he sought for defining a religious identity in returning to self. Shariati (1978) attempted to define “self” regarding the mutual interconnection between an individual and the society in which he/she lives. By “self”, he meant the one shaped within the society as he believed one’s identity is the reflection of the society’s cultural characteristics. Thus, every individual’s personal identity is formed by the set of characteristics defined by historical and social structure of the society. One individual within the society can influence the formation of this identity based on his/her level of awareness and power to exert influence. By awareness, he meant not the one exported and instilled by west like a good to be consumed by the intellectuals but the self-reliant one based on a nation’s history, norms and problems. As such, returning to self is based on an awareness of one’s own nation’s social, cultural and historical conditions not merely returning to

time-honored traditions of any type. On the contrary, this return to self might distinguish some of the age-old untrue traditions and eradicate them totally, thus, is not of a retrospective and reactionary nature. Hence, returning to self in the context of the Iranian society is returning to the Iranian and Islamic values defined by the society itself not those imposed by the west. Returning to the Islamic self is returning to the Islamic culture and ideology not as an inherited tradition or an existing system or set of beliefs but as an ideology that raises awareness and encourages movement. By Islam, he emphasized the one out of repetitive and unconsciously followed traditions that are the main cause of decline; but the one that is an awareness-raising, informative and enlightening ideology that promotes oppositions against wrongs and resistance against imperialism. For the same reasons, he translated the biographies of Salman and Abouzar as two prominent figures of Islam elaborated further in this study.

DISCUSSION

This study attempted to analyze the activist role translation can play in developing and disseminating attitudes against imperialism. For this purpose, two translations by Ali Shariati were investigated as an instance of activist translations carried out by an activist translator. To reveal if these translations were taken as a means to oppose imperialism and also to indicate if in reality this goal was achieved, why and with what effect questions proposed by D’hulst (2010) are discussed. Furthermore, various translational actions, trends, methods and approaches were taken to achieve cultural anti-imperialistic goals. Thus, these measures are also discussed here to clarify at which stage of activism these two translations seem to stand based on Tymoczko’s model (2010).

‘Why’ Question

In the translator’s introduction to the translation of *Abouzar Ghaffari*, Ali Shariati called his work both a translation and a rewriting at the same time due to a number of intentional changes made to this free translation. He

admitted the reason why he translated the book was assuming an ethical, intellectual and social responsibility for himself (Judah Sahhar, 1958, p. 15). Moreover, in elaborating his theory of “the Return to the Self” almost twenty years after publishing the first translation of *Abouzar Ghaffari*, Shariati (1978) explained western attempts to misrepresent Iranian and Islamic culture and civilization so as to downgrade it in the eyes of the Iranians and subsequently develop imperialism. Then, he explained the case of *Abouzar Ghaffari* as an example of a revolutionary figure known by the Europeans. Nonetheless, when the same person was introduced to the Iranian society through translation, the youth and the intellectuals considered the translator a reactionary one against progress and reformation. He believed, as *Abouzar* belonged to the Iranian and Islamic self which was previously devaluated by the followers of imperialist goals, any attempt to introduce him and make him truly known within the Iranian society was suppressed. His translation of the biography of *Abouzar Ghaffari* was an endeavor to compensate for this and let this revolutionary figure of Islam be known to an Islamic country. The subsequent publications of this translation received a great attention and indicated his success in fulfilling this responsibility. He also mentioned his aim for translating this work was to introduce a role model who moved against tyranny. “The goal was to convey this message of Abouzar wondering why people who can find no food to survive don’t rebel against the oppressors [. . .] the aim was to raise religious and social awareness and self-consciousness among people (Shariati, 1978, p. 308)”.

