

## **Comics Polysystem in Iran: A Case Study of the Persian Translations of *Les Aventures de Tintin***

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### **Introduction**

With the advent of Polysystem Theory in the 1970s, Translation Studies (TS) experienced a significant transformation. This approach incorporated the sociocultural context into the analysis of translation. The influence of Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory ("Polysystem Studies") was so marked that Bassnett and Lefevere coined the new term "Cultural Turn" to describe the transformation in TS (xxi). As a result of this transformation, translation can no longer be regarded as an accumulation of mere strings of discrete linguistic signs, but rather as a cultural entity that is the outcome of two possibly divergent cultural repertoires. Polysystem Theory envisages culture as a complex network of related systems, of which literature is one. As an internally related and dynamic polysystem, literature forms a network of relations called "literary" (Even-Zohar 28). These relations are composed of the canonized or "central" and non-canonized or "peripheral" strata. In other words, while one literature may occupy a secondary position in the literary polysystem and scarcely affect the polysystem's central configuration, another literature may come to dominate the centre and develop into a canonical work. According to Even-Zohar, a peripheral position is assumed for translated literature ("Culture Repertoire" 389-403). This peripheral position is postulated to be even more marked for children's literature, as Even-Zohar considers it to be already situated in a peripheral and secondary place in the literary system of the source culture ("Polysystem Studies" 131). Thus, the translation of comics<sup>1</sup> in their modern sense<sup>2</sup>, such as *Les Aventures de Tintin*<sup>3</sup> as

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<sup>1</sup>This is the general English term that is used for the medium that is composed of graphic novels, comic books, *bandes dessinées* (BD, literally 'drawn strip'), *fumetti*, manga, *historietas*, etc. (Hahn). One of the main differences between comic books and the *bande dessinée*, as maintained by Hahn, is that *bandes dessinées* "have never been as casually dismissed as their Anglophone counterparts, and have been called the 'ninth art' since early criticism of the medium." There are also

examined in this study, are assumed to be positioned in the peripheral strata in the literary system. However, there are circumstances when translated literature may occupy a central position in the system. These conditions are hypothesized when 1) a polysystem is nascent; 2) a literature is weak or in peripheral position; or 3) a literature is in vacuum or crisis (Even-Zohar “Polysystem Studies” 47). Still, this position is not static; the dynamic nature of the literary system allows the possibility that the translated literature may centralize itself under certain conditions (Even-Zohar “Polysystem Studies 47”).

Much has been written in TS concerning the cultural turn and polysystem theory. However, despite these studies, the translation of comics has remained largely underexplored. Although a few studies have been carried out (e.g. Kaindl; Zanettin; Borodo), much is still required in order to more fully investigate the translation of comics. This field has been even more neglected and controversial in Iran than elsewhere because, after the Islamic Revolution in 1979, the country and its diverse socio-cultural layers turned a new page and became more or less hostile to the genre. As mentioned by Keyman and Yilmaz, the country was transformed from a secular monarchy into an Islamic republic (433). The institution of Islamic guidelines as the basis for reforms reshaped the society. The constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran established Islam as the official religion of the country, and all laws passed in the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran [Majles-e Shoraye Eslami] were thereafter required to conform to Islamic rules. Hence, according to an Islamic rule stipulated in the regulations of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG), any kind of blasphemy

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differences in “styles of drawing in BD, rather than house styles or authors’ takes, as in the US comic book industry” (58).

<sup>2</sup> Stories comprising verbal texts accompanied by illustrations and pictures have a long history in Iran. The oldest ones date back to the ancient times carved on historical monuments. The examples can be found on Persepolis walls and pillars, coins, handicrafts, swords, etc. However, despite this old history, the advent and arrival of modern illustrative stories in the form and definition of what is called *bande dessinée* and comics in the West to the country, was no sooner than the 1960s.

<sup>3</sup> The focus of the present paper is the translation of the Franco-Belgian BD *Les Aventures de Tintin*. Thus, the term “comics” is used in this paper to refer to the Franco-Belgian *bande dessinée* where *Les Aventures de Tintin* is concerned. However, this term is also generally used to refer to both American comics, Franco-Belgian *bandes dessinées* as well as Japanese Manga, etc. in the text. In other words, *Les Aventures de Tintin* is considered as part of an overall category of comics in Persian literature. This is in fact due to the wide function of the Persian word **كميک استريپ** (Comic Strips) which encompasses the American comics, Franco-Belgian *bandes dessinées* as well as Japanese Manga, which is an indication of the novelty of the phenomenon in the Persian literary system.

against Islam or other officially recognized religions in Iran, as well as the exploitation of perverted and corrupt material, are disparaged and condemned (Kenevisi, Che Omar, Jalalian 205). For example, Esfandiary discusses how cinema was “purified” from such so-called “immoral and corrupt” pre-revolutionary elements as nudity and sexually explicit scenes (71). This purification also influenced the translation and publication of comics in the country, and consequently *Les Aventures de Tintin* was suppressed since it included visual and textual content that offended against the newly established rules. This led to the emergence of unauthorized publishers who, to facilitate their task, used the English translations of the series as their source texts.

Accordingly, as is illustrated by *Les Aventures de Tintin*, relay translation has played a great role in book translation in Iran. Relay translation refers to “cases in which intermediary realisations are primarily intended for consumption in the language which later serves as the source language for subsequent translation(s)” (Dollerup 19). That is to say, while some titles of *Les Aventures de Tintin* have been directly translated under the auspices of the authorized publisher from the original French works, several titles have been translated by unauthorized publishers after the Islamic Revolution, using the English translations as the source texts. This has been mainly due to the extensive and complex ideological manipulations required by the Iranian system and the consequent refusal of the authorized publisher to comply. As can be observed in Figure 1, a translated book must go through 14 steps before it is entitled to become available in the Iranian market.

