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Bible Translation and Culture: the Theory and Practice of Intercultural Mediation in the Translation of John 2:1-12

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1. Introduction[1]

The relationship of Bible translation and culture will be discussed from the theoretical perspective of translators as cultural mediators,[2] with specific goals that guide their intercultural mediation.[3] Translators are mediators in the sense that they have to find or to build bridges between the cultural worlds of the Bible and of their audiences and sometimes they have to resolve conflicts and

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1) This article is based on an unpublished series of lectures I held in Moscow, 26-31 October 2015, given at the Seminar on ‘Translating the Bible: Bridge the gap’ organized by the International Bible Institute in cooperation with the United Bible Societies. I integrated §s and ideas from De Vries (2001, 2003, 2005, 2008, 2014) in these lectures: L. de Vries, “Bible Translations: Forms and Functions”, *The Bible Translator* 52:3 (2001), 306-319; L. de Vries, “Paratext and the Skopos of Bible translations”, A. A. den Hollander, U. B. Schmidt, and W. F. Smelik, eds., *Paratext and Megatext as Channels of Jewish and Christian Traditions* (Boston and Leiden: Brill, 2003), 176-193; L. de Vries, “Malhagiui minjok gisulhakka asia mengrageseoui seonggyeong beonyeok”, *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 4 (2005), 208-228; L. de Vries, “Translation Functions and Interculturality”, Maarten Mous, Marianne Vogel, and Stella Linn, eds., *Translation and Interculturality: Africa and the West*, Schriften zur Afrikanistik 16 (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2008), 123-142; L. de Vries, “The Romantic Turn in Bible Translation”, *Translation* 3 (2014), 123-149.

2) David Katan, *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2004), 7-18.

3) C. Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained* (Manchester: St. Jerome, 1997), 27-38.

negotiate compromises. The ways in which languages and cultures are interwoven is key to the theory of translational intercultural action.[4] To illustrate how this theoretical framework may help us to understand and evaluate Bible translation in practice, it will be applied to the translation of John 2:1-12, the Miracle of Cana.

There are three main domains where translators mediate between biblical cultures and those of their readers. In those domains they have to decide to what extent they engage in transculturation, transforming aspects of ancient cultures into the cultures of their audiences. First, conceptual mediation when Bible translators have to mediate between the conceptual networks of their source texts and those of their audiences, for example when a concept is absent in the world of the new audiences.

The second domain of intercultural mediation is that of norms and values, e.g. the norms and values with regard to wine in the story of the Miracle of Cana. Cultures have different norms and values with respect to violence, sexuality, bodily functions, position of women, and a host of other issues. When the norms and values behind or in biblical texts clash with those of target audiences, translators have the tendency to soften the blow, or even to rewrite the text in ways that are disloyal to the norms, values and intentions of the writers of the biblical texts. The third domain of intercultural mediation is that of cultural pragmatics: mediating the differences that are caused by the way in which patterns of language are interwoven with cultural practices for example the use of γύναι 'woman' as a form of address used by Jesus to his mother in the story of the Miracle of Cana, in John 2:4.[5]

The functional goals of a translation project strongly determine how Bible translators deal with intercultural mediation. However, loyalty to the ancient writers and redactors of the biblical text should keep translators from crossing

4) W. A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), 170-173.

5) A good example of cultural pragmatics is the ways in which linguistic patterns of politeness and honorifics reflect specific cultural patterns of societies, see the classic study of P. Brown and S. C. Levinson, *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987). Ji-Youn Cho applies the field of politeness studies to the ways Korean Bible translations deal with the problems of intercultural mediation caused by the unique, rich and complex politeness and honorific dimensions of the Korean language that are interwoven with Korean cultural practices: Ji-Youn Cho, *Politeness and Addressee Honorifics in Bible Translation* (New York: United Bible Societies, 2010).

the red line in performing their intercultural mediation: translators should never rewrite the biblical texts in ways that violate consensus views of biblical scholarship with respect to the possibilities of meanings that biblical words, phrases or sentences may have.[6)]

This reference to the gate keeping role biblical scholarship is often misconstrued as a positivistic and untenable pretention that biblical scholarship can establish 'the' meaning of a text in an objective sense. Of course, biblical scholarship cannot do that. But biblical scholars may reach an informed intersubjective consensus on what possible and probable readings of a given text are, which readings are impossible or highly implausible because they inconsistent with context, lexica, grammars and the majority of widely accepted commentaries. There is always a grey area of readings that fall between the clear cases of evidently possible readings and evidently impossible readings. When the gate keeping role of biblical scholarship is ignored, there are grave dangers of domesticating or 'taming' the Bible in ways which are disloyal to the writers of the ancient texts and disloyal to the cultural worlds with which their writings are interwoven.

To give just one example, Oxford University Press published a translation of the Bible, the New Inclusive Translation, which translates Matthew 11:27 as 'all things have been handed over to me by my Father-Mother' where Father-Mother renders the Greek πατήρ 'father', a transculturation that changes and transforms the biblical text in a way that is disloyal to the ancient writers and their cultural horizons.

The theoretical approach discussed in § 2 will be applied in § 3 on the intercultural mediation that needs to be done when the story of the Miracle of Cana is translated. The last part of the article (§ 4) reflects on the findings of this paper.

2. Theoretical perspectives

2.1. Words and scripts

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6) For function and loyalty, see C. Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*, 123-128.

Bible translators cannot escape from intercultural mediation because it is impossible to draw a line between texts as linguistic objects, as (groups of) words, and the cultural and historical worlds behind texts. An important cause of this interdependence of text and culture is the fact that language elements of the text trigger cultural scripts or frames of the culture behind the text. For example, the word ‘restaurant’ in a text triggers the cultural script of eating in a restaurant, from being seated to paying the bill, a script assuming tables, waiters, tipping, menu’s. Texts assume knowledge of such culturally scripted events.[7] These scripts are highly culture-specific. For example, the restaurant script must include tipping in the USA (not tipping is a huge offense) but must exclude tipping in Japan (tipping seen there as an offense).

2.2. Skopos or goals of translation

The way Bible translators act as cultural mediators is determined by the functional goals of their translation (=skopos is the technical term used in Translation Studies for functional translational goals).[8] These goals follow from what their commissioners and audiences want to do with the translation, how the translation should function in the historical and cultural circumstances of the commissioners and audiences. In the case of Bible translation, theological traditions, church history and liturgical practices inform the goals of Bible translators (mixed with other factors, e.g. political factors).

All (Bible) translation is goal-oriented rewriting[9]: the translator is both a reader that forms an interpretation in his mind and a writer with his or her own purposes in rewriting the text for a new audience. Translation itself is a local cultural practice of communication that differs in terms of times and places: e.g. what counts as a good translation, requirements for translators, social position and rewards, and so on.

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7) For a clear overview of the notion of script that originated in the field of artificial intelligence and was adopted into cognitive anthropology, see W. A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction*, 127-129.

8) For skopos, see C. Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*, 27-38; L. de Vries, “Bible Translations: Forms and Functions”, 306-320.

9) A. Lefevere, *Translation, Rewriting, and the Manipulation of Literary Fame* (London/New York: Routledge, 1992), xii.

