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## **Translation of Anthroponyms in Children's Cartoons: A Comparative Analysis of English Dialogues and Persian Subtitles**

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### **Abstract**

The impact of animated cartoons on children has already been emphasized by quite a number of researchers. The present study aimed to investigate the strategies Iranian subtitlers of English animated cartoons used in rendering English anthroponyms in cartoons. To this aim, two theoretical frameworks were employed: Van Coillie's Model of Translating Proper Names and Fernandes's Model of Proper Names Translation. The aim was to find which strategies were the most prevalently used by Iranian subtitlers of cartoons and to see which model fitted these attempts best. Five cartoons were investigated: Ben 10, Ninja Turtles, Kung Fu Panda, Spider Man, and Dream Works Dragons. Through a qualitative content analysis, distribution of strategies was found and reported in frequencies and percentages. They were cross-compared between the two models. The results showed that quite a few strategies of each model were used. The only strategy, which was dominantly used by Iranian subtitlers in all cartoons was termed as Reproduction or Copy which was the least demanding on the part of the translator. Many strategies were left unapplied which could be explained by Iranian subtitlers' sheer unawareness of a variety of strategies for translating anthroponyms.

**Keywords:** Anthroponym, Cartoons, Translation

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### **INTRODUCTION**

In the age of globalization, digitalization, and dominance of media, audiovisual translation (AVT) can play an increasingly important role in communication across cultures and languages. Movie is a mass medium and translated movies are the only kind of translations, which are received by a mass audience. Children have

become much more interested in cartoons over many years. Despite being an important part of the audiovisual market, translation of cartoons still lacks scholarly attention in Iran. Children's literature translation including animated cartoons is a specific kind of translation, which need to consider cognitive and linguistic abilities of its recipient i.e. the child (Klingberg, 1986).

Translation of proper nouns, especially anthroponyms, is one of the most difficult areas

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facing a translator particularly while subtitling cartoons. Simply, anthroponyms are not similar to ordinary words whose translation can be easily found in dictionaries. If translators want their target language text to be accepted and understood by their readers, they should behave in accordance with what is expected and meaningful in the target culture (Albin, 2003). The problem of replacing or translating names can be interpreted not only as a purely linguistic matter but also as psychological, literary, cognitive and so on.

Replacing foreign names with more familiar ones shows a lack of respect toward other cultures. This also deprives child readers of the chance to realize the wealth of cultural diversity that surrounds them (Yamazaki, 2002). Translators must be aware of the realm of childhood adapting names to the target culture. Therefore, the lower the age, the less knowledge of the world the audience has. Audience's lack of background knowledge gets often problematic. As a result, close attention must be paid to movies, which are to be translated for young children. Accordingly, translators usually use different strategies to deal with anthroponyms and these strategies can engender different communicative effects on the respective audience. These strategies have been less explored in the body of related literature. The gap is further extended to the realm of animated series. Though cartoon series involve children for a considerably longer time and consequently affect children's mind and language in the long run, they have been less investigated as far as the quality of subtitles is concerned especially in the Iranian context (Yamazaki, 2002). Considering the above-mentioned issues, the present research decided to fill the gap and address the following questions:

1- Which strategies and in what distribution were used in translating anthroponyms by Iranian subtitlers of English cartoons based on Van Coillie's model of translating proper names?

2- Which strategies and in what distribution were used in translating anthroponyms by Iranian subtitlers of English cartoons based on Fernandes's model of proper names translation?

3- Which model of translating proper names best describes the translation of English anthroponyms to Persian by Iranian subtitlers of cartoons or should an eclectic approach be proposed?

The following section discusses some of the related literature on translation of proper names, child literature and subtitles. Names in translated literature have an additional function, namely, they reveal the existence of a 'cultural other' (Hejwowski, 2004), and signal the reader that the text originated in a different culture. Abdolmaleki (2012) believed that two factors contribute to the translation of proper nouns. The purpose of the text and the intended audience were the key factors. In order to provide an effective translation, it is necessary for the translator to get familiar with characterization as well as literary devices, which are used in both languages (Abdolmaleki, 2012).

