

# THE TRANSLATION OF RELIGIOUS VERBAL SYMBOLS INTO BALINESE

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## Abstract

*Symbols, one of the three forms of figurative language, play a crucial role in human life as they expand and deepen knowledge while igniting the imagination. Given their significance, symbols find extensive employment throughout the Christian Scriptures, known as the Bible, the most widely translated book globally. This study aimed to identify the various types of symbols, ideologies, and strategies employed in translating religious verbal symbols from English as the source language into Balinese, the target language. The data utilized for this study is sourced from Jay Green's Literal Translation as the source language and Cakepan Suci as the target language. This study employed a textual analysis approach, examining words and phrases carrying symbolic meanings while drawing upon translation theory concerning ideology and translation strategies. The analysis of ideological aspects draws upon the theoretical perspectives presented by Bassnett, Lefevere, Nord, Yan, and Venuti. Additionally, in terms of translation strategy, symbols were analyzed according to the taxonomy formulated from the theory of translation procedures proposed by Newmark and Molina, and Albir by utilizing Vinay and Dalbarnet's line of thought. The findings of this investigation reveal that the rendition of religious verbal symbols from the source language to Balinese, the target language, predominantly employs oblique/free translation techniques. This finding suggests that the translator's adopted ideology aligns with the concept of domestication.*

**Keywords:** Balinese Language; Translation; Religious Verbal Symbols

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## 1. Introduction

Translation can be defined as the process of converting words or text from one language to another. However, the translation process is far more complicated than this straightforward definition suggests. According to Bassnett (2002), translation entails more than a mere substitution of words; it is a multifaceted process that encompasses not only structural aspects but also considerations of meaning. Similarly, Brislin (1976) highlights that translation extends beyond the surface level of transferring or altering meaning between languages. It encompasses a deeper dimension, involving the transfer of ideas and thoughts. Similar viewpoints are echoed by other linguists, including Nida (1964), who posits that translation strives to achieve the nearest natural equivalence of the source-language message, prioritizing both meaning and style. This process of transferring language involves the application of various methods by translators to convey meaning accurately. Consequently, translators must fully understand the surface and underlying meaning of the source text before embarking on the translation process. Neglecting this crucial understanding can result in distorted translations that deviate from the original intent.

In addition to its inherent complexity, translating religious words and expressions presents one of the most significant challenges for translators. According to Williams and Chesterman (2002), the primary research inquiries surrounding religious texts revolve around the vast temporal and cultural divide between the societies for which these texts were originally written and the societies to which they are being translated. They particularly highlighted the unique case of the Bible as a sacred text, wherein each word is deemed holy. This context requires a word-for-word translation approach. However, they also highlighted that the Bible serves as a tool for missionizing, requiring a target-culture-centered approach to convey its message effectively.

The translation of religious texts, notably the Bible, poses a particular challenge due to the presence of figurative language, specifically symbolism. The inclusion of symbols in these texts carries profound significance. Symbols, as one of the three types of figurative language, play a vital role in human existence by expanding knowledge, delving deeper into understanding, and igniting the imagination. Moreover, the symbolic language used in sacred texts serves to unlock the realms of the human inner spirit, establishing an affinity with the highest facets of reality. The language of symbolism is intended to establish an enduring affinity between humanity and the divine, specifically with God. Moreover, translating religious texts, particularly those containing symbolic elements, encounters a challenge known as the literal dichotomy

phenomenon. This challenge has persisted for Biblical translators since the era of the Roman Empire and continues to be relevant today. For example, translating the Book of Revelation by Bratcher and Hatton (1993) highlighted the presence of two conflicting considerations. Translators are confronted with deciding whether to adhere strictly to a literal translation of the symbolic text or to interpret it in a way that meets the specific needs and understanding of the target audience.

