

The initiator in the translation process: A case study of *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran in the indigenous languages of South Africa

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This article examines the role played by the initiator in the translation of *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran into the indigenous South African languages, and the resulting influence on the translator's decisions. This is achieved through an exploration of how this work came to be translated into the indigenous languages of South Africa, with a discussion of who initiated the translation process, and the intention behind the decision. Translation scholars generally agree that the translator is seldom given an explicit brief; it then becomes his or her responsibility to ask for one. In considering the function of the initiator in the translation of this work by Gibran, the aim was to establish whether the brief provided by the initiator was useful. The article seeks to establish some guidelines as to what constitutes a clear translation brief, in the case of literary translation in particular.

Introduction

The translation of literary works from English into the African languages is not a new phenomenon, as literary translation was one of the methods used to develop the African languages. There are parallels between the translation of *The Prophet* and the translation of John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress* into African languages, which provided the impetus for the creation of original works by African-language authors in the early 20th century. In 1867, the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress* was translated by Tiyo Soga into isiXhosa as *Uhambo lomhambi*, and published by Lovedale Press. This was followed by the Sesotho translation *Leeto la Mokreste* by Rev. Mabile in 1872, and the isiZulu version, *Ukuhamba kwesihambi* by JW Colenso in 1883. The Setswana translation, *Loeto lwa ga Mokeresete*, by Moffat and Sandilands appeared in 1909. The second part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, translated by Henderson Soga into isiXhosa, was published in 1929. The Venda version, *Lwendo la Muendi*, by ED Giesekke, was published in 1960, followed by R Rammala's Sesotho sa Leboa translation in 1966. In the same vein, the translation of *The Prophet* into indigenous South African languages was viewed by Annemie Botha (2006) as an equally valuable contribution to the African languages literary canon. Furthermore, it constituted progress towards achieving equal status for all the South African indigenous languages, and also towards exposing a larger number of South African readers to the philosophy and literature of a well-known philosopher.

The article begins with an overview of how *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran entered the South African indigenous languages literary scene. Thereafter, the author considers the role of the initiator and the resulting influence on the translator's decisions during the translation process. By

examining the role played by the initiator in the translation of *The Prophet* by Kahlil Gibran, the article aims to investigate what can be said to constitute a clear brief for literary translation in general, and whether, to quote Nord (1997:30), 'a good brief spells a better translation'.

The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran in the indigenous South African languages

In 1998, the initiator Annemie Botha, who was at the time employed by the Gauteng Provincial Department of Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture submitted a proposal to the Lebanese Embassy, the Gibran National Committee in Lebanon and the World Lebanese Cultural Union in South Africa that *The Prophet* be translated into the indigenous South African languages. All supported the initiative. The first translations to be completed were in isiZulu and Sesotho sa Leboa, published in 2003, and then distributed to provincial libraries in the province of Gauteng. In 2006, Botha, who had by then taken up employment with the publishing company Pooka CC, obtained further permission from the Gibran National Committee for the translation and publication of *The Prophet* into isiXhosa, Sesotho, Setswana and Xitsonga. The Department of Arts and Culture funded the continuation of the translations into these languages. Botha also obtained permission from the Gibran National Committee in Lebanon to reproduce the charcoal sketches and watercolour paintings originally made by Gibran for *The Prophet*. The translated books were published in 2007 under the following titles:

- Sesotho: *Moporofeta*, translated by M Tsiu and edited by NB Sekere
- Setswana: *Moporofeti*, translated by P Sebate and edited by MR Malope
- IsiXhosa: *UMprofethi*, translated by K Moropa and edited by Z Mtumane

- Xitsonga: *Muprofeta*, translated by E Mabaso and edited by PH Nkuna.

Some brief details about Kahlil Gibran as author and artist reveal why Botha, together with the National Department of Arts and Culture, considered the translation of this work into indigenous South African languages important. It is also worth noting that the edition of *The Prophet* which the translators used was published in 2004.

