

## ESSAY ON TRANSLATION AND CULTURE

### **РЕФЕРАТ** на тема ” ПРЕВОД и КУЛТУРА”, представен в Пловдивския университет, специалност „Английски и български език”, 2016 година

The history of translation practice and theory in Europe is traditionally felt to begin with the Roman orator Marcus Cicero (106 to 43 BCE) and the Bible translator St. Jerome (c.347-c.420 CE). One of the basic theoretical issues comes in reference to the translation of the Holy Scriptures. It is the debate word-for-word versus sense-for-sense which continues till nowadays. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, clear translation strategies were set. Translation most explicitly showed itself as a political weapon. Prominent among the new translation strategists was Martin Luther (1483-1546) [www.sochorek.cz/archiv/werke/luther.htm](http://www.sochorek.cz/archiv/werke/luther.htm)

. He acted as a pioneer, not just in reference to the Christian religion, but also in reference to the work with religious texts, pleading his Bible translation from Latin into a modern German. Later on, to the development of the translation strategies contributed Etienne Dolet (1540), John Dryden (1680), Alexander Tytler (1797) and some authors of the time of the German Romanticism as Schlegel, Schleiermacher, Alexander von Humboldt and others.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, scholars as Saussure and Walter Benjamin practiced on the translation theory in-depth.

In 1959, the structural linguist Roman Jakobson created his tripartite definition of translation. He considered that:

1. Intralingual translation or rewording is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language.
2. Interlingual translation or translation proper is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of some other language.
3. Intersemiotic translation or transmutation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign system.

Jakobson (1959/2004: 139, emphasis in original)

Compared to many other academic disciplines or interdisciplines, the concept of translation studies represents an inquiry of a relatively new field. It dates from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and comes out of other areas such as modern languages, comparative literature and linguistics. In around 1972, James Holmes first suggested the very name translation studies as a better alternative to translation science, translatology or science of translating.

At the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Gideon Toury's book "Descriptive Translation Studies- and Beyond" (1995) has turned out to be an indispensable factor in the theory of the translation studies. He examined the translations, not as isolated texts, but as framed within their cultural, literary and socio-historical contexts, ones. [www.tau.ac.il/~toury/works/GT-Role-Norms.htm](http://www.tau.ac.il/~toury/works/GT-Role-Norms.htm). During the last two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the dynamism and the scope of the intellectual processes have significantly increased. Thus, the ties between translation studies, linguistics, culture, philosophy, politics, ethnography, geography and other humanities strengthened. Translation thrives in an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary context. That opinion is represented by Bassnett and Lefevere. In their book of essays "Translation, History and Culture" (1990), Bassnett's statement is that translation studies should be seen, not as a discipline, but as a dialogue between cultures, languages and histories. That is how the cultural turn in translation studies has begun.

With the following essay, we want to examine the application of the leading contemporary ideas of the translation studies in an up-to-date Bulgarian-English translation. ST (the source text) is in Bulgarian. TT (the target text) is in English. It is an article, entitled “Nestinari (The Fire Dancers)”. The article is created as a multimedia brochure within the framework of the project “Multimedia Catalogue of the Tourist Sites and Electronic Marketing of Destination Bulgaria” (2007- 2013), by the financial support of the European Union and the Bulgarian Ministries of Economy, Energy and Tourism. [www. bulgariatravel. org](http://www.bulgariatravel.org)

This article is published in the brochure section of traditions, crafts and ethnography which fact is a striking approach on the part of the article’s author and translator. Hereby, the reader of the target text is forced to seek for the meaning of the concept of the by-now-unknown word “nestinari” in the source culture. The several interesting photographs contribute to this end. By appropriate forms and colours, they illustrate the Bulgarian authentic tradition “nestinarstvo” and raise the reader’s curiosity. That is the moment when the role of the text and thereby of the translator, becomes decisive. The text represents a relevant and brief one. That is determined by its purpose to acquaint the target readers in a truthful, intriguing and adequate way with an ancient Bulgarian rite. Having narrated about the history of the custom, the article reveals its contemporary run. The reader finds out ornate information about the preparation, the participants and the significance of the ritual. He discovers that the, once common in the whole region of Aegean Thrace custom, now is practiced only in the region of Strandzha mountain, especially in the village of Balgari. Further on, the text describes the participants in the procession and their destination. It mainly points at the leader of the group, at the icons, carried by the people and at the musicians. The musical accompaniment consists of three different melodies that play crucial role in this custom. The most significant of them is the third one, which is performed during the dancing of the so-called Kostadinsko Horo. The Kostadinsko Horo represents the culmination of the ritual. Not just the nestinari (the fire dancers), but also the villagers take part in it. The message of the Kostadinsko Horo is a greeting to all the viewers and guests and a wish for good luck and health. At the same time, the holiday pays tribute to St. Constantine and St. Helena. For ages, these saints have been considered the patrons of the fire dancers. Restorations of the rite, called nestinarstvo, can be carried out all through the year. Yet, the peak time of the custom is on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. On this day the Orthodox Church of Bulgaria celebrates St. Constantine and his mother St. Helena. The already mentioned article represents a non-literary text.