Bible translators do their intercultural mediation by using (i) the text of the translation; (ii) the metatext (notes, introductions, maps, illustrations, pericope titles; (iii) the peritext, that is instruction and information that readers receive around the text through sermons, schools, catechism. The goals of the translation determine to what extent the translator relies on text, metatext and/or peritext in performing his task as a cultural mediator.

For the believers, the Bible is both an ancient text and the Word of God and the translated text is expected to function as such, in the liturgy and elsewhere in the life of the community. This means that the modern religious function of the ancient text in the world of the audiences becomes part of the skopos of any Bible translator. When ignored, the translation will also be ignored. This religious function itself differs very much from community to community in time and place and is part of local religious (sub) cultures, each with their own tradition, rituals, theology of Scripture and views of Bible translation.

Exoticizing or foreignizing rewriting takes place when the goal of the translators is to show the otherness of source texts. Translators may force the language and style of the translation to reflect the otherness of the source language, author, mentality, culture, and so on. It is immediately clear for any reader that a text is a translation when the translator wants to emphasize the otherness of the foreign text (i.e. it is a secondary text with a documentary function: a documentation of another [primary] text[10]).

Religious communities that firmly believe that the Bible is the Word of God, addressing modern people in many different cultures, draw very different conclusions about what it means to translate the Bible as the Word of God. Some traditions emphasize God as the Other, very different from humans. God speaks in His Word, and therefore the Bible cannot use natural, normal language. Or it sees the Bible as reflecting a supernatural higher transcendent reality that cannot be represented in normal, natural language.

This leads to foreignising or exoticizing translations, in a special, holy and solemn church language and style that reflects the divine, inspired nature of the Bible as a voice from another world.

Other communities also take the Bible as the Word of God as their starting point but arrive at the opposite conclusion: God speaks in His Word with an

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10) C. Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*, 48.

urgent message of spiritual salvation for us here and now and He wants to be understood. Precisely because the Bible is the Word of God, we must translate as if God speaks Dutch or Russian. Basically, these are instrumental translations, for example seeing the Bible as an instrument to save the souls of people. So, theological and spiritual perspectives on the Bible as Word of God may lead to both naturalizing translations (as in the tradition of Nida and dynamic equivalence) and foreign-sounding translations (in special 'Bible language' for traditional churches, King James types of tradition).

Naturalizing rewriting takes place when the goal of the translators is to let the translation speak to audiences as if it was a text originally written in the language of the audience (a primary text). Ideally, the readers hardly realize that they are using a translation. The translation has an instrumental function in the host community[11] and is judged by its user in terms of whether the translated text can function as an instrument for the purposes that the user has in mind. For example, a French book with recipes for cooking dishes will receive an instrumental translation in Russian. Russian users are not interested in the translation as a document of the French text (e.g. that it has French weights and measurements) but only whether they can cook the recipes with the information in the translation. Translators of such books freely adapt cultural features if that prevents misunderstandings on the part of the Russian users when they follow the recipes.

Bible translations can be naturalizing at one level (e.g. syntax) and exoticizing at another level (lexical choices), for example the Dutch Bible translation of 2004 (NBV) uses natural Dutch syntax but uses lots of foreign and exotic sounding words (*metrete, stadie, rabsake, centurio*). Translation theorists who do not like naturalizing modes of intercultural mediation call it domesticating or taming of the foreign text, with associations of colonialism and imperialism.[12]

Translators can be consciously performing their task as intercultural mediators (e.g. when they try to adjust biblical weights and measures to those of their audiences) but very often they adapt their translation unconsciously to what is normal, expected, or decent in the host cultures, even when they think they are translating 'literally'.

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11) Ibid., 51.

12) L. Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995), 13-20.

2.3. Layers of culture

The cultural aspects of (biblical) texts can be distinguished in terms of layers of culture[13] that G. Hofstede compared to the skins of an onion[14]:

1. the outer layer or skin of the onion: artefacts (realia) and institutions with visible manifestations (schools, courts, legal systems, weddings);
2. the middle layer: norms (social rules for conduct and values) and values (aspirations, what a community sees as ideal or valuable and what it sees as horrible, disgusting, unworthy. For example family honor and shame are core values of many Ancient Near Eastern communities);[15]
3. the core: basic assumptions (e.g. that there are many gods, that there is one God, or that people are born equal or unequal).

From layer 1 to 3 cultural aspects become more and more implicit, sometimes compared to icebergs: the explicit and visible outer layer of cultures is just the tip of the iceberg. The most important part is invisible, under water. And the cultural mediation is performed most consciously in the first layer of the onion and least consciously in the second and especially the third layer.

3. Intercultural mediation in John 2:1-12

The purpose of this part of the article is to show how the theoretical framework of section 2 may be applied to the exegesis and translation of John 2:1-12.

3.1. The conceptual domain: δόξα

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13) F. Trompenaars and C. Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture* (London: Nicholas Brealey, 1997), 23.
14) G. Hofstede, *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (London: McGraw-Hill, 1991), 7-9.
15) K. van der Jagt, *Anthropological Approaches to the Interpretation of the Bible*, UBS Monograph Series 8 (New York: United Bible Societies, 2002), 47-54.

3.1.1. δόξα in the Gospel of John

When an aspect of biblical cultures is unknown or unfamiliar for readers, translators will have to do conceptual mediation, for example by using a cultural substitute for the biblical concept, e.g. NIV has ‘gallons’ to replace the ‘metretes’ of the Greek source, or by transliterating the foreign term (e.g. Dutch New Bible translation ‘twee of drie metreten’). Descriptive phrases may also be used in conceptual mediation (e.g. ‘fermented fruit juice’ for οἶνος ‘wine’ in John 2 in cultures where grapes and wine are unknown). Finally, loan words from languages of wider communication may be a solution, e.g. Indonesian anggur ‘wine’ in Papuan Bible translations.[16)]

Perhaps the most complex part of conceptual mediation is not so much the translation of unknown or unfamiliar concepts. Rather, concepts that seem to be present in both source and host cultures and do have some overlap may present challenges that follow from the fact that the concept is part of a different network of concepts and embedded in different cultural practices.[17)] This latter problem (of mediating between differences in cultural networks of concepts) requires much more skill from translators and can only partly be solved in the translation itself. Often metatext of the translation (notes, glossaries) is the best place for this kind of conceptual mediation.

The concept of δόξα with its many senses (including ‘honor, reputation, glory, power, authority, splendour’) in and behind the story of the Cana Miracle is an example of such a concept that at first sight seems to have parallels in other cultures. Yet, the δόξα of our pericope has unique meanings grounded in the theological conceptual network of Johannine communities that δόξα is part of.[18)] The Johannine theological δόξα network in its turn draws on ancient social and

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16) For these options and their (dis)advantages in translating the Bible, E. R. Wendland, *The Cultural Factor in Bible Translation*, UBS Monograph Series 2 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1987), 57-82.

17) The technical term for this problem is the incommensurability problem, a major cause of the indeterminacy of translations (for a very clear discussion of this fundamental issue, see W. A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction*, 171-172).

18) The following exegetical understanding of the δόξα concept, and more general of the Gospel of John, is based on Martien de Jonge, *Johannes: Een praktische bijbelverklaring* (Kampen: Kok. 1996), 9-27. I based my observations on the translation of specific Johannine theological and polemic terminology on Matthijs de Jong, “Het vertalen van Johanneïsche termen. Johannes 12 in de Bijbel in Gewone Taal”, *Met Andere Woorden* 34:2 (2015), 23-35.

cultural concepts of δόξα.