Newmark (1986) stated that names should not be translated except of course in allegories. Newmark's position was underlined in some other work of research stating that only the characters' names have to be translated in truly allegorical works (Schogt, 1988). He also indicated that in comedies, allegories, fairy tales and some children's stories, names are translated. Therefore, children's literature is habitually translated freely, adapted and manipulated in many ways (France, 2000; Rudvin, 1994). Klingberg (1986) did not seem to be interested in domestication. In relation to personal names, he maintained that personal names without any special meanings should not be altered.

Fernandez (2006) outlined a translation-oriented parametrical proposal for contrastive analysis taking account of micro and macro linguistic factors. Bertills (2003) also claimed that the main dilemma of translating proper names in

literature derives from their complicated nature, as they are culture-specific items. A good translation needs to take into account both the linguistic and textual aspects of the name as well as their role in the narrative and in the target language (Bertills, 2003).

Van Coillie (2006) pointed out that names are holy, but not so in children's books, where there seems to be a widespread habit of adapting names to the target culture. Iran is not an exception. Increasing the translation of children's literature in Iran, Iranian kids and youngsters are used to reading translated books but with unfamiliar foreign names.

As for subtitling, it is defined as the translation of the spoken (or written) source text of an audiovisual product, usually at the bottom of the screen (Delabastila, 1989; Gottlieb, 1994; Gottlieb, 1998; Luyken, 1991). Gambier (1994) defined subtitling as transferring language from longer units to shorter ones, from spoken language to written text, from one language to another. He added an interpretation of verbal speech combined with numerous other cultural and socio-symbolic signs or with other types of semiotic systems.

In terms of research, the didactic potential of subtitling to learn and consolidate a foreign language has been a particularly active line of enquiry in recent times (Cintas, 2009). In an attempt to bolster their quantitative findings and gain an insight into the cognitive efforts presupposed by reading subtitles, some researchers are resorting to the application of new methodologies and tools, including corpus studies and eye-tracking. Since the late 1990s, subtitling has been a most inspiring field in which to conduct research and more recently also for netizens to communicate in cyberspace. The latest research study on the translation of anthroponyms in subti-

ties was conducted by Judickaitė-Pašvenskienė (2013). In this study, a comparative analysis was done of English dialogue and Lithuanian subtitles with consideration to anthroponym translation in five children's cartoons. The aim of this study was to discover the most frequently used translation strategies to subtitle anthroponyms, to find out if the translation of anthroponyms with no semantic meaning was governed by the rules proposed by the State Language Commission and whether the translation of semantically meaningful names was governed by the translation tendencies noted by Lithuanian subtitlers and scholars. The analysis showed that the dominant strategy for the rendering of the source language anthroponyms, which carry semantic meaning, was *translation*, while the majority of anthroponyms with no semantic meaning were *transcribed* and Lithuanian inflections were added. Thus, it could be claimed that the translation of semantically meaningful anthroponyms was governed by the prevailing tendencies in Lithuania, while the translation of anthroponyms with no semantic meaning was governed by the rules proposed by the State Language Commission (Judickaitė-Pašvenskienė, 2013).

## METHODS

### Materials

The material for the study consisted of five children's animated series released in the USA or the UK. There were two criteria in choosing the series; the cartoons needed to be relatively new (Late 1900s until now) and that they had to be popular and well-received by the public. The corpus for the analysis was comprised of English dialogues and Persian subtitles that appeared in cartoons. Table 1 below shows the corpus used in this research.

**Table 1*****The English Corpus Used in the Research***

No.	Original English cartoons (animations)	Director/s	Release Date
1	<b>Ben 10</b>	Man of Action Studios (Duncan Rouleau, Joe Casey, Joe Kelly, and Steven T. Seagle)	2008-Now
2	<b>Ninja Turtles</b>	Kevin Eastman Peter Laird	1987-2014
3	<b>Kung Fu Panda</b>	Peter Hastings and Cheryl Holliday (season 1) Bret Haaland (season 2-3)	2011-2016
4	<b>Spider-Man</b>	Stan Lee Steve Ditko	1967-2012
5	<b>DreamWorks Dragons</b>	Linda Teverbaugh Mike Teverbaugh	2012-2016

**Theoretical Frameworks**

The theoretical models employed in this study to do the analysis of translations were Van Coillie's Model of Translating Proper Name (2006) and

Fernandes' model of proper name translation (2006). These two models included ten translation strategies as shown in Tables 2 and 3 below.

