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Н. А. Hambardzumyan
Ереванский государственный университет

SOME FEATURES OF TRANSLATION OF THE EPIC: ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE ARMENIAN NATIONAL EPIC “DAVID OF SASSOUN”

Abstract. Translation of folklore and in particular the epic, is related with some challenges such as translation of words that incorporate and convey the outline and national identity of epic narrative. So, how do we translate an epic narrative from one language to another? Beyond the translation of words, the interpreter needs to transmit the cultural and social-historical realities of a particular culture to another. Often translators resort to footnotes, however the extensive usage of footnotes can be exhaustive and make the text difficult to read.

On the other hand, if all the words are translated via the literal layer of the vocabulary, the epic becomes stripped off its national identity, thus becoming a mere retelling of well-known mythological and epic motives. These problems on different scales are seen in Russian and English translations of the epic “David of Sassoun”. The Armenian national epic has several English translations – “*David of Sassoun*”: *The Armenian Epic in Four Cycles*” by Artin Shalian (1964), “*Daredevils of Sassoun*” by Leon Surmelian (1964) and “*The Saga of Sassoun*” by Mischa Kudian (1970) etc.

Each translation addresses and solves the question of translation of epic in comparative ways. This article focuses primarily on Artin Shalyan’s and Leon Surmelian’s translations, while dealing with other translations in deriving argument and analysis.

Keywords: epic, folklore, Armenian epic, David of Sassoun, Daredevils of Sassoun, translation of epic, Artin Shalian, Leon Surmelian, poetic translation, oral style.

А. А. Амбарцумян

Некоторые особенности перевода эпоса: английские переводы Армянского национального эпоса «Давид Сасунский»

Аннотация. Перевод фольклора и, в частности эпоса, связан с некоторыми трудностями. Например, проблематичен перевод слов-реалий, которые воплощают и передают национальную идентичность эпического повествования. Помимо перевода слов, переводчик должен передать культурные и социально-исторические реалии той или иной культуры. Часто переводчики опираются на сноски, но многочисленные сноски затрудняют прочтение текста.

С другой стороны, если все слова будут переводиться, эпос потеряет свою национальную идентичность, и станет, лишь пересказом известных мифологических и эпических мотивов. Эти проблемы, в той или иной степени можно наблюдать в русских и английских переводах эпоса «Давид Сасунский».

Армянский национальный эпос имеет несколько переводов на английский язык – “*David of Sassoun: The Armeninan Epic in Four Cycles*” Артина Шаляна (1964), “*Daredevils of Sassoun*” Леона Сурмеляна (1964) и “*The Saga of Sassoun*” Миши Кудияна (1970) и т. д. Каждый перевод по-своему решает эти проблемы. В данной статье в основном анализируются переводы Артина Шаляна и Леона Сурмеляна, но уделяется внимание и на другие переводы.

Ключевые слова: эпос, фолькор, Армянский эпос, Давид Сасунский, Сасунские удалыцы, перевод эпоса, Артин Шалян, Леон Сурмелян, поэтический перевод, устный стиль.

АМБАРЦУМЯН Айк Ашотович – к. филол. н., с. н. с., доцент Ереванского государственного университета.

E-mail: hayk.hambardzumyan1982@gmail.com

HAMBARDZUMYAN Hayk Ashotovich – Candidate of Philological Sciences, Senior Researcher, Associate Professor, Yerevan State University.

E-mail: hayk.hambardzumyan1982@gmail.com

Introduction

Translation of folklore and particularly the translation of the Armenian national epic is related with certain difficulties. The first question is which text should be translated? In the case of literature, we have to deal with the author's final text, while in folklore, the situation is quite different. There are different variants of the same text that were recorded in different times and by different collectors. We also have literary interpretations of the epic and as in the case of the Armenian epic, the established text has official status. The second important question is how to translate? The options are either closer to the original or free translation. These two approaches have some problems and difficulties.

This article attempts to analyze the English translations of Armenian epic "David of Sassoun" highlighting the peculiar features of translation of the epic.