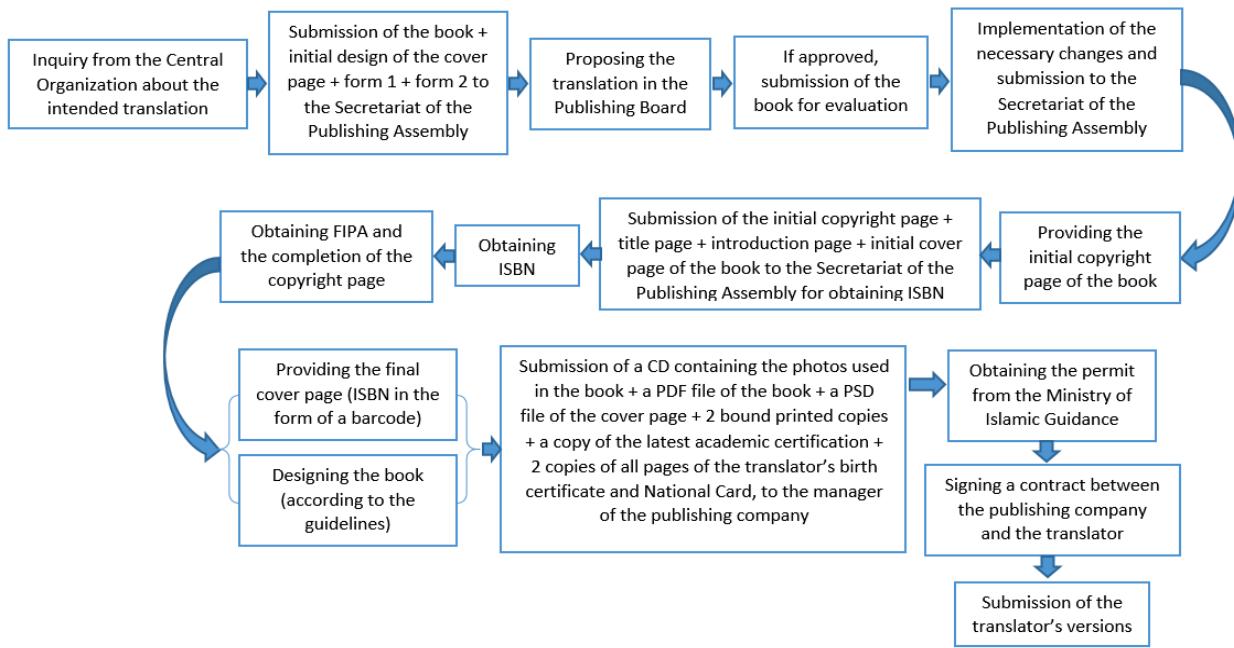


Fig 1. Procedures<sup>4</sup> for the publication of translated books in Iran (Islamic Azad University Kermanshah Branch: Office of the Deputy President; my translation)

In addition to the translator, then, there are five legal boards, bodies and institutions involved in the process of publishing a translated work:

- 1) the publishing central organization;
- 2) the (Secretariat of the) Publishing Board;
- 3) the judges and referees,
- 4) a publishing company,
- 5) the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance (MCIG).

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<sup>4</sup> In the ninth step, FIPA refers to the bibliographic record created for a book by Iran's National Library prior to its publication.

Two important points need to be mentioned here. First, of the five bodies involved, the first four are controlled by and work under the fifth organization, the MCIG. Second, the fact that the MCIG's involvement comes virtually at the conclusion of the entire publication process gives to the Ministry the final word regarding all revisions, changes, modifications and manipulations incorporated from the beginning. The rejection of the translation by the MCIG at this point would therefore necessitate the repetition of a laborious and time-consuming process, a result that publishers and authors are anxious to avoid. The consequence is that genres and works not favoured by the administration are less likely to be considered for translation by publishers. One of these disparaged areas, as mentioned above, is the translation of comic books—including, of course, *Les Aventures de Tintin*.

## 2. Translation of *Les Aventures de Tintin* in Iran

According to Bazzazzadegan, such publishers as Koroush, Ordibehesht and Universal were the first to produce translations of famous comic books such as *Dan Cooper*, *Tarzan: The Lost Island*, *Flipper*, and *Les Aventures de Tintin* for the Iranian market. One of the most celebrated and popular comic books in Iran, translations of *Les Aventures de Tintin* were likewise embraced throughout the world. Millions of readers from a plethora of cultures have been introduced to the series, written originally in French by the Belgian writer Hergé (Georges Remi). The first Iranian publication of *Les Aventures de Tintin* was by Universal Publications in 1971. Marvik Boghasian, one of the founders of Universal, first discussed the possibility of a Persian version of the series with the authorized Belgian publisher Casterman in 1970 (Ahadi). One year later, the first two books, *L'Île noire* and *Objectif Lune*, were translated and introduced to Iranian readers (Ahadi). In all, thirteen titles were produced in Persian by Universal, translated by Khosro Sami'i, between 1971 and 1976. As Ahadi maintained in an interview with Pouya Bahari, Khosro Sami'i's translations were one of the principal factors in the success of the books in Iran:

At the time of the publication of *Les Aventures de Tintin* in Iran, 'idiomatic translations' were not all that common even in books published for young adults in the country. However, Khosro Sami'i's 'idiomatic translations' from French into Persian introduced a new style of translation and thereby strongly promoted the success of the books in Iran. (My translation)

The last four books to appear before the 1979 Revolution, *Tintin au Congo* (*Tintin in the Congo*), *L'Affaire Tournesol* (*The Calculus Affair*), *Les Bijoux de la Castafiore* (*The Castafiore Emerald*), and *L'Étoile mystérieuse* (*The Shooting Star*), were published by Casterman Publications in Belgium and shipped to Iran (Ahadi). After the Islamic Revolution in Iran, publication of the translated series was

discontinued by Casterman, the authorized publisher, mainly due to the ideological concerns of the new Iranian administration. However, after a hiatus of just one year, the books were again being translated and published, albeit with ideological manipulations, this time by an unauthorized publisher, Venus Publications. Unlike the translations in the Universal editions which had been done from the French, the translator of the Venus versions, Esmerdis, translated from the English relays. As one of the results of unauthorized publication, the quality of the books dramatically decreased. Later, other publishers such as Arghavan, Uranus, and Original also produced and distributed the books in Iran. With respect to the quality of the physical artifact (paper, ink, colour, etc.) as well as the translations, none were comparable to the versions published by Universal/Casterman. Nonetheless, despite the interest of a number of publishers, production of the series in Iran was totally halted after a few years and was not resumed until 2000. At that time, two publishers, Tarikh-o Farhang and Rayehe-e Andishe, managed to obtain permission from the MCIG to re-introduce the *Tintin* series. Compared to the examples published in the first years after the Revolution, the quality of these editions was improved in terms of both format and translation. This is despite the fact that the translations were still based on the English relays as the source text and were subject to the ideological manipulations of Iranian Islam.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

In Polysystem Theory, culture is perceived as a complex network of related systems, and literature is examined within this cultural network. Thus, literary systems, as important constituents of culture, are internally related, stratified and dynamic. The pivotal premise of polysystem theory, the dichotomous postulation of the hierarchical positions of “central” and “peripheral” for literary systems, will be exploited to explore the position of translated comics in Persian literature. Canonized literature signifies “those literary norms and works (i.e. both models and text) which are accepted as legitimate by the dominating circles within a culture and whose conspicuous products are preserved by the community to become part of its historical heritage”, while peripheral, secondary or non-canonized literature represents “those norms and texts which are rejected by the said circles as illegitimate and whose products are often forgotten in the long run by the community (unless they change their status)” (Even-Zohar “Polysystem Studies” 15).

