Systematic Analysis of the Translation of Cultural Elements in English and French Versions of Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela*

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Abstract

This study analyses the translation of cultural elements in the two translations of Thomas Mofolo's Moeti oa Bochabela. The research objectives sought to identify the cultural elements in the two translations, the techniques and strategies used in rendering them, bring out the discrepancies in translating cultural elements in the two translations and suggest improvements for inadequate translations. Data was collected from the three novels and other documents after which a comparative analysis was done. The current study was guided by Descriptive Translation Studies (DTS), Philological theories of translation, Skopos Theory, Manipulation Theory and Socio-Linguistic Theory. Its findings reveal that the techniques that were used to render cultural elements in the corpus under study include literal translation, borrowing and calque, which are source text-oriented, and cultural equivalence, explicitation, reformulation, expansion, description, transposition, adaptation and omission, which are target text-oriented. The two categories of techniques fall under foreignization and domestication strategies respectively. The study also shows that in both translations, the cultural elements were more domesticated than foreignized. The English translation has more foreignization than the French one while the French translation has more domestication than the English version. Although not in all cases, there are discrepancies in the rendering of cultural elements in the two translations.

1. INTRODUCTION

Literary translation remains one of the challenging activities due to the existence of many linguistic features, as well as social and cultural aspects (Imami & Mu'in, 2021; Aich, 2022). Larson (1998) indicates that one of the major obstacles is finding equivalents in the target language for concepts not present in that culture. In this case, translation is seen as intercultural communication. Translation of African literary works into European languages has existed for a long time. This is an example of non-related languages and culture. Thomas Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela* is an example of an African literary work translated into European languages. Written in Sesotho, this novel was translated into English (*Traveller to the East*) as well as French (*L'Homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant*). Dunton and Masiea (2016) argue that the two translations may not portray what the writer intended to communicate.

This study, therefore, seeks to examine the translation of the novel *Moeti oa Bochabela*, originally written in Sesotho by Thomas Mokopu Mofolo and translated into English and French. It intends to assess the notion of fidelity in the two translations as far as culture-specific concepts are concerned. Similarly, it seeks to identify the strategies employed to effectuate the translations.

Literature can be perceived as a creative form of expression that can be written or oral such as novels, poetry or drama. It can either be factual or imaginary work that intends to address the emotional, spiritual or intellectual concerns of humanity. Ojaide (1992) underscores that African literature is unique due to the culture it carries. Whether written in European or indigenous languages, African literature is rich in African cultural realities which can be found in poems, idioms, proverbs, names of people and common sayings. These elements are portrayed in the works of African writers such as Chinua Achebe, Ngùgì wa Thiong'o and Sembène Ousmane, just to mention a few, although these works were written in English and French.

Dealing with a literary work such as Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela*, translation becomes a complicated process that solves the problems related to culture given that there is a distance that exists between the cultural backgrounds of the source texts and the target texts. Therefore, it is evident that African literary translators encounter problems not only because of the presence of cultural aspects but also because of the absence of functional equivalents. In this connection, Sebotsa (2016:105) affirms:

> However, in literary translation, another element that the translator cannot ignore is culture, as it forms an integral part of the language. Furthermore, whilst most problems encountered in translation are related to grammar, language structure, terminology, etc., others are culture-bound, which means concepts in the source language (SL) have no functional equivalence in the target language (TL).

Therefore, it is worth noting that there are problems that prevail in translating African literary works due to a lack of significant knowledge of the source culture.

1.1. Research Problem

Moeti oa Bochabela (1907) is rich in cultural elements. Writing in Sesotho, Mofolo tries to capture one of the events of his childhood and the origins of the Basotho nation. It is evident that any translation of this work would intend to be both accurate and faithful, ensuring the original message is effectively communicated in the target language. However, the preliminary reading of the two translations, *Traveller to the East* (English) and *L'Homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant* (French), reveals that they do not fully render the message the author intended to communicate. The translator is faced with challenges owing to a lack of knowledge of culture-specific concepts. Hence, this problem leads to several questions.

1.2. Research Questions

1. What discrepancies exist in how cultural elements are translated between the two translations under study?
2. How can any inadequate translation be improved?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

1. Bring out the discrepancies in the rendering of cultural elements in the two translations.
2. Suggest improvements in the rendering of cultural elements in the two translated books under study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents a comprehensive literature review in relation to literary translation and culture.

2.1. Culture and Translation

Culture plays a fundamental role in translation since literature reflects the culture and history that is produced. This section seeks to find the relationship between culture and translation.