In his article on the Sociolinguistics of Translating Canonical Religious Texts, Nida (2001) reveals that as of the end of 1992, at least one Bible had been translated and published in an impressive 2,009 languages. These translations span various language families and cultures of as much as 99 percent of the global population. One notable example is the translation of the Bible into the Balinese language, undertaken by the Indonesian Bible Society under the title "*Cakepan Suci*." This Balinese version of the Bible has found widespread usage among approximately 12,000 members of the Protestant Christian Church in Bali. The Balinese version of the Bible, *Cakepan Suci*, was initially published in print in 2016, consisting of both the Old and New Testaments (*Cakepan Suci*, 2016). However, it is worth noting that an online translation version was available as early as 1990 but was limited to the New Testament only. Unlike other Bible translations that explicitly express the translator's ideology, whether it be foreignization or domestication, the Balinese version does not provide a specific explanation regarding the ideology employed in the translation process.

Numerous studies have focused on religious words and expressions of translation, demonstrating that translating religious texts is considerably more complicated than translating contemporary secular texts. This complexity arises from a combination of linguistic and religious-cultural factors (Nida, 2007). One significant challenge lies in the selection of translation ideology and strategies. Some translators of religious texts favor a direct or literal translation approach, as they believe that within religious texts, there exist multiple layers of meaning hidden behind the words. Nevertheless, there are translators who lean towards employing oblique or free translation methods, as they have found that literal translations of religious texts often prove unsuccessful. For instance, Sujatmiko (2019) conducted an analysis on the application of oblique translation techniques in translating religious texts, specifically focusing on the handbook series on the revelation to John. In this case he finds 73 data that applies the technique of adjustment offered by Nida (1964). Alteration technique is in the first position which is followed by addition technique in the second position and the last is subtraction technique.

Another study exploring the preference for translation ideology and techniques is conducted by Al-Debyan (2008), who examines a corpus of six Arabic novels. The findings imply that the most successful translations are those that employ foreignizing translation strategies. Similarly, Abdel-Hafiz (2020) provides evidence from the translation of religious words and expressions in Naguib Mahfouz's *Sugar*, demonstrating that among the three major strategies - foreignizing, domesticating, and a combination of both - the foreignizing strategy emerges as the most frequently employed strategy in translating religious words or expressions. The preference for foreignizing or domesticating translation strategies in religious texts may vary depending on the particular context and the translator's approach. Baawaidhan (2016) researched Watson's translation of "*Musid wa Musida*" and found that Watson employed domestication strategies in translating both religious references and cultural expressions. This finding contrasts with the emphasis on oblique or free translation procedures highlighted by Sujatmiko's study, which indicates their dominance in the translation of religious texts. These differing approaches may stem from the specific goals, target audience, and translator's interpretation of the source text.

Based on the phenomenon of translation, especially the translation of religious words which is rich in figurative expressions, this study is aimed at identifying the ideologies and strategies for translating religious verbal symbols from the source language which is English into the target language in Balinese. And referring to the dichotomy of translation, especially the translation of the Bible which is always constrained at two opposite poles, the ultimate goal of this study is to determine whether the translators have relied on foreignizing or domesticating strategies. In this regard, the significance of this study is to find out the ideology and strategy for translating the Balinese Bible, which is currently widely used especially by Christians in Bali but it is not yet known specifically whether translators prefer on utilizing domestication or foreignization translation strategies.

## 2. Research Method

This study is conducted by utilizing qualitative method in which the data is explained descriptively according to the characteristics and the nature of the data. The approach covers emerging questions and procedures, collecting data, analyzing the data inductively from particular to general themes, and making interpretations of the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2009). The source of the data in this study was the translation of symbolic words or expressions which were specifically taken from the last book of the Bible namely the book of Revelation. There are 133 symbolic expressions obtained based on the classification made by (Conner, 1982) in his book *Interpreting The Symbols and Types*. The source language (SL) was taken from The Jay Green's Literal Translation (Green, 1985) and the target language (TL) was taken from *Cakepan Suci* (*Cakepan Suci*, 2016) which is the Balinese Version of the Bible. The Jay Green's Literal Translation which is also known as the Literal Translation of the Holy Bible (LITV) is a translation of the Bible by Jay P. Green, Sr. It was first published in

1985. It takes a literal formal equivalence approach to translation. The Maroretic Text is used as the Hebrew basis for the Old Testament and the Textus Receptus is used as the Greek basis for the New Testament. This version was chosen as the source language because the text of the scriptures is translated directly from the original language, namely Hebrew for the Old Testament and Greek for the New Testament.

