

Literary Translation Flow from Kurdish into Persian between 1997 and 2021: A Sociological Study¹

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Abstract

This study surveyed the translation flow from Kurdish literature into Persian over the period of 1997 through 2021 in the context of the sociological-analytic framework, developed and discussed by Heilbron (1999; 2000) and Sapiro (2007; 2014). To this end, firstly, the National Library and Archives of Iran (NLAI) was consulted as the most comprehensive database in Iran, which contains nearly all translated Kurdish literature into Persian, and secondly, personal webpages of the Kurdish translators like Telegram channels and Instagram pages were searched to compile a bibliography. This bibliography included meta-data such as original text titles, author's name, title of the translated text, translator's name, publisher's name, place of publication, year of publication and literary form (genre). The exhaustive list amounted to 160 literary works translated and published throughout the aforementioned period. This bibliography was then analyzed employing Pieta's (2016) model. The findings demonstrate that, while poetry dominated the translation flow, it followed an unstable movement, whereas prose took a progressive and steady growth and was the popular genre among the most prolific publishers and translators. The findings also reveal an unbalanced distribution of translated works among translators, authors and publishers. The conclusions drawn from this study highlight a close affinity among individuals including translators, well-known authors and small-scale publishers working collaboratively and actively in order to promote peripheral literature in a more well-established manner.

Keywords: Core/periphery model, Kurdish translation, literary translation, NLAI, Persian literature, translation flow, translation sociology

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1. Introduction

The sociological turn was a millstone in advancing translation as a social practice and on a global scale, as it has shifted the text toward extra and ultra-texts elements. Wolf (2007, pp. 14–18) divides sociology of translation into three subfields: 1) sociology of agents, 2) sociology of the translation process and 3) sociology of cultural products. While the first two categories have gained increasing attention and have created fertile ground for the intersection of translation and sociology, the third category has received little attention until recently. The third category, as it “focuses on the flow of translation in its multifaceted aspects and particularly stresses the implications of the intercultural and translational transfer mechanism on the shape of translation” (Wolf, 2006, p. 11) has received insufficient scholarly attention and largely passed unnoticed. Employing the concept of world system of translation, which is “a heuristic device created by translation studies scholars working in the subfield of translation sociology to understand how books circulate internationally in the era of globalisation” (McMartin, 2019, p. 148), allows us to elaborate on various modes of transfer (in this case literary transfer); and one way to explain this global book translation flow is through the lens of the core/periphery model put forward by Heilbron (1999; 2000) and Sapiro (2007; 2014).

2. Review of the Related Literature

In many researches on translation flow, there are two key points that come up repeatedly. They usually concentrate on the flow of translation from the core to the periphery. In addition, these studies concentrate on peak of the world system of translations like the exchanges between English, French, and Germany into other languages and vice versa. In the following section, a selective review of major researches done in different areas related to the topic of these articles is presented.

Linn’s seminal article (2006) focused on the translation flow from Dutch into Spanish in the second half of twentieth century with a particular emphasis on two factors: the role of publishing houses and the role of Francisco Carrasquer. The study’s conclusions demonstrated that commercial factors influenced the success of Dutch reception through government-funded institutions and publishers.

Nanquette's (2016) study was set out to investigate the translation flow of modern Persian literature in the USA over the period of 30 years (1979–2010). She attributed the invisibility of Persian literature to the lack of economic capital and she expounds on the role of Iranian diasporic communities on the basis of their familiarity with the expectation and the taste of the American audience.

Gharehgozlou (2018) studied the Persian-English literary translation flows. Based on the findings of this study, Gharehgozlou maintains that an increase in the number of works translated is not necessarily coterminous with a greater attention paid to literary works as literature or translated works as translations

Fakharzadeh and Amini (2018) investigated the unequal flow of translation from Persian into Russian. Their data analysis revealed two significant trends based on the statistics. The 1990s was dominated by downward trend, while the subsequent decade saw an oscillating trend.

Budimir (2020) shed light on the translation flows from Dutch to between 1991 and 2015 Serbian in order to identify those significant trends discernible during that period. The study's findings indicated that the analyzed data oscillated between two time periods: the 1990s and the post-2000 period. She ascribed the first distinction to genre. After 2000, there was a noticeable shift toward non-prose titles. The second discernible difference was assumed to be in the author selection for prose. The third distinction concerned the ration of direct to indirect translations in the category of non-prose.