Culture

Ihatsu (2008) describes culture as a mental model that is shared by the same cultural group. This invisible phenomenon guides their behaviour, beliefs and values. It is the lens through which people see the world. It shapes how we perceive, interact with, and understand things. Culture encompasses all spheres of life as Porter and Samovar cited in Ihatsu (2008:27), confirm:

> Culture is the deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies, religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving (Poter & Samovar, 1998:12-13).

Thus, culture can be defined as the set of norms that govern a particular society. It is generally how people live their lives, that is, their habits, education systems, traditions, religion, values, family and social structures, political and governmental hierarchies and advanced technology. Culture is not universal. Therefore, what may be perceived as right in one culture may not necessarily be acceptable in another. Al-Hassan (2013) provides an example to indicate how cultures differ in morals. In Western cultures, polygamy is frowned upon, while some Islamic cultures only consider it immoral if someone opposes it. For that reason, one may reasonably presume that Arab culture is different from Anglo-American culture (Al-Hassan, 2013).

In relation to translation, culture can be viewed as the vocabulary that is specific to the given culture or a general concept that is rather expressed in a way that is specific to the source language culture. This is how Alfred Louis Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn define culture:

> *Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values. Culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other hand, as conditioning elements of future action (cited in Akbari, 2013:14).*

Translation does not exist in isolation; it is the result of cultural interaction. People from diverse regions of the world must exchange ideas. Due to different languages, there has to be translation. Since language is the vital instrument of culture, translation can never be separated from culture and the two phenomena can never be separated (Yan and Huang, 2014).

Role of Culture in Translation

In his work Akbari (2013) lays down two fundamental ways of how culture manifests in relation to translation. Firstly, certain words or references carry meanings that are specific to a particular culture. Secondly, even general concepts can be expressed differently based on the cultural context of the source language. To effectively address these cultural elements, translators must take into account both the purpose of the translation and the specific procedures utilized.

Cultures throughout history have primarily used language to reflect their unique identities and how they differ from others. According to Enfield, cited in Bernárdez (2013), grammar is rich in cultural meaning. Translation is the process that takes place between a minimum of two languages. It is, therefore, undeniable that culture is taken into account since culture is present in grammar, particularly in linguistic and syntactic structures (Bernárdez, 2013). Because

language is deeply rooted in culture, translating effectively requires a deep understanding of cultural context. Pym (2000) reasons out that translation involves the issues of how cultures interrelate.

In translation, a translator acts as the mediator between two cultures, thus if the text is full of cultural references, it may be difficult to fully understand it. This may be due to a lack of adequate knowledge of culture since it is an essential element of translation. Studies have shown that it is almost impossible to translate a text without translating culture since it is impossible or difficult to separate the two (Al-Hassan, 2013).

Cultural Elements

Culture permeates every element of a text, from the specific choice of words and their formation to the construction of sentences, the overall structure of the text, and its intended interpretation within a specific cultural context. Since culture is an invisible phenomenon, the cultural elements present in a text are obviously implicit. Scholars define cultural elements in various ways. Stolze (2009) suggests that cultural elements are akin to shared knowledge within a society, which is essential for effective communication.

Persson (2015) refers to them as culture-specific items. According to him, these are unique concepts to a certain culture. These can include anything from plants and animals (flora and fauna) to everyday items like food, clothing, and housing. Additionally, more abstract concepts such as work, leisure activities, political systems, laws, and religious beliefs can also be culture-specific. Bernárdez (2013) affirms that cultural words are not primarily linguistic elements but concepts or notions that are specific to an individual culture.

Newmark (1988) sees them as 'cultural words' which are not universal but rather associated with a particular language. He gives an example of moon, steppe and dacha as cultural words. Words such as live, die and swim are universal. Newmark (1998) classifies these cultural words into five categories:

- **Ecology:** it comprises plants, animals, mountains, and plains such as bush and tundra
- **Material culture (artefacts):** this category includes important symbols such as food and clothes which are closely related to people's lifestyle. For instance, each country has its own unique or special dish (couscous, sushi, raclette, eru...) and traditional clothing (the Sari, the Kilts, Kimono...). Furthermore, material culture consists of houses and towns which can have specific names for buildings or cities, and transport. A close example can be the car as one of the most popular means of transport. The name of the car tells its origin (Volkswagen, Ferrari...) and the economic status of its owner.
- **Social culture:** according to Newmark, this category consists of work and leisure such as sports. For example patisserie and boule.
- **Organisations, customs, activities, procedures, concepts:** there are four sub-categories of this section:
  - ✓ International terms: it refers to acronyms like UNESCO, UNICEF, and FAO.
  - ✓ Religious terms: these are terms that belong to a particular religion.
  - ✓ Artistic terms: this includes names of artistic movements, theatres, and museums.
  - ✓ Historical terms: these are the terms that marked the history of a nation.
- **Gestures and habits:** body language plays a fundamental role in communication. Facial expressions and body movements have various cultural connotations; therefore, they can be interpreted differently. A positive gesture in one culture may have a completely different meaning in other cultures. Newmark describes the importance of gestures and habits by providing the following examples; laughing when someone dies, clapping hands when appreciating something, and kissing or shaking hands when greeting someone. It all depends on the cultural context.