Kahlil Gibran's biographical sketch

Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931), a Lebanese artist, is one of the most widely read writers, distinguished by both the outstanding literary quality of his work and his philosophy. He is perhaps best known for *The Prophet* which was first published in 1923, and has been translated into more than 20 languages. Waterfield (in Gibran, 1994:ix–xi) reports that Kahlil Gibran was born in 1883 in the village of Bisharri, a Maronite Christian village in the mountains of northern Lebanon, to the daughter of a Maronite priest. In 1895 Gibran, his mother and two sisters emigrated to the United States, settling in Boston, where there was a growing Lebanese community. Gibran returned to Lebanon to complete his education and, after four years of studying Arabic and French, he left for Greece, Rome, Spain and then Paris, where he attended the Academy Julian in Paris from 1908 to 1910. By the time he returned to Boston, he had already started writing. His first published work was a short monograph on music, written in Arabic and published in New York in 1905. Indeed, he wrote most of his works in Arabic, which was his home language. It is said that even after having lived in America for most of his life, he would first write a poem in Arabic and then translate it into English. *The Prophet* (1923) is counted among his English writings, and is viewed as his best literary piece. Waterfield, in his introduction to a translation of *The Prophet* by Cole (in Gibran, 1994:viii), writes as follows:

The fame of *The Prophet* is such that it has eclipsed these earlier works and made people think that Gibran was a one-book wonder. This is far from being the case. Gibran only began to write books in English at the end of the 1910s, by which time he had already had an illustrious career as an Arabic man of letters ...

In *The Prophet*, Gibran deals with topics that resonate with African culture, such as love, marriage, children, giving, eating and drinking, and freedom. Sebate (2007:20) was acutely sensitive to this, stating:

Although these topics are found in different literatures of Setswana, what makes Gibran's manipulation of these topics unique and forceful, is that he, in most instances, deviates from conventional views held by many people in his treatment of these themes.

As literary topics these are not new, but Gibran's philosophy then sets him apart from other writers, making the translation of his work into other languages important.

Some sub-components of translation competence as articulated by Beeby (2000), which Botha seems to have taken into consideration when appointing translators, are examined below.

Translation competence

All the translators of *The Prophet* into indigenous South African languages were lecturers of the Department of African Languages at the University of South Africa (Unisa) at the time. They were therefore selected on the basis of their 'communicative competence' in the two languages (Beeby, 2000:45), in other words, the underlying systems of knowledge and skills necessary for linguistic communication (in this case, English and an indigenous language). Unisa became the appropriate service provider as it is the only institution in the country that offers eight of the nine official indigenous languages in South Africa, through its Department of African Languages. Since one of the prerequisites set by the Gibran National Committee was that each translation must be certified by a tertiary institution or a lecturer, each translator was therefore asked to nominate an editorial associate for his or her target language. Two of the associate editors were also from the Department of African Languages at Unisa, and the other two were from neighbouring tertiary institutions. It can also be argued that 'extra-linguistic competence' (Beeby, 2000:45), which includes theoretical knowledge about translation, knowledge about source and target cultures, and knowledge about the world in general, was also to be taken into account by the initiator, since some of the translators were creative writers and professional translators. 'Instrumental and professional competence' (Beeby, 2000:47), which includes the knowledge and skills related to translating as a profession, knowledge and use of different documentation sources, and knowledge and use of the work market, was demonstrated predominantly by the initiator, as she executed her duties from the conception of this project until its completion. For example, the initiator arranged a meeting with the two parties for the purpose of explaining the brief and signing the contracts. The translators and editors were given very limited time to complete the work. This was found to be a constraint, as the contract contained no clause allowing for any form of negotiation. The contracts were signed by both parties on 13 September 2006 and the translation and editing were to be completed on or before 1 November 2006.

The next section begins by giving an exposition of the translation brief as propounded by Nord (1997) and thereafter discusses the translation brief provided by Botha as the initiator.

The initiator and the translation brief

Nord (1992) embraced Reiss and Vermeer's view that texts should be translated according to a *skopos*. It was in the late 1970s and early 1980s when Reiss and Vermeer formulated the functional approach to translation, terming it *skopos* theory because it is the *skopos*, that is, the purpose or scope of the translated text that determines the translation process (Shuttleworth & Cowie, 1997:156). In terms of this model, the intended recipient of the target text is an important factor in any translation process. The recipients of the target text have their own culture-specific world knowledge, as well as their own expectations and communicative needs. The initiator of the translation wishes the

target text to serve a particular purpose or function when it is received by recipients whose culture is different from that of the original. She or he therefore expects the translator to produce a target text which conforms to the requirements of the translation *skopos*. The main principle which determines the translation process is the purpose of the overall translation action. However, by introducing the concept of loyalty, Nord adapted the functionalist theory to what she considered to be the requirements of the translation task. For Nord (1997:20), it is the initiator who 'starts off the translation process and determines its course by defining the purpose (*skopos*) for which the target text is needed'. The initiator can be an individual person, a group or an institution, and expects the translator to produce a target text which conforms to the requirements of the translation *skopos*. Ideally the initiator should give as much information as possible regarding the purpose of the text, the addressees, the medium of the intended communication and the intended function of the text.

