Prestige vs. Popularity: A Critical Paratextual Analysis of Two Persian Translations of *Nahj al-Balaghah*[1]

Ghodrat Hassani[2]
& Seyyed Mohammad Reza Mirseyyed[3]

Abstract

This article employs critical paratextual analysis to examine the prefaces of two influential Persian translations of *Nahj al-Balaghah*: Mohammad Dashti's (1999) and Seyyed Ja'far Shahidi's (1989). Through discourse-analytic close reading informed by Fairclough's (1989, 2013) three-dimensional CDA framework and van Dijk's (1998) socio-cognitive approach, this study reveals how these translators construct competing yet overlapping orientations toward authority, readership, and translation practice. Shahidi's preface emphasizes individual scholarly mastery and literary craftsmanship oriented toward educated readers, positioning translation as aesthetic preservation, while Dashti's preface foregrounds institutional collaboration and communicative accessibility for mass audiences, framing translation as functional mediation. These orientations reflect different value systems in post-revolutionary Iranian culture: Shahidi's translation, which won the Book of the Year Award, prioritizes literary excellence and elite recognition, while Dashti's widely circulated translation emphasizes practical utility and popular appeal. The analysis reveals how post-revolutionary Iranian cultural politics generates a dual validation system where the same religious text can achieve legitimacy through fundamentally different pathways.

Keywords: Critical paratextual analysis, *Nahj al-Balaghah*, Paratext, Religious translation, Translator preface

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2. Corresponding Author: Assistant Professor, Department of English Translation, Faculty of Humanities, Damghan University, Damghan, Iran; email: qhassani@gmail.com

3. Assistant Professor, Department of Islamic Sciences, Faculty of Humanities, Damghan University, Damghan, Iran; email: mirsayyed@du.ac.ir

1. Introduction

Nahj al-Balaghah (The Path of Eloquence), compiled by Sayyid Razi in the 10th century CE, represents one of the most significant collections of Imam Ali's sermons, letters, and sayings in Islamic literature. Its translation into Persian has generated numerous versions over centuries, each reflecting particular ideological, linguistic, and sociopolitical contexts. Translator prefaces, as paratextual elements (Genette, 1997), serve as crucial sites where translators negotiate their authority, justify their methodological choices, and position themselves within broader cultural and political landscapes.

This study examines prefaces to two influential translations: Mohammad Dashti's introduction to his 1999 translation and Seyyed Ja'far Shahidi's preface to his 1989 translation. These translations occupy distinct positions in contemporary Iranian literary culture: Shahidi's translation received the Book of the Year Award (hereafter BOYA), signaling recognition by cultural institutions, while Dashti's translation has achieved remarkable circulation, with its print run reaching 2 million copies within five years of initial publication (Tasnim News Agency, 2013)—a staggering figure by Iranian standards. This contrast between institutionally-sanctioned literary excellence and mass-market circulation makes them ideal subjects for comparative analysis.

The analysis investigates how these translators construct authority, conceptualize their audiences, justify their translation approaches, and position themselves ideologically through discursive strategies. Both translations emerged in the post-revolutionary period, yet they represent different orientations toward how religious texts should be mediated for contemporary readers.

2. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

This analysis employs critical paratextual analysis through discourse-analytic close reading, drawing primarily on Norman Fairclough's (1989, 2013) three-

dimensional model of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Fairclough's framework examines discourse at three interconnected levels:

Textual Analysis (Description): This dimension examines micro-level linguistic features including lexical choices, grammatical structures, pronoun usage, and metaphorical patterns. In this study, we analyze how Shahidi and Dashti employ specific vocabulary related to authority and knowledge, use first-person singular versus plural pronouns to construct different translator identities, and deploy contrasting metaphors that frame translation work differently.

Discourse Practice (Interpretation): This dimension analyzes the processes of text production, distribution, and consumption. Here, we examine how each translator's institutional positioning (Shahidi's university affiliation versus Dashti's clerical-institutional role), target audience construction, and intertextual references shape their prefaces. This level bridges micro-linguistic choices and macro-social contexts.

Sociocultural Practice (Explanation): This dimension situates discourse within broader power relations, ideologies, and social structures. The analysis explores how these prefaces reflect post-revolutionary Iranian tensions between elite cultural production and popular religious education, how different success metrics (awards versus circulation) embody competing value systems, and how translator habitus shapes their approaches.

