
Translation Status, Actors and Dimensions in the Qajar Era (1789-1925)

Mohammad Amir Ahmadzadeh¹

Translated by Esmail Yazdanpour

Originally published as: Mohammad Amir Ahmadzadeh, "Vaz'iyat-e Tarjome, Koneshgaran va Ab'ad aan dar Dour-eh Qajar," *Scientific and Research Journal of Iranian History* 4, no. 2 (2012): 1-26.

Introduction

Translation issues have been a topic of concern among scholars, reformers, and translators since the earliest translations of European works, leading to questions about the impact of translation on the language and thinking of the recipients, as well as the qualities of a competent translator. Cultural sensitivities and the need to attract an audience have also played a significant role in shaping translation practices. How can translation be effective? Are these effects uniform and systematic in the recipient languages of translation and target societies? These questions have resulted in the

¹ Assistant Professor of Historical Research, Institute for Humanities and Cultural Studies, Tehran.

Lingua Franca: The open access journal of the

Society for the History of Authorship, Reading and Publishing (SHARP)

Editors: Cynthia Gabbay, Susan Pickford, Mariana Silveira

ISSN 2475-1367

Issue 9 (2023), Book History in the Persianate World
from the Samanid Dynasty to the Present Day

Guest editor: Esmail Yazdanpour

Cite: Mohammad Amir Ahmadzadeh, "Translation Status, Actors and Dimensions in the Qajar Era (1789-1925)," *Lingua Franca*, Issue 9 (2023),

<https://www.sharpweb.org/linguafranca/2023-Ahmadzadeh>.

formulation of conditions for translation and have often been the focus of attention for translators.

Changes in translation were made with great care, incorporating Iranian cultural and mental elements through the selection of Iranian equivalents. Such translations had a great impact on readers, to the extent that they sometimes forget that what they were reading was a translation of a European book.

From the earliest translations of European languages into Persian, famous translators and speakers often discussed translation practices and the qualities that a translator should possess. Mohammad Kermanshahi (1782-1863)² translated Alain-René Lesage's *Gil Blas* into Persian, concluding in his introduction that readers could better understand the story and engage with the author if translators used Persian names such as Rostam, Afrasiyab, and Farhad instead of unknown French names such as Cadroche, Cavalcani, Waldesque, Roland, and Dantès.³

The Approach of Translators to Translation and Their Social Status During the Qajar Era

Examining the social status and lives of translators during the Qajar era, as well as their understanding of the concepts of the source culture and their specialized knowledge in translation, is important for determining the reliability of their work. Some translators with specialized knowledge entered the field of translation and tended to translate a

² Mohammad Khan Kermanshahi, an influential literary translator during the Qajar period, remains an enigmatic figure primarily due to disputes surrounding the attribution of his translations. The scarcity of information about his biography is compounded by ongoing debates questioning whether he was the true translator or if credit should be assigned to more towering figures of the time. Despite the uncertainties surrounding his authorship, Kermanshahi's translations, notably his rendition of *Gil Blas* by Alain-René Lesage, stand as significant contributions to the literary landscape of nineteenth-century Iran (translator's note).

³ Alain-René Lesage, *Sargozasht-e Gil Blas* [The Adventures of Gil Blas], trans. Mohammad Kermanshahi, ed. Gholam Hussein Mirza Saleh (Tehran: Mazyar Moein, 1998), 1-5.

specific type of European work.⁴ This required skills in translation and familiarity with specific text types. Mohammed-Taher Mirza (1834-1899) was one translator who had extensive education and professional activities in the fields of science and literature. As a prince close to the Qajar court, his translations were well received by the general public and intellectuals alike. His translations were long used as a reference and played an important role in Iran's cultural and political development. A skilled and prolific translator, Mohammed-Taher Mirza selected works based on his social status and carefully avoided translating political works.

Some translators belonged to lower social groups. They were mostly ethics-oriented translators whose involvement in translation was driven by their interest in developing Iranian society. For instance, Kermanshahi translated novels because he believed the genre was important and useful for informing and educating ordinary Iranians.

One translator active during the Naseri era was Mohammad Hasan Khan Etemad ul-Saltaneh (1843-1896). He held a ministerial position for many years, serving as a translator and special secretary to Naser al-Din Shah.⁵ He pursued a state-oriented approach to translation⁶ and did not follow the method of other translation practitioners. The translators of Dar al-Fonun⁷ were another prolific group who saw

⁴ Mohammad Reza Fashahee, *Az Gat-ha Ta Mashroutiyat: Gozareshi Kootah Az Tahavolat-e Fekri va Ejtemai dar Jam'e-e Feudal-e Iran* [From Goths to Constitutional Revolution: A Brief History of Intellectual and Social Developments in Feudal Iranian Society] (Tehran: Gutenberg, 1975), 254-63.

⁵ Naser al-Din Shah Qajar (1831–1896) was the fourth monarch of the Qajar Dynasty who reigned over Persia from 1848 to 1896. His long reign marked a pivotal period in Persian history, witnessing cultural and political transformations. Beyond his political role, Naser al-Din Shah played a significant part in fostering a literary environment, particularly through translation activities. His interest in Western literature, coupled with his proficiency in French and familiarity with Russian, facilitated the translation of numerous foreign works into Persian (translator's note).

⁶ Ahmad Karimi Hakkak, "Persian Tradition," *Encyclopedia of Translation Studies Database*, 1995, 518; Etemad ul-Sultanah, *Rooznameh Khaterat* [Journal of Memories], ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran: Amir Kabir, 1966), 262.

⁷ Dar al-Fonun was a polytechnic founded in 1851 in Tehran. It was the first modern university in Iran, established by the order of Amir Kabir, the chief minister of Naser al-Din Shah Qajar. It was designed to train Iranians in modern sciences and technologies including medicine, engineering, military science,

translation as a means of acquiring new education from European intellectual and scientific resources, and who promoted new sciences in turn.

The Functions of Translation during the Qajar Era

The Conception of a Social Mission and Function for Translation

In Europe, one reason for the popularity of the novel was its role in disseminating science and knowledge. Its destiny and social position depended on sciences that were disseminated through novels in accessible language.⁸ *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, the novel format provided up-to-date scientific and technical information to many readers and brought together imagination and science. Such novels could entertain the public with amazing events and arouse their curiosity, provide intellectuals and students with information and a general understanding of imaginary concepts, and help readers grow and develop depending on their mental capacity. This European method of expressing scientific, social, and political concepts facilitated access to science.