Additionally, Tamaki’s approach will be utilized in ascertaining the place of comics in the literary polysystem of Iran. As maintained by Tamaki, in order to evaluate the status of translated literature in a particular context, a comparison must be made between the number of books authored and the number of books translated in that culture, clarifying the position of translated literature in the literary polysystem (119-146).

Moreover, the synthetic model of translation description proposed by Lambert and Van Gorp will also be selectively utilized to examine the influence of the position of comics on the translations of *Les Aventures de Tintin* in Persian translated literature (42-53). This model explores translation from numerous perspectives including preliminary data such as the format of translated books. This is also discussed by Borodo, as the format of comic books—size, reading direction of the text, font, colours—may influence the way in which the translated comics are interpreted in the receiving culture, and should be considered when investigating their translation (22-41). Moreover, it should be noted that in examining the translation process of books, and particularly comics, a researcher cannot look merely at the transformation of the verbal text. As Borodo insists, translation does not encompass solely “the insertion of text into a pre-existing matrix of panels and speech balloons” (25). In other words, the analysis of the translation of a comic book must involve both the verbal and the visual aspects, the latter of which may include redrawing of characters (Kaindl “Thump” 279), replacing certain visual elements with different ones (Kaindl “Multimodality” 185), or even removing visual signs (D’Arcangelo 197; Zanettin 206). Thus, based on Lambert and Van Gorp’s model, the present paper investigates the translation of *Les Aventures de Tintin* on the three levels of 1) preliminary data, 2) macro-level, and 3) micro-level. Preliminary data encompasses such aspects as the cover, title page, metatext, etc. This will provide the necessary information to move the analysis to the second stage: the macro-level. Here the focus will be on the text structure. In micro-level analysis, the strategies applied by the translators will be examined. Onomatopoeias, sound symbols which pose particular challenges for translators, will be investigated to examine the chosen translation strategies. Furthermore, Venuti’s foreignization and domestication model will be applied for analyzing those translation strategies.

The corpus will consist of *Le Temple du Soleil* (*Prisoners of the Sun*) published by Universal Publications before the Revolution, as well as the post-1979 editions *Coke en Stock* (*Tintin and the Red Sea Sharks*) published by Venus Publications, *Tintin au Pays de L’or Noir* (*Tintin and the Land of Black Gold*) published by Tarikh-o Farhang Publications, *Tintin et le Lac aux Requins* (*Tintin and the Lake of Sharks*) by Original Publications, *Le Lotus Bleu* (*The Blue Lotus*) by Rayeh-e Andishe Publications, and scanlations<sup>5</sup> and their approaches towards the translation of the series. Within this selection, using a

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<sup>5</sup> This is a term used in TS to refer to the creation of fan-made comics from one language to another. The process of scanlation generally includes scanning, translation, and editing of the word by an individual or as a group work.

systematic stratified sampling technique (Saldanha and O'Brien 34), we will focus on the first half of each book, approximately the first 33 pages.

#### 4. Data analysis

##### 4.1. Position of Translated Literature in Iran

To determine the position of translated literature in the literary polysystem of Iran, the number of original Persian-language works and translated books published in the country from 1978 to 2003 were compared. The basis for limiting the comparison to this period was twofold. First, there were no data and information available prior to 1978. Second, the latest book that was investigated in the corpus of the present research was published in 2003. Table 1 shows the publication statistics regarding works authored in Persian and works translated into Persian for the general market and table 2 for the children's book market, in five year periods beginning from approximately one year before the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979. It should be noted that children's literature<sup>6</sup> in Table 2 includes translated comics in general.

No.	Year	Total Number of Literary Book Titles Published	Number of Literary book Titles Originally Written in Persian	Number of Literary books Titles Translated	% Percent of the Originally Persian and Translated Titles
1	1978-1983	1791	1143	648	63.8% 38.2%

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<sup>6</sup> Children's literature is considered to be part of the overall literary system but specifically targeted towards children. *Bandes dessinées*, the focus of this paper, were initially thought to be aimed at a juvenile audience and accordingly part of children's literature. However, the BD has extended its audience and reception beyond children to encompass adults, the foremost example of which is Hergé's *Les Aventures de Tintin* (the main focus of the present research) that, partly due to the political context of the publication, introduced travel writing and the colonial propaganda of the era to young audiences. Hergé's *Les Aventures de Tintin* is also published as children's literature in Iran and accordingly it is included in children's books in Table 2.

2	1983-1988	4540	2994	1546	65.9% 34.05%
3	1988-1993	6523	4610	1913	70.6% 29.3%
4	1993-1998	8476	6535	1941	77.1% 22.9%
5	1998-2003	17649	14451	3198	81.8% 18.1%
6	<b>1978-2003</b>	42915	33274	9641	77.5% 22.4%

Table 1. The number of general books written in or translated into Persian from 1978-2003 (Khane Katab).

No.	Year	Total Number of Published Children's Book Titles	Number of Children's books Titles Originally Written in Persian	Number of Translated Children's Book Titles	% Percent of Original Persian and Translated Titles
1	1978-1983	860	655	205	76.1% 23.8%
2	1983-1988	2643	2116	527	80% 19.9%
3	1988-1993	2712	2058	654	75.8% 24.1%
4	1993-1998	4337	3058	1279	70.5% 29.5%
5	1998-2003	8319	5467	2852	65.7% 34.3%

6	1978-2003	20565	14296	6269	69.5% 30.5%
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Table 2. The number of children's books written in or translated into Persian from 1978-2003 (Khane Kebab).

As can be seen in Tables 1 and 2, more than 75% of both children's and general-audience books published from 1978-2003 are not translations. The numbers, then, according to Tamaki, are an indication of the peripheral position of translated literature in the literary system of Iran from about one year before the 1979 Islamic Revolution until 2003 (119-146).

This peripheral position might also be argued for the translation of comics in Iran. Comics were entirely novel to Iranian culture at the time of their introduction into the literary polysystem, and the ensuing decades have hardly changed this perception since the translation of comic books has not been encouraged under the Islamic administration. The status of comics and their translations can best be understood by looking at a special conference entitled *Comic Strips*, held in Iran in 2008 by the Art Foundation of Animation Studies and Researches. According to a report by the *News Division of Iran's Art Sector*, comics were declared by the conference to be in a depressed condition in Iran and in need of sustained effort to improve their reception (Ketabnews). Mohammad Reza Zaeri, chief editor of the *Jadid* comic monthly in Iran, also called for a more enthusiastic welcome for comic books in the country (Ketabnews). Two other experts, Hosseinpour and Eghbali, likewise criticized the neglected position of comics in Iran.