The epic's variants, literary renditions and consolidated texts

The national epic "Sasna Tsrer" ("Daredevils of Sassoun") has 160 variants, that have been recorded for 100 years. The first variant was recorded in the village of Arnist, near the city of Mush in 1873 by Garegin Srvandzians', told by peasant Karapet. The second variant was found in 1886 in Echmiadzin. It was recorded by the famous Armenologist Manuk Abeghyan told by Nahapet, who came from the village of Ginekac that is near the city of Moks. Later, up to the end of 1970s, many other variants were recorded too, mostly in Eastern Armenia (Republic of Armenia). All the versions of epic written down during more than a century, are mainly in three dialects: Mush, Mokq (Van) and Sassoun. The majorities of the versions of epic were written out of their native land – Western Armenia (now in Turkey) – and for that reason in various versions the dialects were mixed.

Except the dialects, the different variants of the epic differ in some other features. The knowledge of these features is important not only for the translations of these variants, but also for the translations of the established text and literary interpretations. For the stylistic accuracy and the transfer of intonation of the original text, the translator must also know that the variants differ by their form of narration and presentation. Many song fragments are met only in the variants of Mokq (Van). Only in this group of variants there are fragments called "Voghormi" where heroes of Sassoun are commemorated.

The Mokq's versions are artistically more processed and complete and they have more impressive lyrical features than the versions of Mush and Sassoun. The narrations of Mush are far from the lyricism since the narration is developed less dynamically. The versions of Sassoun are more similar to the Mush group. Here the narration is livelier with a tendency to historicism. Besides, the variants are different in epic motifs and personages.

Most of the versions have been published in Yerevan in five volumes (1936, 1944, 1951, 1977, 1999) [1, 2, 3, 4, 5]. The title of edition is "*Sasna Tsrer*" – "*Daredevils of Sassoun*". In 1939, when the Soviet Union celebrated the 1000th anniversary of the epic "*David of Sassoun*", the official text – "Hamahavaq Bnagir" was created [6].

This text is based on 65 versions and was compiled by M. Abeghyan, G. Abov and A. Ghanalanyan. The editor is J. Orbeli. This edition is entitled "*David of Sassoun*", not "*Daredevils of Sassoun*", because it was the source text for the translation into Russian and other languages, one of the reasons being that the word *Tsrer* is difficult to translate and pronounce in other languages. Although this far there is still a debate on this text; the fact that this text is the most famous text of our epic in the world. There are also two other established texts: "*Sasounakan*" of Tigran Chituni [7] and "*Sasunts'i Davit*" (*David of Sassoun*) [8] of Grigor Grigoryan.

Besides, there are famous literary versions of the epic which were created according to different principles and purposes. The most famous and popular one is Hovhannes T'umanyan's "*Sasunts'i Davit*" (1904; *David of Sassoun*) [9]. It is the rhymed version of the third cycle of the epic and was written for children. Nairi Zaryan's "*Sasunts'i Davit*" (1966; *David of Sassoun*) [10] is a prose version, and it is similar to T'umanyan's poem; was translated into Russian, English and Dutch. Two other versions – Avetik' Isahakyan's "*Sasma Mher*" (1922; *Mher of Sassoun*) [11] and Yeghishe Ch'arents's "*Sasunts'i Davit*" (1933; *David of Sassoun*) [12] – have a social-political stance. Accordingly, the translator of the epic has three issues to carry out:

1. To translate the variants, which differ in dialects and stylistic features.
2. To translate the literary versions, or create a new version of itself.
3. To translate the one of the established texts.

How to translate the epic?

The first and logical answer is to keep closer to the original. The translator should accurately transfer the essence of the epic. The translation has to keep the phonetic, stylistic, syntactic, lexical adequacy to the original text. Linguistically, it is important to preserve the syntactic structure of the text, the length and the volume of its sentences. Stylistically, it is necessary to transfer the national uniqueness of the epic and transmit the contours and identity of the epic narrative. The national uniqueness and the identity of narrative are seen through the words that embody the cultural and social-historical realities of that particular culture. These are the words that present the rural life and different beliefs, traditions and customs of the peasants, who keep and pass on the epic narrative for long time. In this case, it's highly significant to transmit the proper names and nicknames of the personages, the geographical titles, idioms, phrases, proverb, onomatopoeia, interjection, exclamation. With all these features, the epic gets national coloring and takes a very important place in the cultural system of the nation.

In order to keep these words and concepts close to the original, the translator must translate all of the words or make a transcription. The methods of loan translation, functional analog, and compensation are also used to accomplish this task.

If the great majority of the words are literal, then there is a problem. The epic loses its national identity and turns into a mere retelling of well-known mythological and epic motives. In the second case, the translator should avoid of translating these words, but at the same time rely on footnotes. Too many footnotes can be exhaustive since they make the text difficult to read.