3. Theoretical Framework

Our framework here is based on the core/periphery model developed by Heilbron (1999; 2000) and Sapiro (2007, 2014). Heilbron established the framework for his approach by examining power relations between central and peripheral languages. He argued that translation on a worldwide scale represents a self-contained world system with a four-level structure. English holds a hyper central position and has dominated this global world system of translation. On the second level of this hierarchical structure, there are two central languages, German and French, which have a far lower standing than English. The third level is reserved for semi-peripheral languages such as Spanish, Russian, and Swedish. Finally, the

fourth level is reserved for peripheral languages that account for less than 1 % of world system of translation (Heilbron, 1999; 2000). In the context of the world system of translation, both Kurdish and Persian belong to the periphery and their interaction can be considered as an inter-periphery exchange.

Borrowing ideas from core-periphery theory, Sapiro in turn touched upon the cultural and political reasons behind the asymmetrical flow of translation in the world system of translation. Apart from cultural and political facets of the translation, there are social functions at stake like the accumulation of literary capital in some languages and Sapiro holds that these factors should be taken into scope while discussing the translation flow.

4. Methodology

4.1. Corpus of the Study

The National Library and Archives of Iran (henceforth NLAI) was consulted to acquire our data to create our bibliography. NLAI is a large database that covers a wide variety of subjects and materials. As a part of national and cultural heritage of Iran, it has many parts and sections with online access. In addition to this database, the private webpages of the Kurdish translators (Telegram, Instagram) were examined to complete the list of Kurdish volumes translated into Persian. The bibliography we have compiled amounts to 160 literary volumes translated from Kurdish into Persian. Our bibliography was only limited to literary books and other books in other areas like criticism, history, mythology etc. were excluded. Collections of poetry and short stories were also included. The time period was only limited to the beginning of (1997), as the first year which Kurdish regularly translated into Persian coinciding with the first presidency of Khatami up to the last presidency of Rouhani in the mid 2021 (24 years). Also, we have confined the source text and source language to Kurdish (dialects including but not limited to Sorani, Kurmanji, etc.) and the target text and language Persian (the official language of Iran). The translated texts were published in Iran by the Iranian publishers, so the literary Kurdish-Persian translations published in other countries were excluded. Some literary works which were retranslated several times by several translators and reprinted several times are listed. The meta-data of these

literary works including the Kurdish title, Persian title, name of the translator, name of the author, name, place and time of publication, and the literary form or genre are all listed.

4.2. Data Analysis

The data analysis in this study is conducted using Pięta's (2016) model. She provided her model in her seminal article "On Translation between (semi-)Peripheral Languages: An overview of the external history of Polish literature translated into European Portuguese". She offered her model by incorporating concepts of external history created by the Gottingen group (Frank, 1990, 2004) and Even-Zohar's (1990) polysystem. This model is organized around five central questions, each followed by a why question:

- 1-When was it translated and why?
- 2-What was translated and why?
- 3-How was it translated and why?
- 4-Who translated and why?
- 5-Where were translations produced and why?

4.2.1. When was it translated?

Before delving into other questions, it would be outstandingly helpful to become familiar with the time frame of this study, starting with President Khatami's two terms in office, moving on to the second presidency period of President Rouhani.

Table 1. Periodization of the study (1997–2021).

President	Number of Terms in Office	Beginning	End	Number of Years in Office	Faction
Khatami	2	3 August 1997	3 August 2005	8	Reformist
Ahmadi-Nejad	2	3 August 2005	3 August 2013	8	Conservative
Rouhani	2	3 August 2013	18 June 2021	8	Reformist

In contrast to the prejudice against Kurdish language and literature in other nations such as Turkey (banned), Syria (banned since 1953), former Soviet

countries, with the rise of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, Kurdish language in Iran has benefited from a sort of freedom and has begun to flourish (Kurdish language has been the official language of Iraq since 2003).

4.2.1.1. Khatami as the Harbinger of Reformist Ideas in Iran

President Khatami's political ideas influenced Iran's sociopolitical climate. By and large, Khatami's reformist administration had a substantial impact on domestic and international affairs. His leniency towards other languages, particularly Kurdish, resulted in the flourishing of Kurdish literature and the beginning of the flow of translation.