It is evident that comics and their translations have not been welcomed by policy makers in Iran, in spite of the genre's absence in the nation's literary system. This situation seems to be brought about by what Even-Zohar describes as a threat, namely that foreign cultures may be perceived as posing towards a receptor culture. That is, translations come from a foreign cultural repertoire and are therefore viewed as potential threats to the collective identity of the prevailing cultural system; they normally meet with resistance to their influence and incorporation ("Culture Repertoire" 395). This resistance may arise either from the receptor cultural community as a whole or from its agents and policy makers in the hierarchy of power; the latter seems to be the case for comics translation in Iran (Ketabnews). As an example of an ideological issue which led to the resistance of the policy makers to the translation of the *Tintin* series and their perception of it as a potential threat to the prevailing Islamic culture, we can refer to the challenges encountered by the translators of *Les Aventures de Tintin* in reformulating passages involving the consumption of alcoholic drinks. As an Islamic country, Iran typically encourages publishers to censor representations of alcohol. So Captain Haddock, in the original version an alcoholic character who is

admonished to reduce drinking, is restricted in the Persian translation to a new diet, which prohibits him from consuming too much carbonated soft drinks and Coke.

#### **4.2. Preliminary data**

The title page of a book and its publication data are the first clues about content given to readers. According to Zepetnek, the title page and publication information help readers to position the book in their own “hierarchy of canon”. Zepetnek maintains that, despite the conventionality of the arrangement of these data, the publishers’ and authors’ decisions are based on factors such as the print style and text arrangement “which the reader will perceive within his/her literary hierarchy” (99).

The series *Les Aventures de Tintin* was translated for different publishers before and after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. While Universal Publications based its translations on the original French-language books, other publishers after the Revolution drew from the English relays. Fig. 2 shows that the first element of the original French format is the name of the author, HERGÉ, in the top centre part of the cover, which is followed by the title of the series/book in a larger font size, all in uppercase, with the publisher’s name at the bottom centre part of the cover in lowercase. At the top, then, there is the name of the author, the phrase “LES AVENTURES DE TINTIN”, and the title of the particular story; at the bottom appears the name of the publisher. The English translation (fig. 3) follows the same format.



Fig. 2. *TINTIN AU PAYS DE L'or Noir*.  
Casterman Publications 1950.  
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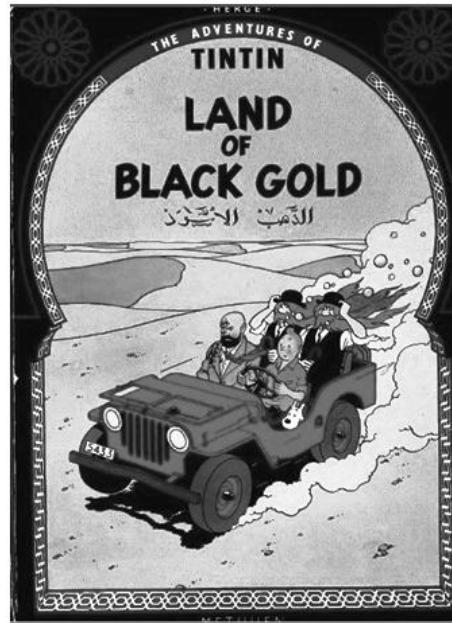


Fig. 3. *TINTIN LAND OF BLACK GOLD*.  
Mammot Publications 1950.  
© Hergé/Moulinsart 2016

However, translated Persian versions (figs 4 and 5) do not always pursue the same structure. This is particularly true of editions produced since the Revolution and continues to the present day. For example (fig. 4), in the Venus Publications version of *Tintin Land Of Black Gold*, the name of the publisher is deleted from the bottom part of the cover and is replaced by the name of the translator; in *Tintin au pays de l'or noir*, the same change is applied. Moreover, the name of the author is relocated from the top to the bottom in *Le Crabe aux pinces d'or*, displacing the identity of the publisher. That is to say, there is no indication of the publisher on the cover. As another example, the more recent publishers Rayehe-ye Andishe and Tarikh-o Farhang make alterations of their own. As stated, these two publishers resumed the publication of the series in 2000. Looking at the cover of the edition published by Tarikh-o Farhang publications (fig. 5), we note that the name of the author is deleted, the title of the book is translated as “Adventures of Tintin, the young reporter 5: The Land of Black”, the number has been added to show the place of the translation in the series, the word “new” has been added in Persian in an explosion shape figure, and there is no identification of the publisher given at the bottom of the cover. The background colour has also been changed to green.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> We were permitted by the copyright holder to reproduce the visuals only in black and white in this paper.

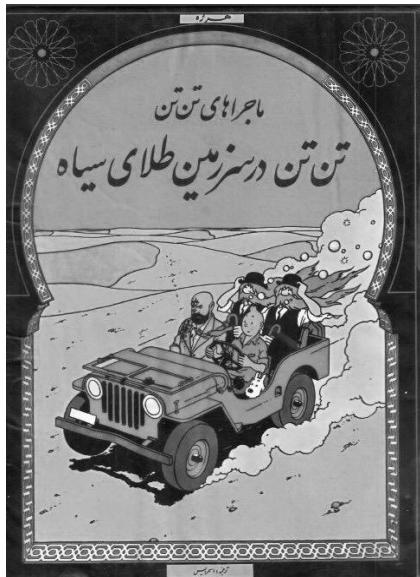


Fig. 4. *Tintin's Adventure Tintin in the land of black gold*. Venus Publications 1981.  
(© Unauthorized Translation and Publication)

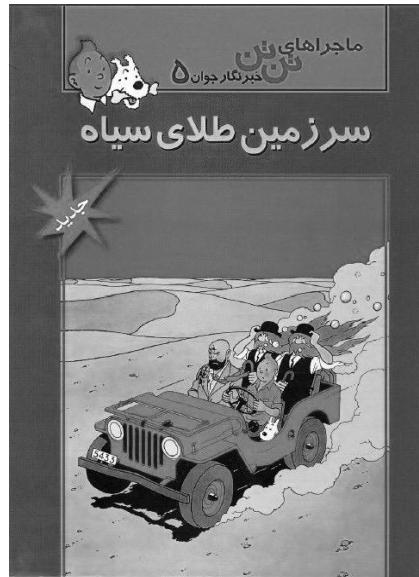


Fig. 5. *Tintin's Adventure Tintin the young Reporter, the land of black gold*. Tarikh-o Farhang Publications 2000.  
(© Unauthorized Translation and Publication)