Van Dijk's (1998, 2015) socio-cognitive approach complements this framework by illuminating how ideological structures manifest in textual choices. As Wodak and Meyer (2009) explain, CDA "is fundamentally interested in analyzing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language" (p. 10). The concept of "translator habitus" (Simeoni, 1998) further informs this analysis, exploring how translators internalize and reproduce or resist dominant norms within their socio-professional fields. Paratextual analysis (Genette, 1997; Tahir-Gürçağlar, 2014) provides tools for

understanding how prefaces function as threshold spaces where translators negotiate their visibility and authority.

The analysis proceeds through iterative reading of both Persian texts, with attention to patterns across lexical choices (particularly terms related to authority, knowledge, and translation), pronoun usage, intertextuality (identifying references to other texts, traditions, and authorities), metaphorical patterns, and argument structure. Given the religious nature of the source text, particular attention is paid to how each translator negotiates sacred language and religious authority. This approach emphasizes interpretive depth and contextual sensitivity, recognizing that the prefaces themselves resist neat categorization and contain internal tensions.

3. Context: The Translators and Their Historical Moments

Seyyed Ja'far Shahidi (1919–2008), a distinguished scholar of Persian literature and Islamic studies, represents the traditional scholarly establishment, trained in classical Arabic and Persian literary traditions. His preface, dated 1989 (1368 Shamsi), reflects the literary-aesthetic orientation that characterized much Iranian intellectual engagement with religious texts. His academic position at the University of Tehran and his embeddedness in traditional literary scholarship shaped his translator persona. Shahidi's translation received the BOYA, signaling its recognition by Iran's cultural establishment as exemplifying high literary standards. This institutional validation positions his work within the canon of officially recognized cultural production, appealing primarily to educated elites valuing literary sophistication in religious translation.

Dashti's translation, published in 1999 (Shamsi 1378), emerged from a different institutional context. Dashti—whose clerical rank and religious authority significantly shape his translator habitus—founded the Amir al-Mu'minin Cultural-Research Institute, reflecting his dual positioning as religious scholar and institutional builder. This clerical-scholarly identity distinguishes his approach from Shahidi's

purely academic credentials. His institutional role signals systematic religious knowledge production oriented toward practical religious education rather than purely literary-aesthetic concerns.

Unlike Shahidi's award-winning status, Dashti's translation achieved success through mass circulation. According to Tasnim News Agency (2013), just five years after initial publication, the translation's print run reached 2 million copies. While this figure represents printing rather than documented sales—and given Iranian publishing practices of institutional commissioning and gifting, may not directly reflect individual consumer purchases—it nevertheless indicates substantial institutional investment and distribution infrastructure supporting the translation's dissemination. This circulation suggests the translation's effectiveness in meeting institutional and community needs, though direct evidence of readership patterns remains unavailable given limited publishing market documentation in Iran.

Dashti's preface reveals extensive engagement with previous translations, claiming familiarity with thirty complete Persian translations spanning about a millennium (p. 9). This encyclopedic knowledge positions him within a tradition while simultaneously claiming to transcend its limitations. The contrast between these two translations mirrors broader tensions in post-revolutionary Iranian culture between elite cultural production and popular religious education, though these should be understood as emphases rather than absolute oppositions.

4. Analysis

4.1 Constructing Authority: Individual Mastery and Institutional-Clerical Scholarship

Textual Level: Shahidi constructs authority primarily through personal scholarly credentials and individual mastery. His preface consistently employs first-person singular: "This book... with the Persian translation of this humble servant [این کمترین خدمت‌گزار]" (p. 7). This self-effacing formula paradoxically establishes authority through traditional Persian scholarly humility, a discourse strategy that simultaneously

claims and modestly disclaims expertise (Koutlaki, 2002). Lexical choices emphasize personal intellectual labor—"I have contemplated," "I have analyzed"—constructing the translator as solitary scholar-artist.

In contrast, Dashti foregrounds institutional and collective dimensions through consistent first-person plural: "We concluded," "we have tried," "we brought." This plural voice operates on multiple levels: representing the institutional voice of the Amir al-Mu'minin Institute rather than merely personal views, invoking a scholarly collective ("We and a group of researchers from the Institute"—p. 20), and occasionally including the reader in shared understanding. His lexical field emphasizes systematic methodology, collaborative research, and team-based expertise.