**Table 2*****Van Coillie's Model of Translating Proper Name***

Types of strategy	Character of translation
Reproduction	Leaving foreign names unchanged
Non-translation plus additional explanation	Adding explanations, either in the form of a note or in the text itself
Replacement of personal name by a common noun	Replacing a proper name by a common noun that characterizes the person
Phonetic or morphological adaptation to the target language	Turning to phonetic transcription or morphological adaptation
Exonym	Replacing a name by a counterpart in the target language
Replacement by a more widely known name from the source culture or an internationally known name with the same function	Opting for recognize ability without abandoning the foreign context
Substitution	Replacing a name by another name from the target language
Translation of names with a particular connotation	Reproducing the connotation in the target language, when names have specific connotations
Replacement by a name with another or additional connotation	Adding or changing the connotation of a name
Deletion	Omitting all proper names

**Table 3**  
**Fernandes' Model of Translating Proper Name**

Types of strategy	Character of translation
<b>Rendition</b>	When the name in the ST is enmeshed in TL, the meaning is rendered in the TL.
<b>Copy</b>	In this case, the name of ST is exactly replicated in the TT, without any orthographic adjustment.
<b>Transcription</b>	This is a method in which a name is transcribed in the equivalent characters of the TL.
<b>re-creation</b>	A newly created name in the ST is recreated in the TT so that it reproduces the similar effects in the TL
<b>Substitution</b>	A TL name replaces the SL name although they are formally and/or semantically unrelated.
<b>Deletion</b>	In this type of strategy, the name in the ST is partially or totally omitted in the TT.
<b>Addition</b>	Extra information is added to the SL name so that it can be more understandable and desirable to the target readers.
<b>Transposition</b>	This is a change of one part of speech for another one without any shift in the meaning.
<b>Phonological Replacement</b>	In this procedure, A TL name which has a similar sound to the SL name replaces the original name.
<b>Conventionality</b>	This strategy is defined as the acceptance of a typical translation of a name in the SL. Conventionality is often used with historical or literary individuals as well as geographical names.

#### DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The five cartoons were selected as already described in the 'Methods' section. The researchers began with a fully-attentive watching of the English and subtitled versions of the cartoons. Afterwards, the different anthroponyms were found and underlined in the subtitles to be compared and closely examined with their translations in cartoon subtitles. A qualitative content analysis was done on the content of subtitles in two languages. The subtitles were found, underlined and copied to a separate table, with their translations to the TL version, in a column on its right side. This was done for all the cartoons separately. Next, the table of anthroponyms for each cartoon was analyzed once based on Fernandes' model and once again based on Van Coillie's model each having ten strategies. The frequency count was done manually to find the distribution of all strategies used from each model in translating anthroponyms in the target movies. The percentages were also counted and reported in tables. To make the comparison easier, a pie chart was

drawn for each cartoon analyzed based on each model. At the end, two tables and pie charts were also drawn which took the entire sample as one and reported and compared the distribution of strategies used in the two theoretical models. Actual instances from each strategy used within the subtitled cartoons were provided for them all, in the form of tables.