In many cases, translating cultures becomes problematic when the translator is not a member of the same culture. This is due to failure to fully understand the texts to be translated. Stolze

(2009) sees culture as the background of every human communication. He sees it as a dynamic phenomenon that is based on historical tradition including the individuals' personal development.

A translator depends on an understanding of the source text in order to produce the target text. Knowledge is, thus, needed to detect cultural aspects. Translating does not only involve two languages. Given the deep connection between language and culture, this process (translation) also involves a transfer from one culture to another. Consequently, on top of being bilingual and having a good command of both languages, a translator has to be bicultural (Pavlović & Polsek, 2003).

The moment a text becomes culturally embedded, it creates translation problems. Newmark (1988) states that cultural words are identifiable because they are specific to a particular language and cannot be directly translated. Cultural customs are often described using ordinary language, and a literal translation could change the original meaning. Therefore, translators use techniques and strategies to accurately convey cultural elements.

Procedures for Translating Cultural Elements

Belkhir (2019) describes translation procedures as tools that translators use to bridge the gaps between languages, where perfect translation is not possible. As mentioned above, translating culture poses problems to the translator and there has been an ongoing debate in the field of translation on untranslatability. Wang and Sunihan (2014) define untranslatability as witnessing the limit at which the translated text can be 'loyal' to the original. The causes of untranslatability can be at linguistic and cultural levels. For the purpose of this study, procedures refer to techniques and strategies.

Belkhir (2019:26) outlines Hervey and Higgins' translation procedures as follows: exoticism, calque, cultural borrowing, and cultural transplantation. According to Graedler (2000) cited by Belkhir (2019), the following are four procedures for translating Culture Specific Items (CISs):

- Producing a new term.
- Illustrating the meaning of the SL expression instead of translating it.
- Retaining the SL term.
- Opting for a word in the TL which seems similar to or has the same 'relevance' as the SL term.

He also cites Pedersen (2005) who refers to CSIs as Extralinguistic Culture-bound Reference (ECR). For him, there are two main categories of strategies used to render ECR from the source language into the target language. These are SL-oriented and TL-oriented. Within the category of SL-oriented ones, there are the following strategies; retention, specification, explicitation, addition, and direct translation. TL-oriented category consists of generalization, substitution, cultural substitution, paraphrase and omission.

For Ye (2014), there are two strategies for translating cultural elements, which are foreignization and domestication. Foreignization is source language culture-oriented in handling the cultural elements. It aims to transmit the alien features of the source culture, transplanting new images and concepts into the target language and culture. In simple terms, it takes the reader to the writer, thus the reader is forced to deal with unfamiliar conventions and concepts. Hence a reader makes some efforts to understand the notions and concepts (Ngoran, 2016).

In his thesis, Belkhir (2019) evokes Schleiermacher's model which advocates for foreignization of the text. For him, it is vital that the text reflects the source culture since it belongs to a certain culture it does not have to be translated in a way that fits the target culture. This model presents a translator with two options: either leaves the author undisturbed and brings the audience closer to the author, or leaves the audience undisturbed and brings the author to the audience.

Domestication is a translation strategy that is target text-oriented. It brings the writer to the reader. For example, a translator may change an object to a more familiar object in order to

help the reader understand the text better and relate. It focuses on the respect of target norms (Ngoran, 2016).

Suh (2005) classifies strategies for translating culture-specific items into two by outlining two major goals of translation. First, to stay faithful to the original text as much as possible, and second, to make the translated text sound natural and easy to understand for the target audience. There are several factors that determine how far a translator can foreignize or domesticate a text. They consider various factors such as the historical context of the text, its genre (e.g. poetry or news), the background of the target audience, and the similarities between the source and target cultures.

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

This section presents the methodology guiding the study. It focuses on the research method and instrument, categorisation of the corpus, methods of data collection and data analysis.

3.1. Research Method and Instrument

This research work is mainly qualitative. It aims at collecting non-numerical data and interpreting meaning from it. The corpus of the study is composed of three novels: Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela* and its two translations, namely, *Traveller to the East* (English) and *L'Homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant* (French). The main instrument for collecting data is reading. The reading and rereading process of the novels mentioned above helped the researcher to observe, compare and contrast the texts to identify and extract relevant cultural elements that form the basis of textual analysis. This enabled the researcher to establish the similarities and differences of the strategies and techniques used in rendering the cultural aspects from Sesotho to English and French.