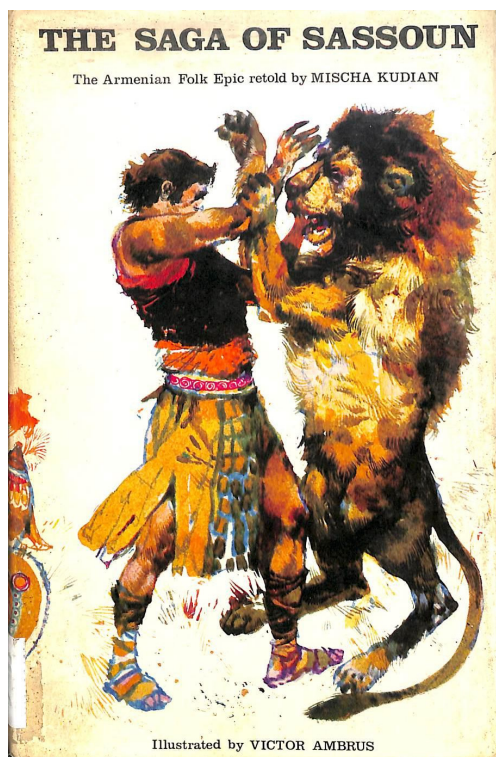
Therefore, the translator must possess not only excellent knowledge of the Western Armenian and its different dialects, but also have an extensive background knowledge of the Armenian, especially Western Armenian people, to be able to convey the characteristic features of the epic genre, the peculiarities of the poetics of "*David of Sassoun*".

In order to have the most accurate translation from the original, the translator must use a specific lexicon. In case of the Armenian epic's lexicon, there are many archaisms, vernacular, colloquial and folkloristic words. Consequently, it's preferable to use the respective layers of the lexicon in translations. From this point of view, there are interesting Russian translations of Armenian epic. The famous translators of different variants, literary renditions and official texts such as V. Bryusov, M. Lozinski, S. Shervinski, N. Lyubimov and others use the specific lexicon of Russian folklore. For example, specific words that occur in the Russian Bylines and tales: *молвить* – *utter*, *удалец* – *daredevil*, *стосковалася* – *languish*, *по горам и долам* – *from mountains and valleys*, *день-деньской* – *livelong day*, *ежели* – *if*, *коль* – *if* etc [13]. These words transmitted the intonation of folklore text, but the excessive use of these words may result in the russification of Armenian text. The epic text loses its national identity. In a large part of the English translations we do not see such a variety of lexicon.

And, of course, the translator has to know not only the different layers of the English lexicon, but also the stages of development of the Armenian language and the features of its dialects. One of the difficulties in the established text and versions of the epic is that there are homonyms, which have quite different meanings in literary Armenian. And, as we shall see, for this reason, some of the words were not correctly translated. Another problem is that the dialects are full of Persian, Arabic and Turkish words. Obviously, this made it difficult to translate the epic.

The English translations of "*David of Sassoun*"

These problems with varying degrees are seen in English translations of the epic "*David of Sassoun*". And perhaps these difficulties are the reason why the variants of the epic are almost not translated into English. I know only a single translation of variant, which was made in 1901. F. B. Collins has translated the first recorded variant by Garegin Srvandztyan into prose. It was published in the series "*The World's Great Classics*" along with other famous works of Armenian literature [14]. In their translation variants they also used Leon Surmelian [15] and Misha Kudian [16].



Pic. 1. The Saga of Sassoun, the Armenian Folk Epic, retold by Mischa Kudian

episodes are missing in the official version. The part of Mher the Junior is fragmentary, some themes and motives are overlooked etc. [15, pp. 13-14].

In my opinion Surmelian runs to an extreme. The established text has many beautiful artistic and poetic pieces created not only to “popularize this heroic tale” as Surmelian considers. We can confidently claim that despite some shortcomings, the lack of important motives and some ideological inaccuracies, the established text is more thorough and complete than the versions.

For this reason, Artin Shalian translated this text. In the introduction of his translation he wrote: “This English version of the Armenian folk epic, *David of Sassoun*, named after its outstanding character, presents the complete, authentic and original text of the epic in four cycles” [19, p. 10].

Shalian’s translation was well received by readers and in the scientific community. Its primary value is that the translation is very close to the original. The interpreter translated line by line. He wanted to transfer all the nuances of the Armenian text as accurately as possible. Some of the words he left without translation. In other cases, he copied words, structures and idioms.