The idea of δόξα as the honor and reputation of a family is evoked by the setting of a wedding in John 2:1-12. The word γάμος 'wedding' in John 2:1 both triggers and assumes a script for weddings that includes a conceptual scheme for how a wedding unfolds and a whole cultural world of social norms around weddings, and banquets in general, e.g. the social norm that guests will take places at the wedding banquet in accordance to their place in society. These social norms are examples of the cultural aspects of the second layer of the cultural onion.[19] The higher position a guest has in society, the closer he or she will be placed to the host.

When people violate those norms, their δόξα 'honor' is at stake. The opposite of δόξα (when it means 'honor') is αἰσχύνη 'shame'. Both words refer to an underlying set of values in the biblical worlds related to the enormous importance of public honor, at all levels, the δόξα of a person, a family, God, or of a tribe or a nation. Of course, δόξα has many more senses, beyond 'honor', both in the Gospel of John and wider in the New Testament.[20]

The following passage from a parable in Luke 14 reflects this public aspect of honor and shame: it is not so much an individual, subjective feeling good or bad about yourself; rather, it is something that society does to you, and with enormous potential consequences, of exclusion, of economic disaster, of death even.[21] Society covers family, or person, or a god, with honor or shame. A person cannot give δόξα to himself, it comes from the public recognition of others.

> Luke 14:7-11 (NIV)
>
> 7 When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: 8 "When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. 9 If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this man your seat.'

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19) F. Trompenaars and C. Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture*, 23.

20) Robert G. Bratcher, "What does 'Glory' mean in relation to Jesus? Translating doxa and doxazo in John", *The Bible Translator* 42:4 (1991), 401-408; Matthijs de Jong, "Het vertalen van Johanneïsche termen. Johannes 12 in de Bijbel in Gewone Taal", 23-35.

21) K. van der Jagt, *Anthropological Approaches to the Interpretation of the Bible*, see especially chapter 5 'Honor and shame: core values in Near Eastern societies', 47-54.

> Then, humiliated (μετὰ αἰσχύνης 'shame'), you will have to take the least important place. 10 But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored (δόξα) in the presence of all your fellow guests. 11 For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

In this passage we see references to social norms about banquet position as reflecting social position: the host and guests bring honor to the one and shame to the other person in the parable. The phrase ἐνώπιον πάντων 'in front of/facing all' clearly shows the public aspect of δόξα. Certain conditions (e.g. poverty, being in debt, certain diseases) also caused public shame, loss of δόξα.[22] Crucifixion was seen as perhaps the most horrendous death, not because its cruelty (the Romans had punishments that were even more cruel, perhaps) but because of the total loss of δόξα of crucifixion: a death of agony in public, full of mockery and public insults, often executed in dishonorable places, outside the community, associated with filth and death.

The concept of δόξα is a good example of a concept that has meanings and nuances that derive from the culturally and historically grounded networks of concepts that it is part of. It is a key concept for the Gospel of John, if not the key to the whole Gospel.[23] Jesus' δόξα (as divine authority, power, glory) is given to him by his Father, made manifest and public in Jesus' works while He was in the human domain of the flesh.

The δόξα of Jesus, the central character of the Gospel narrative, is the central theme, both in the Gospel of John as a whole and in the Cana story. The δόξα of minor characters creates subthemes, both in and behind the text, linked to the δόξα of Jesus as central theme: the δόξα of Mary as his mother, of the disciples-witnesses as sharing in his δόξα, the eschatological δόξα of his flock conferred upon them by the eschatological Judge Jesus and the shame (opposite of δόξα) conferred upon those who are not of his flock. The setting for the first miracle story is a Jewish wedding. Weddings are family matters par excellence and the honor of the family is very much at stake at the wedding party that Jesus

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22) Ibid., 50.

23) Robert G. Bratcher, "What does 'Glory' mean in relation to Jesus? Translating doxa and doxazo in John", 401-408.

attends in Cana: the groom and his family, the hosts, would face very serious loss of δόξα if the wine ran out half way the party. The shame of their poverty would become public and the wedding a disaster.

The pericope of the Cana miracle is the first part of the first major section of the Gospel (chapter 2-12, sometimes called the book of miracles) that describes what Jesus did and said in public, focusing on his public miraculous signs.[24) These miraculous signs, beginning with the sign of the wine, are important in the overall purpose of the Gospel found in John 20:30-31:

> John 20:30-31 (NIV)
> 30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may a believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

The miraculous signs reveal and confirm what the high Johannine Christology of the prologue claimed just before this pericope: that Jesus is the only Son of God, the divine Word, one with the Father who sent Him on his messianic mission as a mortal man among men. The miraculous signs are the external manifestation and visible proof of the exalted, divine origin, mission and authority of Jesus, his δόξα, signs recorded by the disciples-eyewitnesses.

Now the δόξα of Jesus is a concept that is locally and historically situated in the context of the network of other concepts, especially ‘sign’, ‘belief/trust’, (eschatological) ‘judgment’, ‘life’ and ‘death’. The network of concepts functioned in the historical situation of Johannine communities with a high Christology, communities in a time when the schism with the synagogue was definitive and when Johannine communities were in a polemic with other Christian communities who were not yet ready to accept this high Christology as incompatible with the monotheism which they had inherited from the Jewish tradition.[25)]

Only two responses are possible when confronted with these miraculous signs, undeniable evidence of Jesus’ divinity: acceptance (belief) or rejection (unbelief). The acceptance (belief) of the disciples is in focus in John 2:11

24) Martien de Jonge, *Johannes: Een praktische bijbelverklaring*, 19.
25) Ibid., 24-25.

because they play a key role as credible eyewitnesses of the signs, the proofs of the divine δόξα of Jesus. Those who accept the miracles as proof of Jesus' δόξα are in contrast with 'the Jews' who do not believe what the signs show.[26)]

The term 'the Jews' is used in John both as a neutral designation of the Jewish people (e.g. in the Cana pericope Joh 2:6: Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification) and, more frequently, as a collective term that gets its negative tone in the Johannine δόξα-centered network of concepts. The theological Johannine term 'the Jews' is part of the grand division into two positions with respect to the δόξα of Jesus: on the one hand those who accept the signs and believe in Jesus' δόξα authority, called 'my sheep', and on the other hand those who are 'not of my sheep', whether belonging to the synagogue or non-Johannine followers of Christ who stood in the Jewish theological tradition of strict monotheism.

They did not deny Jesus' divine mission, as authorized by God, but could not accept the high Christology, Jesus as one with God, the 'God Jesus' of Johannine communities. The term 'the Jews' may well refer to these non-Johannine followers of Christ in for example John 6:64.[27)] Perhaps the Gospel of John reflects an even later stage of the development in early Christianity where the theological and philosophical polemic on the nature of Jesus had become an internal Christian affair.[28)]

In some contexts this collective Johannine theological term 'the Jews' may refer to specific subsections of this collective, e.g. the Jewish leaders with whom Jesus had a fierce polemic in the portico of the Temple in John 8:48[29)] but, as Matthijs de Jong points out, in John 18:35 both the leaders and the people are included[30)]. Even the at first sight neutral use of 'the Jews' as an ethnonym in John 2:6 may at a deeper symbolic level be connected to John's central

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26) The following exegetical and translational analysis of the Johannine phrase 'the Jews' is based on Henk Jan de Jonge, ""The Jews" in the Gospel of John", Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, and Frederique Vandecasteele-Vanneuville, eds., *Anti-Judaism and the Fourth Gospel* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 121-140; Matthijs de Jong, "Joden of Judeeërs? Over de vertaling van het woord 'Ioudaioi' in het Johannes-evangelie en elders", *Met Andere Woorden* 36:1 (2017), 8-21.