Nord (1997:30) states that it is the brief that spells out what kind of translation is needed, and 'this is why the initiator actually decides on the translation *skopos*'. Translation scholars generally agree that a clear brief from the initiator is rare – a view supported by Nord (1997:30), who writes, 'Clients do not normally bother to give the translator an explicit brief'. Chesterman & Wagner (2002:40) explain that the client's instructions are called a 'brief' precisely because they are brief, indeed short and usually do not cover even the essentials. Magwebu (2007:1) endorses the above viewpoints as she shares her experience of being commissioned to translate the novel *Dancing in the Dust* by Molohe from English into isiXhosa:

The initiator of the translation somehow issued the translation brief, **but the brief only came as a mere statement, with absolutely no clarification of issues** between the initiator and the translator [own emphasis]. The call for the translation of this novel (*Dancing in the Dust*) is absolutely the kind of deal that was negotiated over the telephone and e-mail, with nothing necessarily binding as to how the translation was to be executed, for whom, for which purpose, with which boundaries etc.

As Magwebu's account reveals, the translator is usually given very little information by the initiator on how the translation should be carried out, and this can pose a problem during the translation process.

The brief supplied by the initiator comprised the following three components:

- a one-page memorandum by Botha, the initiator or commissioner
- additional explanatory notes to the translators and editorial associates
- preliminary reading on Kahlil Gibran as an author and artist.

A one-page memorandum by Botha, the initiator or commissioner

In this communication (Appendix A), the initiator provided some information about Kahlil Gibran as writer and artist, and highlighted the significance of translating *The Prophet* into the indigenous languages of South Africa, for example,

exposing the South African reader to Gibran's philosophy as his works:

...speak to a diverse audience, bringing them together in a divided world'. Botha also noted that there is a 'remarkable parallel between the thought processes and philosophies of Gibran and those of the South African people, especially in *The Prophet*, which deals with everyday aspects of life.

Hence she saw it imperative that the book be translated.

Additional explanatory notes to the translators and editorial associates

In the additional notes (Appendix B), the initiator provided specific details as to how the translation process would proceed. She drew the attention of the translators to the actual translation of the text. For instance, the translation had to be in verse form as is the case with the original text. Each translator had to write an introduction to his or her translation. In this introduction, the translator had to give an overview of *The Prophet*, mentioning similarities and differences between Gibran's philosophy and that of the target language culture. For the dustcover, brief biographical details of both the author and the translator were to be written in the target language. The initiator also supplied detailed information regarding the appearance of the dustcover. Since Gibran had created specific artworks with which to illustrate his book, the translator was also required to translate the introduction to Gibran's artworks for *The Prophet*, titles of the artworks and copyright text. Working in close cooperation with the translator, the editorial associate was to certify the translation of the specific language as required by the Gibran National Committee. The duty of the editorial associate was to 'edit, evaluate, make recommendations to the translator and comment on the value of the translation as translation, as literary work in its own right, as well as the contribution of the translated text to the world standard of the language.' (Botha, 2006:2) (see Appendix B).

Preliminary reading on Kahlil Gibran as an author and artist

The preliminary reading on Kahlil Gibran comprised the following:

- a speech by John Haddad (2001), President of the World Lebanese Cultural Union, to commemorate Gibran
- an article from the Lebanese magazine *Al-Hader*
- an introduction to the isiZulu translation and brief text about Gibran by Ntuli (2003)
- introductions to some of Gibran's books translated into English:
 - *The vision: Reflections on the way of the soul* translated by Cole (1994)
 - *The beloved: Reflections on the path of the heart* translated by Walbridge (1997)
- a letter by Ntuli (2005) endorsing the translation of *The Prophet* into other indigenous South African languages (see Appendix C).

In view of the above, it can be said that the initiator provided information that guided the translators during the translation process.