In the presidency of Khatami, both prose and poetry titles proceeded evenly (poetry: 7, prose: 6) and there was not a significant difference between poetry and prose. The next period, Ahmadi-Nejad's first term in office, witnessed the increase of prose, something that continued in his next terms in office. Poetry, on the hand, decreased in his second terms in office. In the next period, the proliferation of poetry anthology and collection in Rouhani's presidency revealed the need of the Iranian audience to understand Kurdish culture and literature. One more reason for recognition of Kurdish translated literature in Iran, apart from state's increasing attention to their literature was the recognition of Kurdish language and literature in the neighboring country, Iraq.

4.2.2. What was translated?

In 1997–2021, the total of 160 volumes by 30 Kurdish authors from various Kurdish-speaking regions was translated. Iraq had 16 authors, Iran 13, and Turkey had 1 (Mehmed Uzun). The works of the Iranian Kurdish authors: Ata Nahayee, Yones Rezayee and Farhad Shahmoradian were translated more than once, but the works of the remaining 10 Iranian Kurdish authors were translated only once. Iraqi Kurdish authors were translated more than once and their works have been widely published in Iran. 7 works, the majority of which written by Bakhtiar Ali, have been re-translated into Persian. With the total of 160 translated titles and 30 translated authors, we have an average of 5.33 titles per authors.

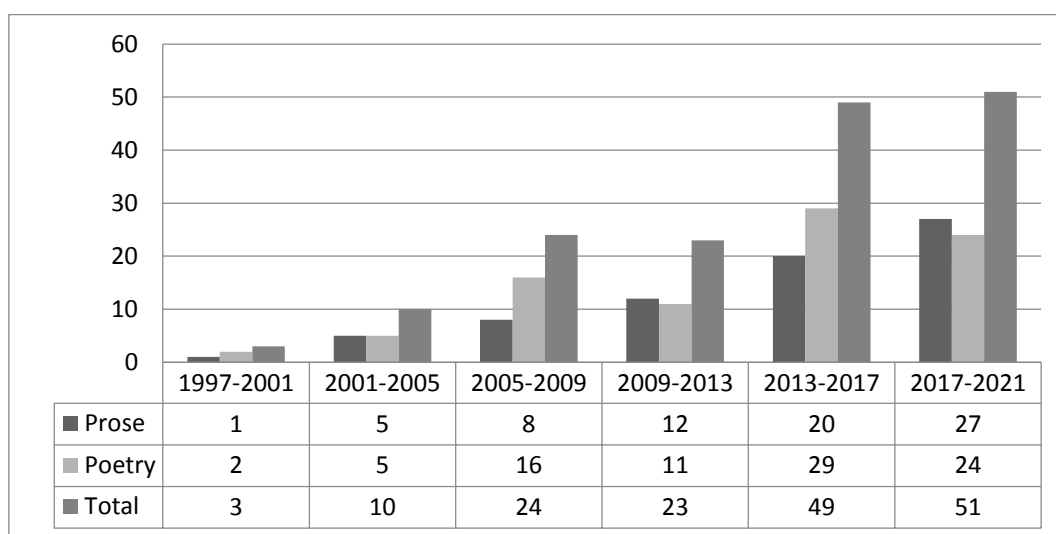


Figure 1. Book-length translations of Kurdish literature published in Iran in the period 1997–2021

As illustrated in this figure, prose has grown in a progressive and steady manner (1, 5, 8, 12, 20, and 27). Poetry, even though outnumbers prose in the total numbers, has fallen in two time periods: 2009–2013 and 2017–2021. This unstable movement is one indicator that poetry is more cautiously treated and publishers are hesitant or reluctant to publish poetry. The quantity of re-translations and re-prints of prose demonstrates that, while the number of poetry volumes is observable in general, it is prose, especially novels and novelettes that have gained popularity among Persian readers. Additionally, one might attribute the rising/falling number of volumes of published poetry to the fact that recognized authors tend to experiment with prose, a genre that affords them more freedom. To corroborate this claim, one can refer to the well-known Kurdish authors such as Bakhtiar Ali, Shrizad Hassan and Ata Nahayee, who preferred prose over poetry. Thus far, one can observe the dominance of a single genre among the two most widely translated authors, Bakhtiar Ali and Sherko Bekes.