Discourse Practice Level: Shahidi's authority derives from his academic credentials (position at the University of Tehran and doctorate in Persian literature), personal relationship with the text through detailed literary analysis, literary sensitivity to stylistic features, and individual aesthetic judgment. His discussion of canonical Arab literary figures—Abd al-Hamid ibn Yahya, Jahiz, Ibn Nubata—establishes his authority within classical Arabic literary scholarship. The extensive quotation from Muhammad Abduh (pp. 15–16) provides external validation while demonstrating engagement with authoritative Sunni scholarship, positioning *Nahj al-Balaghah* beyond sectarian boundaries through literary excellence. Yet Shahidi's authority is not purely individualistic; his university affiliation and the BOYA represent institutional validation.

Dashti's clerical rank as Hojjatoleslam fundamentally shapes his translator habitus, positioning him within religious authority structures distinct from purely academic credentials. As both cleric and founder of the Amir al-Mu'minin Institute, Dashti embodies institutional religious scholarship. His invocation of George Jordac's testimony—"that the attraction of Imam Ali's words created such enthusiasm in me that I read *Nahj al-Balaghah* 200 times" (p. 14)—serves multiple functions. It provides

external validation through a Christian Arab scholar while simultaneously shaming Muslim readers into deeper engagement: "Why should a Christian read *Nahj al-Balaghah* 200 times but I, who claim to be among the Shi'a of Imam Ali... how many times have I truly read it?" (p. 14). This rhetorical move constructs both authority through external validation and moral urgency through implied reproach.

Sociocultural Practice Level: These contrasting authority constructions reflect different positions within post-revolutionary Iranian cultural fields. Shahidi's individual mastery aligns with traditional academic habitus valuing personal scholarly achievement and literary excellence—a model rewarded by cultural institutions through the BOYA. Dashti's institutional-clerical positioning reflects the post-revolutionary emphasis on collective religious knowledge production and practical religious education. His clerical rank provides religious legitimacy while his institutional role provides organizational authority, reflecting what Bourdieu (1991) terms "institutional capital"—authority derived from organizational affiliation combined with religious credentials. However, both translators' extensive personal engagement suggests these orientations coexist with substantial individual investment rather than representing pure oppositions.

4.2 Conceptualizing the Audience: Elite and Popular Orientations

Textual Level: Shahidi constructs his implied reader through sophisticated literary discourse. The preface extensively discusses *balaghah* [eloquence/rhetoric], *saj'* [rhymed prose], and technical literary terminology. His explanation of eloquence— "appropriate speech according to the context, meaning consideration of the listener's or reader's level of understanding" (p. 9)—assumes readers familiar with classical Arabic rhetorical theory. The preface includes occasional Arabic quotations without translation, assuming bilingual competence. References to Abd al-Hamid ibn Yahya, Jahiz, and Ibn Nubata presume knowledge of Arabic literary history.

Dashti explicitly targets "all classes of society" (p. 10) and "contemporary generation" (p. 10), with lexical choices emphasizing accessibility: "Understandable and comprehensible for the general public" (p. 10), "Not belonging to a special group in society" (p. 10), "So that travelers and residents can use it" (p. 20), "Without needing to refer to interpretive books" (p. 17). This democratic discourse constructs readers as seeking practical guidance rather than literary appreciation.

Discourse Practice Level: Shahidi treats *Nahj al-Balaghah* primarily as a monument of Arabic eloquence deserving literary appreciation, positioning readers as connoisseurs. His BOYA status reflects this elite orientation—recognition by cultural arbiters rather than mass-market success. However, his provision of explanatory notes suggests awareness of broader audiences beyond the most elite specialists.

Dashti's extensive apparatus—about 3,000 headings, thematic indexes, 100,000 subject entries in the larger encyclopedic project (p. 20)—constructs the ideal reader as someone seeking practical guidance on specific topics. This represents a shift from text-as-art to text-as-database, reflecting broader information technology influences on knowledge organization. Yet Dashti's sophisticated hermeneutical discussions suggest his "mass audience" includes educated religious readers, not merely those seeking simple answers.

Sociocultural Practice Level: These contrasting audience constructions reflect different value systems in post-revolutionary Iranian culture. The BOYA signals institutional preference for literary excellence and elite cultural preservation. The substantial print run—though representing institutional commissioning and distribution rather than documented individual purchases—nevertheless indicates resources devoted to broad dissemination, suggesting institutional judgment that the translation serves community needs. The contrast reveals competing emphases: prestige versus utility, aesthetic achievement versus functional effectiveness.

