

Bible from the Prism of Culture: Reading the “Song of Songs” in the Moose Culture

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Abstract This paper is about the cultural adaptation of Biblical texts for the Moose, a continental people of West Africa, whose cultural realities are quite different from those of the Jewish people. To achieve this, excerpts from the book of “Song of Songs” in the King James version of the Bible and “*Viim Sid-sid Zamsg Wennaam Sebre*” were paralleled to bring out their nuances and deduct the translation strategies implemented by the Moore Bible translators to achieve their purposes. It comes out of the study that Bible translators were ill at ease in the translation of the Song of Songs into Moore. This is seen in their translation strategies.

Keywords Translation, Culture, Customs, Translation Strategy

1. Introduction

It is commonly accepted among translators that Bible is the most translated book, therefore the one which interacts with most cultures in the world. This is the result of the commitment of many experts and the progress of science. Exegesis is one of the sciences which have brought a significant contribution to Bible translation. This discipline is devoted to the interpretation of Biblical texts and uses methods such as: the historical-critical one, the so-called literary one and the so-called contextual analysis. The contextual analysis makes critical reading of Biblical texts through the feminists, intercultural and cultural prism to name but a few. The cultural approach to Biblical texts is very relevant for Bible translation since multiple existing translations may favour a very plural reading of the same text, depending on the particular language, as language is known to be a vector of culture. This reality is even more highlighted in countries where the variety of languages requires a translation between different languages during the sermons. This is the case in Burkina Faso, a landlocked Sahelian country in West Africa. Indeed, in this small

country which is home to about sixty languages, the colonial legacy has made of French the language of administration and therefore the country's official language. During sermons, French and English are most often used as source languages in the Protestant Church, and translations are made into the local languages. This means that Bible portions are read and discussed in both languages and for different audiences. In this context, knowing that each receiver analyses the message in light of his/her culture, the following research questions arise: How many messages are delivered at a time during the services and programs? In other words, do the recipients of the original message (French/English) and those of the translations (local languages) receive the same messages? Do they have the same understanding of the read and commented verses?

Relying on the cultural distance between the Moose and Jews, it is quite logical to assume that only hardly do the Moose understand the book of Song of Songs. Besides, that distance might have made the Bible translators to use circumlocutions and euphemism to translate the book of Song of Songs.

This paper is targeting at analysing that issue, based on the example of translations of the “Song of Songs” in the Protestant congregations of Burkina Faso. To achieve this, a brief presentation on the “Song of Songs” shall first be made. Then will follow a juxtaposition of text excerpts from the book of “Song of Songs” in the English King James version, the Moore “*Viim sid-sid Zamsg Wennaam Sebre*”, and a literal back-translation of the Moore text into English, before commenting on the dissimilarities and similarities based on the linguistic and cultural background of each group. All this will be completed by a survey targeting at assessing the comprehension of the Song of Songs among protestant Moore readers.

2. Overview of Some Translation Theories

History shows that Bible translation is a formidable task.

Throughout centuries, Bible translators have had many troubles with the priesthood and some kings, Fox (1998). They were charged of heresy for translating the Bible in such way or such other one. This shows that Bible translations were failing to meet some dear and fundamental expectations of the clergy, be they clearly advised or underneath. This state of business has made translators to build translation theories to monitor the practice of their activity and, by the way, justify the choice of their translation methods. Translation as a mindful activity is then all about choices, Nord (1991). As a matter of fact, one must choose words and terms, pictures, sounds... based on their relevance for his/her translation. This relevance is assessed, based on the type of translation needed: source oriented, target oriented, adaptation for a given audience... Every choice is critical and must be justified because it has a big impact on the finished product and the understanding of the translation since it will make the translation to be either accepted or rejected. That is the reason why translators, translation commissioners and translation audiences have long discussed the various issues related to translation.