27) Martien de Jonge, *Johannes: Een praktische bijbelverklaring*, 147.

28) Henk Jan de Jonge, ""The Jews" in the Gospel of John", 239-259.

29) Martien de Jonge, *Johannes: Een praktische bijbelverklaring*, 147

30) Matthijs de Jong, "Joden of Judeeërs? Over de vertaling van het woord 'Ioudaioi' in het Johannes-evangelie en elders", 15.

theological and polemic message because the ritual cleansing jars probably stand for the Old Covenant, transformed by Jesus into the wine of the New Covenant in his blood. That is why it is not a good idea to omit the reference to 'the Jews' in John 2:6 as CEV does:

> John 2:6 (CEV)
> 6 At the feast there were six stone water jars that were used by the people for washing themselves in the way that their religion said they must. Each jar held about 100 liters.

The same is true of the proposal to translate 'the Jews' here, and elsewhere in John's Gospel, with 'the Judeans'. Why would there be jars for ritual cleansing of the Judeans in Cana, in Galilea.[31] More importantly, when the plural of Ἰουδαῖος is used in a polemic context, the rendering 'the Judeans' completely misses the Johannine meaning of 'the Jews' as a polemic label for those who reject the high Christology of this Gospel.

Behind efforts to avoid the translation with 'the Jews', or to soften the phrase by renderings such as 'the Jewish leaders', there is sometimes a cultural problem of values and norms in target communities. Modern audiences, painfully aware of the Holocaust, find translations that sound anti-Semitic or racist highly offensive. Translators feel the need for intercultural mediation that results in a translation which avoids the generalization 'the Jews' and which prevents misunderstandings of the term 'the Jews'. As long as such efforts are compatible with contextual senses of 'the Jews' in the Greek (for example a translation with Jewish leaders in Joh 8:48), certain types of translations indeed may require such renderings, for example common language versions. But in a literary and ecclesiastical translation 'the Jews' should be retained, everywhere in John, and any intercultural mediation should take place in the metatext (e.g. introduction, notes) and peritext to explain what 'the Jews' means in this Gospel, in relation to the overall literary and theological δόξα network that it is part of.

Ultimately, someone's δόξα has its origin in open recognition of others of your place in society. One cannot give oneself δόξα. Δόξα needs public and δόξα demands recognition in antiquity.

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31) Ibid., 14.

John 8:48-54 (NIV)

48 The Jews answered him, “Aren't we right in saying that you are a Samaritan and demon-possessed?”

49 “I am not possessed by a demon,” said Jesus, “but I honor my Father and you dishonor me. 50 I am not seeking glory for myself; but there is one who seeks it, and he is the judge. 51 I tell you the truth, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” 52 At this the Jews exclaimed, “Now we know that you are demon-possessed! Abraham died and so did the prophets, yet you say that if anyone keeps your word, he will never taste death. 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham? He died, and so did the prophets. Who do you think you are?” 54 Jesus replied, “If I glorify myself, my glory means nothing. My Father, whom you claim as your God, is the one who glorifies me.

It could cost your life in ancient times to publicly reject the δόξα of a powerful political or religious authority because it implied revolt and an attack on someone’s authority, power and honor. That is why the writer of John connects the acceptance or rejection of Jesus’ δόξα directly with eschatological judgment, death and life. Jesus had received his divine δόξα in the public recognition from God the Father as his only Son, a claim that shocked ‘the Jews’ and that they rejected. Given the unity of Jesus and God the Father, key theme in the Gospel of John, rejecting the δόξα of Jesus by not believing the proof offered by the signs, is rejecting the δόξα of God and this means eschatological death. The opposite, belief, means life, life as an eschatological gift of God the Father who put the final decision on life and death in the hands of the eschatological judge Jesus:[32)]

John 5:22-27 (NIV)

22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, 23 that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him. 24 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life. 25 I tell you the truth, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. 26 For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son to have life in himself. 27 And he has

32) Martien de Jonge, *Johannes: Een praktische bijbelverklaring*, 80.

given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

3.1.2. δόξα in John 2:1-12

Back to John 2:1-12, the all-important cultural and Johannine theological motive of δόξα is present in the text (verse 11) and behind the text of John 2:1-12. For example, we saw above that in John 2:3-5 the δόξα of the bridegroom and his family is at stake (as family honor) behind the text when Mary comes to Jesus, saying 'they have no wine'.

When Jesus replies to Mary that his hour has not yet come, the concept of hour refers to the hour of his coming death on the cross which is the ultimate shame, robbing him from all his δόξα as a member of human society. But at the same time it is the ultimate δόξα, the appointed hour of his glory: his return to his full heavenly glory with the Father after the public shame at the cross. The concept of 'hour' used in reply to mother Mary in the Cana story, not only evokes the idea of Jesus'own δόξα after his death at the cross but also the δόξα of the Father: the expression 'my hour' evokes the idea of the authority of the Father who sent him, who has authority over him to appoint the eschatological time table of his divine mission.[33] The notions of divine authority and awesome power of Jesus as (one with) God are the central element of the Johannine δόξα concept, elements that are less prominent in the English word 'glory'.

Jesus forcefully and in a strikingly abrupt way tells his mother in John 2:4 that he is under the authority of his heavenly Father and not under the authority of his earthly mother. Mary fully accepts this divine chain of δόξα command and authority: God gave Jesus δόξα authority and Mary trust and belief in that divine authority is subtly expressed in her response to Jesus. She does not contest his authority over her and shows immediate and unconditional acceptance of his δόξα authority and power by her simple words to the servants: 'do whatever he tells you to do'.

The Johannine concept of Jesus' δόξα has various aspects, some of which come to the fore in one context, and others in other contexts: (divine and therefor highest) authority, the origin of his δόξα (the Father who sent Him on his divine mission and authorized him to become the eschatological Judge), power to do miraculous things that only God can do, heavenly glorious splendor,

33) Ibid., 48.

honor as due to highest authority, demanding recognition, δόξα can be a place or position (e.g. on earth in a seat next to the host in a banquet or in heaven the seat at the right hand side of the Father).

In our Cana story the word δόξα occurs once, in John 2:11 and in that context the idea of divine authority, divine mission and heavenly power of Jesus comes to the fore, the heavenly power that enables Him to turn water into wine, the heavenly authority He has over all humans, including His mother and His divine mission given to Him by God to transform the Old Covenant of the water into the sublime wine of the New Covenant.