The phrase, “socialist faithful” was added to the title of the original reflecting the view of the translator to let Abouzar be known as a revolutionary figure against oppression and imperialism. Shariati got the idea of scientific or religious socialism, a new reading of a new type of socialism, from Mohammad Nakhshab, the founder of God-worshipping socialists as well as Judah Sahhar, the main author of *Abouzar Ghaffari*. Thus, translation of this book with the abovementioned phrase added to the title was aimed to render this new view of

socialism within the Iranian society with the introduction of a religious figure as a revolutionary socialist one to give the Iranians a role model (Mostazafin Foundation, 2011, p. 65).

In the introduction to translation of *Salman the Pure*, the translator pointed out the imperial justification that as eastern primitive cultures are devoid of logic and original thoughts, the west aims to donate them culture and civilization. Shariati strongly admonished these thoughts and emphasized the eastern countries are of certain perceptions the west is not even able to understand. Thus, he translated the biography of Salman to demonstrate there are peculiar characters within the eastern and Islamic culture, suggesting that these cultures do not need western imperializing culture and civilization (Massignon, 1964).

Shariati (1978) classified modernism into two types. The first one is just superficial modernism and consumerism followed by common people and the other is modernization of thought and worldview pursued by elites. Then, he defined what the west has offered the world in the name of modernized civilization is of the first type acting as an instrument of imperialism. However, in his theory of “the return to the self”, civilization is not the one bestowed upon the third world by the imperializing west but what causes self-consciousness. He further exemplified the civilization the holy prophet Muhammad (PBHU) brought as the sample of a real civilization that turned an uncultured and underdeveloped nation into the one resisting and fighting against imperial powers of the world. For him, unlike modernism, civilization could not be imported and must grow from within a society after long years of endeavor. He finally concluded making civilization equals death of colonialism while modernism is preparing new pray for foreign capitalist hunters. Then, he compared the method adopted by imperial powers to subjugate Iran and other third world countries like the Arabs and Africans. For other countries, it is denial of civilization that justifies imperialism i.e. it is instilled in the minds of these nations that as you have no civilization, the west bestows you

with culture and civilization so as to help you progress. In the case of Iran, as the civilization cannot be denied, they attempt to misrepresent the existing civilization and tarnish its image. As a result, “our ‘self’ is so repulsive in our eyes and anyone attributed to this ‘self’ and to our history, our culture and our religion whether as a belief or as an expert in science is accused among the youth” (Shariati, 1978, p. 24). Moreover, in the introduction to his translation of *Salman the Pure*, Shariati reminded that our eastern culture is not primitive and without logic. Hence, the justification of western imperialism to give the imperialized nations a true rational culture is not acceptable. He further added that these so-called primitive cultures have certain perceptions the west is not able to decipher (Massignon, 1964). That sounds to be another reason why he attempted to translate the biographies of Salman and Abouzar as they belong to the “self” that is denigrated in the eyes of the young and by so doing tried to indicate the high status of eastern cultures and their valuable thoughts and characters in an activist translational reaction.

‘With What Effect’ Question

Concerning the reception of translation by the target audience, although both translations were among the highly circulated and multiply reprinted books, the translation of *Salman the Pure*, as condemned by the translator himself in his other authorial book, seems not to have received a positive feedback at the lifetime of the translator whereas the original work in French presented as a speech drew attention of the French audience. Shariati (1978, p. 63) complained that the work was not acknowledged as expected and not even mentioned in the list of translated works of the year as it was translated by a young man.

Regarding the translation of Abouzar, in his book written on the theory of the return to the self, Shariati (1978) clarified he was in doubt whether to translate the works of Sartre or the biography of Abouzar. He decided to do the second as it was Abouzar whose words were heard as verses of holy books and formed part of the people’s belief. Moreover, he was both a

prominent religious figure and a great man of revolutions against poverty, discrimination, capitalism and dictatorship. The translator expressed his satisfaction with his choice as he confessed a great number of people read this translation in 5 subsequent publications. As it was mentioned earlier, there were even more reprints of this translation after the translator’s comment which reveals the translation reached a broad audience. The translated book was also adapted into a play, as mentioned in the previous section. After the play was performed, the audience who watched Abouzar for the first time as a revolutionary figure, protested in the street against the oppression of the government of the time. A number of documents are also available about the censorship imposed upon the publication of this book specially before the Islamic Revolution in Iran (in 1978) all indicating the book was not only a highly circulated one but also received great attention in many different fields.