There have been a lot of debates about the possibility of cross-cultural translation throughout history. Edward Sapir (1921), American linguist and anthropologist of Lithuanian origin and his disciple Benjamin Lee Whorf (1937), argued that the language is the window through which human societies can have a representation of the world. Therefore, men cannot have world views, other than the ones their languages allow them to conceive¹. For the latter, it is not possible to explain to a person, a reality that his/her language skills do not express. This theory was resisted by authors such as Pinker (1994)² saying that things which cannot be said in one's language can nevertheless be conceived in one's mind. Translation is, for them, much more than a matter of data transfer between languages. It is rather about *deverbalisation* and *reverbalisation*, making the translator to go beyond words, in order to allow pictures, sounds and meanings to take shape in a given language.

For a long time, the principles of translation have gone through debates on whether to make a literal translation (word-for-word translation) or free translation. Without taking sides in the literal translation, Jan De Waard and Eugene A. Nida (2003: 181-185) argue that this translation approach, long advocated by some translators and authors like the translators of the Septuagint and Aquilla³, is a valuable source for text critical studies. This approach to translation has been resisted by many translators and translation theorists. According to the same source, translators like St Jerome and much later Martin Luther, have mouthed the same trumpet as Cicero and Horace, favoring an approach that transfers the meaning of the source

text in the target language with the greatest respect for the grammar and syntax of the latter.

Further discussions on the theoretical foundations of translation led to the opposition between "equivalence translation" and "correspondence translation". Correspondence translation, also called by Nida (2000) "formal equivalence" is worried about transferring the source text into the target language, with a scrupulous correspondence between the lexicons of the two languages. This source-oriented approach to translation was rejected by linguists, theorists and practitioners of translation like Eugene A. Nida (1964) and Lederer (1994). The main criticism against this approach to translation is that it focuses so much on the original text that it ends out producing incomprehensible translations with inconsistencies from the standpoint of syntax and semantics. Moreover, it does not accurately render the meaning of the text in the target language. Opposing this approach to translation, theorists and practitioners like Eugene A. Nida (1964) and Marianne Lederer (1994) have advocated for translation by functional equivalence as an alternative to correspondence translation. For the latter, equivalence translation is all about accurately conveying the meaning of the source text in the target language. This approach to translation takes the linguistic and sociological realities of the target language into account. Their goal is to achieve a transfer of the contents of the original message in an acceptable format in the target culture, without betraying the meaning of the source text (ST). More recently, translation theorists and practitioners like Michaela Wolf (2010) acknowledged in the article "Translation 'Going Social'? Challenges to the (Ivory) Tower of Babel" in *MonTI 2 (2010: 29-46)* that "Translation is by nature located in the contact zones "between cultures", and is therefore exposed to different constellations of contextualisation and structures of communication". She is convinced that "the "cultural turn" is without doubt the most decisive turning point the discipline has taken". She is supported by Johan Heilbron (1999) who argues that "the translation of books may be fruitfully understood as constituting a cultural world-system". These late developments in translation theory show that culture and cultural adaptation are a major challenge in every translation project as it involves not only two languages but at least two cultures.

These debates show how relevant is the legibility of a translation in its assessment, moreover, in the target language. That readability is not only about syntax and grammar. It is also about the appreciation of the content in a given cultural framework. Before stepping into the analysis of the text excerpts, it is relevant to make an overview of the Moose culture, to better know the context of appreciation of the target text; and the "Song of Songs".

1 The Sapire Whorf Hypothesis

2 http://arbres.iker.cnrs.fr/index.php?title=Hypothèse_de_Sapir-Whorf#les_arguments_contre_le_relativisme_linguistique (consulted on 03-24-2015)

3 Aquila did a translation of the Biblical texts in Latin. According to (Jan De Waard, Eugene A. Nida 2003: 181), this translation comprised some Hebrew expressions in a very awkward Greek.

3. Brief Overview of the Moose Culture

The Moose are a small people group encountered in the

Volta Basin in Burkina Faso, West Africa. This patriarchal ethnic group is specific because of its social organisation and moral values. It has so far been ruled by monarchs, assisted in their decision-making by a college of elders which grant the purity and application of the customary laws. These rules and laws are handed over from generation to generation by means of initiation which is a school of rituals, designed to show young men and women how the society is ruled, the duties of everyone in the family and the worship for ancestors. Initiation opens doors for men and women to get wedded and lead a family life after the customary norms of the tribe.

