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Central Tehran Branch
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**A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN
TRANSLATION STUDIES**

Translator's Ideological Tendencies in Translating Islamic Texts

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June 2012

IN THE NAME OF GOD
THE ALL COMPASSIONATE THE ALL MERCIFUL

Dedicated to:

My Dear Parents and Wife

Acknowledgements

At first, all my special thanks belong to God who bestowed upon me the inspiration to seek knowledge.

Then, I would like to sincerely thank all those who made this effort possible. My heartiest thanks are to my adviser, Dr. Khanmohammad who patiently supervised and corrected this study. I would also like to express my deep gratitude to the reader of the study, Dr. Akef for the helpful and precise points he made to develop this work. I am also sincerely indebted to Dr. Mohammadi for his professional suggestions on religious aspects of the present work. I am additionally grateful to Mr. Lajevardi and Mr. Sane'ie for their helpful cooperation with the identification and analysis of the formal features of the Arabic text under study.

Last but not in any way least, I respectfully express my special thanks to my family especially my dear father and mother, and my loving wife who were highly patient and extremely supportive of my endeavor, without their patience and encouragements I had no chance to develop this study.

Abstract

Ideology is a construction which hinders us from seeing the real state of things (Zizek, 2003) and is practiced in all human related affairs including translation. As Calzada-Perez (2003, p.2) puts it “all language use, including translation, is ideological and this means that translation is always a site for ideological encounters”. Islamic text translation, more specifically, is therefore always at the risk of ideological manipulation.

The present study looked at the Islamic text translation from the ideological perspective. The main purpose of this study consequently was, to investigate the extent to which Islamic text translation may be subject to ideological manipulation. For this purpose, this study initially attempted to argue the significance of the ideology in translation, specifically Islamic text translation. It then provided an overview of some theoretical arguments and earlier conducted studies about the role and significance of ideology in translation. Thereafter, more practically, the present study employed Fairclough’s (1989) three-layer CDA framework to examine the influence of ideology in the two translations of the book *Al-Kafi*, a *Hadith* collection compiled by *Al-Kulayni*, an outstanding *Shi’ah* Scholar. The present study eventually concluded that translation, in general, and Islamic text translation, in particular, is an ideological and dynamic process which is influenced by the translator’s ideological tendency and therefore is unavoidably subject to minor or major ideological manipulations.

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List of Abbreviations

ASCB = Allah's Supreme Covenant Body¹

CDA = Critical Discourse Analysis

F = Frequency

MR = Members' Resources²

NICC = Number of Ideologically Contested Items

NPS = Number of Passive Sentences

ST = Source Text

¹ For Muslims the Holy Prophet, the twelve Imams, and Fatima al-Zahra are believed to be infallible people (Modleg, 1999). In the translation of *Al-Kafi Allah's Supreme Covenant Body (ASCB)* is used after the name of this people to give them more respect. In English the use of words such as 'peace be on him /upon them etc.' has been a usual practice. The replacement of such expression in this study is because of Hadith 39 of chapter 111, part four, Al-Kafi vol. 1. According to the usual practice 'peace be on him', expresses a form of prayer. However, 'A member of Allah's Supreme Covenant Body' is the mention of a special entitlement in Divine Providence and a prominent position (Sarwar, 1999, Preface).

² Each member of a society interprets her world through socially-determined "knowledge of language, representations of the natural and social worlds..., values, beliefs, assumptions, and so on" (Fairclough, 1989, p. 24) which Fairclough calls Member's Resources (MR).

CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

1.1 Introduction

“Human related sciences over history have been subject to many ideological changes” (Modleg, 1999, p. VI). Language as a medium of ideological forces and consequently translation as such has been affected by these changes. One of such changes is raise in significance of ideology in Islamic text translation (Modleg, 1999). This significance even increases to a greater extent if as Lefevere (1992) and Levy (2000) asserted translation is viewed as dynamic rewriting and reproduction of the source text message in the tube of receptor language. This way Selden’s (1948) clarification of the interaction of ideology and texts can be applicable to the interaction of ideology and translation. As stated by Selden (1948):

Texts do not reflect historical reality but rather work upon ideology to produce an effect of the *real* ... The meanings and perceptions produced in the text are a reworking of ideology’s own working of reality. This means that the text works on reality at two removes. (p. 43)

In addition, many socio-cultural researchers and Islamic experts hold that Islamic translation plays a central role in production and reproduction of prevailing ideology since it involves transformation of ideological constraints including prevailing ideological differences or different collective ideological tendencies between source and receptor community and more specifically

translators' ideological tendencies (Mohadeth, 2009). Thus they cannot be considered as an isolated decoding of the source text, rather is influenced and manipulated by the hegemony surrounding the translator. According to Hatim and Mason (2003), translation is “an act of communication” permanently dealing with at least two different languages along with a broad network of elements including cultural, historical, political and ideological differences. Furthermore, “language and consequently translation are the most significant features of human beings, regarded as an integrated part of meaning, on the one hand, and closely related to ideology, on the other hand” (Khajeh & Khanmohammad, 2009, p. 25). This way translation is considered an ideological phenomenon which extends beyond the linguistic word formation and word selection procedure.