The study affirms the reading method as valid and reliable. As a corpus-based study, translators are the primary actors. It is important to correspond with translators to understand their motives. This is done through interviews or questionnaires. However, it is beyond the researcher's capacity to utilize the aforementioned instrument. Hence, the researcher opted for critical reading of their works and other details as sufficient tools to provide the necessary data.

3.2. Data Collection

According to Daragmeh (2016), there are two major types of data in research; primary and secondary data. Information collected through questionnaires, experiments, interviews, case studies and other first-hand resources represents the former. At the same time, the latter is mainly information collected from second-hand resources, including books, journals and websites. The study uses primarily secondary data, which is presented as textual and documentary data.

Textual Data

In this research, textual data was collected through reading and extracting cultural elements from *Moeti oa Boachabela* and its two translations. The novel was selected because it is rich in cultural concepts. It stands as one of the very first written in an African language, not just in Southern Africa but across the entire continent. Therefore, there is a probability that these cultural concepts may pose challenges to the translator when rendering them from Sesotho into English or French.

A careful reading of the Sesotho text was carried out to identify and highlight cultural concepts of the receptor's community. Since this is a comparative study, each of the two translations was subjected to careful reading and rereading while identifying and highlighting concepts that served as equivalents of the cultural concepts in the original Sesotho text. Lastly, a list of cultural elements in Sesotho with their equivalents in English and French was compiled. The extracts are grounded on Krugger & Wallmach's (1997) analysis method.

Documentary Data

Documentary data was collected from available literature on translation, literary translation and culture, as well as from other works written on the three novels under study. The sources

included books and journal articles. This data was collected and exploited in understanding cases as observed in the textual data.

3.3. Corpus Building and Categorization

There was a need to build and categorize corpus since this study involved corpus analysis. For this analysis, a parallel corpus was built. This means it contained the original text (source text) alongside its translations. Mcenery & Xiao (2007) define a parallel corpus as a corpus that contains texts and their translation, either bilingual or multilingual. The categorization of cultural elements was done randomly as propounded by Baker's (1992) and Newmark's (1987) definitions of culture and cultural elements, as indicated above. This was based on the data collected for this study.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section delves into three novels: the original work and its translations. It explores the social, cultural, and historical backdrop of their creation, along with details about the author, translators, and publishers.

4.1. About the Novels

Presented in this section are the novels under study, namely, *Moeti oa Bochabela*, *Traveller to the East* and *L'homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant*.

Moeti oa Bochabela

Moeti oa Bochabela is Thomas Mofolo's first novel and the first in Africa to be written in an African language, in this case, Sesotho. It centres around Christianity. The story is about a young African on a quest for truth and righteousness. He travels to a land where white missionaries introduce him to Christianity. *Moeti oa Bochabela* was first published in 1907 in *Leselinyane*, a newspaper run by the Paris Evangelical Mission Society (PEMS) in Lesotho. Interestingly, the first page featured an image of the Bible school Mofolo attended in 1894. The novel reveals Mofolo's view of traditional African societies as inherently evil, a reflection of his deep Christian beliefs. However, it's important to note that this portrayal likely stemmed from his religious ideology rather than the historical reality of these cultures. While Mofolo's embrace of modernity seems sincere, it undeniably colours his perspective in the novel.

Traveller to the East

Traveller to the East recounts the tale of Fekisi, a cow herder who flees his village after witnessing his alcoholic father's gruesome death. Mofolo paints a stark picture of the event, describing the villagers' disturbing indifference. Fekisi, disillusioned by the community's problems with alcohol and violence, seeks answers from the elders. They share a creation myth explaining how God abandoned the people for their immoral behaviour. The myth recounts how a giant creature swallowed everyone except a pregnant woman, whose son later emerged to save humanity.

The Sesotho version of *Traveller to the East* was published in the newspaper *Leselinyana*. Critic Daniel P. Kunene, in an essay for *African Writers*, points out that the book's themes appeared to align with the views of the Morija missionaries. However, Kunene highlights a key point: the novel starts by portraying the Basotho people in a harsh light, describing them as savages. The critic wrote that Mofolo's 'intention is deliberate and self-conscious. He states that the Basotho of the missionary days, in which his story is set, were living in deep, pitch-black darkness and ate each other like animals of the veld.' Kunene also compares the deaths of Phakoane and Fekisi in the novel. Kunene denotes that 'death is such a powerful force in this work because it was a powerful weapon from the pulpit'. 'The fear of death was exploited by missionaries to convert people to Christianity by promising a beautiful, glorious life in heaven with God to those who lived a good, Christian life.'