When a man or a woman is deemed grown enough to get wedded, he/she is not responsible for looking for a husband/wife. This responsibility lies upon the whole society but primarily on his/her parents because marriage is a matter of pride for the family and even above, for the whole community. That is why every father makes sure that his sons are wedded to women who are mature, submissive, and righteous and who fully understand the rules of the community. He will then look for "good wives" for his sons. They are not even consulted in some situations. One may be sat and all of a sudden, he is brought a wife he is to marry and care for because he is deemed grown enough to found a family. Likewise, every father wants his daughters to be married to righteous men who are hard-working, courageous and smart above all. Sometimes, it is accepted that when a man sees a woman he wants to marry, he reports to his father who will undertake all necessary steps for him to marry her if there is no counter-indication according to the Moose customs. But as a general rule, one is not asked to marry the one he/she loves but to accept and love the one he/she is married to. Above all, they are asked to lift up on high the standards and rules of the community in ruling their family. As a rule, there is a gender-based division of tasks and responsibilities in the family structure. Men are named to be heads of families and to sit in the midst of elders when they become elder citizens or are asked to come for consultation on a given issue. As for women, they are named to be housewives, caring for their children in full harmony with their co-wives. Men would eat together while women and children also sit together to eat. There is then no room for leading an idyll with one's lover because men are not supposed to show emotions or feeling but might and decisiveness.

This cultural context will be the frame for analysing the text excerpts from the Song of Songs in the Moore Bible. Prior to that analysis, it is relevant to make a brief presentation on the book.

4. Author and Origins of the "Song of Songs"

The "Song of Songs" is part of the poetry books with "Job", "Psalms", "Proverbs", and "Ecclesiastes". It has been at the epicentre of several controversies. Its interpretation,

origins, and especially erotic content have hitherto shocked many of its readers.

Scholars have long speculated on the origins of the "Song of Songs". While some attribute it to Solomon, the third king of the unified kingdom of Israel, others believe that King Solomon could not be the author. For those critics and contemporary exegetes who deny ownership to Solomon, two main theories have emerged: while the former believe that this writing dates from the earliest time of the kingdom of ten tribes (975-923 BC) when Thirza was the capital city of the kingdom of Israel, the latter think that the composition of the Song goes as back as long after the captivity, at the time of the Greek domination in Palestine⁴.

In most cases, those who think that King Solomon is not the author of the "Song of Songs" defended with the argument of the presence of words of Greek origin in the Hebrew original. These arguments are nevertheless struggling to convince a large audience. In fact, the abundance of business relations between the Middle-East as a whole and the West, in addition to the various conquests conducted, do not help the languages in that area to maintain their "purity". There was interference between their languages. This justifies, by the way, the presence of foreign words in either of these languages.

The detractors of this approach rely on the presence of historical references to the time of King Solomon to conclude that he is the author of this love song, Stuart Olyott (1988). Delitzsch, quoted by the www.lueur.org website says: "The song moves in the circumstances of the time of Solomon, with a glance of safety that can only be expected from a poet of that time ... the description of the palanquin and Solomon's bed (chapter 3 v. 6-10), the tower of David (ch.4 v.4), the images taken from the ivory tower and Lebanon (ch.7 v.5), all this reveals a writer who was an eyewitness to the life of the great King"⁵. They defend that the book was written around the year 960 BC. It has been written in the youthful vigour of King Solomon and preceded the Proverbs and Ecclesiastes attributed to him according to Frédéric Godet et Al (1982).

5. Interpretation of the Song of Songs

5.1. Characters

Likewise its origins and author, the interpretation of the Song of Songs is source of divisions for the scientific community. Some people argue that it is a poem featuring three main characters that are Solomon, the Shulamith and the shepherd. For the advocates of this approach, the shepherd in the poem cannot be Solomon in any way at all. They even see in the eighth chapter of the book, a failure of Solomon in his attempt to conquer the heart of the Shulamith.

4 <http://www.lueur.org/textes/ba-etude-cantiques5.html> (Consulted on 01-18-2015)

5 <http://www.lueur.org/textes/ba-etude-cantiques5.html> (Consulted on 01-18-2015)

For the latter, the Shulamith resists him until the end of the poem and marries the shepherd instead.