The role of translating novels in spreading knowledge in the target society can be considered unparalleled: novels addressed various scholarly topics including history, culture, politics, society, and crises, and informed social groups in different communities of the general conditions of the world.⁹ The content of the novels also turned into a functional framework for producing and shaping new customs, rules, and norms, as they had a significant role in presenting and promoting moral values with an attractive and readable narrative framework. Some translations, such as James Morier's *Hajji Baba of*

mathematics, geology, and natural science. Dar al-Fonun played an important role in introducing modern ideas and training a new intelligentsia in Iran (translator's note).

⁸ Ali Khazaei Far, "Nazariyeh Tarjomeh, Gozashteh va Hal" [Translation Theory, Past and Present], *Farhangestan Letter* 28 (winter 2005): 69-79; Ali Salhjoo, *Gofteman va Tarjomeh* [Discourse and Translation] (Tehran: Markaz Publishing, 1998).

⁹ Clifford Edmund Bosworth and Carole Hillenbrand (eds.), *Qajar Iran: Political, Social, and Cultural Change* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 1983); Ali Salhjoo, "Karkardgeraee dar Tarjomeh" [Functionalism in Translation], *Translator Quarterly* 8, no. 29 (Summer 1999): 39-46.

Ispahan,¹⁰ were shaped by the ethics and culture of the Iranian people while also exerting a direct influence, resonating strongly within the Iranian audience. Translators in the first few decades of the nineteenth century considered the novel as the best means of improving the customs and morals of a nation and their translations quickly had an impact on society. In Iran, as in Europe, novelists became the greatest teachers of science and culture, and scholars, philosophers, and those striving for a new education tried to make various social groups more knowledgeable through fiction.¹¹

Translated novels had diverse social, historical, and cultural dimensions. Sometimes an engaging and informative story would grant readers a deeper understanding of the source culture, while covering philosophical and educational topics. Some novels were also considered historical books. In various translated texts, historical concepts, myths, scientific fantasies, and science were often regarded as similar. Mohammad-Taher Mirza, for instance, intertwined historical and novelistic vocabulary in his translation of *The Three Musketeers*. Although the book was written in the form of mythological stories, the events depicted were never contrary to reality. Mohammad-Taher Mirza was among the translators who paid close attention to the facts and realities present in the works. Although his translated novels contained astonishing topics, magic tales, and legends, he focused on the translation of real historical events that happened in a specific world. Translating novels not only included historical content but also had an instructive and entertaining role for other translators. Translations that described the culture and ethics of the source society and that were accurate and frank in expressing historical topics attracted many readers.

¹⁰ Written in English by James Morier and published in 1824, *Hajji Baba of Ispahan* is a picaresque novel that depicts Persian society during the Qajar period, drawing from Morier's diplomatic experiences in Persia. This literary work, marked by its insightful portrayal of cultural nuances and political intricacies, was later translated into Persian and achieved popularity (translator's note).

¹¹ M.C. Hillmann, "Persian Prose Fiction: An Iranian Mirror and Conscience", *Encyclopedia of Persian Literature*, ed. Ehsan Yarshater, 1988, 289-93.

Utilizing Translation to Express Political Views

One of the primary roles of translated literature, particularly novels, was to shed light on political crises and promote social progress. During the decline of the Qajar dynasty, many novels featuring political crises in France and the Roman Empire were translated, helping to promote the idea of freedom. The novel was also an essential literary genre for communities that could not openly express their opinions due to authoritarian rule. The use of symbolism, storytelling, narration, and allegory provided a suitable way to express and address public needs. The novel's narrative form was an appropriately cautious way to voice social and political criticisms. Iranian translators living in an absolute monarchy used the metaphorical language of the novel to fight oppression and criticize social, cultural, and political situations. They employed the language of contemporary European nations or the ancient history of Iran to express their goals and desires. Translated novels provided a means for public reflection and contemplation on various issues without direct confrontation with the Qajar rulers. Such novels aimed to promote patriotic and social awareness and show the public the need for change.¹²

These novels presented history in a mythical and narrative form and achieved great success with a beautiful style. In the translation of these novels as a new literary genre, the new interpretations by the translators were significant. Mirza Mohammad Khan Amin Daftar, the translator of *The Story of Henry IV with Queen Marguerite* by Alexandre Dumas, asserted in his introduction to the translation that Europeans used this format to revive history and reflect it in their society. Some translators, such as Mohammad Tahir Mirza, were so confident in the content of the novel that they imagined it as real events and history. For instance, the translation of *The Three Musketeers* was presented as *The History of the Three Musketeers*. Mohammad Tahir Mirza believed that the book was based on historical events to better explain them to the reader. Mohammad Tahir Mirza and Abutorab Nouri were among the translators who believed that European novels were merely a new form of narrative and expression, and that genuine historical

¹² John H. Lorentz, *Modernization and Political Change in Nineteenth Century Iran: the Role of Amir Kabir* (Princeton: Princeton University, 1974), 148–53.

events and topics were only expressed in the form of myths and novels to evoke human emotions.

Through an examination of translators' prefaces and the content of works translated, the main approaches and models used in translations become evident. To analyze translation work, it is necessary to compare the translation with the original while considering the multilingual and temporal context of both. In fact, the inclusion or omission of substantial parts, along with intricate alterations to translated texts, was contingent upon the translator's proficiency, thereby facilitating the transfer of meanings and concepts from one culture to another. It is worth noting that translators during this period were typically educated within the Qajar court, an environment characterized by a formal, closed, governmental culture. The translation of French novels was typically done by court translators or at the request of courtiers. As such, the translator's first concern in translation was alinguistic and lexical issues, followed by technical language, specialized concepts, and vocabulary. For inexperienced translators who had little knowledge of European circumstances, any variation in situations was considered risky.

The Role of Translation in Developing Persian Prose

In the nineteenth century, translation had a profound impact on Persian literature. Through translation, Persian prose was introduced to new literary styles, leading to a distinct division between literary and non-literary genres. The incorporation of various modes of expression facilitated this process, allowing for greater diversity and innovation in Persian prose. The influence of the latest technical advances imported from the West, coupled with the import of various European texts and the development of printing and publishing industries in Iran, led to the formation and growth of a newly transformed Persian prose. This transformation opened up new possibilities for education and training in a modern style, with translation serving as a channel for conveying political

concepts, leading Iran to emulate events in nineteenth-century Europe.¹³ As a result, effective new social and political movements were created, which helped to establish new standards. The press and translations in newspapers also played a key role in introducing new personal experiences and fresh insights from world literature, resulting in the growth of a realistic and forward-looking approach. Overall, the impact of translation on Persian prose during this period was far-reaching and significant, preparing the ground for a new era of literary development and innovation in Iran.