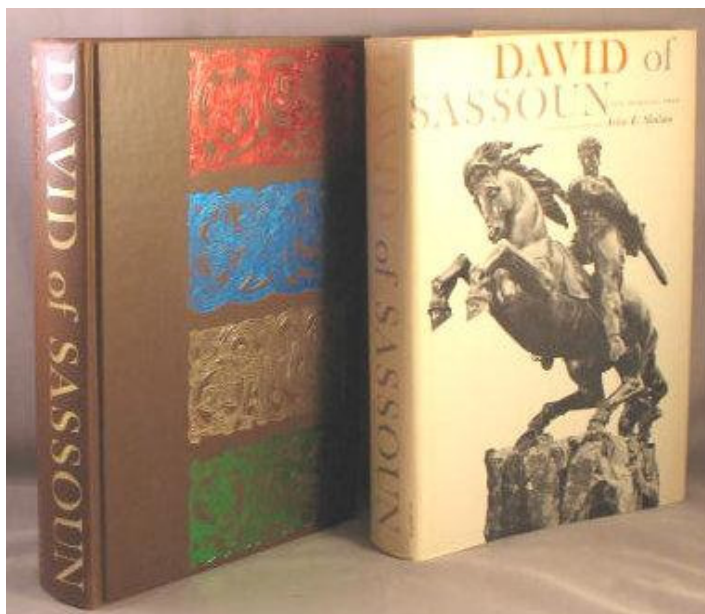
“Mr. Shalian’s translation is exceedingly true to the text he followed. Cycle by cycle, section by section, and line by line one can exactly follow the Armenian text. The Yerevan recension is in a very free verse; Shalian’s text is in a crisp, sparse prose, printed in stanzas matching the Armenian. “The condensed description remains condensed” [20, p. 56], – we are reading in Dickran K. Kouymjian’s revue.

Other translators, Aram Tolegian [17], Tom Samuelian [18] chose a poetic version of the third cycle of the epic by Hovhannes Tumanyan, or the combined jubilee edition of the 1939, as Artin Shalian [19]. Of course, it is relatively easy to translate Tumanyan’s variant and the established texts because they are more homogeneous with the linguistic and stylistic points of view. However, the translators had their own guidelines for selecting text translation.

Especially Leon Surmelian whose prose translation is based on the variants, explains why he didn’t choose the established text in the introduction of his translation. “I cannot help feeling that the scholars who produced “*David of Sassoun*” as a unified narrative paid more attention to linguistic problems, grammatical forms, dialectic words, spelling, pronunciation, rhythm, etc. and their specialties than to the structure and plot. These are valuable contributions to the better understanding of the story, but I believe it is the high time for the ‘historical’ school to be superseded by the artistic. Now that the linguistic and critical ground has been cleared up still some problems remain which the poets should tackle with. The poet’s unifying vision can organize this vast material into a more luminous whole”. Surmelian also mentions that some important



Pic. 2. David of Sassoun, translation by Thomas J. Samuelian



Pic. 3. David of Sassoun, The Armenian Epic in Four Cycles by Artin Shalian

Strict compliance with the jubilee edition is obvious from the title. As in the established text, the name of the translation is “*David of Sassoun*”. As we have witnessed, this is the name chosen for the established text, because it is difficult to translate the word “*Tsrrer*” into English. It has many meanings in different contexts. Word “**tsurr**” in Armenian has meanings “**foolhardy**”, “**daredevils**”, “**crazy**”, “**madman**”, “**brave**”, “**naive**”, “**crooked**” and etc. Though Shalian does not use the term “**tsurr**” in the title he basically translates it in the text as “**foolhardy**”. Sometimes the “**foolish**”, “**fool**” and “**crazy**”. But these words do not express the full meaning and richness of shades of word “**tsurr**”. Therefore, in different contexts the translation becomes monotonous. For example, in the first cycle Baghdasar was called a “**tsurr**” when he fought his brother Sanasar, because he had received a message from the princess, and had not told his brother:

*Sanasar said: – Brother, I will not hit you,
You may hit me, you may kill me.
In vain Sanasar pleaded with his brother,
For Baghdasar was stubborn,
Had a touch of foolhardiness,
He was called Foolhardy Baghdasar [19, p. 71].*

In this part “**tsurr**” means “**crazy**”, “**foolish**”.