While the reproduction of the original French-language format and information in Universal's Persian-language edition suggests the observation of copyright issues, the changes made to the covers of the later publications can be considered as an indication of their unauthorized status. Moreover, in the case of the books published by Venus Publications less than two years after the Revolution, the changes in the books' layout might be interpreted as an indication to the readers as well as to government regulators that these are indeed new versions of the works, which are conform to the ideological changes in the country. As observed by Farahmand, representation of Islamic forbidden issues such as drunkenness were frowned upon by the national administration after the Revolution. This was one of the main reasons for the cessation of the series' production by the authorized publisher. So these changes in the unauthorized editions seem intended to demonstrate that the publisher is moving away from forbidden or controversial issues, choosing different approaches in translation as well as observing the new ideological expectations. However, there are additional reasons for the changes made by Rayehe-ye Andishe and Tarikh-o Farhang. As can be seen in fig. 5, the word "new" was added on the cover, which suggests an improved translation over the earlier post-Revolution versions. The other modified preliminary element is the changed reading directionality. While English reads left-to-right reading language, Persian is right-to-left, which has resulted in a reversal at both the linguistic and visual levels: the images as well as the translations have become horizontally reversed (cf. 4.4; figs 6, 7, 8, etc.).

#### 4.3. Macro-level

There are cases in translation where the names of characters or places are changed, and this can in fact be seen in the English translations of *Les Aventures de Tintin* with respect to proper names (Delesse 251-270). However, after the Revolution in Iran, the unauthorized publishers used the English translations of this series as their source texts. That is to say, relay translation has been the main procedure in the translation of the series since 1979. As discussed by Dollerup, the use of relay will normally result in “new ‘derivations’ to those made by predecessors in the chain” (22). This, as might be expected, led to the change of many personal and place names, that is, derivations, in the versions produced by publishers after the Revolution. Due to the popularity of the previously published authorized versions based on the French originals, these derivations provoked a negative reaction among readers. Nonetheless, due to the absence of Universal Publications editions, even the unauthorized versions were more or less welcomed by Iranian fans. An interesting example of the power of reader reaction is the translation of *Les Aventures de Tintin: Coke en stock*. This is the nineteenth Tintin book, which is titled *The Red Sea Sharks* in English. Using the English relay text as the source language, the first Venus edition translated the title as<sup>8</sup> کوسه های دریای سرخ [literally *the sharks of the red sea*], transliterated as /ku:se hʌje dærjʌje sorx<sup>9</sup>/ . However, the title was changed in the second edition to انبار زغال سنگ [the coal stock], transliterated as /ænbʌr-e zoʊʌl sæŋ<sup>10</sup>/ . Venus admits in an explanation on the second page of the second edition:

Note: While the first edition of this book was translated from the *English version* titled “The RED SEA SHARKS”, considering the great number of criticisms given by the readers, the original French title of the book, “COKE EN STOCK”, has been selected for this second edition. (Venus Publications; my italics; my translation)

This demonstrates the degree to which readers responded negatively to the re-translations from the English relay translations, and how in response the publisher was forced to change the title in the second edition. This also suggests the importance of such factors as the source text and the

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<sup>8</sup> Note that although Arabic and Persian are separate languages from different families, the Arabic script is used for the writing of the Persian language. Persian is one of the Western Iranian languages within the Indo-Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family. On the other hand, Arabic belongs to the Semitic branch of the Afro-asiatic family. This difference has led to the existence of four more letters (to represent additional sounds) in Persian in contrast with Arabic: ڦ/p/, ڮ/tʃ/, ڻ/ʒ/ and ڱ/g/.

<sup>9</sup> The letter ڪ, normally transliterated as /b/ or /x/, is the ninth letter of the Persian alphabet. This voiceless velar fricative sound is pronounced very similarly to the German, Irish, and Polish un-palatalized “ch”, Russian “x” and Spanish “j”.

<sup>10</sup> The letter ڱ, normally transliterated as /ɣ/, is the 22<sup>nd</sup> letter in the Persian alphabet. This is a voiced velar fricative sound, close to the Parisian French “r”.

readership for translation agencies and their policies. It can be argued that the gap in the literary polysystem of Iran, in addition to the high popularity of the series, have defined a central and canonized position for the translation of *Les Aventures de Tintin* in the polysystem, which explains the resistance to the changes shown by the readers.

#### **4.4. Micro-level Analysis: Onomatopoeia**

On the micro-level, onomatopoeic sounds have been selected for analysis since they have particular features of interest to this discussion. As a type of ideophone or sound symbolism and as expressive functions, onomatopoeias are one of the challenging areas in the translation of comics. This is due both to the cultural specificity of onomatopoeic sounds and to their placement within the images. Since onomatopoeia imitates an environmental sonic production, there is a close relationship between the signifier and what is signified. In other words, they are not arbitrary linguistic signs as postulated by Saussure (xxvi). Linguistically, as mentioned by Casas-Tost, there is usually alternation and lengthening of vowels and sometimes of consonants in these graphic ideophones (39-55); morphologically, partial or total reduplication can be seen; syntactically, they may play various roles such as adverbial, substantive, interjective, and so on, depending on the language; semantically, the signifier and signified are correlated; pragmatically, they have a referential function as they “imitate a sound in the real world”, as well as an expressive function as they are intended to represent emotion (Casas-Tost 40-41). The analysis of the data revealed different types of onomatopoeic representations in the corpus of study. The sounds include such onomatopoeic events as snoring, a dog barking, gunfire, a telephone ringing, etc.

As mentioned above, the different instances of the translated series of *Tintin* in Persian have been based either on the original French or on the relay English. So we will have two sets of analyses of the translation of onomatopoeia into Persian: one from the French as the source text before the Revolution by the authorized publisher, and one from the relay English versions from unauthorized publishers and scanlations after the Revolution. The order of the analysis of the onomatopoeic sounds follows the publishing sequence of the editions.