Another interpretation arises in contrast to this approach. The defenders of this second approach utter that the song features two characters: Solomon who embodies the role of the shepherd at a time and the Shulamith. According to Stuart Olyott (1988), this approach bases on historical facts like Solomon lifestyle and his other writings.

5.2. Meaning

It should be noted that a bone of contention remains among the critics and exegetes regarding the meaning of the Song of Songs. While some will see only an allegory of God's love for his people: Israel, others only see a thrilling song of love in a couple and a third group rather think that

this book is both an apology of love in a couple and an allegory of the love between God and his chosen ones.

For those who make an allegorical interpretation of the book, characters, images and events have no historical basis. These are symbols, exalting God's love for his people. Also true is it that this interpretation of the song is dominant among the rabbis of Israel, it is subject to multiple difficulties when one tries to give a spiritual value to each locality, plant, character, animal... mentioned in the poem.

Some other people think that this song is only praise to the ideal love which must exist between a man and a woman. This view cannot win a large audience among Bible scholars because denying the divine inspiration of this book means that there is no room for it in the Bible.

Table 1. Study corpus

Code	English version	Moore version / Back translation	Bible Ref.
Text 1	Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love <i>is</i> better than wine.	<i>Bi a mogs maam ne a noore, ti bõe, fo nonglem n são rãam.</i> <i>Back translation:</i> Let him kiss me with his mouth for your love is better than alcohol.	Ch.1 v.2
Text 2	Thy two breasts <i>are</i> like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.	<i>Fo bïis a yïibã yaa wa yãg-bi a yïib sën ya kinkirsi, n wãbd yamd rulg-lelma svka.</i> <i>Back translation:</i> Your two breasts are like two fawns that are twins, which eat grass among the lilies	Ch.4 v.5
Text 3	Thy lips, O <i>my</i> spouse, drop <i>as</i> the honeycomb: honey and milk <i>are</i> under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments <i>is</i> like the smell of Lebanon.	<i>M pvg-paala, fo no-bimsã tokda sudo. Sud ne bïisim bee fo zelemã têngre. La fo futã yüug wënda Libã tidare.</i> <i>Back translation:</i> My new bride, your lips are oozing honey. There is honey and milk under your tongue. And the smell of your clothes is like the fragrance of Lebanon	Ch.4 v.11
Text 4	Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have overcome me: thy hair <i>is</i> as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.	<i>Ra ges maam ye. Ti bõe, mam zoeta fo ninã. Fo zoobdã yaa wa bvvs sën sigd Galaad tãng seega.</i> <i>Back translation:</i> Do not look at me because I'm scared of your eyes. Your hair is like goats coming down from the side of the hill of Gilead.	Ch.6 v.5
Text 5	How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! the joints of thy thighs <i>are</i> like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.	<i>Nabiig bi-pugla, fo naoã sën be fo neooda wã pvsã yaa neere. Fo kigbã yaa gils wa tvvm-mitb sën maan loyerg sogdese.</i> <i>Back translation:</i> Prince's daughter, your feet in your shoes are pretty. Your buttocks are round like earrings of a necklace made by skilled workers.	Ch.7 v.1
Text 6	O that thou <i>wert</i> as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! <i>when</i> I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.	<i>Fo sã n da ya mam tão, n yësem m ma bïisa, dë, mam sã n yã foom yinga, mam da tõe n moka foom ti ned ka paoog maam ye.</i> <i>Back translation:</i> If you were my brother, that sucked my mother's breast, then, when I see you outdoor, I would kiss you without being despised by anybody.	Ch.8 v.1

Nowadays, many exegetes agree with the third group to see the “Song of Songs” as a poem featuring two main characters: Solomon and the Shulamith. They also see in this book, an image of the ideal of fleshy love which must exist between a man and a woman, and at the same time an allegory of the love of God for the Church.⁶

This study will try to bring out the nuances that may exist in the contextual interpretation of the expressions of love and desire in the English King James version and the Moore “*Viim sid-sid zamseg Wennaam Sebre*”. This analysis is intended to highlight the differences in the understandings based on the cultural background of the two audiences. Since it is fairly impossible to review the entire book, the verses below will be the foundation of our analysis.