Translating Foreign Newspaper Articles

The growth of the press and the expansion of the printing industry made Iranian scholars, intellectuals, and translators aware of their significant delay in the fields of scientific, cultural, social, and political transformation. As a result of the formation and growth of these modern and efficient techniques for translating foreign works, the majority of which were in French, they were used as behavioral and cultural guidelines for a segment of Iranian society. Although the process of translation was sometimes slow, irregular, and disjointed, it created a great enthusiasm for new issues in Iranian society on the eve of the constitutional revolution. Most of the translations were related to historical, scientific, and educational topics, which had a significant impact on the growth of social and political awareness among different groups in Iran.

The Role of Translation in Spreading Modernism in Iran

Translation was also a program for promoting modernity. Educated and cultured Iranian groups turned to translation to convey modern slogans and concepts. Of course, not all of them were professional translators, but most of them were from groups such as court politicians, teachers and graduates of Dar al-Fonun and other new schools, and European-educated intellectuals, with their own intellectual, cultural, and political tendencies.¹⁴ Due to differences in knowledge level, social background, and motivations

¹³ David Menashri, *Education and the Making of Modern Iran* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 7.

¹⁴ Guity Nashat, *The origins of Modern Reform in Iran, 1870–80* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1982).

for engaging in translation, translations were not homogeneous. Each translator's interpretation of translation was based on individual, social and cultural environments, audience goals, and tastes, but overall, they created social movement and innovation. The experience of translation created a new style of expression and innovative thinking in Persian prose and writing.

Although translations continued slowly and irregularly due to political limitations and the lack of powerful social platforms, they gradually provided a basis for the new cultural, written, and intellectual vocabulary.¹⁵ At times, translations were used to re-explain old rules and the new literary genre of the novel was considered as equivalent to ancient Persian stories, myths, and scientific imaginings. In later stages, translations could break away from Iranian traditions to some extent and create their own path to new styles, cultures, and fresh rules.¹⁶ New concepts and vocabulary came into Persian via a process of linguistic transfer, with changes in sound and spelling.

Obstacles to the Greater Impact of Translations

The Impact of the Translator's Mindset on the Main Concepts

The translated sources and works produced during the Qajar era in Iran faced limitations in achieving formal equivalence, textual equivalence, and functional equivalence. In the case of functional equivalence, non-cultural words were used instead of cultural ones from the source language, resulting in foreign words becoming native in the target language. In the use of textual and explanatory equivalence, the cultural, political, or social meanings of words were explained and interpreted in the target language, with new concepts being defined and interpreted concisely, leading to interpretive translations in some texts. If the implied meaning of a new concept was transformed into the target language through literal translation, it would result in deviation and

¹⁵ Goel Kohan, *Tarikh-e Sansor dar Matbu'at-e Iran* [History of Censorship in Iranian Press] (Tehran: Agah Publications, 1981).

¹⁶ Monica M. Ringer, *Education, Religion, and the Discourse of Cultural Reform in Qajar Iran* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda, 2001), 76.

inadequate meaning, thus reducing the credibility of the translation. In such cases, the original term was introduced in the translated text in the target language, sometimes even spelled Persian-style.

Some Qajar-era translators used cultural adaptation extensively. Due to the significant cultural distance between Iranian and Western cultures, some translated very freely and made numerous adaptations. They would remove or Iranianize aspects unfamiliar to their audience. They would change the names of characters and even the social context, and in translating plays, they would change the structure and content of the text. Translators were so devoted to nativism and cultural adaptation that they made the style and language of plays and novels closer to Persian norms and added or removed some scenes entirely, expanding the text in line with Iranian tastes.¹⁷ They would adapt the speech and characteristics of the story's characters to Iranian culture and create an Eastern-style translation of Western works. In other words, Qajar-era translators would change the ethics and moods of the characters, giving them an Iranian appearance, and would even "completely put conversations in the form of Iranian poetry and turn a French crow into a Persian-speaking nightingale".¹⁸

When Translation Goes Too Far: The Negative Impact of Cultural Adaptation

In many Qajar translations, the names of European characters became Iranian. Iran's relations with Europe were initially limited and Western names were unfamiliar and alienating. Their pronunciation was not easy and they disrupted the natural flow of Persian storytelling and plays. This cultural adaptation meant that the translation deviated significantly from the original text's atmosphere and took on a strong local

¹⁷ Behzad Barkat, "Adabiyat va Nazariye-e Nizam-e Chandganeh: Naghsh-e Ejtemai-e Neveshtar" [Literature and the Theory of Multiple Systems: The Social Role of Writing], *Social Sciences Letter* 28 (Autumn 1979), 85–9.

¹⁸ Edward G. Browne, *A History of Iranian Literature*, Volume 4: *A History of Persian Literature from the Safavid to the Present Day*, trans. Bahram Meghdadi, notes and comment by Ziauddin Sajjadi and Abdul Hussein Navai (Tehran: Morvarid Publications, 1978), 327.

flavor. Translation indigenized texts and “brought the audience to Chaleh Meidan [a district in Tehran] instead of New York”.¹⁹ This style of translation was more attractive and appealing to target language readers. For example, the Iranian cultural elements that Etemad ul-Saltaneh²⁰ added to the translation of Molière’s *Le Médecin malgré lui* were used to attract audiences and distance the translation from the original text. Etemad ul-Saltaneh used concepts from ancient works, including poetry, proverbs, and Arabic phrases, on aesthetic grounds.²¹ The resulting translation was sometimes so native that it seemed to have been produced in Persian: he went so far as to have one character talk about leaving for Europe to study medicine for three and a half months, saying, “I am not like the one who was a servant to Mirza Nasir for six months who went to Europe for three and a half months to study medicine, paid a sum, got a medical license, and returned to Iran”.²²

Among the major changes made by Qajar era translators were adapting the themes and characters of Western plays to Iranian issues and personalities, Orientalizing the events and characters, modifying contents contrary to Eastern thought, giving an Iranian atmosphere to the works through the use of local cultural elements and specific Iranian vocabulary and phenomena, and expanding the original text.