In the second cycle, in one episode, when Mher the Elder does not know how to hunt, “**tsurr**” means “**naive**” or “**foolish**”.

*Mher said: – Kerry Toros,
Curse on this sort of game!
I ran after beasts all day, I chased them all day,
But they all escaped, I could not reach them.
I shot at them with my bow and arrow,
But could not hit them.
Now I am back home, empty-handed.
Ah, Kerry, [if you only knew] how tired I am!
Mher had become heavy, he could not run fast.
And when he ran, his feet sank in the ground.
His uncle said: – You, foolhardy of Sassoun –
Must all Sassounites be foolhardy?*

*How can a man run after game
And catch animals by hand? [19, p. 115].*

Or in David cycle, Sassounite beat minstrels (gusan) that came to sing about the beauty of Khandut. In this context, “tsurr” is “crazy”.

*The minstrels arrived at Gaboudgogh.
Khantout Khanum, sitting at her window,
Saw them coming. She asked:
– Minstrels, did you go to Sassoun?
– Yes, Khanum, we did, they said.
The wrath of God upon them,
Those Sassounites are foolhardy.
We went to David’s house to sing your praise;
They fell upon us, beat us, broke our sazes;
We fled to the lower end of the city [19, p. 300].*

Leon Surmelian called his book “*Daredevils of Sassoun*”. The comparison of the two translations demonstrates that the word “**daredevils**” is more expressive, more capacious than the “**foolhardy**”, and it conveys the meaning of the word “**tsurr**” more accurately. In the introduction of his translation L. Surmelian explains the word “**tsurr**”: “These Armenian supermen with their ‘twisted’ minds may be called the beatniks of the Middle Ages. They are unconventional daredevils, in the possessed of Christian Armenia refusing to be drowned in successive tides of pagans, and the dzour (“tsurr”) may be a titanic warrior as well as a fool in the more common meaning of the word” [15, p. 18].

The translator feels all the shades of meanings of the word “**tsurr**” more subtly and sometimes reveals the meaning within the text and in parallel with the word “**daredevils**” also uses the words “**madman**”, “**fool**”, “**crazy**”. For example, in the same episode, when Baghdasar is going to fight Sanasar:

“The younger brother had a crazy streak in him, and people called him Mad Balthasar. He said ‘Let us fight. Either you kill me, or I kill you’ [15, p. 54].

In the episode of Khandut’s minstrels:

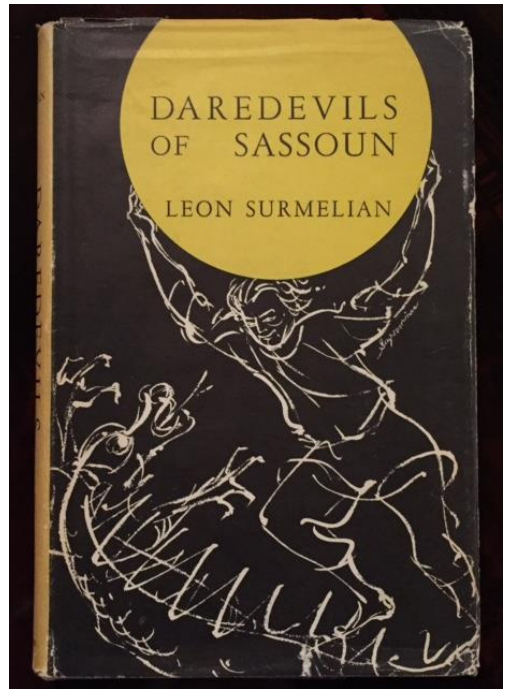
“The minstrels were back in Tabriz on the seventh day. Khandut was seated at her window. She asked them: “Did you see David?” They said: “Lady, may God wreck their homes, they are all madmen in Sassoun. We went to David’s house and sang your praises, and we got a beating for it” [15, p. 196].

In another episode when David took copper of porridge and all the bread, an older man says: “*For the love of God stay away from him. He is one of the Daredevils of Sassoun, belongs to Meher’s stock. He will kill you if you lay hands on him*” [15, p. 196].

In the translation of proper names and nicknames of the personages, the translator must try to keep the original phonetic, phonemic or graphic aspects of the words.