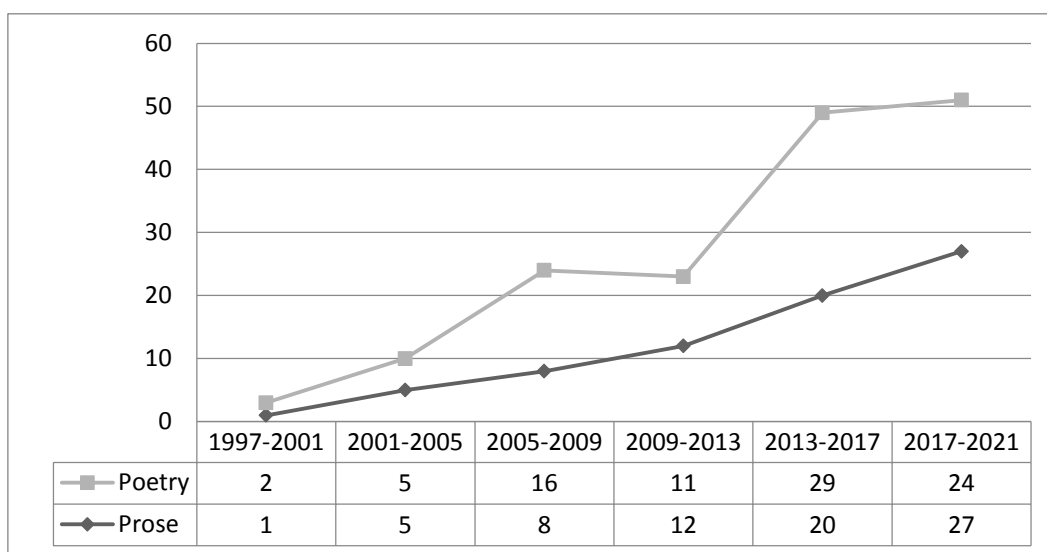


Figure 2. The distribution of book-lengths works based on literary genre.

What makes the translated works from Kurdish into Persian notable is the quantity of collections. There were 23 collections in total, containing 19 collections of poetry and 4 volumes of short stories. What is more, 18 collections of short stories and poems have been translated in the last eight years, coinciding with Rouhani's presidency.

4.2.3. How was it translated?

All literary works were translated directly into Persian without the use of an intermediate language. This contrasts sharply with Moretti's assertion that "movement from one periphery to another (without passing through a center) is almost unheard of" (2013, p. 112) and with Heilbron's claim that "communication between peripheral groups often passes via a center" (2000, p. 15). This is predicated on the premise of Heilbron's hypothesis of the world system of translation (2000) that "translation of translations, often termed indirect or second-hand translation has become much less common, at least in literary translation" (p. 16)

This can be attributed to a host of factors. Firstly, the speakers of both languages share numerous common grounds, and both languages have a close affinity that makes it impossible to imagine a mediatory language. Furthermore, as maintained by Pieta and Ritan Bueno (2017), "indirect translation tends to be negatively evaluated because it is said to increase the distance to the ultimate source

text and, as a consequence, it also tends to be hidden and camouflaged" (pp. 2–3). Secondly, Kurdish translators are native speakers of Kurdish and have a strong command of Persian, Iran's official language. As a result, they can directly and fluently translate from Kurdish to Persian and vice versa. Thirdly, most of these literary works are candid portraits of writer's daily lives and their indirect translation would, in the words of Hadley (2017), "exhibit a proclivity towards omitting cultural elements particular to their source cultures..." (p. 1).

4.2.4. Who translated it?

In total, 32 Kurdish-Persian translators are identified within the specified time period (1997–2021). They have succeeded in translating 160 works of Kurdish literature into Persian. Among 160 literary works, 155 works were translated individually and 5 literary works were collaboratively translated.

The most prolific translators were Mojaver (63 titles), Halabcheyi (24 titles), Sanjabi (13 titles), and Shiri (10 titles). Indeed, the four aforementioned translators control around two-thirds of all translations, while the remaining 28 translators control approximately one-third. 16 translators have translated only one literary work from Kurdish to Persian, indicating an asymmetrical distribution of literary works among translators and a dearth of professional translators devoted to Kurdish-to-Persian translation.