¹⁹ Karim Emami, *Az Past va Boland Tarjomeh* [Lows and Highs of Translation] (Tehran: Niloufar, 1978); Christophe Balaÿ and Michel Cuypers, *Aux Sources de la Nouvelle Persane* (Paris: Institut Français d’Iranologie de Teheran, 1983); Mohammad Gholam, *Roman-e Tarikhi: Seir va Naqd va Tahqiq-e Romanha-ye Tarikhi Farsi 1284 ta 1332* [Historical Novel; History and Criticism and Analysis of Persian Historical Novels, 1885-1953] (Tehran: Cheshme, 2002).

²⁰ Mohammad Hassan Khan Etemad ul-Saltaneh (1844-1896), whose full name was Mirza Hassan Ashtiani, was a prominent Qajar era figure. Etemad ul-Saltaneh was a diplomat, historian, writer, and translator who held various positions in the Qajar court, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He played an important role in the modernization efforts of the Qajar government. Etemad ul-Saltaneh is also known for his translations of Western literary works into Persian, including the works of Shakespeare and Molière. His translations were influential in introducing Western literature to Iranian readers and helping to bridge the cultural gap between Iran and the West during the Qajar era (translator’s note).

²¹ Molière, *Hekayat-e Tabib-e Ejbari* [*Le Médecin malgré lui*], trans. Mohammad Hassan Khan Etemad ul-Saltaneh (Tehran: Ehyaye Ketab, 1957).

²² Molière, *Hekayat-e Tabib-e Ejbari*, 1957, 17–9.

Translated books were “adorned in writing in the manner of Iranian storytellers with Persian poems”.²³ Mirza Habib’s translation of *Hajji Baba of Ispahan* (1824) filled the entire book with appropriate poems by himself and Persian speech masters, verses, hadiths, proverbs and couplets, to the extent that it seems that the printed text was originally written in Persian.²⁴ Arabic phrases and poems in colloquial and regional dialects of North Iranian, Turkish and other languages were also added to European texts.²⁵

Since French plays were translated for Iranian audiences accustomed to traditional Iranian theater, Qajar era translators borrowed the style of these Iranian plays and shaped the French texts accordingly. Both Etemad ul-Saltaneh in his translation of *Le Médecin malgré lui* and Mirza Habib Esfahani in his translation of *Le Misanthrope* took this approach.²⁶ Etemad ul-Saltaneh shaped the French text in the form of Iranian imitation plays and Mirza Habib translated and staged the text in the form of traditional Iranian Shabih Khani.²⁷ The plot underwent occasional changes, with certain characters being introduced or excluded. Etemad ul-Saltaneh introduced an entirely Iranian merchant character named Johoud to *Le Médecin malgré lui*. Similarly, Mohammad Tahir Mirza’s translation of Molière’s *L’École des femmes* replaced the two Egyptians in the original text with an astrologer and a fortune teller.²⁸ Mirza Habib likewise omitted and added scenes to his translation of *Le Misanthrope*, while his *L’École des femmes* included a section, “The Wedding of Mirza”, that altered the structure of the play.

²³ Yahya Arianpour, *Az Saba ta Nima* [From Saba to Nima] (Tehran: Amir Kabir Publications, 1978), 265.

²⁴ Rajab Ali Kiani, “History of Theater and Drama in Iran: Western Influence” (Ph.D., University of California - Los Angeles, 1984), 2-70.

²⁵ Molière, *Mardom Goreez* [Le Misanthrope], trans. Mirza Habib Isfahani, ed. Iraj Afshar (Tehran, Ameh Books, 2009), 482.

²⁶ Molière, *Mardom Goreez*, 2009.

²⁷ Shabih Khani is a traditional form of theatrical performance art in Iran. It involves reciting or singing poetic verses in a melodic and rhythmic manner. This cultural practice is often performed during religious ceremonies, such as mourning rituals or at special occasions like weddings and other celebrations (translator’s note).

²⁸ Arianpour, *Az Saba ta Nima* [From Saba to Nima], 1978, 347.

Qajar-era translators often changed the titles of the works they translated. Etemad ul-Saltaneh changed the Countess de Ségur's *Mémoires d'un âne* to a title that can be back-translated as *The Donkey Carrying Books or Logic of the Donkey*. Mohammad Zaki Aliabadi translated and published Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches* [History of the Ottoman Empire] as *Tarikh-e Imperatori-e Osmani*. Even scientific books underwent changes in their titles and concepts: Jakob Eduard Polak's book on medicine was translated by Hakim al-Mamalek as *Zobdat al-Hikmah* [The Essence of Wisdom], while Kotaravsky's book on ophthalmology was translated by Mohammad Hassan Khan Kafari as *Zia al-Nazerin* [The Radiance of the Observers], echoing the title of a sixteenth-century Safavid book on the same subject. Another book by Polak on medicine was translated by Mohammad Hossein Afshar as *Alaaj al-Asqam* [Treatment of Conditions]; Figuet's *La Terre et les Mers* was translated by Mohammad Taqi Ansari Kashani (1839-1901) as *Tazkirat al-Ard* [Memoir of the Earth]. By drawing on cultural elements, Quranic verses, and classic metaphors and titles, the translators aimed to create a sense of familiarity and resonance. They sought to connect the translated works with the existing cultural and intellectual framework of the Persian-speaking audience.

Kermanshahi recognized certain adaptations and incorrect substitutions in his translation of *Gil Blas*. He separated well-known names such as Paris, Portugal, Napoleon, and Bismarck from his proposal and criticized the use of incorrect names, writing "These names should be used as they are, and substituting them with incorrect names is not appropriate."²⁹ While Kermanshahi suggested various names to replace foreign names, he went to great lengths to Iranianize his translations. He replaced French names in *Gil Blas* with Iranian names and referenced Sheikh Bahai's *Nan-o Halwa* [Bread and Halwa] and *Shir-o Shekar* [Milk and Sugar] in the translation.³⁰ He believed that the

²⁹ Lesage, *Sargozasht-e Gil Blas*, 1998, 12-15.

³⁰ Sheikh Baha' al-Din (1547-1621 CE), an eminent figure in Safavid Iran during the late-sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, contributed significantly to diverse intellectual domains. With a prolific literary output exceeding 100 works in Arabic and Persian, his influence extends across philosophy, mathematics, and poetry (translator's note).

translator should faithfully convey the author's original intention and the message of the text in any possible way in the translation. This required a coordinated, conscious, and informed approach, taking into account the people, places, and times of the work.