The method of collecting data is observation method which was applied by observing thoroughly the SL religious terms in this case words or phrases that contain symbolic meanings and their translations in TL. The observation method was implemented by note-taking technique to collect the relevant data. The collected data was analyzed by utilizing translation theory related to ideology and translation strategies. In association with the ideology, analysis refers to the theoretical views put forward by (Bassnett, S and Lefevere, 1992), Nord in (Venuti, 2000). Meanwhile, in terms of translation strategy, symbols were analyzed according to the taxonomy formulated from the theory of translation procedures proposed by (Newmark, 1988) and (Molina, L and Albir, 2002) by utilizing Vinay and Dalbarnet's line of thought (Venuti, 2000). The taxonomy is as follows:

Table 1. Taxonomy of Translation Strategies Proposed by Newmark and Molina and Albir Based on the Vinay and Dalbarnet's Line of Thought

| Translation Method                                     |                                  |                                                     |                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Procedures/Technique of Translation<br>Direct /Literal |                                  | Procedures/Technique of Translation<br>Oblique/Free |                          |
| 1.                                                     | Borrowing (Pure and Naturalized) | 1.                                                  | Transposition            |
| 2.                                                     | Calque                           | 2.                                                  | Modulation               |
| 3.                                                     | Literal                          | 3.                                                  | Established Equivalence  |
|                                                        |                                  | 4.                                                  | Amplification            |
|                                                        |                                  | 5.                                                  | Reduction                |
|                                                        |                                  | 6.                                                  | Linguistic Amplification |
|                                                        |                                  | 7.                                                  | Linguistic Compression   |
|                                                        |                                  | 8.                                                  | Generalization           |
|                                                        |                                  | 9.                                                  | Particularization        |
|                                                        |                                  | 10.                                                 | Compensation             |
|                                                        |                                  | 11.                                                 | Discursive Creation      |
|                                                        |                                  | 12.                                                 | Description              |
|                                                        |                                  | 13.                                                 | Substitution             |
|                                                        |                                  | 14.                                                 | Variation                |
|                                                        |                                  | 15.                                                 | Adaptation               |
|                                                        |                                  | 16.                                                 | Note                     |

According to (Sudaryanto, 1988), there are two methods of presenting the analyzed data, namely formal and informal methods. The former refers to the method of presenting the analyzed data by means of symbols, diagrams, figures, and tables, while the latter refers to the way of presenting data by using words to describe findings. The informal method was applied to present the analyzed data in this study by using descriptive sentences.

### 3. Result and Discussion

#### a. Result

Bible translation using a dynamic/functional method as a continuation of the formal method is inseparable from the global phenomenon in the world of Christian Bible translations which always places translation at two different poles, namely literal and free. (Bassnett, 2002) reveals that the conflict between the two poles of translation, namely literal and free, has started since the time of the Roman Empire and since then has continued to be a point of debate in various ways up to the present. This statement is also confirmed by (Newmark, 2001) who states that the main problem in translating is always: whether to translate literally or freely, whose argument has been going on since at least the first century BC.

In principle, the starting point for the emergence of various versions of Bible translations, each of which leads to one of the two translation poles, is the different orientation of translations carried out based on different principles which of course also reflect different theoretical approaches. This is triggered by various factors, one of which is the most fundamental is that Bible translations are read by various groups, both in terms of age and the ability of each age group to

understand the messages received. In this case, (Nida, 1964) distinguishes four circles of Bible readers, namely: children, new literate, average literate, and specialists/experts.

Based on the above understanding, Vinay and Darbelnet in (Venuti, 2000) assert that translators can choose from two methods of translating, namely direct or literal translation and oblique translation. Accordingly, they strictly separate translation procedures based on these two different poles which is direct translation when there is a similar structural, lexical, even morphological equivalence between two languages and oblique translation when there is structural or metalinguistic differences and even certain stylistic effects that cannot be transposed into the target language without upsetting the syntactic order, or even the lexis. In accordance to this line of thought, there are 3 procedures/technique of translation that can be grouped into direct or literal namely borrowing, calque and literal and 16 procedures/technique of translation that can be categorized into oblique or free translation namely transposition, modulation, established equivalence, amplification, reduction, linguistic amplification, linguistic compression, generalization, particularization, compensation, discursive creation, description, substitution, variation, adaptation and note.