The translations of the titles and military equipment

Taking into consideration the above mentioned aspects and translations of the titles of hero’s clothes and military equipment, Surmelian is more creative. Shalian tends to adhere to his basic principles of line by line translation. He doesn’t translate a large number of names and geographical titles and uses their originals. He also gives the transcription and explains these words with footnotes. In this translation there are a lot of footnotes, but in my opinion, some of them are not significant. For



Pic. 4. Daredevils of Sassoun, the Armenian National Epic, Original text with introduction and notes by Leon Surmelian

example, the translator explains such words as “**Akravoukar**” (Crow’s Rock or Rock of Van. The cave where Pokr Mher is confined), “**Aznahur**” (Giant, brave man), “**Dev**” (Evil earthly beings or evil spirits in Armenian mythology, endowed with supernatural strength, stamina), “**Khanum**” (A word of Turkish origin, implying nobility or high social status for women), etc.

But it should be noted that these footnotes do not give comprehensive information. In some cases, such as “**Babik**” (Dear elderly father), “**Keri**” (A maternal uncle, mother’s brother), “**Vardapet**” (A healer of the Armenian Church), “**Khalif**”, “**Melik**”, footnotes can be avoided, because the meaning of the words is understandable from the context. For example, Babig.

*The distance of forty days he covered within one day,
And came to a crossroad. There he saw
A venerable old man sitting by the wayside.
– Greetings to you, fatherly sire, said Sanasar.
– Lord’s bounty to you, Sanasar, said the elderly man,
Will you dismount, I have something to tell you.
– Babig, who are you to know that I am Sanasar?
He replied: – I am the angel of God;
Sitting here, I point the way to wayfarers [19, p. 77].*

But the translator is not consistent. In another case he has translated the word “**Parav**”, though some of them, as the word “**Babig**”, should be left without translation. However, the word is translated “**old widow**”, not “**old woman**”, though in the original text this woman is not a widow:

*There was an old widow living in Sassoun
Who had been a favorite of Mher’s.
She had a field of millet
Where sparrows and quails thrived [19, p. 215].*

In both translations there are also many transcribed words. Transcription is a good method for transmitting intonation of the original, but sometimes, as in the case of names “**Kurkik Jalaly**”, “**Karsoun Jewgh Dzam Deghtzoun**”, “**Dzhovinar**”, “**Gaboudgogh**” etc. it’s very hard to pronounce and understand those words for non-Armenian speakers.

On the other hand, there are lots of archaisms, which give a particular historical flavor to the epic. But for some reasons those words were translated. For example, the titles of weapons and equipment of heroes:

*Going into the lake,
Sanasar walked as if he were on dry land.
He reached a garden at the bottom of the lake,
Where he saw a palace and pavilion,
And a pool [in the garden].
Water flowed in front of the palace.
There he saw the marine horse, Kourkig Jelaly,
Tied to a post, equipped with a saddle of mother-of-pearl,
And a Lightning Sword hung on the side [19, p. 45].*

In my opinion, it was not necessary to translate the title of the sword and the cross. Both translators translate these titles. Both translated “**Tur Kecakin**”- “**Lightning Sword**”. The cross has a different translation. In Shalyan’s translation “**Khach Paterazmi**” – is translated as “**Battle cross**”. In Surmelian’s translation “**Victory Cross**” is the translation of “**Khach Huhtanaki**”.

I should emphasize that in the same episode A. Shalian accurately translates the titles of other weapons:

*The shirt of mail,
The girdle of armour;
The helmet of mail,
The shoes of mail,
The heavy mace of the warrior,
The strong spear, bow and arrows,
The bugle-horn, the impregnable shield [19, p. 46].*

Idioms, phrases, formulaic language and lexical onomatopoeetry

Another serious issue is the translation of idioms, phrases, formulaic language units and expressions of the epic. Translators are mainly used in the method of loan translation. For example:

“Merrnem k’yez” has been translated “I would die for you”. The phrase “Im sirty bats”, which means – **unravel, explain my dreams**, is translated “**open my heart and see**”. The phrase “Im akynjkalen k’ye” which means a gift given to those who bring good news “ach’k’alusank” in Armenian, has been translated “**Give me my reward**”. The “Zim hugin angrogh arran” – “**Today they took my life without a warrant**”, “Astvatsk’votunavri” – which means “**God’s wrath on you**”. The significance of phrase “esainch ‘mur er k’sec’ink mer eres” has been discredited – “**What was this soot we put on our face!**”. The curse “prrem, lam k’o arev” has been translated “**Woe to your sun**” etc.

We see that the translation doesn’t fully convey the meaning of idiomatic expressions. And it happens at the expense of artistry and national coloring of the original [20].