Translation has always been a guide for nations in displaying their civilization. Translators must be well-versed in three essential pillars: the source language, the target language, and the subject of translation. If the translator cannot grasp the idea governing the text, they cannot produce an accurate translation.³¹ Translation itself is a form of art, and the translator must possess the art of intellectual creativity, imagination, and dynamism so that they can find equivalent words, combinations, and well-crafted structures in the target language. In the process of an appropriate translation, the power of creativity and innovation is accompanied by other intellectual challenges, and the translator must have a suitable scientific and artistic background to carry out his task successfully.

The Role of Translators in Functionalist Approaches to Translation

In functionalist approaches, the quality of a translation is assessed based on its ability to fulfill a predetermined role in the target language and culture. In this approach, the original text is sometimes only seen as a source of information, and the translator is seen as an expert or author who decides what role the translated text should play in the target language and culture based on the type, role, and purpose of the original text. This reflects the translator's role as a conveyer of meaning. This means that translation is a conscious and directional activity in which every decision the translator makes, every option they choose, and every approach they take is influenced by their ideological tendencies. Translation has been an influential tool for the exchange of ideas and the dissemination of knowledge in human societies. Translators worked within their own specific socio-cultural context and were considered part of the language community that benefited from their translation. Therefore, translation was a purposeful and directional

³¹ Hassan Babak, "Tarjomeh va Tasir-e an bar Zaban va Adab-e Farsi" [Translation and its Impact on Persian Language and Literature], *Daneshgah-e Enghelab Quarterly* 108 (1997), 37.

activity, carried out based on the needs, beliefs, and perceptions of the target society and culture. Some translation theorists consider the translator's strategies to be influenced by their ideological perspectives and have gone so far as to consider translation itself an ideological activity. Schaffner argues that not only can every translation be considered a product of an ideology, but the ideological aspects of every translated text can also be exposed to scrutiny.³²

The translator strives to convey not only the author's intended meaning but also the semiotic features of the source text. However, during the transfer process, there are obstacles and limitations that can have an impact on the translator's decisions and methods, as translation involves the application of principles, conventions, values, and specific beliefs that may not necessarily be the same in the source and target cultures and languages.³³

The Ideological Aspects of Translation

In examining the ideological aspects of translation, the processes involved in the production and reception of texts and the rules of the source and target languages are taken into account. The social use of language leads translators to analyze and evaluate the quality and function of the text within its social and cultural context. The discourse constraints that translators faced in Qajar-era translation influenced their translations. Cohesion, as a semantic concept, shows the semantic relationships within a text. Whenever the interpretation of an element in a text is dependent on the interpretation of another element in the same text, lexical cohesion occurs.³⁴

One of the main tasks of the translator is to pay attention to the "lexical cohesion" of the text. Based on this, there are two stages in the translation process: the non-

³² Christina Schäffner, "Translation, Politics, Ideology," in *CTIS Occasional Papers*, ed. Keith Harvey (Manchester: UMIST, 2002), 2:97-111.

³³ Basil Hatim and Ian Mason, *Translation and the Translator* (London and New York: Longman, 1990), 23-31.

³⁴ Hatim and Mason, *Translation and the Translator*, 1990.

linguistic level before translation and the linguistic level of translation. The pre-linguistic stage involves selecting a work for translation. The cultural framework of the target society is influential in the selection and translation of works. In the linguistic stage of translation, the source text language elements are replaced by the language elements of the target text. This is done in two ways: one is to preserve the language elements of the original text by bringing in equivalent language elements in Persian; the other is to change the language elements of the source language. In this stage, translators do not act uniformly in terms of which elements to preserve and which to change, since they have different tastes and understandings of their mother tongue. That is why every translation is different. Even a translator who shows a tendency towards the author's wording sometimes changes the language elements of the source text instead of preserving them, and conversely, a translator who is primarily interested in translating the author's intended meaning sometimes preserves the language elements of the source text.³⁵

Methods of Translating Texts

Given that the original text represents only a subset of the potential linguistic capabilities of the source language, "literal translation" can confine the translator's choices. In this method, the translator primarily selects linguistic features and elements actualized in the source language. When the translator encounters difficulties mastering these elements, they may resort to features of their mother tongue. However, this method can also have some advantages, including linguistic innovation. This innovation, inspired by the original text, can lead to new relationships between words in the target language.

Some translators followed a different method. They primarily selected a larger set of active linguistic elements that belonged to their mother tongue. Word-for-word translation was the dominant tradition in translation. In this tradition, the result of the translation was prose comprehensible for the audience of the target community. However, this prose was not written with the full potential capacities of the Persian

³⁵ Ali Salhjoo, *Gofteman va Tarjomeh*, 1998, 45-7.

language. The tradition of word-for-word translation was prevalent before the emergence of meaning-based translation, and translation had to pass through literal translation in its evolutionary process towards meaning-based translation. In essence, in a word-for-word translation, the author and their world remain undisturbed within the source text. To comprehend the meanings, the reader bears the responsibility of being aware of the situations and developments in the author's world for a complete grasp of the intended meanings. Given that translation could show these interventions and appropriations as well as the authenticity of cultures, translation can be used as an opportunity to demonstrate and highlight linguistic and cultural differences.³⁶ Translation required an understanding of the actual linguistic capacities of the source and target languages. The target language was influenced by the source text, and its traditional structures were affected. Translation is always relative and has no power to fully transfer the words, combinations, changes, and style of the author.

Translation Stages During the Qajar Era

The status of Qajar era translation can be divided into three periods from the reign of Abbas Mirza to the assassination of Naser al-Din Shah:

- A) A thirty-year period from the time of the translation of Mirza Reza Mohandes³⁷ until the start of the activities of Dar al-Fonun School (1850-1880).
- B) Periods when most translation work was done by teachers and translators affiliated with the Ministry of Sciences and the Directorate of Translation at the Ministry of Publications.

³⁶ Jean Delisle, *Tahlil-e Kalaam, Raveshi Baraye Tarjomeh: Nazariyeh va Karbord* [L'analyse du discours comme méthode de traduction], trans. Esmail Faghih (Tehran: Rahnama Publications, 2002), 149.

³⁷ Mirza Reza Tabrizi (1788–1883) known as Mohandes, a polymath in Mohammad Shah's era, was instrumental in engineering and translation. Noted for designing Dar al-Fonun School, he excelled in military engineering during the Herat campaign. After studying in England, he served under Abbas Mirza. His enduring legacy includes designing the Naseri Dam and translating historical works (translator's note).