Observations

Before examining the translated texts, let us look briefly at what was initially considered the determiner of accurate and 'good' translations. In the 1960s, when a number of linguistic theories were formulated, the term 'equivalence' was considered essential in any definition of translation. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, it was in the late 1970s that the notion of equivalence began to be re-examined, and new ideas relating to the nature of meaning in translation studies began to form, for example the *skopos* theory by Reiss and Vermeer (1984). Another case is the work of House (1981) which represents a shift in the notion of equivalence, as she defines this concept in terms of the function of language. In her view, a translation must function as the equivalent of its source text in a different culture or situation, but the translation must also use equivalent pragmatic means to achieve this functional equivalence. A slightly different view of this concept is held by Newmark (1988). Although he states at one stage that the concept of equivalence is a 'dead duck', he upholds the concept by using another pair of concepts, namely semantic and communicative translation. For Newmark (1991:10–13), a semantic translation is author-centred, and a communicative translation is reader-centred. Semantic translation is source-language biased, while communicative translation is target-language biased. Following in Vermeer's footsteps, Nord (1992:40) also departed from the equivalence-based approach to translation, having found the concept of equivalence to be illusionary, because it makes unrealistic demands. Heylen (1993:2) states that the comparison of translations with original works inevitably results in the evaluation of translations in terms of right and wrong, with emphasis on finding mistakes in the translation. She views advocates of normative approaches to translation as being insensitive to certain socio-cultural aspects which play an important role in the translation process. The reduction of translation problems to translatability problems and the neglect of the conditions under which translations are produced, so that they may function in the receiving culture, are typical of such insensitivity. According to Heylen (1993) a non-prescriptive model is essential in order to explain the time-bound and culture-bound criteria which play an important role in the translator's activity. Such a model should not only take into account the match between the source text and the target text, but also investigate the underlying constraints and motivations which inform the translation process. In the case of *The Prophet*, it can be said that factors such as guidelines in the translation brief, additional reading material, prerequisites set by the Gibran National Committee and the involvement of the Lebanese Embassy informed the translation process, and in turn influenced the translators' decisions.

Then, considering the above, the following section does not criticise or evaluate the individual translations, but examines some noticeable similarities in the translated texts. The aim is to give a brief overview of how the translations were rendered. The analysis is limited to introductions to the translation, use of punctuation and translating of names.

Introductions to the translation

Each translator was required to write his or her introduction in English for that particular translation, and then translate it into the target language (see Appendix B). In the introduction, each translator expressed in his or her own words the fact that Gibran's philosophy sets him apart from other writers, as he challenges the reader's mind. The provided 'Preliminary reading on Gibran' clearly had some bearing on the introductions produced by the different translators, as they articulated related views. Some of the similarities between the introductions can be attributed to Ntuli's (2003) introduction to the isiZulu translation, which formed part of additional reading. The translation of this world-renowned classic was viewed by each translator as a contribution to the literature of his or her target language, as shown by the extracts in Table 1.

In their introductions, the translators also explained that *The Prophet* represented a type of poetry not common in African languages. According to Waterfield (in Gibran, 1994:xii), who defines prose poetry as 'prose with poetic emotion and rhythm', Gibran experimented with the use of more than one meter per poem, and developed the prose poem as an Arabic form. Waterfield (in Gibran, 1994:xii) states further that Gibran played an important role in initiating the Romantic revolution in Arabic literature, 'shifting it from the safe ground of craftsmanship to the dangerous waters of inspiration and imagination'. Drury (1995:211) defines a prose poem as characterised by 'intense condensed language'. He further mentions that the prose poem was pioneered in 19th century France by Aloysius Bertrand and Charles Baudelaire and it represented a form of poetry which was a kind of 'reaction against the strict poetic dictates of the French Academy' (Drury, 1995:211). However, some translators recognised the uniqueness of this literary genre and saw a resemblance to traditional poetry, or *izibongo* as illustrated: [Setswana] 'Many parts of these poems are structured like traditional poetry' (Sebate, 2007:22); [Sesotho] 'To a large extent, the manner is similar to style used in praise poems' (Tsiu, 2007:22); and [isiXhosa] 'this book, which can be classified as prose poetry, presents a form of literature which is not common in Xhosa' (Moropa, 2007:18).

These extracts may be usefully compared with that from Ntuli (2003:12): [isiZulu] 'The structure of many parts of these poems is reminiscent of the style used by the traditional bard or *imbongi*. This book will open the eyes of many young Zulu poets to different methods of composing poetry'.

The Xitsonga translator took a slightly different approach to that of the other translators, as he concluded his introduction by writing a short poem whose opening lines read as follows: 'The Prophet is a colossal ship that lands us in Lebanon from our Tsonga [Xitsonga] homes/ The Prophet is a mirror that mirrors our Orphaleseness ...'.