Onomatopoeic lexical units and interjections, which transfer the features of style and the dialects of epic singers, put forward some particular translation challenges. It’s especially difficult to find foreign language equivalents that can convey the same emotional content. The translators are forced to preserve such lexical units via transcription and transliteration. For example, in the episode, when minstrels are singing a Khandut’spraise, A. Shalian uses transcription and conveys the words “hala duco”, “luco”:

*I look upon her cheeks glowing like pomegranate wine,
Ah, hala duco, like pomegranate wine
I look upon the breasts [hidden] in her bosom,
As sweet as Aleppo confections.
Ah, **hala duco**, as sweet as confections.*

and

*How shall I extol her stature?
It is forty-kaz high, luco, and a bit more.
How shall I extol her eyelashes?
They are like crane’s wings, **luco**, and a bit more [19, p. 298].*

In another case the similar word has been found. In Armenian – “Hoy, ho’y”, in English:

***Ay**, [brother] Mher, now that you are going,
May desolate roads bloom before you,
And may no arm of your enemy rise against you [19, p. 141].*

In another episode, when David comes to Melik, the interjection “**of-of**” is translated close to the original.

*They heated iron rods
And put them against Melik’s feet;
He murmured: **-Uff**, maidens,
Why have you not made my bed well? [19, p. 274].*

But despite a great work that has been done, we can still find some mistakes that are associated with the above mentioned problems of translation. For example, the word “**erdik**” (detail of traditional Armenian architecture: window in a roof) Shalian has translated “**roof**” while Surmelian has translated the same word as “**window**” or “**window roof**”. It is not correct. Word “**purak**”, which in Moks dialect means “**fair**”, Surmelian has translated “**green grove**” because in literary Armenian that word has that meaning. But in the context this word is quite understandable:

*The following morning Tzenov Hovan rose,
He touched the ground three times
And gave thanks to God;
He said: – I offer my thanks to Thee, O Lord,
For my dream that came true by your grace.
The House of Sassoun has a green grove now.
I and my brother need fear no more [19, pp. 189-190].*

As it is shown in the examples, in lexical aspect the neutral-colloquial language is dominated. From this point of view, Tigran Kuyumjians's note is of interest: "The English is modern, sometimes colloquial, but never slang and, following the Yerevan edition, never vulgar. A precise yet readable translation of this type requires the kind of skill and care that searches for the most justice. Only in this Shalian has excelled. Without verbosity or pedantry his English, except for the absence of regional dialect, reads very much like the Armenian" [21, p. 56].

But the question is that epic is the genre of the oral folklore and slang and the vulgarisms are the characteristic features of the language of variants of the epic. In this case, what is considered to be Shalian's translation's advantage can also be considered as its failure. From this point of view, I want to bring one more note from another review, which compares these two translations. "Surmelian has built his translation with creativity. He himself has good story teller's instinct for what is seemingly an oral style. Mr. Shalian's translation seems completely faithful and carefully literal. The resulting product creates a stylistic effect that is not anything but oral or folk, and I would summarize that the translator's English precludes the creation of a convincing "folk style" [22, p. 96], – we read in Wm. Hugh Jansen's review.

Conclusion

Comparing the English translations of Armenian Epic, we saw that each translator, depending on what text he chose – variants, literary renditions or standardized text, sought to convey the epic features and national color. And for the most part they succeeded. Some of the translators chose the standardized text, making a literal and scholarly translation, or selecting the variants and trying to transfer the features of the style of the folk text, creating a more poetic text.

Translators are accurately transferring the essence of the epic. They strive to keep the phonetic, stylistic, syntactic, lexical adequacy to the original text. But, they do not preserve the syntactic structure of the text, the length and the volume of sentences. The national uniqueness of the epic and identical contours of the epic narrative are not always maintained.

For close translation the translators have to know not only the different layers of the English lexicon, but also the stages of development of the Armenian language and the features of its dialects. One of the difficulties in the standardized text and versions of the epic is that there are homonyms, which have quite different meanings in literary Armenian. And for this reason there are inaccuracies in translation.

In translation of idioms, phrases, formulaic language units and expressions of the epic, the translators are mainly used in the method of loan translation. But the translation doesn't fully convey the meaning of idiomatic expressions. And it happens at the expense of artistry and national coloring of the original.

However, there may not be a perfect translation. Many layers of folk text remain untranslatable and await new translations.

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