The methods and measures taken to develop anti-imperialist ideas by means of translation can also indicate the possible effect of translation on the target community. The following is a description of such methods and attempts adopted by Shariati in conducting the aforementioned two translations to promote ideas against cultural anti-imperialism:

- Translation of biographies of great anti-imperialist figures of the world

One of the approaches Shariati took in advancing opposition to imperialism, besides his other translations, was translating biographies of characters whose life was dedicated to fight against imperialism and tyranny. He translated *Salman the Pure* and *Abouzar Ghaffari* as the main characters in these biographies sought anti-imperialist goals in their lives. In the introduction to translation of *Abouzar Ghaffari, Socialist faithful*, Shariati explained his translation was in praise of a man of desert, resistance, bravery and fight and revolution (Judah Sahhar, 1958, p. 17). He intentionally selected those figures who belonged to the Islamic and Iranian self so as to stand against the imperialist ideas of denial of eastern civilization or its misrepresentation and

downgrade. As pointed out earlier, Shariati mentioned in his introduction to both these translations that one of his aims was to show within eastern civilizations exist some characters the west is not even able to decipher.

- Translation of works from anti-imperialist authors

There was a tendency to select those books for translation whose authors had anti-imperialist thoughts and/or took measures against imperialism as reflected in their biographies and descriptions of their professional life. As elaborated in results section, Judah Sahhar belonged to the Islamic world and had a number of works on Islam, strongly opposed colonization of Egypt and held anti-Jewish opinions as believed Jews supported and welcomed colonization. Louis Massignon was also a great scholar of Islam who dedicated his life to study Islamic thoughts, characters (Hallaj, Salman, Fatima), events as well as mysticism; was profoundly interested in the east and travelled to important Islamic countries including Iraq, Egypt, Iran, Morocco and Algeria; opposed colonialism, imperialism and oppression against people of Palestine, Maghreb and even Algeria against his country of origin; attempted to raise awareness among people of these countries and their political activists and prisoners; encouraged their youth, including Shariati as his student, to defend their own identity against imperialism and became the voice of the imperialized and the oppressed.

- Anti-imperialist and activist translator

The study of the cultural and sociological dimensions based on the model proposed by Chesterman (2009), the results of which presented under who question in previous section, indicated that Shariati himself was an activist figure against imperialism. His proposal of the theory of “the return to self” as a means against imperialism, opposition to Westoxification, his cooperation with the National Front and Freedom Movement of Iran, his support from Algeria during the war for independence against imperialism of France together with his professor Massignon, his revolutionary lectures at Hosseiniyeh Ershad

and several imprisonments due to political activities all indicate that Shariati was an activist translator against imperialism particularly of cultural type.

- Introducing role models belonging to one’s self through translation

In an introduction to a book on the life of *Hujr ibn Adi*, Shariati complained about Iranian’s insufficient attention to their outstanding role models particularly the prominent figures of Islam. He regarded it as a weakness for Iranian Shias who must resort to books written by foreigners to know about great characters of Islam. He then regarded his translations of the biographies of Salman and Abouzar as a partial compensation (Akbari Marznak, 1970).

- Using special methods of translation aimed to follow anti-imperialist goals

Ali Shariati, as a translator against western imperialism, believed literal and faithful translations that merely transfer the text from one language into another without any explanation (especially when translating texts of humanities with a subjective nature and multiple layers of meaning) are not sufficient for giving the Iranian audience an adequate knowledge of the ideas presented and opposing imperialism (Shariati, 1978, p. 250). Hence, he asserted in his introduction to the translation of *Abouzar Ghaffari* that he carried out not a literal but a free translation and the resulted work was not merely a translation in the strict sense of the word but a rewriting (Judah Sahhar, 1958).