As revealed in the following, the translated examples imply a young and weak position for comics in the Persian literary polysystem but they also suggest that those works have been moving to a more central position. On the one hand, based on Venuti’s notions of foreignization and domestication, the frequency of foreignizing choices in the corpus was higher in earlier translations, especially in the case of the earlier versions published by such publisher as Venus publications, etc. (cf. figs 7, 10, 13, 16, 19); the secondary position of comics in the literary polysystem in Iran conditioned the selection of foreignizing strategies. On the other hand, recent professional translations—especially the more recent versions published by Tarikh-o Farhang and Rayehe-e Andishe (cf. fig. 27)—as well as scanlations, were less inclined towards foreignization, which points to the dynamic position of comics in the literary polysystem and their movement towards a more central position. In other words, the newly-acquired central position of comics has conditioned the

selection of domesticating strategies. However, the inclination of the translations towards either the foreignizing or the domesticating approach is not linked to a particular timeline. This is to say that, while the foreignizing strategy is the predominant strategy in the earlier versions of the corpus, there are also cases of domesticating strategies in the very same versions. Similarly, while both foreignizing and domesticating strategies are used in the more recent translations, the former approach has become less prominent. However, the selection of domesticating procedures along with foreignizing ones may be seen as the translator's attempt to gradually introduce new resources into the Iranian cultural repertoire while at the same time avoiding the extensive importation of foreign elements into the receptor language and culture. Supposedly, this is also a sign of the canonized position of translated comics in the literary polysystem of Iran.

First, we will look at the translation of *Le Temple du Soleil* from Universal Publications, the only authorized publisher of the books. In the first example (figs 6 and 7), the image shows a telephone ringing. Looking at the translation, it can be observed that the translator has chosen a foreignizing strategy for the onomatopoeia.



Fig. 6. *Le Temple du Soleil*.  
Page 3. Top right.  
© Hergé/Moulinsart 2016



Fig. 7. *Le Temple du Soleil*.  
Page 3. Top left.  
© Hergé/Moulinsart 2016

The original French version has transliterated the sound of the telephone as DRRRING. The Persian translator has opted for a foreignizing strategy and has translated the sound as دررینگ /drriŋ/. In contrast, the representation that is always used in Persian to demonstrate a bell or a telephone ringing is زنگ/zəŋ/ or زنگ/zæŋ/ (Dehkhoda Dictionary). The threefold repetition of the sound RRR, to show the continuity of the sound, is also reproduced in the Persian translation:

jjj/rrr/. The reason behind the choice of a foreignizing strategy can be explained by Even-Zohar's polysystem theory. As mentioned earlier, comics were new in the literary polysystem of Iran when they were introduced to the country a few years before the Revolution. It can be argued that there was a gap in the literary system of Iranian culture in this regard. As mentioned by Chang, the purpose of importing a text through translation into a cultural repertoire is the improvement of the existing repertoire through changing, replacing or adding new elements to it (144). Moreover, as stated by Even-Zohar ("Polysystem Studies"), a peripheral position is generally assumed for translated literature in the literary polysystem except in situations when the polysystem is either young, weak or in crisis. Thus, in terms of comics, a weak literary polysystem can be assumed for Iranian Persian. In such conditions, the foreign repertoire (comics, in this case) is assumed to be slotted to fill in the gap, the result of which is the high probability of the canonization of the translated comics in the polysystem. The canonization of the translated literature entails producing new and innovative repertoires and models for literary production which can encourage a foreignizing strategy, as this instance demonstrates.

The next example is taken from *The Red Sea Sharks*, published by Venus Publications after the Revolution in Iran. The onomatopoeic words that were observed in the work include interjections expressing surprise and pain, as well as the transliteration of dog noises, a tiger's roar, the ringing of a phone, snoring, objects falling, a clock ticking, and gunfire. For this analysis, we have selected the transliteration and translation of onomatopoeias representing clock bombs (figs 8-10), snoring (figs 11-13) and guns firing (figs 14-16).

On page 16, Snowy is illustrated as listening to the suspicious sound of clock bombs inside the luggage on board the airplane.



Fig. 8. *Coke en Stock*.  
Page 16. Bottom right.  
© Hergé/Moulinsart 2016



Fig. 9. *The Red Sea Sharks*.  
Page 16. Bottom right.  
© Hergé/Moulinsart 2016



Fig. 10. *The Red Sea Sharks*.

Page 16. Bottom left.

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Publication)

The sounds are borrowed and transliterated (fig. 10) in the Arabic alphabet as تیک توک/tik tu:k/. While the TICK TOCK sound signifies the sound of a watch or a clock in English, the onomatopoeia that has always been used in Persian to refer to the sound of a watch or clock is تیک تاک/tik tək/ or تیک تیک/tik tik/ (Moein Farsi Dictionary; Amid Words Dictionary). While it is possible to glean from the visual and dialogic context that the sounds refer to a clock bomb, the transliteration appears as an unnatural and unexpected foreign sound for Iranian readers. With a young and weak position for comics in the literary polysystem of Iran, the foreign repertoire can be slotted in, canonized in order to fill the gap in Iran's literary polysystem, which explains the introduction of new and innovative repertoires such as تیک توک/tik tu:k/. Other examples found in the corpus confirm the young and weak position of comics in the literary polysystem of Iran and the concomitant selection of foreignizing and therefore innovative strategies by translators. Note the representations of snoring and gunfire in *The Red Sea Sharks*. In the first example (fig. 11), Tintin spots a patrol and asks Captain Haddock to lie down. Captain Haddock falls asleep and begins to snore.



Fig. 11. *Coke en Stock*.  
Page 21. Bottom right.  
© Hergé/Moulinsart 2016



Fig. 12. *The Red Sea Sharks*.  
Page 21. Bottom right.  
© Hergé/Moulinsart 2016



Fig. 13. *The Red Sea Sharks*.  
Page 21. Bottom left.  
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The balloon in the English source text (fig 12) translates the snoring sound into the Anglophone onomatopoeia ZZZ..., a transformation of the original French ideophone RRR.... The Persian translator, unlike the English translator, who has adopted a domesticating strategy, has opted to

render the snoring sound as ...zzz /zzz.../ (fig 13). This is clearly a foreignizing strategy, since snoring sounds are always transliterated as خور پف /khor pof/ in Persian.

In the second example (fig. 14), gunfire, Tintin and Captain Haddock are on a ship when the Mosquitoes, warplanes, attack them from the sky. Tintin asks for a gun and starts to shoot at them.