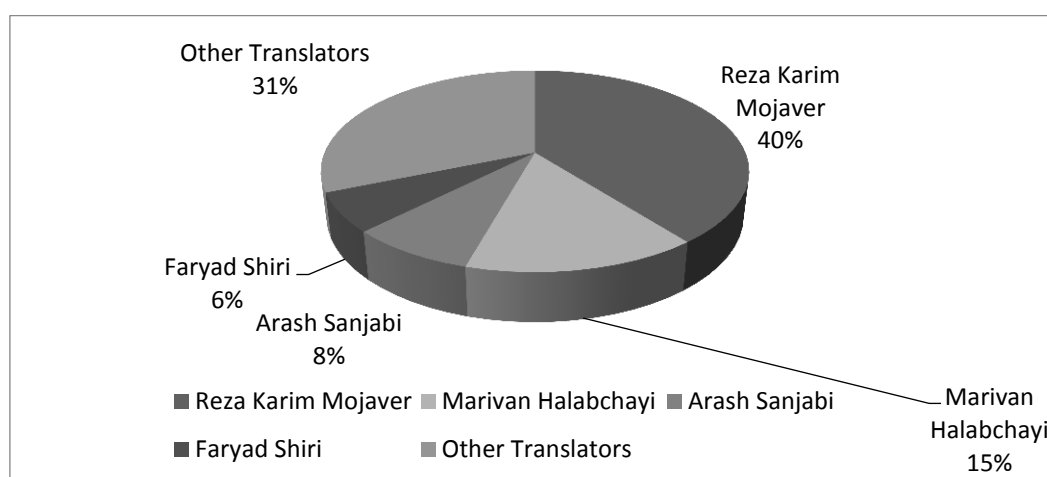


Figure 3. The distribution of translated works per translators in the period 1997 to 2021

Karim Mojaver, one of the most prolific Kurdish to Persian translators, has translated 63 Kurdish titles (first translations and retranslations). His translations account for 39.375 percent of all works translated. He has released 32 translations of poetry in Kurdish literature (50.80%) and 31 works of prose (49.20 %). He strikes a balance between poetry and prose. Halabcheyi, another translator has produced a total of 24 titles (15 percent of all Kurdish translations into Persian), including 17 prose works and 7 collections of poetry. As can be observed, he has a general preference towards translating Kurdish prose, particularly Bakhtiar Ali's novels. The Third most prolific translator is Sanjabi. He has translated 9 prose works and 4 poetry collections comprising 8.125 % of all translations. The last most prolific translator is Shiri. He has published 10 titles, 1 prose work and 9 poetry collections.

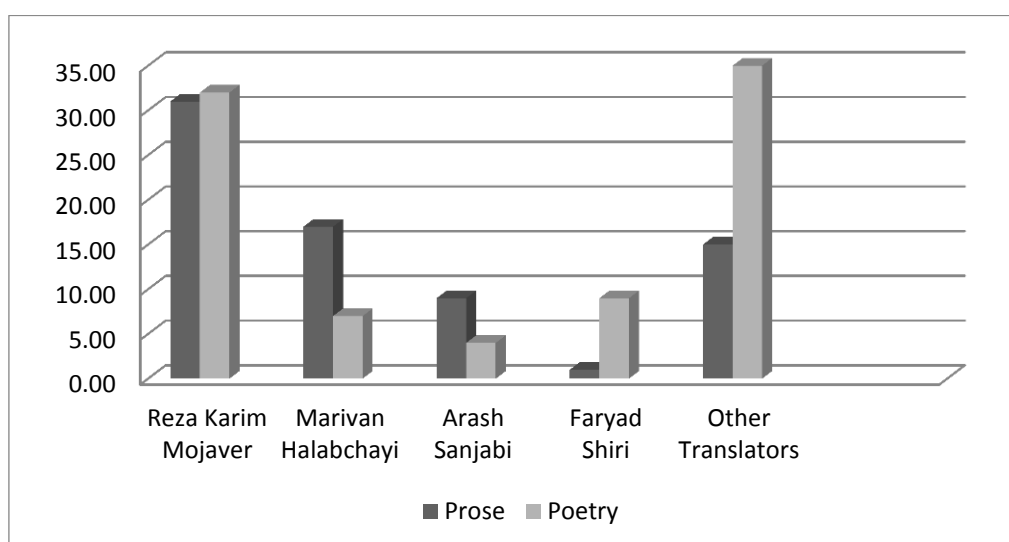


Figure 4. The proportion of prose/poetry translated works into Persian per translators

Another significant point worth noting is that the two pioneering translators, Reza Mojaver and Halabcheyi, who have translated a sizable portion of Kurdish literature into Persian, have played significant role in the introduction and circulation of Kurdish literature in Tehran books fair as a 'tournament of values' (Moeren, 2010). Attending literary events, festivals and academic sessions, they have become cultural communicators between Persian and Kurdish speakers. To be more exact, their social roles benefit the Kurdish literary works they translate significantly. These epitextual components, which include but are not limited to

interviews, gatherings, and literary criticism, motivate Persian readers to seek out other Kurdish writers and poets. Additionally, the Kurdish translators, particularly these four, have developed into celebrity translators, similar to their Persian counterparts and their names serve as a branding technique, attracting the attention of Persian readers and inviting them to read Kurdish literature.