6. Analysis of the Text Excerpts

Text 1: Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth: for thy love is better than wine.

Moore: *Bi a mogs maam ne a noore, ti bõe, fo nonglem n são rãam*

Back translation: Let him kiss me with his mouth for your love is better than alcohol.

A kiss is a show of attachment between those who share it. It is not only an "erotic" act in the Western and Middle-East context. It can also be used for a greeting. For instance Paul the apostle often said: "Greet one another with a holy kiss" (Romans Ch. 16 v.16.). However, this verse of the "Song of Solomon" Chapter 1 is making a picture of a declaration of love made by the bride to her beloved. These pictures are very common in the Western countries and in the Middle East. As a matter of fact, women and men are granted the right to show their feelings.

As for the red wine, it is a symbol of love and seduction in the Western and Middle-East understanding. The celebration of love is compared to wine which was a symbol of abundance, great wealth and joy.

Unlike the Western societies, in the Moose context, marriage is a family issue. In this context, the only things expected from women are humbleness, hard work and respect for all community values. Nobody would then, ask a lady if she loves her husband or a girl if she loves her husband to be in the traditional Moose society. Consequently, the introduction of the poem is very odd and outrageous for the Moose. How dare a woman be dating a man in such an open way? One would wonder. She even makes the first step by inviting a man to kiss her with his mouth. It would have been tolerated if it were from a man because men are allowed to date women, not the opposite. In the same verse, Wine is translated by "ra Dam" which is rather alcohol, not wine because the Moose do not know wine. Furthermore, alcohol is not associated with love in the Moose context. The Moose "ra Dam" is rather associated with sacrifice, feast, and wealth. How come then, that love is associated with alcohol? What is the meaning of that comparison? These are some of the questions that one would ask himself at the reading of that poem in the Moaga context. We can see that the Moore Bible translators have chosen literal translation and adaptation for the translation of this verse. No circumlocution or mitigation twist is used. This option can always be justified but we note that in many ways, it is difficult for the Moose audience to have the same understanding as the audience of the French or English versions.

Text 2: Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins, which feed among the lilies.

Moore: *Fo bïis a yiibã yaa wa yãg-bi a yiib sën ya kinkirsi, n wãbd yamd rulg-lelma svka.*

Back translation: Your two breasts are like two fawns

that are twins, which eat grass among the lilies⁷

The author of the poem compares the beauty of the breasts of his bride to two twin fawns grazing among the lilies. Fawn grazing among the lilies can only be fat and in good shape. This comparison is praise to the perfectly uniform and good shape breasts of his fiancée. In the Western and Middle-East context, women breasts are seen to be erotic organs.

This way of sublimating a woman's beauty, is weird to the Moose for whom women's breasts are not erotic organs. This is seen in the fact that women were allowed to stroll, topless through the village without shocking anyone. Above this aspect, this comparison is even seen as an insult in the Moose society. As a matter of fact, the only honourable way of comparing human beings to animals is comparing them to a lion or a horse (for men) and sheep (for women). When a man is compared to a lion or a horse, he is praised for his courage, hard work, majesty and strong character. For women, a comparison to sheep is praise for their humbleness, cool temper and wisdom. Any other comparison is easily seen as an insult because animals are not associated to anything but meat, agricultural needs and wealth. Here also, it is noted that Bible translators have made literal translation with no circumlocutions or mitigation twists

Text 3: Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb: honey and milk are under thy tongue; and the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.

Moore: *M pvg-paala, fo no-bimsã tokda sudo. Sud ne bïisim bee fo zelemdã têngre. La fo futã yũug wëndã Libã tdare.*

Back translation: My new bride, your lips are oozing honey. There is honey and milk under your tongue. And the smell of your clothes is like the fragrance of Lebanon.

In this verse, the poet enjoys honey and milk from the lips of his darling. This verse is a little bit ambiguous but highly suggests an embrace which is very common in the Western and Middle-East context as commented in the first text.

These verses that suggest an embrace are very difficult to understand for the Moose in a religious context. Culturally, embraces are only mentioned in some pagan Moose songs during public celebrations. Nonetheless, these hugs are never materialized in public because of the various taboos surrounding sex. Most likely, the Moose will understand this verse as: she is a good speaker because of this common expression "no-noom soaba", literally (someone with a sweet mouth), meant for someone who knows how argue to achieve his /her goal.