L'Homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant

L'Homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant is the French translation of the Sesotho book *Moeti oa Bochabela* which was published in 2003. It offers a real literary pleasure and conceals strong poetic passages. Its elegant presentation and the accompanying critical apparatus (foreword by the translator and preface by Alain Ricard, Director of the collection) make it a beautiful object, both erudite and accessible. *L'Homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant* is the third title in the collection 'Traversées de l'Afrique' which aims at bringing to light 'travel stories which are first written accounts of the African continent' but also the first stories written by Africans. Thus, it gives access to a greater number of texts which until the writing of this research were untranslated.

4.2. Context of Writing the Novel and its Translations

The first missionaries to come to Lesotho, namely Arbousset, Casalis and Gosselin, arrived in 1833, under the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society. Before this, there was no codified system of writing in Lesotho, and all verbal art was dramatic and participatory. It is important to remember that the missionaries came to Christianize, and any activity they engaged in was part of the Christianization process. One of its activities was the promotion of mother-tongue literacy. The development of education for Blacks was purely an 'accident of history'.

Mofolo wrote *Moeti oa Bochabela* during the period (1900-1960) when the missionaries actively participated in the development of Sesotho literature. He was working for the missionaries at the Morija Book Depot. According to Shava and Kolobe (2016), During this period, missionaries heavily promoted religious themes in literature, overshadowing secular stories. This dominance may have stifled creative expression and the exploration of diverse themes. Ricard (2016) refers to the writers of this time as the defenders of Christianity.

Historically, *Moeti oa Bochabela* is set within a time when the African continent had been under European domination for 400 years and the time when independence was about to come to Africa between the late 1950s and early 1960s. As a reminder, this was the time when Africa's norms and cultural values were despised, denigrated and, in many cases, openly suppressed.

According to Gerard (1971), though the missionaries encouraged creative writing, the writers did not have a free hand in the subject matter of their fiction, and the content of the works which were accepted and published gave clear evidence that 'those who controlled the press made sure that the message of those books was utterly above reproach from the point of view of their ethos and their faith'. Early Sotho writings weren't originally intended to be creative works, but rather tools for missionaries to spread Christianity. This limited the freedom of expression, as these writings heavily relied on religious themes and symbolism. Both the missionaries and the Sotho audience likely viewed these works as a way to interpret the Bible in a familiar cultural context.

The English translation of 'Traveller to the East' appeared in 1934, a time when its publisher, the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK), was heavily involved in spreading Christianity. The SPCK promoted their beliefs through various means, like building libraries and charity schools, distributing religious materials, and supporting missionaries in colonies. So, *Traveller to the East* was produced during this colonial period when translation was done by Europeans for European audiences and in the background of colonial ideologies and politics. While missionaries played a role in starting Lesotho's literature, their focus on religious themes limited the exploration of other topics. This may have stifled creativity and led to a decline in writing, especially novels, which had been flourishing in allegorical and realistic styles. Even today, the impact of this decline is felt in the development of Lesotho's literature in English, particularly the novel form.

For its part, *L'Homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant* was translated and published in 2003, during the period (1980s-date) when literature vanished (Shava & Lesole, 2016). This was done in different contexts after independence which Lesotho got in 1966.

4.3. About the Author and the Translators

This section presents the author of the original text as well as the translators who worked on the two translations. Knowing the backgrounds of the author and the translators may equally help in understanding what might have influenced their style of writing or choice of translation strategies.

The Author: Thomas Mofolo

The English version (*Traveller to the East*) offers an autobiography of Thomas Mofolo. It states that he was born in August 1877 in Mafeteng district, precisely in Khojane region. However, the exact date of his birth is unknown. According to Gerard (1978) On December 22, 1876, Thomas Mofolo was born and his birth is documented in the parish register of Hermone. Born to Abner and Aleta Mofolo, devout Christians, he arrived as their third child on this significant date.

The missionaries had been present for a long time in Lesotho at the time Mofolo was born. This made it possible for main educational institutions to exist and during that time many local teachers were trained. The rise of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) in Lesotho during the mid-1800s likely had a significant impact on Thomas Mofolo's upbringing. This surge in Christian influence is evident not only in the fact that Mofolo's parents were themselves Christians but also in his baptism by Reverend H. Dieterlen. Mofolo's life serves as a microcosm of the growing Christian presence in Lesotho during this period.

Mofolo's early life was seemingly typical of a rural childhood. Couzen (2003:290) affirms:

> Thomas developed a great love for nature while out herding the family cattle. He also took part in hunts for monkeys and wild game and enjoyed listening to older boys' tales about encounters with leopards at the cattle posts.