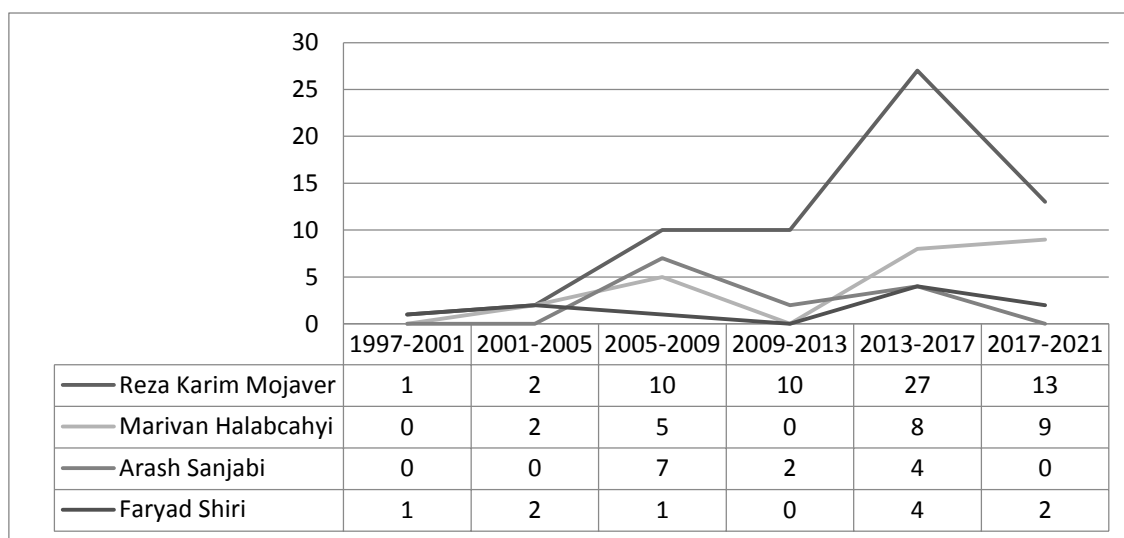


Figure 5. The productivity of four productive translators in the period 1997 to 2021

4.2.5. Where were translations produced?

The compiled bibliography includes 52 publishers, most of them are situated in Tehran. Among these publishers, 25 (almost half) published a single work in Persian, demonstrating that Kurdish literature in general, and translation from Kurdish to Persian in particular, has not received the attention they deserve on the part of publishers. Literary genres, poetry and prose, are evenly dispersed among single- and multiple-title publishers (13 proses, 12 poetry) (60 proses, 75 poetry). This demonstrates a highly asymmetric distribution of translated titles by publishers. Among the publishers who have devoted their attention to a single work are two large-scale publishers, Nay and Ghatreh, indicating that large-scale publishers with high symbolic and economic capital in Iran have avoided the temptation of investing in the translation of Kurdish literature.

Translating the 4 top translated authors from Iraqi Kurdistan is partly due to the recognition of the language of these authors in their country and is partly due to

the advertisement of the authors in various occasions. During the last 12 years, Afraz publishing has released 31 titles (original translations and retranslations) (2009–2021). 27 works are classified as prose, while the remaining 4 are classified as poetry. Sales is the second most prolific publisher. It has published 11 titles, including 8 works of prose and 3 works of poetry. Cheshmeh and Kooleh-Poshti published ten titles apiece.