Perhaps one of the reasons why the translators likened the prose poems to *izibongo* is the frequent use of repetition which is a common feature of praise poetry.

Use of punctuation

Punctuation is considered in this discussion since the initiator pointed out that the translator was required to pay special

attention to Gibran’s style, mainly retaining the verse form of the prose poems. According to Aitchison (1994:79–80), the main purpose of punctuation is to clarify the meaning of the written message, as incorrect punctuation can result in ambiguity and absurdity. Punctuation in poetry serves ‘to encapsulate thoughts and ideas; aid in coherence and the presentation of meaning i.e., to avoid confusion’ (Relf, 2011). The nature of this poetry impacted on the use of punctuation. The examples in Table 1 show the use of an additional comma in the target text (TT) compared with the source text (ST) specifically in the Sesotho languages. For example, in instances where no comma was used in the ST, a comma was added in the TT (ST: 0 versus TT: 1), or where one or two commas were used in the ST, a second or third comma respectively was inserted in the TT (ST: 1/2 versus TT: 2/3), and so on. Jackson and Stockwell (2011:27) affirm that the comma, semicolon and colon are used to mark structural units within a sentence, especially where there is likely to be ambiguity in reading it.

The use of an additional comma in the translation may be viewed as part of the translator’s strategy for maintaining the poetic form, since the brief stipulated that the verse form should be maintained (see Appendix B).

Translation of names

Van Coillie (2006:123–124) says that names in literature serve specific purposes or functions, one of them being to identify characters, and when a translator translates a name he or she wants to ensure that the translated name functions exactly as the original name. Van Coillie is of the opinion that non-translated names can have a negative impact on the target reader who may sometimes find it difficult to pronounce the name due to morphological and phonological differences between the source and the target languages. The few names found in the book, namely Almustafa (the Prophet), Almitra (the woman) and Orphalese (the city), appear in Table 3 with their phonological adaptations. All three names were indigenised in Setswana, and one in Xitsonga.

In African languages in general, a syllable in a word comprises a consonant plus a vowel (CV). In translating

Almustafa [A/lo/mo/se/ta/fa] and Almitra [A/lo/mmi/tse] we notice that vowels have been added to the syllables [l > lo] respectively, and [s > se]. Again the syllable /tra/ has been changed to /tse/ as /tr/ is not a common sound combination in most of the indigenous languages. The names were probably indigenised for easy pronunciation. As the names seem to be Arabic rather than English, it can be argued that the use of Arabic names by the author is a reflection of his cultural background. Nord (1997:97–98) cautions that when names are translated they may lose their function as markers of a foreign culture, as names are ‘markers as to which culture the text world belongs to’. Magwebu (2007:90) backs Nord’s point of view as she retained the Setswana names in Molope’s *Dancing in the Dust* for ‘the sake of authenticity’ and also to preserve the ‘Setswana tone’ set by the author in the original text. The translation brief did not address the translation of names, and for that reason their phonological adaptation was not considered by the isiXhosa and Sotho translators. The initiator respected the translator’s choice with regards to this.

Conclusion

The initiator, who was also the publisher, guided the translation process efficiently. After obtaining permission from the Gibran National Committee to continue with the translation of *The Prophet* into other indigenous South African languages, she approached translators and editors selected on the basis of competence and experience. The signing of contracts by the parties involved, and the certification of the translation by the associate editor signified commitment and accountability. The translator was not regarded as solely responsible for the final product. The initiator’s approach dismissed the misconception that simply any person who is proficient in a language can translate. In choosing the translation method, the translators were directed by the translation brief. The translation brief was not ‘a mere statement’. It was informative as it stated the reason for the translation and helped the translators to make informed decisions. The introductory