C) The popularization of translation in the last decade of Naser al-Din Shah's reign until the Constitutional Revolution (1886-1911).

Dominance of the Traditional Translation Method in the First Period

In the initial phase of translation, the dominant approach to translating European texts into Persian was influenced by the longstanding history of translating from Arabic to Persian and the prevailing style among Iranians for over a thousand years. In this traditional style of translation, translators aimed to render European interpretations and idioms into Persian equivalents. Their goal was to ensure that the audience could grasp the relative understanding of the subjects and that the writings would be comprehensible and widely circulated. Translators during the eras of Prince Abbas Mirza (1789–1833), Mohammad Shah (1808–1848), and Naser al-Din Shah (1831–1896) considered it necessary to adhere to the traditions set by their predecessors. The focus of this approach was on making the meaning of the expression clear, rather than attempting to achieve a perfect and exact match with the original text. Free translation was an admired method within this tradition. Only religious texts, particularly the Quran, were presented as word-for-word translations, as the sacred religious text discouraged interpretation and summarization. In these translations, the Persian meaning of each word was mentioned between the lines. However, when translating other texts, translators would use expressions as they saw fit and incorporate Persian poetry and proverbs as substitutes for the original content. These methods emphasized that in the conventional style of translation, the main objective of the translator was to convey the meaning of the expressions, while also embellishing the writing with a contrived expression that was in harmony with Iranian tastes.³⁸

Qajar-era translators used this translation model in translating two literary masterpieces. One of them was Abd al-Latif Tasouji's translation of the *Arabian Nights*

³⁸ Babak Ahmadi, *Sakhtar va Ta'vil Matn: Neshaneh Shenasi va Sakhtargaraee* [The Structure and Interpretation of Text: Semiotics and Structuralism] (Tehran: Markaz, 1991), 72.

during the reign of Mohammad Shah. This was an originally Persian book that was lost in past centuries with stories that were circulated orally. The other was James Morier's *Haji Baba of Isfahan*, which was rendered into Persian in 1886 from a French relay translation. In both, the talented translators added Persian poems and proverbs and introduced new expressions and concepts that effectively conveyed the content and substance of the original, despite lacking literal and stylistic conformity.

Tendency Towards Indirect Translation of European Texts During the Second Period

Many Qajar-era translations were indirect, such as *Haji Baba of Isfahan*. Some scientific works were also translated from Arabic and Turkish into Persian.³⁹ When Etemad ul-Saltaneh wrote *Al-Ma'athar Va Al-Aathar* [Monuments and Achievements] in the fortieth year of Naser al-Din Shah's reign (1889), he mentioned the increased number of translators who translated directly from European languages. He explained that interest in European languages had increased: "Delving into the teaching and learning of various languages, which is the key to awareness of arts, sciences, crafts and customs of nations, is the preface of intercourse and communication with nations and countries: knowledge of French, knowledge of English, knowledge of Russian and knowledge of German".⁴⁰ Naser al-Din Shah himself was aware of the importance of learning foreign languages and was interested in literature, history and geography; he also knew a little French and intended to learn German and Russian. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, several Persian princes became interested in foreign languages and began translating European works, including Firuz Mirza Mutamar Al-Dowla (1849-1915), Ali Bakhsh Mirza Qajar (1842-1925), Muhammad Tahir Mirza (1844-1900), Abdolhossein

³⁹ A. R. Sheikholeslami, *The Structure of Central Authority in Qajar Iran 1871-1896* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997), 22.

⁴⁰ Mohammad Hassan Khan Etemad ul-Saltaneh (ed.), *Almaasir val Asaar* [Monuments and Achievements], (Tehran: Sana'i Library, n.d.), 127.

Mirza (son of Tahmasb Mirza Mu'ayyad Al-Dowla), and Hossein Gholi Mirza Amad Al-Dowla (1840-1906), the son of Azad Al-Dowla and brother of Naser al-Din Shah.

During the reign of Naser al-Din Shah, some scientific, technical, and medical texts were translated and compiled from European originals for teaching purposes. The main reason for the prevalence of translated works in the Naseri era was that there were not yet many diverse and plentiful sources of intellectual, scientific, and cultural knowledge available in Persian. Etemad ul-Saltaneh provides examples from two fundamental educational books prepared in this manner. He mentions *Hendeseh Wosta* [Intermediate Geometry] and *Hendeseh Ulya* [Advanced Geometry] authored by Nazam al-Din Mohndes ul-Mamalek Ghaffari, a graduate of the Naseri time in Europe, stating, "he has translated documents from reputable European scholars into Persian. The book *Hay'at* [Astronomy] written by Abdulghaffar Najm al-Mulk,⁴¹ has also been translated into Persian based on credible European works."⁴² The translators of the Naseri era used several dictionaries for direct translation, which were written in English to Persian and French to Persian in India. In Iran, due to the obvious need for a dictionary and language learning, writing bilingual dictionaries became customary. Among the most important of these dictionaries was the French-Persian dictionary, published in Tehran in 1879. The introduction claims that Naser al-Din Shah himself was involved in its authorship and composition. The introduction concludes that the scientific review and investigation was carried out by Arabic, Persian, and Turkish language scholars under the supervision of Etemad ul-Saltaneh.

In the early translations, the translators tried not to depart from the common Persian prose style and did not adopt the sentence structure of the foreign language. They tried to use their own contemporary vocabulary and terminology. In the

⁴¹ Najm al-Mulk, also known as Mirza Abdulghaffar Isfahani, Najm al-Dawla, and Najm al-Mulk, significantly shaped 19th-century Iran as the first teacher of modern mathematics and geography at Dar al-Fonun. Noteworthy achievements include pioneering the Solar Hijri Calendar in 1912 CE, becoming Iran's official financial calendar, departing from the Arabic Lunar-based calendar. In 1891 CE, he translated the first Persian book on modern philosophy from French (translator's note).