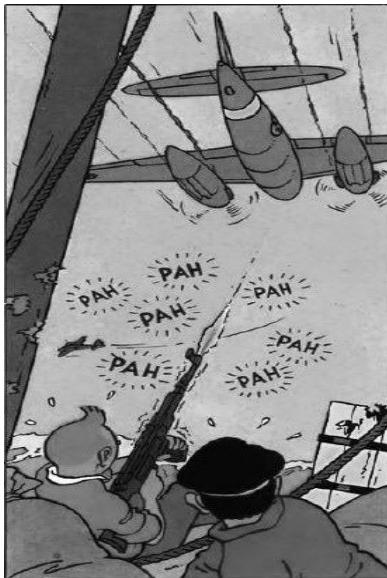


Fig. 14. *Coke en Stock*.  
Page 34. Bottom left.  
© Hergé/Moulinsart 2016

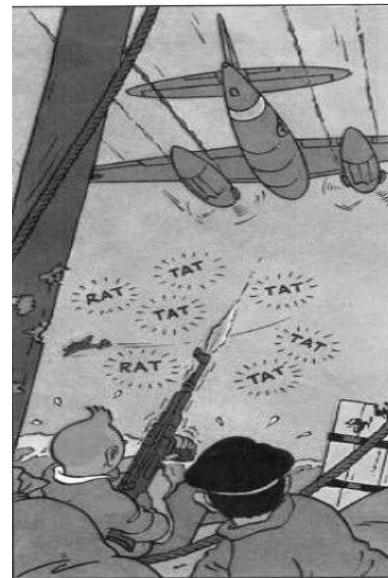


Fig. 15. *The Red Sea Sharks*. Page  
34. Bottom left.  
© Hergé/Moulinsart 2016

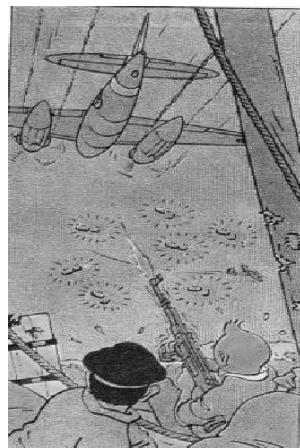


Fig. 16. *The Red Sea Sharks*. Page 34.  
Bottom right.  
**(© Unauthorized Translation  
and Publication)**

The sounds of the gun shooting in the original French version are transliterated as PAH PAH. The English translator, however, opting for a domesticating strategy has rendered the sounds as RAT TAT (fig. 15). As mentioned earlier, the Persian translations made after the Islamic Revolution in Iran have been based on the English versions. So, as can be seen, the Persian translator has borrowed the sound as تăت /ræt tæt/ from the English source text (fig. 16). These examples clearly demonstrate the choice of foreignizing and innovative translation strategies and indicate the young and weak position of comics in the literary polysystem of Iran. Examples from other publishers will only reinforce this hypothesis.

*Tintin and the Land of Black Gold* was translated and published by Tarikh-o Farhang Publications from the English version of the book. The interjections and onomatopoeic transliterations observed in this book include such sounds as car horns, explosions, telephones ringing, airplane propellers, etc. For this analysis, we have selected the transliteration and translation of onomatopoeias representing the sound of a car horn (figs 17-19). The image illustrates the Thompsons at a gas station, honking to attract the attention of the gas station attendant (fig. 17). As can be seen in the images below, a foreignizing strategy has been used by the Persian translator (fig. 19).



Fig. 17. *Tintin au Pays de l'or Noir*.

Page 1. Centre.

© Hergé/Moulinsart 2016

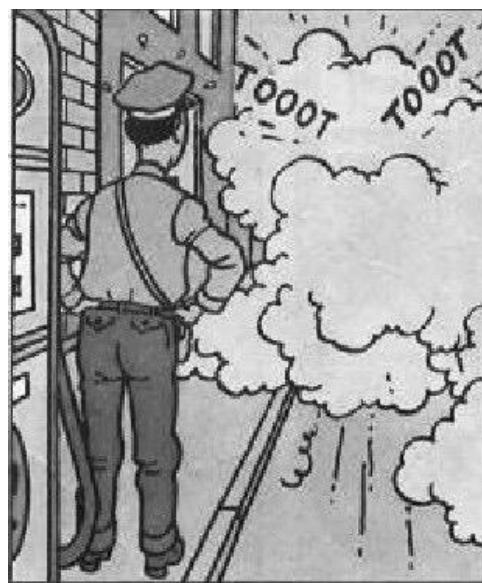


Fig. 18. *Tintin and the Land of Black Gold*.

Page 1. Centre.

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Fig. 19. *Tintin and the Land of Black Gold*.

Page 3. Centre.

(© Unauthorized Translation and  
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While the English translator has chosen a domesticating strategy, transforming the honking sound of POUET in French into TOOOT in English (fig. 18), the Persian translator has opted for a foreignizing strategy and has borrowed the English sound TOOOT as تووت/tu:t/ into Persian, a new and innovative onomatopoeia in that language.

With respect to more recent publications, the gap for comics in Iran's literary polysystem and their relatively canonized position can still be observed. However, a shift in progress to a less canonized position may be indicated. Because of the pervasive availability of comic books through the Internet, scanlations created by Tintinophiles have appeared online over the past few years. As one example, Mohammad Ali Sepehr Afghan, the author of *Tintin in Iran*, a scanlation accessible on the Internet, explains how he had always wanted Hergé to write one of his Tintin books about Iran. We were able to find five online books (scanlations) of *Les Aventures de Tintin* that were created by fans and made available on the Internet: 1) *Tintin in Iran*, 2) *Tintin in Tebran*, 3) *Tintin and a Suspected Visitor*, 4) *Tintin and a Gang of Criminals*, and 5) *Tintin and Milou: The Freelance Reporter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (my translations of the titles). The analysis of the onomatopoeia used in these books shows that in many cases, such as the sound of a telephone ringing (figs 20-22), the translator has used a foreignizing strategy.



Fig. 20. *Tintin and Milou: The Freelance Reporter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*. Page 4. Middle right.  
(© Scanlation)



Fig. 21. *Tintin and the Gang of Criminals*.  
Page 7. Middle right.  
(© Scanlation)



Fig. 22. *Tintin and a Suspected Visitor*.  
Page 3. Middle right & left.  
(© Scanlation)

As can be seen, the sound of a telephone ringing is translated as زنگ /Ring/ in three different scanlations, namely, *Tintin and Milou: The Freelance Reporter of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, *Tintin and the Gang of Criminals*, and *Tintin and a Suspected Visitor*. The continuity of the sound is also conveyed through the repetition of the ز[r] letter (fig. 20), or by the repetition of the whole word (figs 21-22). As mentioned earlier, the Persian onomatopoeia that is usually used to represent a bell or a telephone ringing is زنگ/zing/ or زنگ/zang/ (Dehkhoda Dictionary). These translations made by fans are a valuable resource for investigating the position of the translation of comics in the literary polysystem of Iran. This is due to the fact that fans tend to translate more freely than institutional translators, less encumbered by concerns over copyright, ideology and so on. Therefore, from these examples, it can be argued that the selection of foreignizing strategies in scanlations entails a canonized position for the translation of comics in the translation literary polysystem of Iran. This is due to the new, young and correspondingly weak position of comics in the country. Hence, the translators attempt to import novel and innovative resources into the literary system and thereby to improve the existing repertoire through adding new elements, the result of which has manifested itself in their choice of foreignizing strategies. However, the choice of foreignizing strategies is more frequent in earlier versions of the book than it is in the more recently published versions as well as in the scanlations. This is an indication of the dynamic position of comics in the Persian literary polysystem. In other words, less frequent foreignizing choices suggest the movement of translated comics towards a more peripheral position in the polysystem.