The Dutch Bible in Plain Language (BGT), with its goal to be maximally clear for new and old readers of the Scriptures, including people with a limited vocabulary, translates δόξα in John 2:11 with ‘heavenly power’. In other places the Bible in Plain Language translates δόξα with a range of other expressions triggered by specific contexts, to give readers access to the rich Johannine δόξα network in which God gives Jesus authority, honor and power to act as God on earth, including power over life and death, both during his life on earth and as eschatological judge. For example, the Dutch Bible in Plain Language translates δόξα with ‘heavenly power’ in John 1:4, 2:11, and 11:40, with ‘honor’ in John 7:18. The verb δοξάζω in John 17:1 where it is an active form with ‘give me, your Son, my place in heaven’ and in John 17:5 with ‘now give me the highest power and honor with You in heaven’. The passive form in John 12:23 is rendered in the Bible in Plain Language as ‘the Son of Man will receive his place in heaven next to God’.

A literary and/ or ecclesiastical translation of the Gospel of John will try to render the theme word δοξά(ζω) verbally consistent with one word, as much as possible, for example by using glory and to glorify. Such a skopos indeed requires a different way to mediate the Johannine conceptual network centered on δοξά. The repetition of ‘glory’ throughout the Gospel gives an audible clue to the central theological theme of John: the call to the listeners and readers to believe what the miracles signs reveal: that Jesus is God, sent by God on a mission of salvation of His sheep on earth.

The problem for such a literary approach is which word to choose for δοξά(ζω) in all its occurrences: glory, or honor, or power, or praise. In order to bring out the whole δόξα network in a literary or ecclesiastical translation, other key

elements of the network should also be translated verbally consistent, e.g. miraculous sign, the Jews, believe/unbelief. Metatextual helps (notes, glossaries, introductions) would help the readers of literary and ecclesiastical translations to understand the contextual senses of these words within the Johannine network, e.g. that 'the Jews' in the Johannine thought world does not stand for a race or for all people who are ethnically Jewish but stands for those who reject the high Christology of this Gospel, the δοξά of Jesus as God and primarily refers to religious communities of Jews and Christians with whom the Johannine community was in a polemic and antagonistic relationship about the nature of Jesus.

3.2. Norms and values: οἶνος and μεθύσκω

We noted above that the word γάμος 'wedding' in John 2:1 triggers a cultural script for wedding feasts and also triggers social norms of behavior associated with a proper Jewish wedding in Palestine during the Roman era. Elements of the script triggered by the word γάμος in John 2:1 are for example that a wedding feast will last seven days, that food and wine will be served in abundance for the guests, that guests will be seated in accordance to their social position and power, their δοξά.

Weddings in other parts of the world trigger very different scripts, for example in the interior of Papua wine was unknown and not part of the script but pigs and pork were essential for any weddings, as food and as part of the bride price. Wine is valued positively in the cultural world behind this story about the miracle of the wine in Cana, although with the awareness that wine, just like sexuality or food, may become very negative things when people violate social and religious norms for enjoying such good things. In the Miracle of Cana, wine quite probably even symbolizes the New Covenant just like the water in the jars perhaps symbolizes the Old Covenant with its many purification rituals. Elsewhere in the New Testament writings wine is also closely linked to the New Covenant (e.g. in Mark 14:24 Jesus says of the wine during the Last Supper 'this is my blood of the covenant' [some MSS 'new covenant']).

For some audiences, both Christian and Muslim, the role of wine in this story is shocking because alcoholic drinks are valued (very) negatively in their

communities. Many translators and translation consultants (myself included) have faced the tough question how to function as an intercultural mediator when audiences demand that οἶνος in John 2:3 and elsewhere be rendered with (unfermented) 'fruit juice' or 'red juice' and μεθυσθῶσιν in John 2:10 with euphemisms that avoid any association with drunkenness.

Intercultural mediation must always be bounded by intersubjective consensus of biblical scholarship on meanings of words, phrases and sentences in the sources whenever there is a clash of values and norms between source texts and target audiences, the second layer of the onion in terms of F. Trompenaars and C. Hampden-Turner.[34] To give an example, there is scholarly consensus that οἶνος in John 2:1-12 refers to wine, a concept triggered by the script of a Jewish wedding and assumed in this text (e.g. Joh 2:10, the best wine being served first, the ordinary wine later when the guests, under the influence of wine, are in a merry mood and less critical).

Some people have objected to this approach and they claim that the skopos theory implies unlimited rewriting of texts when cultural conditions demand so. For example, if the audience rejects 'wine' and wants a non-alcoholic term in John 2:3, the translator should be loyal to the audience rather than to the writers of the ancient text. Note, however, that C. Nord devotes a whole chapter to the interpersonal loyalty that a translator owes to the writers of the texts that they translate, arguing that skopos considerations can never overrule loyalty when there is scholarly consensus on what the ancient writer wanted to say with certain words, phrases and sentences in a source text.[35]

Often translators, caught between what they know their source says and what target audiences want the text to say, try to find renderings that leave out the most culturally offensive part, downplaying things. A good example in John 2 would be renderings of μεθυσθῶσιν in John 2:10 that do refer to the act of drinking considerable amounts of wine but that avoid referring to the changes in state of mind that result from drinking, for example CEV 'when they have had plenty'. But the effects of alcohol are clearly relevant to the context (the guests do not mind the ordinary wine served to them precisely because of their wine-induced altered mind state caused by the best wine they were served first).

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34) F. Trompenaars and C. Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture*, 23.

35) C. Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*, 123-128.

The altered mind state is a core element in the meaning of the verb form μεθυσθῶσιν which is derived from the Greek noun that refers to the altered mind states under the influence of alcohol. Note that the noun μέθη and the derived verb refer to all the stages of the psychological effects of alcohol on the brain, including the pleasant and culturally accepted effects of moderate drinking of a couple of glasses such as relaxation and a joyful mood to drunkenness.

Dutch and German translations function in cultural contexts where wine, certainly as part of a wedding feast, is valued very positively. Most Germanic audiences share the cultural outlook behind the Cana story regarding wine as part of a (wedding) celebration. When one compares recent American with modern Dutch and German translations, it is clear that the translators of the American versions, with audiences often not sharing those Germanic norms and values regarding alcohol consumption, try to mediate the cultural gap in norms and values by avoiding words that evoke the changes of mind triggered by drinking lots of wine, especially 'to be drunk' is avoided. For example, μεθυσθῶσιν in John 2:10 is translated in CEV as "after the guests have had plenty, ...", NIV has "after the guests have had too much to drink" (stronger wording than CEV but still avoiding 'drunk'), NAB has "when they have been drinking awhile". In contrast, the revised German Luther Bibel has 'betrunken' and in three major Dutch translations we find 'dronken' (NBV, GNB, BGT), words that mean 'to be drunk'.

The Handbook for Translators on John as included in Paratext 7.5 steers translators away from a rendering with 'drunkenness':

> "The verb rendered "drunk a lot" literally means "to become drunk", but most translators seem to prefer the meaning "have drunk freely" [...] It is not necessary to press the meaning "to become drunk" in this context, because the degree of intoxication is irrelevant. The important element is the contrast between the new wine and the old. Commentators generally agree that the point of the story is to mark the contrast between the new way of Jesus and the old way of Judaism, symbolized by the new wine and the old."

In fact, in John 2:10 an ancient cultural script of parties and feasts is referred to that prescribes the best wine to be served first, when the guests are all clear-minded and assumes drunkenness as a condition that dulls awareness of

quality of the wines being served; the best wine should be served first, precisely because of the effects of drinking too much. The Handbook writes that 'most translators' seem to prefer renderings that avoid the element of drunkenness but that is not true for all translation traditions (for example Dutch or German).