⁴² Etemad ul-Saltaneh (ed.), *Almaasir val Asaar* [Monuments and Achievements], n.d., 174.

introduction to the translation of *Napoleon in His Times*,⁴³ published in 1836, Mirza Reza writes: “Historians have written that Napoleon was distinguished from an early age in understanding sciences and adhering to strict customs. In fact, there will be no greater blessing and industry for humans than this.”⁴⁴ Here, it is evident that the translator has deemed the literary and rhetorical style of the Persian language suitable for the phrases “understanding sciences” and “adhering to strict customs,” and has used the word “industry” [san’at] instead of “art” [honar]. The literature of the Qajar era, as seen in the 1868 translation of *History of Frederick II*, was based on the traditional expressions and forms of the Persian language. “We must not despair of the progress of military industry and the science of its etiquette, nor of political work, which should bring us a kind of perfection in humanity,” the translator expressed.⁴⁵ In this translation, military and political words were translated according to the customs of the time, following the rules of Arabic and expressed with Arabic verb forms. Zain al-Abidin Monshi’s translation of the Russian law system, commissioned by Aliqoli Khan, the Minister of Science, used concepts related to the Iranian mentality to express and translate the text. These translated works contained combined phrases with Arabic words and were stylistically consistent with the writings of Iranian authors who did not know any foreign language.

In contrast to traditional translators who adhered to a specific, old-fashioned style of translation, some translators emphasized the importance of simplicity in translation and believed in the social and cultural impact of the source text.⁴⁶ One of these translators was Ali Mohammad Mostofi, a member of the Ministry of the Press, who in 1890 CE translated *The Battle of Sudan*. Mostofi used new and expressive language in his

⁴³ Many translations from this period have uncertain origins, often compiled by translators from diverse sources, including oral accounts, or the original texts might have been lost over time. The titles provided here are English equivalents, and the original books could have been in French, German, or any other language (translator’s note).

⁴⁴ Mirza Reza Mohandes, “Introduction,” in *Tarikh-e Napoleon Bonapart* [Napoleon in his Times] (Tehran: s.n., 1847).

⁴⁵ Unknown author, *Tarikh-e Feredrik Dovvom* [History of Frederick II], trans. Mohammad Hossein Qajar, manuscript in the National Library, No. 1237, 1863, 114.

⁴⁶ Balaÿ and Cuypers, *Aux sources de la Nouvelle Persane*, 1983.

translation, and paid attention to the correct pronunciation of foreign names. His occasional use of incorrect pronunciation for proper names was a result of being influenced by the language of the source text, which caused a lack of consistency in his translation of names.

The subject and content of translation works of this period were also one of the ways of understanding the intellectual and cultural direction. The diversity of topics among translated and published sources in the Naseri period is noteworthy. During this period, books on science and history, intellectual, philosophical, and literary works were translated and published, including Voltaire's *L'orphelin de la Chine* by Mirza Ali-Akbar Khan Moshiro al-Dowleh, also known as Awans Khan; Voltaire's *La Princesse de Babylone*; John Stuart Mill's essay *On Liberty* as *Manafe'-e Hurriyat* [The Benefits of Freedom]; Jules Simon's philosophical essay *De la liberté de Conscience* as *Zamin va Zamane* [Earth and Time]; speeches by Mirabeau; Gibbon's *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*; and Molière's *Misanthrope*. Naser al-Din Shah and his court's interest in Western knowledge, developments, and progress led to a tendency to translate books on history and geography, including travel narratives. Royal biographies were also in demand at court, with topics including Alexander, Frederick the Great, Napoleon Bonaparte, Alexander II of Russia, Nicholas I of Russia, Catherine the Great, and Louis XIV. Some of these translations circulated in manuscript form, others were published.

Tendency to Translate General Texts in the Third Period

Another aspect of the thematic diversity in translations was the focus on translating news, scientific, political and geographical reports, as well as articles describing inventions and discoveries. Many of these translations were published in newspapers during the Naseri era and played a major role in promoting simplicity in Persian prose and attracting readers. The curiosity of the Shah and his courtiers led to the translation of part of Jules Verne's novel *Les Aventures du Capitaine Hatteras* and *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*. The latter was translated and published in serial installments in the *Iran* newspaper. Ali Qoli Kashani translated travelogues on China, Australia, Africa, Turkestan, and scientific treatises on earthquakes and volcanoes for the same newspaper. These

translated works illuminate the multifaceted interests of various translator circles in engaging intellectually with new discoveries and perspectives emergent in the modern world.

The Social and Scientific Origins of Translators

The social status of translators varied at different times. Some had learned foreign languages abroad, while others were educated at Dar al-Fonun. Some translators were from linguistic and religious minorities, including Armenians, Jews, and Assyrians, or were foreign political envoys and religious delegates. Naturally, each group played an important role in shaping the intellectual orientation of translations and their diversity. Most translators, especially in the early decades of Naser al-Din Shah's rule, were involved in translation work in one of four state institutions: the Royal Translation House as part of the Ministry of Publications, the Dar al-Fonun school, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the semi-autonomous administrative apparatus of Zell-e Soltan, Naser al-Din Shah's son in Isfahan. Some translators were individuals who pursued translation out of personal interest and taste, rendering works of their own choosing. These independent translators included learned Qajar princes such as Bahā' al-Dawla and enlightened statesmen like Zell al-Sultan, with a passion for translation, history and literature. Under Zell al-Sultan's patronage, notable translator-journalists like Mohammad Taqi Ansari and Mirza Mahmud Khan Afshar Kangavari contributed to the *Farhang* newspaper in Isfahan, enriching Persian readers with their eclectic translations.

One phase of translation involved expert editors not only refining and correcting the translated text, but also designing and laying out the material in preparation for publication. In this phase, some editors focused on improving the fluency and eloquence of the translated text.⁴⁷ However, one of the principal deficiencies plaguing translation was that in many cases, translators lacked subject-area expertise. Some translators worked on texts across diverse disciplines, irrespective of their qualifications. These

⁴⁷ Abdullah Anvar, *Fehrest-e Nuskhah-haye Khati-ye Ketabkhaneh-ye Melli* [List of Manuscripts of the National Library], Vol 1 (Tehran: National Library of Iran, 1990).

translators included Mahmoud Afsar Kangavari under Zell al-Sultan and Aref Khan Ourumi at the Royal Translation House. One instance illustrating the lack of specialized expertise among translators involved the translation of an astronomy text at the order of Etehad ul-Saltaneh.⁴⁸ The text was translated by Joseph Désiré Tholozan, the Shah's French physician, together with Mohammad Taqi Kashani, neither of whom had any astronomical expertise. Etehad al-Saltaneh sent the completed translation to Abd ul-Ghaffar Najm ul-Molk, an astronomer, for technical review and evaluation.