Referring to 3 types of procedures in direct translation and and 16 types of procedures in oblique translation it is revealed that 2 out of 3 direct procedures are applied and and 9 out of 16 oblique procedures are utilized in transferring the 133 religious symbols from source language to the target language in Balinese. The finding on the analysis of 133 symbolic expressions from the Book of Revelation from SL which is Jay Green's Literal Translation into TL which is Balinese Bible Cakepan Suci can be summarized in the following table. As it is described from the table the type of procedures in direct strategies is dominated by literal procedure with number of occurrence 43 (32%) and the type of procedures in oblique strategies are dominated by description with numbers of occurrence 19 (14,2%), transposition with numbers of occurrence 21 (15,7%) and amplification procedures with numbers of occurrence 27 (20%).

Table 2. The List of Translation Procedures of the Symbolic Expressions Based on Taxonomy in Accordance to Vinay and Darbelnet's Line of Thought

| Translation Strategies    |             |       |                          |             |       |
|---------------------------|-------------|-------|--------------------------|-------------|-------|
| Direct/Literal Procedures |             |       | Oblique/Free Procedures  |             |       |
| Procedures                | Occurrences | %     | Procedures               | Occurrences | %     |
| Borrowing                 | 2           | 1,5%  | Transposition            | 21          | 15,7% |
| Calque                    | 0           | 0%    | Modulation               | 0           | 0%    |
| Literal                   | 43          | 32%   | Established Equivalence  | 0           | 0%    |
|                           |             |       | Amplification            | 28          | 20%   |
|                           |             |       | Reduction                | 0           | 0%    |
|                           |             |       | Linguistic Amplification | 1           | 0,75% |
|                           |             |       | Linguistic Compression   | 3           | 2,25% |
|                           |             |       | Generalization           | 5           | 3%    |
|                           |             |       | Particularization        | 1           | 0,75% |
|                           |             |       | Compensation             | 0           | 0%    |
|                           |             |       | Discursive Creation      | 1           | 2,25% |
|                           |             |       | Description              | 19          | 14,2% |
|                           |             |       | Substitution             | 0           | 0%    |
|                           |             |       | Variation                | 0           | 0%    |
|                           |             |       | Adaptation               | 8           | 6%    |
|                           |             |       | Note                     | 0           | 0%    |
|                           | 45          | 33,5% |                          | 88          | 66,5% |

## b. Discussion

Direct/Literal Procedures are used by translators to achieve formal equivalence. Nida (Nida, 1964) explains that the translation of formal equivalence tries to reproduce formal elements, including: (1) grammatical units, (2) consistency in the use of words, and (3) meaning in terms of the source context. There are 45 symbols out of 133 which are transferred by utilizing direct procedures which in this case are borrowing and literal.

### 1) Borrowing

This procedure is applied by absorbing words or direct expressions from SL which include pure borrowing and natural borrowing. The application of borrowing procedure which in this case is natural borrowing is shown in the following data.

## Data 1

SL : Babylon the great has fallen (Revelation 18:2)

TL : *Suba uug Babele (Wahyu 18:2)*

Slightly different from pure borrowing which borrow words or idioms of the source language without any changes, naturalized borrowing involves the act of adjusting word from the source language to the spelling of the target language. In this case, the word Babylon is borrowed and then naturalized through adjustments to Balinese spelling.