Although renderings such as 'drink freely' are still to some extent within the scholarly consensus as (marginally) possible readings, when translators avoid renderings of οἶνος in John 2 with 'wine' and consciously replace it with terms for non-alcoholic fruit juices, their intercultural mediation, although satisfying the values and expectations of the target culture, violates scholarly consensus on the meaning of οἶνος in John 2:1-12, as referring to wine and therefore are disloyal both the writers of the Gospel and the ancient cultures that shaped their writings. This does not mean that we 'objectively' know that οἶνος in John 2:1-12 refers to wine. Rather, the intersubjective consensus in the scholarly community is that the word means 'wine' in this passage.

3.3. Cultural pragmatics: γύναι

Cultural pragmatics refers to the study of the relationships between cultural practices and language use. In older literature it is called 'the ethnography of speaking'. Topics are greeting systems, forms of address and reference to persons, language and taboo (euphemism, swear words), kinship terms, politeness and honorifics, metaphorical use of language, proverbs and other culture-specific genres, color terminology, spatial orientation, taxonomies, and genres.[36)]

To illustrate intercultural mediation by translators at the level of cultural pragmatics, let us have a look at the form of address γύναι 'woman' in John 2:4.[37)] Languages reflect the socially and culturally defined relationships of people. For example, in communities with a caste system or in societies with sharply separated classes of people (e.g. slaves and free people, or feudal

36) W. A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction*, 1-371.

37) My illustration of the intercultural mediation of cultural pragmatics is based on the exegetical and linguistic analysis of Knepper in relation to γύναι and of De Jonge in relation to δόξα: G. M. Knepper, "Betekenis en vertaling van gunai in Johannes 2:4 en 19:26", *Met Andere Woorden* 34:2 (2015), 2-14; G. M. Knepper, "Nida's Γύναι: Eugene Nida's Views on the Use of Γύναι in John 2.4", *The Bible Translator* 66:2 (2015), 159-169; Martien de Jonge, *Johannes: Een praktische bijbelverklaring*, 48.

societies with a noble class and classes of commoners) the relationship between speaker and addressee as perceived in these societies is expressed in the patterns of their languages, in forms of address, in personal pronouns, in honorifics and in many other ways. Translating the Bible inevitably means that such patterns of the cultural pragmatics of the target audiences must be taken into account, in one way or another.[38)]

Our pericope of John 2:1-12 has a striking example of how difficult it can be to grasp the cultural meanings associated with the cultural pragmatics of biblical texts and to render those meanings adequately in a different cultural setting:

> John 2:4
> [καὶ] λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὔπω ἥκει ἡ ὥρα μου.
>
> John 2:4 (KJV)
> Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come.

John 2:4 presents a problem in terms of cultural pragmatics because the vocative form γύναι is not normally used by children, small or grown up, to address their mothers in Greek. Sofar, both in the biblical writings and in non-biblical Greek writings no examples have been found of a son addressing his mother with γύναι 'woman'.[39)] Why does Jesus use this unexpected form of address? Is it culturally appropriate or normal to address your mother with 'woman'? And how to mediate the effect of that marked form of address in another cultural context? Why does Jesus use the idiom (that occurs both in Hebrew and Hellenistic Greek) 'what to me and you' in addressing his mother, creating even more distance to her?

The Gospel of John is a carefully composed literary work written for religious insiders, the members of the Johannine community, with symbolical and metaphorical language. This means that the story invites the listeners and readers to pay close attention to how the story is told because that reveals the hidden

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38) Ji-youn Cho, *Politeness and Addressee Honorifics in Bible Translation*, 71-94.

39) G. M. Knepper, "Betekenis en vertaling van gunai in Johannes 2:4 en 19:26", 3; G. M. Knepper, "Nida's Γύναι: Eugene Nida's Views on the Use of Γύναι in John 2.4", 166; Knepper's approach to gunai is based on the book of E. Dicky, *Greek Forms of Address: From Herodotus to Lucian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

layers and subtexts and, crucially, leads to the essence of the Gospel: the narrative wants people to trust the evidence of the miraculous signs as proof of the δόξα of the incarnate Jesus, his glorious status as God, one with the Father, with divine authority, honor, power and splendor. Rejecting that δόξα means rejecting the One who gave that δόξα to Jesus, a δόξα that includes the delegation of the authority of the Father to Jesus as eschatological Judge which makes the response to the Gospel a matter of life and death. The tight and compact literary gem that John 2:1-12 is indeed requires close reading. Mary is the first to be brought on stage:

> John 2:1 (ESV)
> On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

Mary is introduced and referred to three times in the Cana story as the mother of Jesus, never by her personal name Mary, and this use of the kinship term mother is highly significant. All societies have norms related to kinship relations, often founded on religious traditions. Children have obligations with respect to their parents, for example to obey them, show gratitude, to care for them in old age and to treat them respectfully, in short the God-given command to 'honor' your parents (LXX Exo 20:12, τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα). The word 'mother' is used to evokes the idea of the δόξα of Mary as a mother in Israel who has authority of her son Jesus who must give her the honor, obedience and respect that go with her position.

But now Jesus is about to perform his public miraculous sign to reveal his δόξα as God (Joh 2:11) and Mary will be confronted, as all other witnesses of the miracles, with the key question whether she will accept or reject his divine δόξα authority and power. In her case this means she has to give him δόξα (honor and obedience) as her God rather than insisting on receiving the δόξα that she was entitled to from him as her son. Jesus makes very clear to her that his obedience is to the Father, and that his actions follow a divine time-table ('my hour'), as a wake-up call to Mary.[40)]

Mary does not object to Jesus' forceful expression of his need to obey the Father and to demand obedience from Mary to him as the Son of God. By not

40) Martien de Jonge, *Johannes: Een praktische bijbelverklaring*, 48.

voicing any objection and by immediately obeying him, Mary takes her place in the divine chain of command, of δόξα as authority: Jesus is completely obedient to the Father, one with the Father in will and works, sent on a divine mission. Mary shows her obedience to Jesus as God by immediately relaying his command to the servants: do as he tells you to do.

The writer of the Cana narrative chooses his words carefully to point out to his audience what is actually happening here, what the deep meaning and significance is. Mary wants to save the δόξα of the families of the marriage couple, now the wine is gone, by invoking the help of her son who is under her δόξα authority as his mother. But Jesus makes clear that he must now obey his Father and that she must obey him, as the Son of God. The dialogue between the main character, Jesus, and the minor character, Mary, is constructed to alert the audience to what kind of momentous, otherworldly and strange events are unfolding. It is not a report of a normal, interaction between a mother and her son where the normal rules of linguistic politeness of Hellenistic Greek are followed. Rather, the ancient writer creates a special literary effect by deviating from the normal cultural pragmatics of his society in the way that the dialogue unfolds. The son Jesus addresses his mother in a way that is not normal and that is highly unexpected, also for ancient listeners and readers. The writer uses the word mother twice to refer to Mary, right before and after Jesus uses the word woman to address his mother.

John 2:3-5

καὶ ὑστερήσαντος οἴνου λέγει ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν, Οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν.

[καὶ] λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὔπω ἥκει ἡ ὥρα μου.