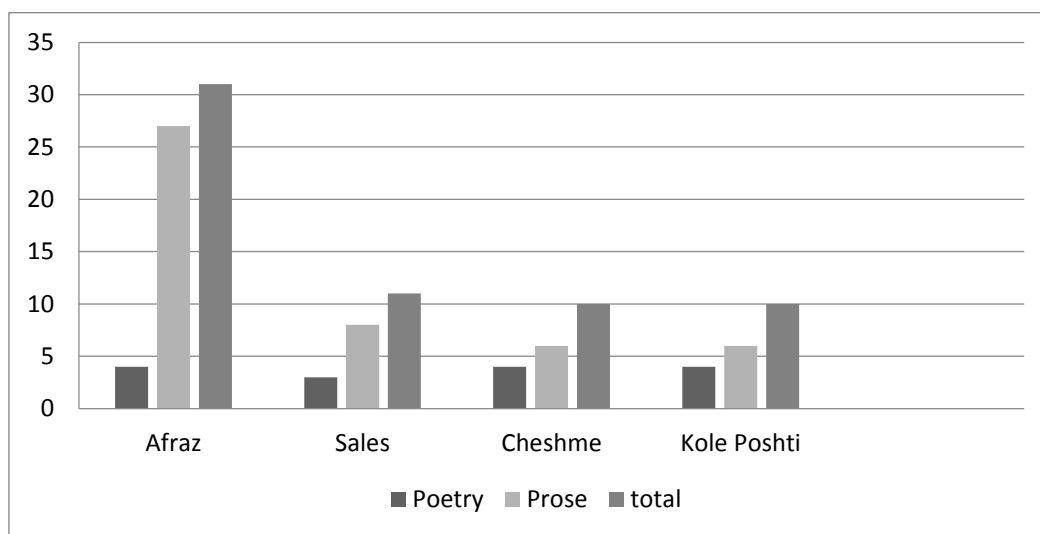


Figure 6. The productivity of four prolific publishers in the period 1997–2021

As can be seen, the most prolific publishers, except for Cheshmeh, are small-scale publishers located in Tehran. Another pattern is the domination of prose among the prolific publishers.

5. Results and Discussion

The first outstanding pattern is related to the genre of the translated Kurdish literatures into Persian. Poetry has dominated the literary translation, which accounts for 87 volumes. This domination of one genre in comparison to prose is in line with Heilbron and Sapiro's claim that "book translations from peripheral languages lack the [genre] variety." (2016, pp. 383–384). By contrast, among the most prolific publishers, prose occupied the first spot. This was predicated on some premises: first, favoring prose over poetry is congruent with Azadibougar and Patton's claim that "literary circulation usually favours prose forms rather than poetry" (2015, p.173). In addition, one can refer to the role of individual translators and their close affinity with authors and small-scale publishers in the promotion of Kurdish

literature. Further, some Kurdish translators like Halabcheh-yi and Karim Mojaver become celebrity translators. Kurdish translators, similar to other Iranian translators who gained reputation for their translations, became celebrity translators and small-scale publishers make use of their fame and visibility for their own economic interests.

The second salient pattern has to do with the translators. Several critical elements can be seen throughout their profile. They are all academicians, and their academic degrees are unrelated to translation. Second, with the exception of Halabcheh-yi, their primary focus is not on translation but on other professions such as filmmaking, management, and the like. These two findings corroborate Hacoen (2014) and Pięta's (2016) conclusions that translators from peripheral languages work on a part-time basis and acquire translation proficiency through informal means.

In addition, the translators appear on many literary events and occasions to bridge the cultural gap between the Iranian publishing field and Kurdish literature. The case of Kurdish literature is counterargument to Rizzi and Pym's (2019) claim that, "The clients do not need to actively trust translators, but display a 'strong, thin' trust—or impersonalized confidence based on the reputation of an institutions or profession rather than individuals" (p.13). Since Kurdish translated literature does not sufficiently draw the attention of large-scale publishers, Iranian readers tended to display strong trust based on the profile of the translators.

Since the large-scale publishers of Iran show lesser interest in the publication of Kurdish literature, the focus of the Persian readers shifted to the translators rather than the publishers. An informal network of contact between the Kurdish translators, the authors and the small-scale publisher (independent publishers) took shape to deliver the final product. The same claim made by Nanquette (2016) on the publication of Persian literature in the USA can be applied to the case of Kurdish translation in Iran: "Usually, translations depend on the contacts of the publisher with certain translators and their affinity with a particular author." (p. 7). The unequal distribution of the translation can also be due to this reason.

6. Conclusion

This article studied the literary translation flow from Kurdish into Persian via the theoretical framework proposed by Heilbron (1999; 2000) and Sapiro (2007; 2014) over the period of 1997–2021. The patterns emerged from this study reveal that although poetry dominated the translation flow, it had an unstable movement and it is prose which has taken a progressive and steady growth. Also, the findings reveal unbalanced distribution of translation works per translator, per author and per publisher; that is, in every section, one constitutes a considerable number of Kurdish literature, e.g., Karim Mojaver as the translator, Afraz as publisher and Bakhtiar Ali and Bekes as authors.