## 2) Literal

In literal procedure the translator is translating word for word without adjusting the translation process with the context of the sentence

## Data 2:

SL : Crown of life (Revelation 2:10)

TL : *Gelungan urip (Wahyu 2:10)*

The interpretation or the symbolic meaning of 'crown of life' is eternal life (Conner, 1992). In this case the SL is translated literally to the TL by translating the word 'crown' into '*gelungan*' and the word 'life' into '*urip*'. The translator does not attempt to provide an explanation regarding the symbolic meaning of the expression 'crown of life' listed in the context of a sentence that reads: Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

On the other hand, the use of oblique/free procedures in dynamic equivalent translation focuses attention not so much on the source of the message, but on the target reader's response. One way to define a dynamic equivalence translation is to describe it as "the closest natural equivalent to the source language message." This definition contains three important elements: (1) equivalent, which refers to the source language message, (2) natural, which refers to towards the receptor language, and (3) closest, which ties the two orientations together on the basis of the highest level of approximation (Nida, 1964). It also explained that natural translation must suit (1) the receptor language and the culture as a whole, (2) the context of a particular message, and (3) the reader of the receptor language.

There are 88 (66,5%) symbols out of 133 which are transferred by utilizing direct procedures which in this case are transposition, amplification, linguistic amplification, linguistic compression, generalization, particularization, discursive creation, description, and adaptation.

## 3) Transposition

Transposition is a translation process that replaces one class of words with another without changing the meaning message. Transposition can also be implemented in a single language. There are two types of transposition: obligatory transposition and optional transposition. Mandatory transposition occurs when the target language has no other choice due to different language system.

## Data 3:

SL : A new name (Revelation 2:17)

TL : *Adan ane anyar (Wahyu 2:17)*

In the case of data 3, the expression in SL 'a new name' undergoes changing of grammatical category with the type of mandatory transposition into TL '*adan ane anyar*' (name which is new) due to different language system.

## 4) Amplification

Amplification technique in translation process in an act of providing a more detailed information that is not listed in the SL

## Data 4:

SL : Satan's seat (Revelation 2:13)

TL : *Tongos Ratun Setane ngrajegang singgasanannyane (Wahyu 2:13)*

Data 4 shows an example of an act of providing a more detailed information in order to make the message clear to the receptor. In this case, the simple expression 'Satan's seat' in SL is translated into TL '*Tongos Ratun Setane ngrajegang singgasanannyane*' (A place where the Queen of Satan upholds her throne). The purpose is to suit the message to the context of particular message which is interpreted as the Satan's throne of power (Conner, 1982).

### 5) Linguistic Amplification

This translation procedure is applied by adding linguistic elements in the TL. This technique is commonly applied to consecutive translations or voiceovers.

Data 5:

SL : Key of David (Revelation 3:7)

TL : *Sereg druen Sang Prabu Daude (Wahyu 2:13)*

The application of the linguistic amplification procedure is seen in the addition of the linguistic element '*druen*' which means 'belonging' that in this case replaces the linguistic function of the preposition 'of'. In addition to the application of linguistic amplification procedure, this expression also uses other procedure, namely amplification by adding more detailed information about the word 'Daud' through the addition of the expression *Sang Prabu* (The King) to provide information to receptors about the existence of 'Daud' as King.

### 6) Linguistic Compression

This linguistic compression technique is applied by combining language elements in the TL. This is the opposite of the linguistic amplification procedure which is adding linguistic element in the TL.

SL : Golden altar (Revelation 8:3)

TL : *Genah aturane (Wahyu 8:3)*

In the data above, the translator applies the linguistic compression procedure by removing the word 'golden' which functions as an adjective to explain the word 'altar'. In this case the translator also simultaneously applies the description procedure for the word 'altar' by replacing the expression and briefly describing the function of the 'altar' as a place for offerings. In this case, '*genah aturane*' means a place for offerings.

### 7) Generalization

Through generalization procedure, translators use a more general of neutral terms in expressing words or terms in TL. This technique is similar to acceptance.

SL : White robes (Revelation 7:9, 13, 14)

TL : *Busana putih (Wahyu 7:9, 13, 14)*

The specific meaning of 'robe' according to Merriam Webster Dictionary is a long flowing outer garment which is used for ceremonial occasions or as a symbol of office or profession. In Indonesian, the word robe also has a specific meaning, namely long clothes (below the knees), long sleeves, like those worn by Arabs, padri, or judges. The example given above show how translators used the strategy of generalization by translating the word 'robe' in SL into busana putih in TL. The word 'busana' in Balinese, which is the same word as 'busana' in Indonesian language generally means clothes or clothing. This procedure was chosen by the translators probably because there is no specific word in Balinese that can be used for describing long clothes that are often interpreted as robes.