λέγει ἡ μήτηρ αὐτοῦ τοῖς διακόνοις, Ὅ τι ἂν λέγῃ ὑμῖν ποιήσατε.

John 2:3-5 (ESV)

3 When the wine ran out, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” 4 And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come.” 5 His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

So, ancient listeners to this text would have had the sound ‘mother’ in their

ears when they heard the strange address form γύναι 'woman'. According to sociolinguistic analysis by scholars in classics γύναι was used in both classic and Hellenistic Greek as:[41)]

1. all-purpose address form for adult women, occurring in negative and positive and neutral contexts;
2. Neutral form of address used by a man for his wife;
3. Never as a form of address by a child to his or her mother.

The writer of the Gospel uses the strange deviation of the normal patterns to paint the underlying mysterious reality of the relationship between a Jewish mother and a son who is God. The abnormal form of address γύναι, preceded by the distancing idiomatic expression Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, is a strong signal to the readers that there is nothing normal in this strange exchange between Jesus and Mary, and that they must 'decode' these signals to reach the mysterious and complex layers of meaning under the surface of the simple words of verse 4.

According to G. M. Knepper, the idiom 'what to you and to me' occurs also in non-biblical or pagan Hellenistic Greek, and therefore does not deserve the label Semitism.[42)] But ancient translators of Old Greek versions used the Greek idiom to render the Hebrew idiom *mah li wâlâk*. And in doing so, it may have picked up a nuance of reproach and rebuke that was not so prominent in the corresponding Greek idiom. Listeners to John 2:4 who were familiar with LXX would perhaps be reminded of echo's in LXX books such as the clearly reproachful answer of the widow to Elisa in 2 Kings 3:13.[43)]

How to deal with the problem of Jesus using 'woman' to his mother? Jesus, portrayed in John as the Son of God, cannot violate the commandment of His Father to honor one's father and mother. Therefore, these words must mean something else and require 'decoding' by the audience, to go to the deeper levels of this ancient piece of religious literature written for insiders familiar with such genres of texts. That 'decoding' can only be done when one listens again and

41) G. M. Knepper, "Betekenis en vertaling van gunai in Johannes 2:4 en 19:26", 3; G. M. Knepper, "Nida's Γύναι: Eugene Nida's Views on the Use of Γύναι in John 2.4", 166; Knepper's approach to gunai is based on the book of E. Dicky, *Greek Forms of Address: From Herodotus to Lucian* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

42) G. M. Knepper, "Betekenis en vertaling van gunai in Johannes 2:4 en 19:26", 5-6.

43) Ibid., 6.

again to the gospel as a whole and the echo's and connections in the text slowly reveal the true story.

For example, the use of γύναι by a son to his mother is not only absent in the non-biblical literature of the time (nor in the classic period) but it occurs only two times in the NT, here in John 2:4 and in John 19:26. Furthermore, the two 'strange' usages of γύναι by a son to address his mother are connected: in both cases the theme is the relationship between Jesus and his mother from the perspective of his divine origin and ministry (his δόξα, the central theme of the Gospel). The first occurrence of the strange γύναι in John 2:4 is at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry of miraculous signs which reveal his δόξα, his true nature as God. Jesus makes very clear to Mary, when she implicitly exerts her motherly authority over him to do something about the wine situation, that he is under the authority of God, not hers, in this public setting where he reveals his divine δόξα for the first time with a sign that will be followed by many others.

The second strange occurrence of γύναι is in John 19:26 at the end of his divine ministry on earth when the shame of the cross is about to be turned into the δόξα of his return to his exalted position at the side of his Father in heaven. Jesus honors his mother, in accordance with the Ten Commandments, by lovingly taking care of her when he is no longer on earth, by placing her under the wings of the beloved disciple that replaces him as her son.

In John 2:1-12 Mary implicitly accepts and trusts that Jesus must obey his Father that gave him δόξα authority over her and all the others. The words of Jesus at the end of Jesus' short reply to Mary in John 2 'my hour has not yet come' also connect the Cana story to the crucifixion story when the 'hour' of Jesus had come to return to his Father's glory. In the second occurrence, at the cross, the strange use of γύναι symbolizes the transfer of the mother-son relationship from Jesus to the beloved disciple now that his 'hour' has come, the 'hour' mentioned by Jesus in John 2:4, the time appointed by his Father to return home to a place and position of δόξα in heaven with the Father and leave mother Mary in the caring hands of the beloved disciple who is now her son.

Now if we look at the ways in which translators have dealt with verse 4, we see how difficult the mediation of cultural pragmatics is, if the translator wants to be loyal to both the biblical writers and their ancient cultures and to the demands, needs and cultural horizons of their audiences.

John 2:3-5 (CEV)

3 When the wine was all gone, Mary said to Jesus, “They don’t have any more wine.”

4 Jesus replied, “Mother, my time hasn’t yet come! You must not tell me what to do.”

5 Mary then said to the servants, “Do whatever Jesus tells you to do.”

Notice that the CEV rendering normalizes and naturalizes, ‘tames’ the strange use of γύναι by rendering it with ‘mother’ in verse 4 and putting it before the clause rather than after it as in the Greek. The Greek source uses the word ‘mother of Jesus’ and ‘his mother’, in verse 3 and 5, to evoke the cultural and religious norms that sons should honor, give δόξα, to their mothers and at the same time she is called ‘mother of Jesus’ because she is the mother of the Son of God. The perspective on Mary in this Gospel is emphatically that of the mother of Jesus because her name never occurs in the whole book. Furthermore, the Greek writer creates a tension between ‘mother’ in John 2:3 and 2:5 and ‘woman’ in John 2:4, an abrupt change of perspective on Mary. CEV introduces ‘mother’ where the Greek text does not have ‘mother’ and removes the two ‘mother’ references of the Greek text. CEV prioritizes the clarity of referent tracking for the readers, by identifying her as Mary in verse 3 and 5.

But the writer(s) of this Gospel, in the ways in which they introduce and refer to Mary, had good reasons to call her ‘mother of Jesus’ in verse 1 and 3, setting up a strong contrast with Jesus’ ‘woman’ in verse 4. CEV removes this sharp contrast and the literary tension that it creates. Readers of CEV may miss the dramatic change of perspective, from the perspective of the δόξα of Mary as his mother in verse 3, to the perspective of the δόξα of Jesus in verse 4, as the (Son of) God who now has to do what his Father in heaven told him to do, and not what his mother tells him to do, now that he has the delegated authority of the Father on earth.

The Handbook for Translators on John offers this advice: “Jesus’ use of “woman” in direct address was normal and polite (compare Mat 15:28). It showed neither disrespect nor lack of love, as can be clearly seen by the parallel use in John 19:26.” The Handbook further recommends the use of ‘mother’ or ‘my mother’: “The closest equivalent in many languages is simply ‘my mother’

or ‘mother’, but in others an equivalent expression showing proper respect would require the omission of any expression of direct address.”