#### RESULTS

##### RQ1: Results of analysis based on van Coillie's model

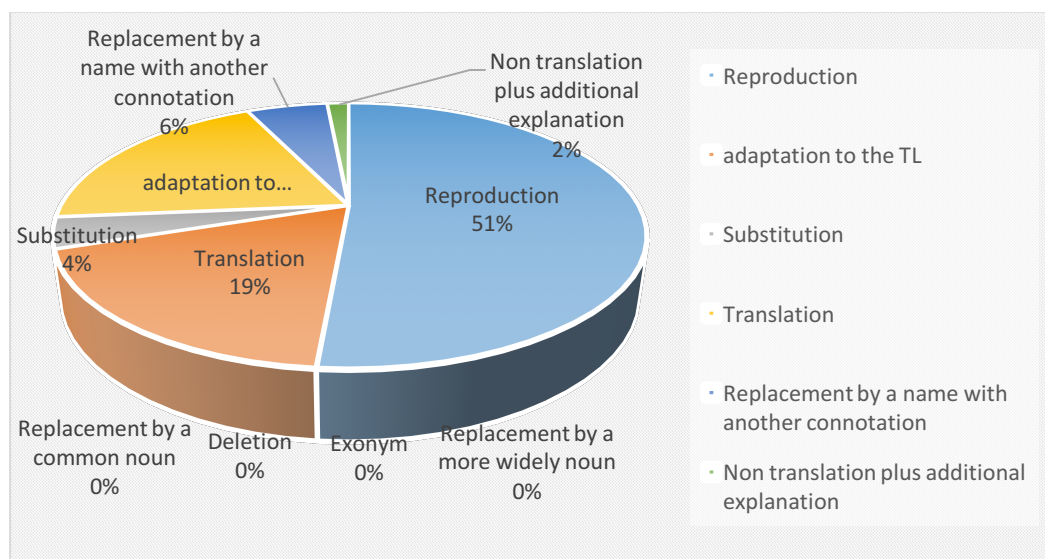
In this section, the strategies used by the Iranian translators of English anthroponyms were classified based on Van Coillie's (2006) model as it explicitly reflects the possibilities of name translation from one language into another. A total number of 10 translation strategies of anthroponyms were included within Van Coillie's model. Table 4 below shows the frequency and percentage of the strategies used in translating anthroponyms in the target cartoons all taken together.

**Table 4****Frequency and Percentage of Translation Strategies in All Cartoons Based on Van Coillie's Model**

Translation strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1. Reproduction	243	51.37
2. Non translation plus additional explanation	7	1.47
3. Replacement of personal name by a common noun	0	0
4. Phonetic or morphological adaptatioin to the TL	87	18.39
5. Exonym	0	0
6. Replacement by a more widely known name from the source culture or an internationally known name with the same function	0	0
7. Substitution	18	3.80
8. Translation of names with a particular connotation	92	19.45
9. Replacement by a name with another or additional connotation	26	5.49
10. Deletion	0	0
Total number	473	100

Among the ten strategies introduced within this model, six strategies were used and four were left unemployed by Iranian translators in rendering English anthroponyms into Persian. The former included Reproduction, Non-translation plus explanation, Phonetic/morphological adaptation,

Substitution and Translation of names with a particular connotation. The latter were Replacement of personal name by a common noun, Exonyms, Replacement by a more widely known name and Deletion. A better comparative look is provided in Figure 1 below.



**Figure 1. Percentage of the translation strategies used in all cartoons based on Van Coillie's model**

As in Table 4 and Figure 1 above, the distribution of Van Coillie's translation strategies used in rendering English anthroponyms into Persian in all the cartoons followed this sequence:

Reproduction (51%) > Translation of names with a particular connotation (19%) > Phonetic/morphological adaptation (18%) > Replacement by a name with another connotation

(6%) > Substitution (4%) > Non translation plus additional explanation (2%)

The most widely used strategy within Van Coillie's model used by Iranian translators in rendering English anthroponyms into Persian showed to be Copy. This strategy was used in rendering more than half of the anthroponyms in the cartoons. The next two frequent strategies

within this model were found to be Translation of names with a particular connotation and Phonetic/morphological adaptation. The other three strategies used altogether (Replacement +Substitution+Non translation) accounted for 12% of the whole anthroponyms translated. Moreover, Iranian translators showed to make no use of four strategies within this model. These were Deletion, Exonyms, Replacement by a

common noun and Replacement by a more widely known noun.

### RQ2: Results of analysis based on Fernandes' model

Table 5 and Figure 2 below show the general tendency of Iranian translators in rendering the anthroponyms in all the aforementioned cartoons based on Fernandes' model.