Bible translators have made a loan translation in this verse. This loan translation keeps the ambiguity of the English version but does not really adapt to the Moose cultural realities.

Text 4: Turn away thine eyes from me, for they have

7 In this back translation, "lilies" are not meant for the ones encountered in the Middle-East. It rather refers to a local red grass which is known to the Moose.

overcome me: thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead.

Moore: *Ra ges maam ye. Ti bõe, mam zoeta fo ninã. Fo zoobdã yaa wa bvvs sën sigd Galaad tãng seega.*

Back translation: Do not look at me because I'm scared of your eyes. Your hair is like goats coming down from the side of the hill of Gilead.

The sublimation of the beauty of the bride continues in its gradation. The author of the poem highlights the beauty of his beloved's eyes by noting how glaring they are: "Turn away your eyes from me, for they have overcome me." It is a big show of tender and love for the bride.

To say the least, this sounds weird, to the Moose since it is inconceivable for a man to be won by a woman. This would be considered a sign of extreme weakness and the person would be seen as effeminate. In the Moose culture, men are praised for being firm and authoritarian. That authority is even conducted through their eyes. Every glance is a full message that must be decoded and worth orders for their recipients. In addition to that, comparing one's hair to goats is not praise in the Moose culture. It is even nearly an insult since for the Moose, goats are famous for their disorder, dirt and bad smell. How then can someone compare the hair of his beloved one to goats?

A double translation strategy is seen in this verse. The first one is a modulation which is seen the translation of « Turn away thine eyes from me » by « *Ra ges maam ye* » which is (do not look at me). In addition to the modulation, there is a loan translation in the translation of « thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Gilead » by « *Fo zoobdã yaa wa bvvs sën sigd Galaad tãng seega* ». It should be kept that these two strategies fail to render the original emotion of the poet in the Moose culture. There is even an adverse effect in that the bride is nearly insulted for the Moose and the poet becomes laughable.

Text 5: How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! The joints of thy thighs are like jewels, the work of the hands of a cunning workman.

Moore: *Nabiig bi-pugla, fo naoã sën be fo neooda wã pvsã yaa neere. Fo kigbã yaa gils wa tvvm-mitb sën maan loyerg sogdese.*

Back translation: Prince's daughter, your feet in your shoes are pretty. Your buttocks are round like earrings of a necklace made by skilled workers.

The poet magnifies the beauty of his fiancée's waist in this verse. He appreciates the roundness of her waist by comparing it to jewels, made by a learned hand. This is to say how perfect and pretty they are.

These praises are fairly common among the Moose. In fact their men are known to be particularly proud of plump women. This is partly what justifies this Moaaga saying "*pag pa nobed t'a sid zab ye*" to mean that no husband will complain because his wife is gaining weight.

Two translation strategies are also used in this verse. The translators have chosen to make a loan translation in the

early lines of the verse: « How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince's daughter! » is translated by « *Nabiig bi-pugla, fo naoã sën be fo neooda wã pvsã yaa neere* », adapting the content of the verse to the Moore syntax. In addition to the loan translation, they have also made an economy by translating « The joints of thy thighs are like jewels » by « *Fo kigbã yaa gils* » i.e. your buttocks are round.

Text 6: O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised.

Moore: *Fo sã n da ya mam tão, n yësem m ma bïisa, dë, mam sã n yã foom yinga, mam da tõe n moka foom ti ned ka pooog maam ye.*

Back translation: If you were my brother, that sucked my mother's breast, then, when I see you outdoor, I would kiss you without being despised by anybody.

These lines depict a bride who is so sorry for not being able to kiss, hug her beloved one without suffering the scorn of her peers. She would have liked to kiss him, at least, as if he was her brother, because a kiss between brothers is not choking in their context, but sadly, she cannot!

The translation of this verse into Moore could be a stumbling block for many because in the Moose culture, brothers dare not embrace one another in such a way. This could even be interpreted as an attempt to commit incest. This interpretation can even lead to one's exclusion from society for failure to observe the moral values of the society.