Mofolo first attended school at Qomoqomong in the Quthing District of Lesotho where his teacher, Lechesa Segoete, inspired him to study. He later continued his studies at Matatiele under the guidance of Reverend Frédéric Ellenberger. After completing his studies, Mofolo worked for Reverend Alfred Casalis, who was in charge of Morija's Bible School, Printing Press and Book Depot. Couzen (2003) refers to Mofolo as a man with a remarkable observant nature, interested in the natural world, the seasons, and the habits of animals as Eugene Casalis, the missionary, had described him.

In 1894 Mofolo began to study at the Morija Bible School, and then in 1896, he started a course at Morija's Teacher Training College. He obtained a teaching certificate in 1898, though he faced some difficulties in funding his studies (Kunene, 1989). Throughout different periods, he was employed at the Morija Sesotho Book Depot. His first stint began in 1899, where he assisted Alfred Casalis, grandson of Eugène Casalis who came to Lesotho in 1833, with operating the printing press.

Due to the Anglo-Boer War in 1900, the mission had to put its publishing on hold. As a result of the outbreak, the press closed and Mofolo left Morija for Leloaleng, in the Quthing District of Lesotho. He trained as a carpenter at the Leloaleng Technical School for two years, after which he took up teaching positions first at the Bensonvale Institution in the Herschel District of what was then the Transkei, and then in Lesotho's capital, Maseru.

After a stint teaching in Maseru, he returned to Morija in 1904. There, he served as both secretary to Casalis and proofreader for the printing press (Gérard 1971). This role surrounded him in the world of publishing, undoubtedly shaping him for his future literary aspirations (Kunene, 1989). The missionaries also actively encouraged him to write.

According to Kunene (1989), Mofolo suddenly left Morija on 23 March 1910. Mofolo's unexpected departure from Morija in 1907 ignited a compelling and enduring debate among scholars. This intriguing enigma stems from the fact that he had already submitted the manuscript for his novel *Chaka*. Various theories emerged, which suggested that his departure could be linked to a disagreement with the PEMS missionaries, possibly due to their reaction to the manuscript.

He was an enterprising and successful businessman, running several ventures, including the operation of a steam engine for the pounding of corn. Mofolo married for the first time on 15

November 1904, a woman by the name of Francina. _Moeti oa Bochabela_ was published in 1907, and Mofolo's first child was born on 15 July 1908. But his married life was daunted by problems. Mofolo fled Morija on 23 March 1910, the year of publishing _Pitseng_, after the revelation that he had been engaging in adultery. After his disgrace, and despite appeals by Reverend Duby, Casalis and others, Mofolo never returned to Morija, though he did return to Lesotho.

Francina died on 20 September 1915. There are very few details about Mofolo's married life available, and the only information about his first marriage concerns Francina's death, in Mofolo's obituary for her, he wrote that 'she was suffering from a sore foot, which later became worse and infected her entire body' (Kunene 1989). He married again in 1918, but his second wife, Josefina, died on 27 October 1927. Mofolo married for a third time in 1933, a union which lasted till his death.

Mofolo was an active businessman and engaged in a variety of business activities until in 1933 he bought a farm and moved to the Matatiele area just outside the borders of his native Lesotho, in what is now KwaZulu-Natal. After he had paid for the farm, the sale was challenged on the grounds that he did not have permission to own land that adjoined to white-owned land, a circumstance that was illegal as outlined in the 1913 Land Act, which limited 'native' land purchases to areas adjoining land owned by other 'natives.'

The sale of the farm was, thus, cancelled by the courts and Mofolo's farm was returned to its previous owner with Mofolo bearing the costs, including the forfeiture of a large portion of the selling price awarded as damages to the seller. This was an action which Mofolo fought unsuccessfully in court. He ultimately lost almost all of his wealth as a result of this judgment against him, as well as because of the non-payment of large debts owed to him from previous business dealings. He suffered a stroke in 1941 and his health steadily declined along with his fortunes. Mofolo died in penury in September 1949, aged 72, at Teyateyaneng in the Berea area of Northern Lesotho.

The Translators

This section presents information about the translators of the books under study. _Traveller to the East_ was translated by Harry Ashton although there is no any documented information about him. _L'Homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant_ was translated by Victor Ellenberger and reviewed by Paul Ellenberger.

Victor Ellenberger

Victor Ellenberger (1879-1972) was born in the Cave House during a war, yet he excelled as a student and pursued education in France. His remarkable journey led him to serve as a Minister in Lesotho from 1917 to 1934, notably in Leribe, and later in Paris. Ellenberger's expertise in Lesotho's flora, environmental dynamics, and the tragic history of the San people is truly noteworthy. He published books on various topics such as _A Century of Mission Work in Basutoland_. With the help of his son, Paul, he copied over four hundred (400) San paintings. He extensively translated from Sesotho into French. For example, he translated _Chaka_ by Thomas Mofolo. Victor tied the knot with Évangéline Christol, who is Frédéric Christol's daughter, the missionary artist.