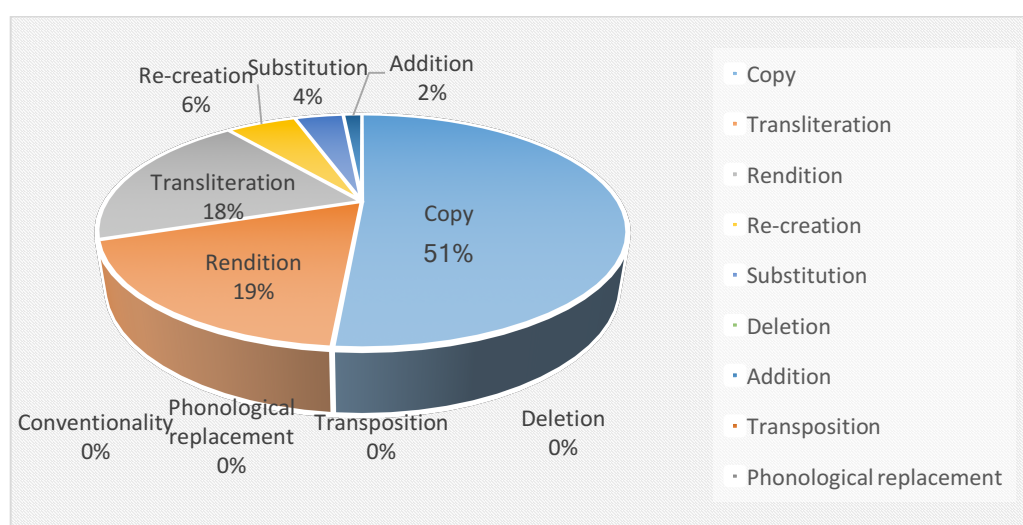
**Table 5**

*Frequency and Percentage of Translation Strategies Used in All Cartoons Based on Fernandes' Model*

Translation strategies	Frequency	Percentage
1. Rendition	92	19.45
2. Copy	243	51.37
3. Transliteration	87	18.39
4. Re-creation	26	5.49
5. Substitution	18	3.80
6. Deletion	0	0
7. Addition	7	1.47
8. Transposition	0	0
9. Phonological replacement	0	0
10. Conventionality	0	0
Total number	473	100

According to the Table 5 above, among the ten strategies introduced within this model, six strategies were used and four were left unemploy by Iranian translators in rendering English anthroponyms into Persian. The former included Rendition, Copy, Transliteration, Recreation,

Substitution and Addition. The latter were Deletion, Transposition, Phonological replacement and Conventionality. The same information is also presented schematically in Figure 2 below, which makes the comparison among the strategies simpler.



**Figure 2. Percentage of the translation strategies used in all cartoons based on Fernandes' model**

As it can be observed in Table 5 and Figure 2 above, the distribution of Fernandes' translation strategies used in rendering English anthroponyms into Persian in all cartoons analyzed followed this sequence:

Copy (51%) > Rendition (19%) > Transliteration (18%) > Recreation (6%) > Substitution (4%) > Addition (2%)

The results show that the most frequently used strategy within Fernandes' model by Persian translators of English cartoons was Copy which was used to render more than half of the anthroponyms in these cartoons into Persian. The next two frequent strategies within this model were Rendition and Transliteration which together accounted for the translation of about 40% of the total number of anthroponyms in cartoons. Recreation, Substitution and Addition were scarcely used and yet some other strategies were totally absent. These included Deletion, Transposition, Phonological replacement and Conventionality.

### **RQ3: Best model describing Iranian subtitlers' translation strategies**

The third research question in this study was to see which model could better fit the translation of anthroponyms in English language cartoons translated into Persian. The analytic results showed that Iranian subtitlers used very few strategies from either model. Four strategies within each model were left unemployed. Among the six remaining strategies, the most frequently used which diverged greatly from the other five were Copy and Reproduction respectively from Fernandes' and Van Coillie's models. Descriptions of these two strategies within the models show that they are actually the same in function but just termed differently. Therefore, it appears that neither of the two models has priority against each other in describing what Iranian translators do in rendering English anthroponyms in cartoons into Persian. No alternative model can be proposed either, as it seems what Iranian subtitlers do in practice to translate anthroponyms lacks any variety. They may be even unaware of

the variety of strategies they can use in dealing with proper nouns.

### **DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS**

The present study investigated the translation of anthroponyms in popular English language cartoons into Persian. The two models adopted showed that Iranian translators hardly used more than half of the strategies suggested for rendering anthroponyms. The results of the study revealed that Iranian translators mainly chose to adopt the Reproduction or Copy strategy in translating anthroponyms, which entailed no translation of the names at all, no consideration of connotations, source or target cultures and the similar issues. The tendency shows to be oriented towards a non-translation one. However, in children's literature proper names, especially the names of the characters in the story need to be translated and this can be done freely, in an adapted form or in a manipulated way (France, 2000; Rudvin, 1994). This, however, showed to be missing largely in Iranian subtitlers' work.