4.3 Translation Philosophy: Literary and Communicative Orientations

Textual Level: Shahidi's methodological discussion focuses on preserving *saj'* [rhymed prose]: "I have tried, within the limits of my ability, while converting Arabic expression to Persian, to preserve as much as possible the verbal arts... especially the art of *saj'*, in which Imam Ali was known for excellence" (p. 19). Lexical choices emphasize "preservation," "maintaining," and "recreating" aesthetic features. His description of Imam Ali's style as ranging from "hard as rocky cliffs" to "soft as spring dew" (p. 13) frames translation as requiring literary sensibility.

Dashti emphasizes "message transmission" [پیام‌رسانی] as primary consideration. His discussion of general versus specific, absolute versus restricted meanings (pp. 23–24) draws from Islamic jurisprudential hermeneutics (*usul al-fiqh*) rather than literary theory. Critical passages reveal his priorities: "Although literal translation [تحت‌اللفظی] is a respected methodology... from the perspective of practical application and message transmission it brings numerous problems. With changes in cultures and civilizations, and changes in vocabulary in message transmission, today's generation cannot understand the meanings and concepts hidden in some Quranic and hadith expressions, whereas we have committed to Imam Ali to transmit his message to today's generation" (p. 23). This justification invokes reader-response considerations and ethical obligation to the audience.

Discourse Practice Level: Shahidi's approach demonstrates commitment to formal equivalence where possible, treating Imam Ali's words as literary artifacts requiring preservation of aesthetic features. He explicitly defends this against potential criticism that meaning might suffer for style's sake, revealing awareness of this tension. This literary-aesthetic approach likely contributed to receiving the BOYA, as such recognition typically values formal excellence and craftsmanship over mass accessibility.

Dashti's handling of proverbs illustrates his functional approach: where Shahidi might render "لا أكون كالضّبع" [I will not be like the hyena] literally with explanatory footnote, Dashti translates the underlying message: "I am not heedless of the country's political issues" (p. 17), eliminating cultural specificity for communicative clarity. This functional approach, prioritizing comprehension, likely explains the substantial institutional investment in wide distribution. Yet Dashti's attention to Arabic eloquence and stylistic features suggests message transmission coexists with aesthetic awareness rather than completely displacing formal concerns.

Sociocultural Practice Level: These translation philosophies reflect broader ideological orientations. Shahidi's literary-aesthetic approach aligns with cultural preservation values and literary excellence—criteria rewarded by cultural institutions. Dashti's functional-communicative approach serves post-revolutionary goals of making religious knowledge accessible and applicable, reflecting clerical-educational priorities distinct from purely literary values. The shift from "loyalty to words" to "loyalty to message" reflects functionalist translation theories (Nord, 1997; Vermeer & Chesterman, 2021), though Dashti doesn't cite these explicitly.

4.4 Negotiating Gender: Different Engagement Strategies

Both prefaces reveal gendered dimensions of religious interpretation through different strategies. Shahidi's preface contains no discussion of gender-related passages in *Nahj al-Balaghah*, despite the text containing statements about women that have generated controversy. This silence may represent strategic avoidance of potentially contentious issues by focusing solely on literary qualities. The one mention of Zaynab al-Kubra (p. 19) serves only to illustrate *saj'* in speech, not to engage substantively with female religious authority. This avoidance strategy maintains focus on aesthetic dimensions while sidestepping interpretive controversies that might complicate reception. For an award-winning translation appealing to cultural elites, such strategic silence allows literary appreciation to remain primary.

Dashti directly addresses controversial gender-related passages, particularly "النّساء نواقص العقول" [women are deficient in intellect] and "المرأةَ شرّ كلّها" [woman is entirely evil]. His extended discussion (pp. 18–19) employs hermeneutical strategies: contextual restriction (arguing "*naqis*" means "difference" not "deficiency"), theological consistency (appealing to Islamic principles of divine justice), linguistic analysis (claiming "*sharr*" means "difficulty/responsibility" not "evil"), and cultural reframing (using Persian proverbs to naturalize the interpretation). Whether one accepts these readings, Dashti's willingness to engage controversial material explicitly reflects awareness that audiences require such clarifications. This explicit engagement might also reflect different ideological pressures facing translators working within revolutionary religious institutions versus those in traditional academic settings.

4.5 Intertextuality and Authority Networks

Shahidi's intertextual references construct a network of literary-aesthetic authority encompassing classical Arabic critics (Jahiz, Ibn Nubata), Persian literary tradition, and Egyptian scholar Muhammad Abduh (whose edition Shahidi uses). This network positions *Nahj al-Balaghah* within world literature discourse, emphasizing its universal aesthetic value. The extensive quotation from Muhammad Abduh (pp. 15–16)—a Sunni scholar praising Ali's eloquence—serves to de-sectarianize the text, presenting it as transcending Shi'a-Sunni divisions through literary excellence. This trans-sectarian appeal likely enhanced the translation's candidacy for prestigious literary awards. However, Shahidi's references to classical Shi'a commentaries complicate any simple characterization of his work as purely universalist.