They were political, linguistic, cultural, economic factors in the forming of translation flow from Kurdish into Persian. In relation to political reasons, one can refer to the changing of the political climate of Iran, coinciding with Khatami's presidency in 1977 up to 2005. To corroborate the influence of political influence on the flow, it was observed that collections and anthologies flourished in the presidency of Rouhani. One more political reason is the recognition of Kurdish language in Iraq and the prospective relationship of Iran with its neighbor, Iraq and the acceleration of Kurdish recognition in Iran. Culturally, the growing attention of Iranian elites and university scholars to Kurdish literature on various university events and cultural gathering and the appearance of translators can be mentioned as formative factors in introducing Kurdish translated literature from the cultural point of view. In respect to economic reasons, one can refer to the absence of Kurdish translated literature among large-scale Iranian publishers with high symbolic capital and the role of small-scale publishers with low symbolic capital. It was observed that even small-scale publishers tended to translate well-known Kurdish writers.

All in all, the conclusions drawn from the study highlight the close affinity among individuals including translators, well-known authors and small-scale publishers working collaboratively and actively in order to promote peripheral literature in a more well-established manner. The conclusion drawn from the study is also in line with Budimir's (2020) study which highlighted the "importance of

individuals and their efforts in the promotion of peripheral literature.” (p. 232). In this study, it is shown how Kurdish translators develop a close affinity with Kurdish authors and small-scale publishers to introduce and circulate Kurdish literature. Their profile is compatible with Hacoen (2014) and Pięta’s (2016) conclusions that translators from peripheral languages work on a part-time basis and acquire translation proficiency through informal means.

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رویکردی جامعه‌شناختی^۱

میلاد میره‌کی^۲ نیما نوشمند^۳

چکیده

این مطالعه به بررسی جریان ترجمه از ادبیات کردی به فارسی در بازه زمانی ۱۹۹۷ تا ۲۰۲۱ در چارچوب جامعه‌شناختی-تحلیلی پرداخته که توسط هایلبرون (۱۹۹۹؛ ۲۰۰۰) و سایپرو (۲۰۰۷؛ ۲۰۱۴) توسعه و بحث شده است. بدین منظور، نخست از سازمان اسناد و کتابخانه ملی ایران به‌عنوان جامع‌ترین بانک اطلاعاتی ایران که تقریباً تمام ادبیات ترجمه شده کردی به فارسی را در خود دارد، مشورت گرفتیم و در گام بعدی صفحات اینترنتی شخصی مترجمان کرد مانند کانال‌های تلگرامی و اینستاگرامی را جستجو کردیم تا کتاب‌شناسی توصیفی تألیف کنیم. این کتاب‌شناسی توصیفی حاوی فراداده‌هایی نظیر عناوین متن اصلی، اسم نویسنده، عنوان متن ترجمه شده، اسم مترجم، اسم ناشر، محل نشر، سال نشر و فرم ادبی (ژانر) بود. فهرست جامع شامل ۱۶۰ اثر ادبی بود که در طول دوره مذکور ترجمه و منتشر شده است. سپس این کتاب‌شناسی با استفاده از مدل پیتا (۲۰۱۶) مورد تجزیه و تحلیل قرار گرفت. یافته‌ها نشان می‌دهد که درحالی‌که شعر بر جریان ترجمه غالب بود، حرکتی بی‌ثبات را دنبال می‌کرد، درحالی‌که نثر رشد متری و پیوسته داشت و ژانر محبوب در میان پرکارترین ناشران و مترجمان بود. این یافته‌ها همچنین توزیع نامتوازن آثار ترجمه شده را در میان مترجمان، نویسندگان و ناشران نشان می‌دهد. نتیجه‌گیری‌های حاصل از این مطالعه نشان‌دهنده رابطه نزدیک بین افراد از جمله مترجمان، نویسندگان مشهور و ناشران مقیاس کوچک است که به طور مشترک و فعالانه به منظور ترویج ادبیات پیرامونی به شیوه‌ای تثبیت‌شده‌تر کار می‌کنند.

واژه‌های راهنما: ادبیات فارسی، اسناد و کتابخانه ملی، ترجمه، ترجمه ادبی، ترجمه کردی،

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