In a similar vein, Abdolmaleki (2012) asserted that there are two factors involved in the translation of the anthroponyms i.e. the purpose of the text and the intended audience. As the corpus in the present study was children's cartoons, which considers children's literature, again there seems to be no reason why the majority of the anthroponyms in cartoons should be left untranslated for the children audience. However, this knowledge seems to be lacking among Iranian translators of animated cartoons even the most popular ones.

Another issue, which seems to be ignored largely by Iranian translators of English cartoons, is the cultural issue. As previously described in the 'Introduction' section, names in translated literature have an additional function, namely they reveal the existence of the 'cultural other' (Hejwowski 2004), and show the reader that the text originated from a different culture. Translators need to be aware of the cultural loads of the names they are translating. In case, there needs to be any adaptations and some equivalents need to



be found in the target language, translators should adopt the right strategy. Such strategies do exist in s Fernandes (2006) and Van Coillie's (2006) models. However, as the results of this research showed, they either were left unused or were scarcely used by Iranian subtitlers. It is probable that the translators were very unaware of the significance of this cultural issue.

Closely related to what was just mentioned is the mental and developmental effect of animated movies on children (Gökçearsan, 2010; Habib & Soliman, 2015). The least varied strategies used by Iranian subtitlers shows that they were somehow blind to this psychological matter and limited themselves to the minimum strategies that could be used in rendering the existing anthroponyms.

In conducting this research, a number of problems occurred which were partly due to the availability of the corpus or the matter of time. An instance of the former was that not the subtitles of all series, which were intended to be included in this study from the very beginning, could be found and analyzed. In other words, the researcher had a limited access to the English and Persian subtitles of all. Some, though very popular, were not yet subtitled and could not enter the study as a result. An instance of the latter was that more animated series would have been included if more time had been allowed. However, since the researcher dealt with series and they were long by nature, time limitation did not allow to include a more extensive and comprehensive corpus. For the same problem of time, it was not possible to take into account all the seasons of the sample and just the first seasons of all the series were considered and analyzed. Another limitation of the present research was the limited related literature both in the Iranian context and on the global scale in spite of the significance of the topic. This would restrict the background exploration and the discussion of the findings.

## **CONCLUSION**

The finding that many strategies were left unapplied by Iranian subtitlers could show that they

were unaware of a variety of (at least ten) strategies for translating anthroponyms. The fact that they mostly used the copied form of the source language name into the target language shows that they might have no serious belief in translating anthroponyms in the first place. The cultural, mental and developmental effect of cartoons especially the characters within cartoons (each with a proper name) on children who are the main audience of animated movies appears to be underestimated by Iranian subtitlers. The question rises whether Iranian translators are adequately taught about the significance of anthroponyms in a language and the best strategies of translating them into another language. On the other hand, whether they are aware of the sorts of adaptations and equivalent-makings they are allowed in rendering anthroponyms; or a more fundamental question whether they perceive cartoons as an influential part of children literature at all.

The analyzed frameworks did not seem to describe Iranian subtitlers' strategies of translating anthroponyms in English animated cartoons. About half of the strategies included in each of these frameworks showed to be left unused by Iranian subtitlers. The cultural load of anthroponyms seems to be either unknown or unimportant to subtitlers. Thinking of an alternative or an eclectic framework to describe Iranian subtitlers' strategies of translating anthroponyms seems to be dead-end too as they mostly limit themselves to the mere copy of the names into the target language. The application of the other available strategies showed to be kept to minimum, which is somehow worrisome.

The overall conclusion is that Iranian subtitlers of animated series need to be familiarized with the gist of children literature. They need to consider that cartoons are included within children literature, which makes many psychological, developmental and cultural issues important. The key is to learn about the wide range of strategies that scientifically explored and presented to translate anthroponyms in cartoons, such as those within Fernandes's (2006) or Van Coillie's (2006) frameworks. Subtitlers' awareness should

be raised of the multiple layers of meaning underlying each anthroponym, which needs to be considered before making decision how to translate it. The Reproduction or Copy strategy should be the last resort and not the very first choice in translating anthroponyms.

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