Dashti's intertextuality emphasizes previous Persian translations (30 enumerated), contemporary academic disciplines (psychology, sociology, economics), and his own institutional publications (frequent self-citation of institute works). This network constructs authority through comprehensive scholarly command rather than solely aesthetic sensibility. Dashti's claim to have compiled "more than 20 research works" (p. 15) on *Nahj al-Balaghah* establishes him as a specialist whose

translation crowns decades of dedicated study. The different networks reflect distinct emphases in cultural capital: Shahidi's emphasizes literary cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1984/2018) valued by cultural institutions granting awards, while Dashti accumulates religious-scholarly capital resonating with religious audiences seeking authoritative guidance. Yet both translators draw on overlapping sources—classical commentaries, previous translations, Arabic literary tradition—suggesting shared foundations despite different emphases.

4.6 Ideological Positioning and Metaphorical Framing

Textual Level: Shahidi maintains relative restraint in explicit political positioning. His emphasis on literary qualities and treatment of historical context as background for understanding rhetorical situations keeps overt politics at some distance. Even when discussing Imam Ali's political letters, Shahidi frames them as demonstrating administrative wisdom and literary skill rather than explicit models for contemporary governance.

Dashti more explicitly frames *Nahj al-Balaghah* within revolutionary Islamic discourse. His discussion of "Islamic government" [حکومت اسلامی] as his initial research focus under Shahid Mofatteh's guidance (p. 15) signals alignment with revolutionary ideology. References to "the luminous revolution of Islamic Iran" (p. 9) make political allegiance explicit. The comparative discussions of "isms and ists" [ایسم‌ها و ایست‌ها] (p. 25), while framed academically, serve ideological functions—positioning *Nahj al-Balaghah* as providing tools to critique Western ideologies.

Metaphorical analysis reveals contrasting conceptualizations. Shahidi employs primarily aesthetic and natural metaphors: "گلچینی از گلستان" [selection from the rose garden] (p. 25), "گوهرهای گفتار" [jewels of speech] (p. 25), and "جولانگاه اندیشه" [playground of thought] (p. 16). These metaphors frame translation as aesthetic curation—selecting beautiful specimens from a garden or gems from a treasury. The translator appears as connoisseur with refined taste.

Dashti favors depth and immersion metaphors: "اقیانوس همیشه موّاج" [ever-turbulent ocean] (p. 9), "ژرفای اقیانوس" [ocean depths] (p. 10), and "شنا کردن در ژرفای مفاهیم" [swimming in depths of meanings] (p. 12). These metaphors construct *Nahj al-Balaghah* as requiring deep diving and specialized equipment (scholarly methods) to access hidden treasures. The translator appears as explorer/researcher penetrating depths inaccessible to ordinary readers.

Sociocultural Practice Level: These contrasting ideological positions reflect different institutional contexts and audiences. Shahidi's measured approach likely contributed to receiving the BOYA—avoiding overt politicization while remaining acceptably aligned with Islamic Republic cultural policies. The BOYA signals approval by cultural gatekeepers while the literary emphasis appeals to readers across political orientations. However, the very emphasis on literary excellence and aesthetic universalism carries ideological implications, potentially positioning *Nahj al-Balaghah* as cultural heritage requiring preservation rather than revolutionary program requiring implementation.

Dashti's explicit revolutionary framing may partly explain why his translation achieved institutional rather than award-winning success—it speaks directly to audiences committed to Islamic Republic ideology rather than literary elites seeking aesthetic appreciation. Yet Dashti's emphasis on comprehensibility, his engagement with universal human themes, and his invocation of Christian scholars suggest his ideological positioning includes elements transcending narrow sectarian or political boundaries. The contrasting metaphors reflect different emphases: Shahidi's surface beauty requiring appreciation versus Dashti's hidden depths requiring excavation and guidance. Yet both metaphor systems acknowledge *Nahj al-Balaghah*'s richness and value, suggesting underlying agreement about the text's importance despite different approaches to mediation.