### 8) Particularization

The particularization procedure is applied by translators as a strategy of expressing more concrete, precise or specific terms from superordinate to subordinate from SL to TL. This technique is the opposite of the generalization technique.

SL : clothed to the feet (Revelation 1: 13)

TL : *nganggen jubah sane lambihne rauh ka cokor (Wahyu 1:13)*

One of the examples of the 133 symbols that use the particularization technique is the translation of the expression 'clothed' which is an adjective to explain that there is someone called the Son of man who wears clothes that reach to the feet. In this case the word 'clothed' in SL is translated using a particularization technique into Balinese by adding the word '*jubah*' which specifically means long clothes even though there is already information that the clothes worn by the entity are clothes in a specific sense, namely long clothes known as robe. This also shows that there is an inconsistency in translating the word 'robe' where in the previous sentence (example), especially in Revelation 7:9 the translator uses a generalization technique in translating the word 'robe' into 'busana' or 'clothe' in TL. The word 'clothed' in SL should be translated simply as '*mebusana*' in the target language because there is already information that the clothes worn are clothes that reach to the feet.

#### 9) Discursive Creation

Discursive creation is a translation procedure which is done by displaying temporary equivalents that are unexpected or out of context.

SL : Gold tried in fire (Revelation 3: 18)

TL : *Mas ane murni* (Wahyu 3:18)

On the data above, the expression 'gold tried in fire' is translated as '*mas ane murni*' in TL. The strategy chosen by the translator can be said to be discursive or to provide a temporary equivalent which does not necessarily correspond to the context of the sentence. The expression '*mas ane murni*' or 'pure gold' can be the output or result of a purification process that is carried out by burning gold in a fire. Therefore the equivalent created by the translator in this case is not necessarily in accordance with the context referred to in Revelation 3:18.

#### 10) Description

Description is a procedure which is applied by replacing a term or expression with a description of its form and function.

SL : Book of life (Revelation 3: 5)

TL : *Cakepan ane mamuat adan anake ane maan idup* (Wahyu 3:5)

Description is one of the 3 most common procedures used by translators in translating symbols from SL to TL. Out of a total of 133 symbols found in the Book of Revelation, 19 or 14.2% of the symbols are translated using description technique. One example is the translation of the phrase 'book of life' which is transferred into '*cakepan ane mamuat adan anake ane maan idup*' or a book that records the names of those who have life. In this case the translator tries to provide an explanation of the function of the book referred to in SL.

#### 11) Adaptation

This procedure of adaptation is applied when the translator is replacing elements of the source culture with elements of the target culture

SL : Desert (Revelation 17: 3)

TL : *Tegal* (Wahyu 17:3)

The word 'desert' in the expression 'And he carried me away into a desert, by the Spirit' which is taken from Revelation 17:3 in SL is translated into the word '*tegal*' in the target language. This procedure is carried out by translators to adapt culturally to terms in the source language that are not known in the target language. According to the Balinese dictionary, the word *tegal* is interpreted as a field or dry land which is common in Bali or in Indonesia. For example, the word '*tegal*' in Sundanese and in Javanese also literally means "field"

### 4. Conclusion

This study proves that the translation of religious symbols is inseparable from the dichotomy between literal translation and free translation. This is evidenced by the use of several different types of translation strategies from each pole of translation. At the literal translation pole, translators utilize 2 of the 3 types of strategies that exist in direct/literal translation, namely borrowing and literal. Meanwhile, at the free translation pole, the translator uses 9 of the 16 strategies that exist in oblique or free translation. In addition, this study also proves that translators also use more than one translation strategy in transferring expressions from SL to TL. From the overall analysis it was also found that free translation dominated the use of religious symbol translation procedures, with the appearance of 88 out of a total of 133 symbols or 66.5%. Therefore it can be concluded that the ideology used by translators in translating religious symbols, especially in the Book of Revelation, is the ideology of domestication.

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