With a view to the translation studies, the prevailing part of the translation is word-for-word. The source text and the target one, are equal.

According to Peter Newmark’s classification of the stages of translation, such a way of translating can be identified with the functionalist stage (in the second chapter of Munday’s Companion, 2009). This turn in the theory of translation studies dates from around 1970. It is focused on the intention of the text and tends to be seen as a commercial operation. In case, we assume that the present article has got first of all commercial purposes, the above applied method of translation, is correct. If so, it would mean that we should ignore some of the essential characteristics of the modern translation studies. Such a main feature is the consideration that the translation might turn out to be a portal, not only to the history, but also to the ethnography, culture and identity of little-known peoples. It is Lorna Hardwick’s, scholar of ancient Greek and author of a book on intercultural translation, statement. The same opinion is shared by Peter Newmark who mentions the ethical/aesthetic stage. It dates from the beginning of the millennium. According to Peter Newmark, this stage should reinforce the demand of an ethical behaviour on the part of the translator and the aesthetic value of the translation. An enhanced precision in the translation of some names of sites, ethnical groups and cultural phenomena, is indispensable. This applies both to the source texts

and to the target ones. The translator must not mislead the reader. He has to respect the reader's personality. To this end, some footnotes and endnotes, are not just affordable, but also desirable. Opinions vary on the matter of application of explanatory remarks. There are scholars who believe that sometimes explications signify weakness on the part of the translator. Others think that namely the notes make the translator's presence explicit. In our case, such ones are missing. So, the narrator relies on the reader's intelligence. In this train of thoughts, our examination on the application of the modern translation studies leads us to the conclusion that explanatory remarks by usage of Bulgarian source texts are necessary. This applies to the most of the historical, geographical and cultural concepts, that our article contains. The description of the origin of this custom in the ST „.....че произхожда още от траките.....” is delivered in the TT by the following way: “.....to originate from the Thracians.....” Further on, the word “Thrace” appears. Those concepts are of great importance for Bulgarian history and culture, but less-known in the countries of the TT. That is the reason why explanatory notes on the part of the translator are welcome. Later on, other two geographical notions are mentioned: „Странджа” and „Българи”. Strandzha is a mountain in southeast Bulgaria, near to the Aegean Sea. Balgari is a village in Strandzha mountain. In the TT the translation of both concepts “villages of Strandzha” and “the village of Balgari” mislead the TT's reader. This delusion disables him to tell the names one from another. The translator's notes are of great importance when explaining the Christian background of the ritual. „Стар календар” as “old calendar” is not a satisfactory explanation. There should be an appropriate additional remark on the part of the translator that has to clear the meaning of “old calendar” in Bulgarian. It is namely the Julian calendar which has been official in the Bulgarian Orthodox Church until 1968, contrary to England where the Julian calendar has been replaced two hundred years earlier. The icons are mentioned several times in the article. However, the reader of the target text cannot realize their importance for the Orthodox religion of the Bulgarian people. In order this to happen, a certain remark on the part of the translator is needed because icons do not exist in the Catholic Church. The same applies to the Bulgarian traditional dance “horo”. To infer, we can say that the article in the TT contains neither any blunders, nor misleading implications. However, it is not satisfactory for a translation to be of best quality nowadays. In this age, the “translationship” should play except other roles, a social one. It means, to interpret facts and ideas and to bring people closer to one another, which according to Peter Newmark's ethical/aesthetic stage, has to be every translator's aim.

#### Bibliography:

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