Here again, Bible translators have made a loan translation which understanding in the Moose culture can be source of troubles.

7. Discussion

Various strategies were used to translate the "Song of Songs" into Moore. Every strategy is meant for a specific purpose in the context. The nature of the book and the distance between the Moose, Westerners and the Jews have had an impact on the translation strategies which include adaptation, loan translation, dilution, borrowing, generalization, modulation and literal translation. Systems and thoughts that differ from those of the Moose culture are translated by means of literal translation, modulation, and loan translation. That is why they are mainly used for the translations of terms related to beauty, the human body, sexuality, in a nutshell, everything that is taboo in the Moose society. These strategies have made the final translation to be full of foreign images and values. Even in some situations, the interpretation of the target text in the Moose culture is in sharp contrast with the original intentions of the author. So, we can assert that our first hypothesis which was that Moore speakers receive a different message is confirmed. Indeed, translation aims at making the unknown known to the target audience even though, depending on the theory one is

relying on, different approaches may be justified. Bible translation has had through time and space different objectives. In Africa in general and Burkina Faso in particular, the stated objectives of Bible translation were to bring the Gospel to the people even though one may question some attitudes related to this activity. The dynamic equivalence by Nida in the framework of Bible translation was presented as the one favouring a good dialogue between cultures because it advocates an adaptation of the translated text to the target audience. For Nida et Taber, (1974: 12), "a good translation does not sound like a translation". For the latter, priority must be given to the meaning of the message within the target audience because the accepted forms within the target audience have priority over any other prestigious norms. This is not the case in the translation of the Song of Songs in Moore. The discomfort with the translated version is evidence that the strategies used by the translators were not enough to make the book of the 'Song of Songs' readable in the Moose culture. A survey conducted among church goers and pastors revealed that fact. Indeed, 154 church goers went through a questionnaire about how they feel with the book the 'Song of Songs': 57% admitted not to be at ease with this book because of its erotic nature. Thirty five pastors (35) were surveyed as well, among which eighteen (18) or 51% confessed to have never used this book for preaches during their celebrations. Seven pastors or 20% used it once, five pastors (5, 7%) used it twice and eight pastors used it more than twice but none of them used it in Moore. One may then wonder what the role of this book is in the Moore Bible.

Our second hypothesis about the use of euphemism and circumlocution in the Moose language is not confirmed as regards the use of erotic language. Adaptation appears especially in the translation of food and beverage in some cases. There is a lack of consistency in this regard. As we are pointing out the discomfort revealed in the survey, we wonder about the best options translators could have made to produce the « same » message in words and meaning for the Moose people. Was it possible to translate the letter and spirit of the 'Song of Songs' in the current Moose culture? What is « sameness » in translation? To stick to the current culture would mean to suppress this book from the Moose Bible because there is no other way to produce an acceptable language related to this story in this language. It may be one of the reasons why literal translation was used in translating 'problematic' passages. The discomfort noticed in the translation of this book needs to be analysed deeply to provide a solid basis for further translations or revisions of the Bible in this language.

8. Conclusions

As we come to the end of our study, we hold with (Lederer 1994: 122) that the so called cultural problems are among the most frequently mentioned difficulties in translation. As a matter of fact, it is very difficult and nearly impossible to achieve lexical correspondence between source and target

civilization. The challenge is not only limited to matching words from source and target languages, but goes as far as transferring the maximum of the implicit world of the source language into the target one.

This journey through the Song of Songs has revealed that the Bible translators have encountered many difficulties related to differences between the Jewish culture, the Western culture and the Moose one in their translation project. Moreover, all their efforts were not enough to make the target text legible to the Moose audience. We were then tempted to agree with Edward Sapir (1884-1939) and his student Benjamin Lee Whorf (1897-1941), to say that languages are frames that determine the borders within which human societies can understand the world, and they are quite never equivalent enough to have the same representations of the world. However, we acknowledge that languages are not static but dynamic. They enrich or impoverish to the point of disappearing, while they are in contact with other languages and cultures. We remain convinced that Translation is far more than a simple linguistic mediation between cultures. It also has an educational purpose. Translation is a door through which a given human society can enter into the culture of another one, access their ways of thinking, and learn from them.

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