Islamic texts, on the other hand, which are said to have owned a significant role in guiding human to bliss is a reality that either directly creates or indirectly causes many social practices (Modleg, 1999). From earlier times on, Islamic texts were taken as holy and divine gifts by God which were all infallible; But this very reality has been unavoidably subject to many ideological changes and even conscious and intentional manipulations (Modleg, 1999). Several figures or institutions have made a great attempt to reform, manipulate, and even abuse such texts (Al-Ansari, 2003). One of the

channels for these powers to fulfill their dreams was, and still is, translation of such texts into other languages and consequently reinterpretation of the translated texts. The preferred battlefield to manipulate such texts is through translation since manipulating original Islamic texts requires such a great power. That's why "translation of these texts was also regarded, and still is, as a rigorous mission" in which both linguistic and ideological backgrounds are prerequisite (Modleg, 1999, p. VI). "Neither is any inexperienced individual permitted nor capable of translating such texts" since they include metaphysical and ideological conventions (Modleg, 1999, p. V). In other words, the monopoly of Islamic text translation has always belonged and still belongs to a certain group of translators.

The present study was mainly conducted to question and investigate the authenticity of Islamic text translations. The main purpose of this study, thus, is to investigate and examine the extent to which individual ideological tendencies of translator and ideological conventions of the receptor language influence the Islamic text translation. Additionally, the present study makes an attempt to uncover the probable implicit and explicit underlying ideological manipulations applied to the selected corpus. Consequently it can shed light on possible strategies through which these manipulations might be

conducted via employing Critical Discourse Analysis proposed by Fairclough (1989).

1.2 Significance of the Study

Obviously translation of Islamic texts, since it includes transformation of ideological conventions, is a matter of great concern (Mohadeth, 2009). This significance is due to the role of Islamic trainings in people's life (Kashfi, 2003). Islamic trainings serve as a window to let the believers to look and interpret every single phenomenon in life. Additionally, for many people it provides a yardstick to judge occurrences in their social interaction and consequently social lives. Translation of such texts is a matter of *greater* concern. That is due to the fact that original Islamic texts are often considered being divine, while the translated versions are at the risk of deviation and manipulation (Kashfi, 2003). That is why people feel an inner-need to authenticate such translations before putting them in practice in their lives.

However, many current studies about ideological tendencies and dependency of translator in translating Islamic texts are situational and subjective in nature (Hicham, 2007). And so far, infrequent studies are done to investigate the role of translator's ideological tendencies in the Islamic text translation (Hicham, 2007). Ergo "several subjective prescriptions were coined in that regard"

Hicham, 2007, p. V). Therefore, investigating translator`s ideological tendencies in translating Islamic texts can provide translators of Islamic texts with a great comfort through casting fresh light on the question of authenticity of Islamic text translation.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Translation is often described as a form of communication between the source-text author, translator, and the reader of the translation. But in actuality the translation of Islamic texts is not primarily a matter of communication between such individuals. Islamic text translation, like other forms of translation, takes place within an ideological setting and can only be understood within that setting via a dialectic movement from 'station' of a universal, natural, and rule governed to the 'space' of situational, human, and relative meaning. "Islamic texts are also at the risk of conscious or unconscious ideological manipulations when being translated" (Kashfi, 2003, p. 98) . Additionally, Schaffner (2003) maintains ideological aspects can be determined within a translated text itself, at "the lexical level, for example, in the deliberate choice or avoidance of a particular word and at the grammatical level, for example, in the use of passive structures to avoid an expression of agency" (p. 23). What he holds support the theme that translation is a site for ideological clashes, encounters, compromises, challenges which all may be

resulted in macro and micro deviation of the translated text from the original one.

Now what if a translator living out of the above said ideological setting decides to translate an Islamic text into his/her mother tongue or better to say ideological setting. How do his/her individual ideological tendencies and conventions of the receptor language affect the translation process? Should he/she disclose himself from his ideological state of belief and receptor language well-established norms to decode the source text or should he cling to his own ideological state of belief and receptor language expectations to render the target text, or even is it ever possible for a translator or any individual to leave behind or change his/her ideological state of belief?

Here the problem arises. On one hand, if the translator discloses himself and follows the source text ideological patterns to decode the meaning, the translation, according to Modleg (1999), would be nothing except transformation of the source text ideology into the target language. On the other hand, if the translator applies his/her own consciousness, or better to say clings to his/her ideological believes, to render the source text into his/her mother tongue, he/she will no longer be made sure about the authenticity of his/her interpretation of the source text and subsequently such operation