There are, however, cases where the translator has changed the original onomatopoeic sound into a Persian onomatopoeia, opting for a domesticating strategy. In the example below (figs 23-24), we can see Captain Haddock and the Thompsons standing on the deck of a ship while seagull droppings fall on the hat of one of the Thompsons.



Fig. 23. *Le Temple du Soleil*.  
Page 5. Middle left.  
© Hergé/Moulinsart 2016



Fig. 24. *Le Temple du Soleil*.  
Page 5. Middle right.  
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The sound of the seagull's feces falling on the Thompson's hat is shown as PLOC in the source French text. The Persian translator has altered this sound into a Persian onomatopoeia تلپ/telp/. تلپ/telp/ or تلپ/talap/ is an onomatopoeia in Persian indicating the sound of the drop of something on the ground (Dehkhoda Dictionary).

Another example of a domesticating strategy is found in *Tintin and the Land of Black Gold*, translated and published by Tarikh-o Farhang Publications from the English version. In the beginning of the story (fig. 27), the Thompsons are at a gas station, endlessly honking to call for the gas station attendant to come and fill the tank. The honking sound, however, is represented differently in the Persian translation.



Fig. 25. *Tintin an Pays de l'or Noir*.

Page 1. Top middle.

© Hergé/Moulinsart 2016



Fig. 26. *Tintin and the Land of Black Gold*.

Page 1. Top middle.

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Fig. 27. *Tintin and the Land of Black Gold*.

Page 1. Top middle.

(© Unauthorized Translation and Publication)

As can be seen above, using the English version as the source text, the Persian translator has domesticated the honking sound in the Persian version in the same way that the English translator had done with the French source. That is to say, in the translation of TOOOT into the Persian

sound of **بوق**/bu:q<sup>11</sup>/, just as in the translation of the French POUET into the English TOOOT, the translators have opted for a domesticating strategy. It needs to be noted that these inconsistent choices may originate in a wish by the translators to avoid an extensive importation of foreign elements into the Iranian cultural repertoire. Supposedly, despite the less frequent use of the foreignized strategies in more recent translations, a canonized position can still be assumed for the translated comics in the Persian literary polysystem at the time when the edition was published in the country.

## 5. Discussion

Both “comics” and their translations were entirely new to the Iranian polysystem at the time of their introduction into Iran, which is an indication of the superiority of the comic repertoire and a gap in Iranian literary polysystem. The analysis of the statistics shows that translated literature has been peripherally positioned in the literary polysystem of Iran from c. 1978 to 2003. As was shown in Table 1, less than 25% of children’s books, including BD, and approximately the same percentage of general works published during this period were translations, which indicates their peripheral locus. Despite the gap in the literary system, comics and their translations were also not welcomed by publishers and policy makers in the country since they posed a potential ideological threat to the receptor culture as an Islamic community. This situation led to the official termination of the publication of *Tintin* books in Iran after the Islamic Revolution of 1979, which in turn resulted in the appearance of unauthorized editions that were adapted to the newly founded Islamic structure of the post-Revolution society.

The changes in the preliminary data were observed to be conform to these ideological transformations. The analysis of the onomatopoeia in the corpus of study also corroborated the gap of the comics genre in the translated literature of Iran. According to Chang, the superiority of a cultural repertoire over the alternative options can be considered as a favourable starting point in predicting its acceptance by a cultural entity (136). In other words, the analysis of the onomatopoeia in the corpus has shown that imported/foreignized repertoires have found their ways into the canon of the weak Persian polysystem. As was predicted, although there were cases of localization and domestication (albeit more so in recent translations), many of the observed translations of onomatopoeia were retained, borrowed and introduced into the Persian translated literature. With regard to comics, the immature, susceptible, and fragile Persian literary polysystem seems to have given way to foreign stylistic items and welcomed them into its repertoire. The instances of foreignized onomatopoeia include such sounds as interjections, laughter, dogs barking, ringing

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<sup>11</sup> The letter **ڙ**, normally transliterated as /q/, is the 24<sup>th</sup> letter in the Persian alphabet. This is a voiced velar fricative sound, close to the Parisian French “r”. Despite using different letters in Persian alphabet, the pronunciation of this letter is the same as the pronunciation of ئ sound.

telephones, snoring, clocks ticking, guns firing, the drone of airplanes, car horns blowing, etc. However, this foreignizing tendency appears more consistently in the editions published in the 1980s. Conversely, the books published in the 2000s by Nashr-e Tarikh-o Farhang Publications, Rayehey-e Andishe Publications, as well as the scanlations, were less inclined towards foreignizing strategies, a shift which may be a sign of the dynamic position of literary systems and sub-systems in the translated literary polysystem. It seems that translated comics in the polysystem of Iran have moved from the canon towards a less central position.

## 6. Conclusion

Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory ("Polysystem studies"), Tamaki's approach (119-146), the synthetic model of translation description proposed by Lambert and Van Gorp (42-53) as well as Venuti's domestication/foreignization model were applied in the present research to study the position of the Persian translations of *Les Aventures de Tintin* in the translated literary polysystem of Iran. Based on publication and translation statistics in Iran, the preliminary data, and macro- and micro-level analyses, a gap can be seen in the translation of comics in the polysystem of Iran's literature which has led to foreignization as the prevailing strategy used by translators to render onomatopoeic signifiers into Persian. This approach could be attributed to the virtual absence of comics and their translations in Persian literature. The void of this particular literary genre in its modern sense seems to have led translators to consider a canonized position for the source comic books and accordingly, to retain certain foreign cultural elements in their translations. However, it must be noted that this central position is more salient in the earlier translations of the 1980s. Looking at the translations produced by two recent publishers in 2000 as well as translations provided by fans on the Internet indicates a lessening tendency to employ foreignizing strategies. This suggests that a translation polysystem is a naturally dynamic phenomenon. It seems that the position of comics' translation in the translation polysystem of Persian literature is moving from a somewhat canonized position towards a more peripheral one.

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