Notice that the Handbook points to Jesus’ use of γύναι ‘woman’ in Matthew 15:28 to argue that γύναι in John 2:4 is a normal and polite form of address. But in Matthew 15:28 Jesus addresses an adult woman who is unrelated to him, just as he does in John 20:13 and 20:1. In those contexts γύναι is normal. But not in John 2 where a son addresses his mother.[44)]

It is easier, however, to criticize the advice of the Handbook and the rendering ‘mother’ than to find renderings that do justice to the strange use of γύναι in John 2:4. A literal translation with ‘woman’ may result in quite different, unintended effects in target cultures, for example, as the Handbook points out, that Jesus wants to deny that Jesus is his mother or that Jesus addresses Mary as his wife, or it may sound extremely offensive. In fact, we reach the limits of translatability here, as so often in the domain of cultural pragmatics where language and culture are completely interwoven. Perhaps, the best solution is one that retains ‘woman’ but with a note to explain the background and possible explanations of this usage. It is important to retain the contrast between ‘mother’ as used immediately before and after verse 4 and ‘woman’.

NIV does retain the ‘mother/woman’ contrast by using ‘dear woman’ to render γύναι but then softens the use of ‘woman’ with ‘dear’.

John 2:4 (NIV)
4 “Dear woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied, “My time has not yet come.”

The way in which NIV deals with the form of address in verse 4, nicely illustrate the role of the translator as mediator in a conflict. NIV tries to be loyal to the biblical ‘party’ in the conflict by retaining the cultural strangeness of the address form ‘woman’ in Greek in a mother-son relationship but at the same time ‘pacifies’ the other party in the conflict, by adding ‘dear’, negotiating a compromise with target audiences who do not want a translation where Jesus seems to be disrespectful and rude to his mother. The rendering ‘why do you involve me?’ likewise tries to be loyal to the distancing intention of the Greek

44) Ibid., 3.

idiom but chooses a rendering that tries to avoid a sharp tone of rebuke or disrespect, by moving to a higher register (rather than ‘why do you bother me’).

Sometimes, depending on the goal of the translation, an implicitation is the least of all evils in the mediation of cultural pragmatics, when all efforts to find a rendering in the target language have failed. Knepper observes that this strategy of leaving γύναι untranslated is followed by several English and Dutch translations. Untranslatability is often mentioned as an argument for this null-option or zero strategy. Knepper quotes R. G. Bratcher who remarked that γύναι in John 2:4 is untranslatable: “No English word in current usage is a faithful enough equivalent of the Greek.”[45] However, when translators feel forced to go this way, metatextual compensation in the form of a note or as part of the introduction to the translation should be part of the intercultural mediation.

4. Conclusions

The notions of skopos,[46] script,[47] layers of culture,[48] translation as intercultural mediation,[49] and insights from anthropological linguistics on the ways in which linguistic practices are embedded in and constitutive of cultural practices[50] were brought together in one theoretical framework in section 2 of this article, as a set of tools for Bible translators to analyze and understand the relation of Bible translation and culture. But also as tools for their practical work of making decisions and finding solutions for problems caused by the huge differences between the biblical worlds and those of their audiences.

Translators face the difficult task to function as a bridge, as a mediator and as a negotiator in a conflict when the cultural worlds in and behind biblical texts in

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45) G. M. Knepper, “Betekenis en vertaling van gunai in Johannes 2:4 en 19:26”, 9; Robert G. Bratcher, “What does ‘Glory’ mean in relation to Jesus? Translating doxa and doxazo in John”, 103.

46) C. Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*, 27-38.

47) W. A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction*, 126-129.

48) F. Trompenaars and C. Hampden-Turner, *Riding the Waves of Culture*, 23.

49) David Katan, *Translating Cultures: An Introduction for Translators, Interpreters and Mediators*, 7-18.

50) W. A. Foley, *Anthropological Linguistics: An Introduction*, 260-261.

Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek differ from those of the new audiences in very different worlds. Those differences can be grouped into three major categories, differences in (networks of) concepts, differences in norms and values and differences in cultural pragmatics. The section 3.1 on the exegesis and translation of δόξα in John 2:1-12 illustrated the conceptual domain, the section 3.2 on ‘wine’ and ‘drunkenness’ was an example of the intercultural mediation of norms and values when conflicts arise. The section 3.3 on ‘mother’ and ‘woman’ in the Cana story illustrated the domain of cultural pragmatics.

Loyalty to the ancient writers and their cultural background and cultural practices should always constrain the room within which translators perform their job as mediators. Transculturation and cultural rewriting is often unavoidable in translation but when it violates the consensus of biblical scholarship, translators have the ethical responsibility to resist the pressure of commissioners, synods, financial interests, sectarian and ideological forces.[51] The Bible Society movement will become irrelevant and in the end lose the trust of people when it gives in to such pressures.

The first domain, of the mediation of concepts unknown or unfamiliar to the audience, is what comes to mind of most people when they think of Bible translation and culture, the problems caused by concepts in the source unknown or unfamiliar to target audiences. However, the second and third domain often pose the most challenges, in the second domain because translators or their audiences insist on rewriting biblical texts to make them less ‘offensive’ to their values and norms. This leads to disloyalty to the ancient writers when the rewritten text clearly violates scholarly insights in what the ancient writers intended to say.

The problems in the third domain have to do with the limits of translatability. Although untranslatability also occurs in the first two domains, it is especially present in the third domain of cultural pragmatics. For example, languages with extensive and elaborate systems of politeness and honorifics, from Korean to Balinese and many languages of India, posed enormous challenges to Bible translators. But this had the advantage that it created a sharp awareness of the impact of cultural pragmatics on the theory and practice of Bible translation. It was in these Asian contexts that Bible translators and consultants developed

51) C. Nord, *Translating as a Purposeful Activity: Functionalist Approaches Explained*, 123-128.

deep insights into the problems caused by cultural pragmatics and honorific grammar.[52] The experience and wisdom of these translation traditions should be used globally because linguistic and cultural practices are interwoven in all the languages of the world.

<Keywords>
Johannine terminology, politeness, honorifics, biblical cultures, translation as cultural rewriting.

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52) For Korean, see Ji-youn Cho, *Politeness and Addressee Honorifics in Bible Translation*, 131-197.

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<Abstract>

Bible Translation and Culture: the Theory and Practice of Intercultural Mediation in the Translation of John 2:1-12

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The paper presents a theory of Bible translation as intercultural mediation and applies it to the translation of the story of the Cana Miracle in John 2:1-12. The theoretical framework draws on the notions of script, skopos, the ethics of loyalty and the distinction between three domains of intercultural mediation, namely the conceptual domain, the domain of norms and values and the domain of cultural pragmatics. There are three applications, the first is the intercultural mediation of the key concept δόξα 'glory' in various translations, the second application illustrates the ways in which translators bridge gaps in norms and values, in this case norms and values clashes around the use of alcohol. The third application focuses on the vocative γύναι 'woman' used by Jesus to address his mother Mary.

Pressured by commissioners and audiences, translators sometimes become disloyal to the writers of the ancient biblical texts and this pressure is especially felt when the cultures of the ancient biblical worlds and those of audiences have very different norms and values. In such cases, the concepts to be translated such as οἶνος 'wine' are actually easy to translate in most cases but translators try to soften the blow to the sensitivities of their audiences. This is in stark contrast with the domain of intercultural pragmatics where it is often impossible to find renderings in target languages that convey the sense of the biblical term. The first domain of intercultural mediation, that of concepts, is the domain that most people think of when they reflect on translation and culture, for example wondering how to translate 'camel' when audiences have no clue what a camel is. Yet, it is the unique cultural networks of concepts that we reach the boundaries of translatability.