Paul Ellenberger

In 1918, Paul Ellenberger was born in France while his parents were on vacation. He grew up in Lesotho, where he completed his elementary education in Leribe before moving to France for his senior schooling. As a child, he helped his father imitate San paintings. In 1953, he and his spouse Annette returned to Lesotho, where he served as a minister for 17 years in Leribe and Masitise, among other places. Alongside his brother François, he recorded traditional music on cassettes and developed a strong interest in the history of Lesotho. Paul was fascinated by palaeontology, while François was drawn to geology. They co-founded the Morija Museum and Archives in 1956 (Gill, 1995). He was a missionary in Qomoqomong for several years.

4.4. About the Publishers

Traveller to the East was published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge in 1934. The founder of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK) was Reverend Thomas Bray (1658-1730), an Anglican minister who also established the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in London in 1699. SPCK's main goal was to spread Christian teachings through the promotion of libraries and charity schools, distribution of books and pamphlets, and support for missionaries in the colonies. By 1712, the Society had 80 members based in London and 370 corresponding members. Despite having a small income, occasional significant donations were received for specific projects. While SPCK couldn't finance the founding of charity schools, its members leveraged their influence with parish authorities and religious societies to open schools and provided small amounts to support needy schools. The Society released several small books for schools and provided lists of recommended books by teachers. Between 1713 and 1825, the Society aided Lutheran missionaries in India by providing Bibles, sermons, supplies, and financial support.

In 1800, the SPCK counted around 2000 members, and their contributions amounted to £12,025. Throughout the nineteenth century, the Society's goals encompassed the instruction of impoverished children in Christian beliefs, the provision of Bibles, Book of Common Prayer, religious literature, and pamphlets, as well as the dissemination of these materials in foreign languages. Later on, new aims included providing funding to bishops of emerging dioceses and establishing colleges to train clergy for international service.

When a new organization, the National Society, took over running charity schools in 1817, the SPCK stepped back from directly managing them. However, they continued to support education by donating books to school libraries and making them available to all National Society schools.

The SPCK was involved in various activities during the 1800s. Apart from education, they also funded church construction, trained missionaries (including medical ones), and provided chaplains for ports. Publishing was a major focus, with a committee creating booklets for self-taught readers. In 1859 alone, they released over 100 new booklets, along with religious songs, and simplified history and science books. The SPCK even opened bookstores in London and British colonies.

On the other hand, *L'Homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant* was published by *Editions Confluences*. *Editions confluences* was created in July 1994, in Bordeaux. François Mitterrand and Jacques Chaban Delmas were finishing their mandates as President of the Republic and Mayor of Bordeaux respectively.

Between 1994 and 2019, *Editions Confluences* published 450 books, including the complete works of the writer and photographer, Félix Arnaudin. It also has a dozen collections in fields such as architecture, urban planning, gastronomy and arts.

Macro-textual Analysis

This part focuses on the paratext of the source text and the translations. Genette and Maclean (1991) define paratext as the text that surrounds the main text of a published work as well as editorial decisions, including formatting and typography. In order to understand how the texts are built, the current study examines the novels' title, genre, structure and comments on and by the author or translator.

The Title of the Texts

Moeti oa Bochabela, Mofolo's novel, through its components 'moeti' (visitor/traveller) 'oa Bochabela' (of the East) narrates a story of a young Mosotho, who in search of truth and virtue, journeys to a land where White men help bring him to Christian salvation. The author limits the story to the life of this young man and portrays the Sesotho culture and customs experienced during that time.

Mofolo obviously had reasons for choosing this title. First, the geographic area of the East has a great importance in Sesotho mythology. It signifies the place where the sun shines, which is

observed as a god that brings sunshine, therefore, representing hope. People know that whatever happens, the sun will always shine. This is the best representation of human hope. Secondly, the East indicates the beginning of life. It is believed that Basotho originated from Ntsoana-Tsatsi which is the East. Similarly, all the rituals are performed facing the East.

Harry Ashton translated this title as *Traveller to the East,* which is the literal translation of the original. It captures the idea rendered by the original. However, there is more behind this rendition. This may be due to the major role the East plays in the Sesotho culture as mentioned above.