The Ministry of Science and the Ministry of Publications were the most important official institutions related to cultural work and translation during the Qajar era. The Ministry of Science was responsible for the Dar al-Fonun school. The presence of foreign teachers made the school an active center of translation in the field of educational modernization. A number of Iranians also worked alongside them to translate new sciences.⁴⁹

The Ministry of Publications had several branches: the Royal Translation House, headed by Mohammad Hossein Faroughi,⁵⁰ the Department of Publications and Newspapers, the Government Press run by Mohammad Hossein Faroughi, and the Assembly of Writers, established by Etehad al-Saltaneh. The Translation House employed Iranian and foreign translators as well as religious and ethnic minorities who played a major role. Etehad ul-Saltaneh described the translation program: "many works, extracted from different tongues, are rendered into the noble Persian language and are

⁴⁸ Etehad al-Saltaneh, whose full name was Mirza Ali Asghar Khan (1848–1924), was a prominent figure in the Qajar era of Iran. He served as the Prime Minister of Iran and held various influential positions during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Etehad al-Saltaneh was known for his diplomatic prowess and his involvement in significant political events of his time (translator's note).

⁴⁹ Etehad ul-Saltaneh, *Almaasir val Asaar*, n.d., 404.

⁵⁰ Mohammad Ali Faroughi (1875–1944), known as Zoka al-Molk, was an Iranian writer and statesman who served as Prime Minister three times. He pioneered the establishment of the University of Tehran and served as its first chancellor. His notable literary contributions include the scholarly editing of several prominent classic literary works as well as translation efforts that introduced Western philosophical concepts to Iran (translator's note).

reviewed each day for the discerning eye of His Exalted Majesty, the Shah".⁵¹ Etemad ul-Saltaneh visited the Government Press and the Translation House almost daily and spoke about the efforts to organize and expand the Translation House. He considered the jealousy of the Foreign Minister, Mirza Saeed Khan, as one obstacle to its development, such that Etemad ul-Saltaneh had to use Naser al-Din Shah's decree to benefit from the translators of the Foreign Ministry at the Translation House.⁵²

Conclusion

This paper has examined the objectives, practices, and impact of translation as a cultural encounter during the nineteenth-century Qajar period in Iran. Several key themes emerge from this analysis relating to the status, practitioners, and multi-faceted dimensions of translation in shaping Iran's experience of modernity through engagement with texts and ideas from the West.

Firstly, translation served as a pivotal conduit for facilitating cultural dialogue and intellectual exchange between Iran and the West during the Qajar era. The perceived material and cognitive backwardness of Qajar Iran in comparison to European powers provided the context for this cross-cultural encounter through translation. The assimilation of modern scientific and political thought from the West was oriented towards overcoming this gap by bridging epistemic differences. Hence the selection and translation of foreign texts focused on transferring concepts and vocabulary considered vital for Iran's modernization.

Secondly, the asymmetric power equation between Iran and Western imperial states shaped the objectives and approach to translation in tangible ways. The Qajar court and reformist intellectuals initiated translation efforts to assimilate knowledge and ideas from Europe based on a recognition of Iran's weakened geopolitical position. This

⁵¹ Etemad ul-Saltaneh, *Almaasir val Asaar*, n.d., 404.

⁵² Mohammad Hassan Khan Etemad ul-Saltaneh, *Rooznameh Iran-e Soltani* [Iran Soltani Newspaper and Iran], ed. Jamshid Kianfar (Tehran: National Library of the Islamic Republic of Iran, 2001), 228.

accounts for the prevalence of historical, geographical, and technical writings in early Qajar-era translations.

Thirdly, the experimental process of literary and prose translation entailed creative negotiation between linguistic and cultural frameworks. Iranian translators adapted source texts using domesticating strategies to make foreign concepts intelligible and appealing for local audiences rooted in Persian literary aesthetics. This quest to render ideas accessible led to free translations by means of cultural adaptation and contextualization. However, excessive domestication also risked distorting original meanings and intentions.

Fourthly, translation emerged as a proxy battleground during the Qajar period, reflecting tensions between the state and civil society and between tradition and modernity. The outlook of Qajar state sponsors of translation differed from independent translators aligned with reformist causes and the Iranian nation. The former focused on practical learning to strengthen the state, while the latter saw broader philosophical exposure as crucial for societal progress.

These divergent agendas played out in differing translation priorities, as court-patronized projects emphasized technical treatises while independent initiatives tackled more heterodox writings. The state sought to utilize translation as a tool for material advancement without fundamentally disturbing sociopolitical hierarchies. Hence the Qajar court favored non-controversial scientific or historical translations that posed no ideological threat.

In contrast, dissident intellectuals and an emerging civil society understood the power of translated texts to critically interrogate established mores and galvanize public opinion. Through selective translation, they subtly voiced dissent against authoritarianism by highlighting ideas of liberty, pluralism and human rights emerging in European thought. This engendered a potent, yet mostly concealed tussle between state and civil society actors employing translation to further their respective agendas.

Moreover, as traditional Qajar elites confronted modernizing reforms, translation became a battleground between old and new. Conservative factions resisted exposure

to progressive Western concepts that undermined traditional beliefs. But Iranian advocates of change saw selective translation as a means to foster new attitudes and practices without excessive cultural disruption. This tension between advocating cautious modernization while upholding national identity permeated debates on acceptable translations.

Therefore, despite alignment on strengthening Iran, conflicting motivations meant that state-sponsored and independent translations espoused divergent trajectories. Whereas the former represented status quo worldviews, the latter gave voice to reformist aspirations. The porous boundaries and interpretive latitude between source and target texts allowed rival groups to promote their agenda through translation choices. This rendering of translation as a proxy battleground reveals its multilayered cultural and political significance during the Qajar era.

Ultimately, the Qajar era offers an insightful case study of how translation facilitates dialogue across linguistic and cognitive frontiers, transferring not just text but new ways of thinking. The engagement with foreign ideas and knowledge systems through translation was fraught with creative tension between universality and particularity as Iran sought to assimilate modernity on its own terms. The interplay between internal reform and external pressures manifested in the objectives, practices, and limitations that characterized Iran's translation movement during this period.

In conclusion, analysis of the multi-faceted role of translation during the Qajar period sheds light on the cultural and ideological implications of cross-cultural encounter through ideas and texts. For any society undergoing transformation under external exigencies, the translational exchange of concepts is fraught with both opportunity and anxiety. As preserved boundaries of thought confront expanding intellectual vistas, translation serves as a conduit for cultural dialogue and reassessment of identity. The Qajar experience reveals how translation shaped the emergence of new literary forms, scientific discourses, and political thought in 19th century Iran, propagating modernizing reforms while also stirring debates on cultural identity and national consciousness.