5. Discussion and Theoretical Implications

The analysis reveals two distinct translator orientations that should be understood as emphases rather than absolute categories. Shahidi's literary artisan orientation presents the translator as individual master craftsman with refined sensibility, embedded in classical literary tradition, with authority validated by the BOYA. Dashti's scholarly-clerical mediator orientation presents the translator as institutionally-supported religious scholar working within a team, with authority derived from clerical rank, comprehensive research, and demonstrated effectiveness evidenced by substantial institutional distribution. These orientations reflect tensions in post-revolutionary Iranian culture between elite cultural production and popular religious education, representing complementary strategies for different audiences and purposes rather than oppositional approaches.

Both prefaces construct translation as cultural intervention with different emphases: Shahidi's intervention tends toward preservation of *Nahj al-Balaghah*'s status as literary masterpiece, while Dashti's tends toward accessibility for contemporary application. The contrasting reception mechanisms reveal competing yet coexisting value systems. Institutional recognition (Shahidi's BOYA) signals approval by cultural gatekeepers valuing literary excellence, while substantial institutional distribution (Dashti's 2 million print run) indicates sustained commitment to accessible guidance. While this circulation figure represents printing rather than documented sales—and Iranian publishing practices of institutional commissioning complicate interpreting it as direct public reception—the resources devoted to distribution signal institutional judgment of the translation's value. Neither measure invalidates the other; they reflect different spheres of value within Iran's complex cultural field where both translators navigate theological tensions in translating sacred texts differently yet share concern for serving religious communities.

This analysis contributes three key insights to translation studies. First, it demonstrates that translation success is not universal but reflects position-specific values within complex cultural fields. The divergence between award-winning prestige and institutional distribution reveals that "successful" translation cannot be determined without specifying evaluative frameworks and audiences, complicating simplistic binaries often structuring translation studies discourse (Blumczynski & Hassani, 2019). Both translators blend formal and functional concerns, suggesting translation studies should move beyond binary taxonomies toward recognizing continuums of emphasis.

Second, the study highlights how paratextual discourse performs substantial ideological work independent of translations themselves. Translator prefaces construct entire models of textual authority, readership, and cultural transmission, functioning as crucial sites where translators negotiate visibility and legitimacy. The application of Fairclough's three-dimensional CDA framework reveals how micro-level linguistic choices (textual level) connect to production/consumption processes (discourse practice level) and broader power relations (sociocultural practice level), demonstrating its utility for understanding translator positioning in contexts where multiple value systems compete.

Third, this case illuminates how religious translation in post-revolutionary contexts involves negotiating multiple authority structures simultaneously—academic credentials, clerical rank, institutional affiliation, literary excellence, and popular accessibility—suggesting that religious translation cannot be adequately understood through frameworks developed primarily for secular literary translation. The analysis reveals that what appear as competing orientations actually represent different strategies for addressing shared concerns about mediating sacred texts for contemporary audiences.

7. Conclusion

This critical paratextual analysis reveals how two influential Persian translations of *Nahj al-Balaghah* construct competing yet overlapping orientations toward translation authority and religious knowledge in contemporary Iran. Shahidi's literary-aesthetic orientation, validated through the BOYA, and Dashti's functional-accessible orientation, validated through substantial institutional distribution, embody distinct emphases regarding the relationship between religion, culture, and society. Together they reveal the complexity of post-revolutionary Iranian religious culture, where elite literary appreciation and mass religious education coexist as complementary rather than contradictory values.

The analysis demonstrates that translator prefaces function as crucial sites where translators navigate multiple tensions: individual versus institutional authority, elite versus popular audiences, formal fidelity versus functional adequacy, and aesthetic preservation versus practical application. These should be understood as tensions to navigate rather than absolute oppositions, as both translators exhibit awareness of competing demands and address multiple priorities simultaneously. Neither approach is ideologically neutral, yet both work within post-revolutionary Iranian cultural politics to serve religious communities effectively.

For translation studies, this analysis contributes three key insights. First, it demonstrates that translation success reflects position-specific values within complex cultural fields—"successful" translation cannot be determined without specifying evaluative frameworks and audiences. Second, it reveals how paratextual discourse performs substantial ideological work independent of translations themselves, constructing entire models of textual authority, readership, and cultural transmission. Third, it complicates simplistic binaries structuring translation studies discourse, suggesting that translators blend formal and functional concerns along continuums rather than occupying fixed positions. The application of Fairclough's three-

dimensional CDA framework illuminates how micro-level linguistic choices connect to production/consumption processes and broader power relations, proving particularly valuable for understanding religious translation in post-revolutionary contexts where multiple authority structures must be negotiated simultaneously.

Disclaimer: AI was used to refine the language of this manuscript with human oversight.

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