The French title is *L'Homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant*. Over time, this title went through various modifications. It was first titled *Voyageur de l'Orient*, *Pèlerin de l'Orient* and then *Vers le soleil levant* by its translator, Victor Ellenberger, a descendant of a missionary family that settled in Lesotho. Later, his son, Paul Ellenberger, who revised the translation, suggested *le découvreur du soleil primordial* before the current editor retained *L'Homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant.* This evolution of the title and the hesitations of its 'discoverers' are not only anecdotal but also affirm to the complexity of this text and the evolution of the readings that have been made of it.

The Genre of the Texts

Genre can be defined as a form of literature or any art. The two main categories of genre are fiction and non-fiction. Fiction is based on things, events, and characters that are not true. It includes poetry, drama and prose. Non-fiction writing pertains to real things, events, and people. It is grounded in factual information.

Moeti oa Bochabela is fiction written in ordinary form or prose. It is written in a form of language that flows naturally with a basic grammatical structure. The novel is written in sentences that are grouped into paragraphs. However, it contains poems which are arranged in stanzas. Similarly, the two translations maintain the prose and poetry.

The Internal Structure of the Texts

At this juncture, the study focuses on analyzing the segmentation of the text. The text covers the presentation of its narrative structure and the number of pages and chapters.

The source text, *Moeti oa Bochabela* ,is divided into twelve (12) chapters and contains 75 pages. As mentioned earlier, the text is written in a form of language that flows naturally with a basic grammatical structure. Apart from that, there are songs and poems that follow a rhythm structure. Both translations respect this narrative structure.

Traveller to the East also contains twelve (12) chapters and has 87 pages. The reason for more pages in the English version is due to the different writing systems of these two languages (Sesotho and English). However, these chapters are preceded by the biography and autobiographical sketch of Thomas Mofolo, the author of the Sesotho book. The translator also added few comments by different authors as far as Mofolo is concerned.

L'Homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant comprises twelve (12) chapters and 156 pages. The pages are many in the French version as compared to the source text because, first, the book contains a preface by Alain Ricard. The preface has eighteen (18) pages. Also, the bibliography has of two (2) pages and a foreword by the translator has six (6) pages. Secondly, the French languages tends to use more words than English and Sesotho. In other words, French is analytic while English and Sesotho are synthetic.

Comments by the Author and the Translators

This section looks at some comments made by the author and the translators. In this case, the prefaces, back-cover comments by publishers, and blurbs and other forms of comments found in the corpus.

The original book does not have a preface by the author. Nonetheless, the translations have comments by the translators. The preface of *Traveller to the East* shows that this translation led to others such as a translation into Ewe. Also, this translation rides mainly on the reputation

of *Chaka*, Mofolo's historical novel, which ensured his place as an author in the class of world literature.

The preface of the French version by Alain Ricard, offers a critical analysis of the novel *Moeti oa Bochabela*, and the evolution of the titles in French over time. It shows that *Moeti oa Bochabela* is indeed the first novel in Africa, written in an African language. From this preface, we also learn that the French translation seems to be a better version compared to the English. (Ellenberger, 2003:17) asserts:

> La traduction anglaise gomme souvent les dimensions culturelles sotho : là où le texte emploie le terme *bale* (p.35) que V. Ellenberger traduit par *initiées*, dont il souligne par une note qu'elles s'enduisent le corps d'argile, l'anglais devient « les jeunes filles », the girls (p.64), comme s'il fallait faire disparaître les rites sotho…

5. CONCLUSION

The purpose of the current study was to analyze the cultural elements in the two translations of Mofolo's *Moeti oa Bochabela*. These elements were categorized into four groups: ecology, proper nouns, social referents, and orality. The study aimed to identify techniques and strategies used in translating these cultural elements in the two versions, highlight any discrepancies in their rendering, and suggest improvements. The analysis revealed that techniques such as literal translation, borrowing, and calque were employed as source-text oriented, while cultural equivalence, explicitation, reformulation, expansion, description, transposition, adaptation, and omission were used as target-text oriented. The study also found discrepancies in the rendering of cultural elements in the two translations, with some elements not accurately conveyed. For instance, the English translation of the term 'bale' was rendered as 'girls', while the French translation provided footnotes to explain borrowed terms.

In the comprehensive literature review, various key issues were meticulously examined, encompassing conceptual, theoretical, and empirical aspects. These include translation, literary translation, culture, and the pivotal role of culture in the translation process. The primary objective was to elucidate the specific domain to which this study pertains. Furthermore, the theoretical review encompassed several influential theories that serve as guiding principles for this study.

The data collected from *Moeti oa Bochabela, Traveller to the East and L'Homme qui marchait vers le soleil levant* was presented and analysed at the systemic, macro-textual and micro-textual levels. These incorporated the context of writing the novel and its translations, the genre of the texts and the *tertium comparationis* of the novels, to name but a few.

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