- Translation of works from third world rather than from the west:

One way to oppose cultural imperialism which is usually imposed by west is to avoid translating western literary works so as to prevent the prevalence of imperialist ideas in the target society and instead attempting to translate works from the cultures having status similar to the country at risk of being imperialized i.e. the so called third world. Accordingly, Shariati (1978) highlighted the need to recognize and then introduce eastern and Islamic role models. As previously

mentioned, when he was in doubt whether to translate the biography of Abouzar or works of Jean-Paul Sartre, he chose the first believing that those from the west suffer from what we do not. The problems Sartre and his society encounter are different from ours and we need to know about those whose concerns and problems are similar to ours. In translating Abouzar, both the author and the main character of the came from the Islamic world and in translating Salman, the main character belonged to the translator's country of origin and religion.

Concerning the research question on the activist role of these two translations in opposing cultural imperialism in Iran and based on the analysis of "why" and "with what effect" questions as well as identified methods and attempts, these two translations seem to stand in the second stage of activism in translation in a colonial or imperial context as clarified by Tymoczko (2010). In this stage, attempts were made to reject imperialism and help define an identity but still this resistance did not contribute to define an autonomous identity beyond the binary opposites and polarized thinking.

CONCLUSION

In an attempt to follow the upcoming translator turn in translation studies, this study investigated two translations done by Ali Shariati on biographies of Salman and Abouzar based on the analysis of paratextual resources. One approach to the study of history is taking small units like particular events, eras or individuals as the object of study. This small-scale investigation is known as microhistory proposed as a reaction to mainstream and general trend always taking major events and individuals into account (Ginzburg, Tedeschi, & Tedeschi, 1993). This approach has also been applied in translation studies (Munday, 2014) and as suggested by Atefmehr and Farahzad (2021) can help analyze neglected translations, translators, events and institutions. The role of Ali Shariati as a translator has largely been neglected specially regarding the activist influence he intended to have on opposing cultural imperialism in Iran. This is why the

present study concentrated on analyzing his translations as a case undertaken in a microhistorical analysis. The results of this study indicated that the two translations of biographies of Salman and Abouzar made by Ali Shariati were carried out as an activist means to develop attitudes against cultural imperialism. This was reflected in a number of measures and methods adopted by Shariati the most important of which was to select the biographies of two great anti-imperialist figures of the world to provide a role model for opposing cultural imperialism. Interestingly, these anti-imperialist figures were introduced by anti-imperialist authors, Judah Sahhar and Massignon which further emphasizes the translator's endeavors to obtain his activist goals by means of translation. The translator himself was also an anti-imperialist figure as elaborated in the analysis of the cultural and sociological dimensions of the study of translator. Besides, Shariati's emphasis on the concept of self and his call for translating role models belonging to one's self and coming from the third world further demonstrate his translational activism. This stance was also reflected in his method of translating which was explicitly clarified in his preface to one of the translations to be following his activist ideas against domination of powers of the world over third world cultures. These results suggested that even one translator can attempt to take translation as an activist means to contribute in furthering big programs of social change. Moreover, this translational activity sounds to stand in the second stage of activist translation in colonial or imperial context. It has moved against the first stage i.e. accepting imperialism and has tried to start opposing this imperialism by means of translation. Nevertheless, this opposition still takes place within the polarized thinking and binary opposites and has not yet been successful in defining an autonomous identity as implied by the third stage. The results of this study can help better clarify the activist role translation can play in furthering large programs of political and social change beyond merely being a means of communication. As this study was limited to only two translations by one translator, the

results cannot be generalized to the whole trend of anti-imperialism in Iran, hence, further studies are recommended to be conducted in a larger scale to shed light on the role of translation in promoting ideas against cultural imperialism in Iran.

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