Table 1: Content of the introductions

Language	Examples	Salient phrases
Setswana	These are some of the views that will intrigue, challenge and get the readers talking, arguing, debating and engaging this book (Sebate, 2007:20).	challenge and get the readers talking
Xitsonga	The Vatsonga [Xitsonga] readers will find <i>The Prophet</i> a very valuable resource that challenges the mind and offers solutions to topics of everyday nature such as love, work, religion etc. (Mabaso, 2007:21).	challenges the mind
Setswana	This book is without doubt a laudable contribution to the Setswana literature, a literature that is also accessible to its sister languages, namely, Northern Sotho [Sesotho sa Leboa] and Southern Sotho [Sesotho] (Sebate, 2007:19).	laudable contribution to the Setswana literature
Sesotho	The Sesotho translation, <i>Moprofeta</i> , will be an important contribution to the heritage of the Basotho as well as their literature (Tsiu, 2007: 21).	an important contribution to the heritage of the Basotho
isiXhosa	Therefore, there is no doubt that the translated version of Gibran’s book will make a valuable contribution to Xhosa literature (Moropa, 2007:20).	a valuable contribution to Xhosa literature
Compare: isiZulu	The Zulu translation of <i>The Prophet</i> enriches the Zulu literature in many ways ... The translation of Gibran’s book is a welcome contribution to Zulu literature ... I don’t doubt that the readers will find the book stimulating and challenging (Ntuli, 2003:8, 13).	a welcome contribution to Zulu literature stimulating and challenging

Table 2: Insertion of an additional comma

Text	Punctuation
Title of prose poem: <i>The coming of the ship</i>	
ST: (p. 2): For to stay, though the hours burn in the night, is to freeze and crystallize and be bound in the mould.	2 commas
TT: Setswana (p. 29): <i>Gonne go emaema, le fa diura di swa mo bosigong, ke go gatsela le go nna segegane, ka tloga ka phuthelwa ke mouta.</i>	3 commas
ST: (p. 2): And alone and without his nest shall the eagle fly across the sun.	no comma
TT: Setswana (p. 29): <i>Ka boyona e se na sentlhaga sa yona, ntsu e fofa go kgabaganya letsatsi.</i>	1 comma
TT: Sesotho (p. 29): <i>Mme boinotshing le ntle ho sehlhla sa yona, ntsu e tla tlameha ho fofela letsatsing.</i>	1 comma
ST: (p. 3): Ready am I to go, and my eagerness with sails full set awaits the wind.	1 comma
TT: Sesotho (p. 29): <i>Ke malala-a-laotswe ho tsamaya, mme mafolofolo a me ka diseili tse seng di lokile, a emetse moya.</i>	2 commas
Title of prose poem: <i>The farewell</i>	
ST: (p. 97) And Almitra the seeress said, Blessed be this day and this place and your spirit that has spoken	1 comma
TT: Sesotho (p. 103): <i>Mme Almitra, moprofeta, a re, Ho hlonofofatswe letsatsi lena le sebaka sena le moya wa hao o buileng</i>	3 commas
TT: Setswana (p. 109) <i>Mme Alommitse wa sedupe one are: Go sego letsatsi le, le lefelo le, le mowa wa gago o o buileng</i>	2 commas

Table 3: Indigenisation of proper names

Source language name	Translation	Target language
Almustafa	Alomosetafa [A/lo/mo/se/ta/fa]	Setswana
Almitra	Alommitse [A/lo/mmi/tse]	Setswana
Orphalese	Ofaletse [O/fa/le/tse]	Setswana
	Ofalisi [O/fa/li/si]	Xitsonga

reading material on Gibran was helpful as it was the translators' first encounter with Gibran's literary work. It provided some guidance regarding Gibran's style. The translators were made aware in the brief that although they were to translate the meaning of the author's words as contained in the book, they were also to consider the author's style and maintain the mood of the source text and, as a result, opted for the faithful translation approach. They nevertheless regarded themselves as authorities in their own right, as they modified punctuation in order to elucidate meaning and in some instances indigenised proper names to eliminate foreignness. Some of the views expressed in the translation brief did not necessarily reflect the initiator's opinion, but were requirements set by the Gibran National Committee (see Appendix B). As noted in the introductions to the various volumes, the translation of Gibran's work was viewed by the translators as a contribution to the development of African languages literatures in written form, which are still very young in comparison with English. It can be claimed that the initiator provided a brief which helped the translators to gain insight into Gibran as author and artist, and also to make informed decisions during the translation process.

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Appendix A: The translation brief

GIBRAN.transl.A&C.translators.info.gen.0906

TRANSLATION AND PUBLICATION OF *THE PROPHET* BY KAHLIL GIBRAN INTO THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF SOUTH AFRICA.

The Prophet by Kahlil Gibran has been translated and published in more than 50 languages worldwide. In 2004 it has also been published in Northern Sotho and Zulu

Kahlil Gibran, (1883-1931) Lebanese artist, writer and philosopher, is one of the most read philosophers and writers of our time. His philosophical works differ from other philosophers in that it is written to be understood by and is accessible to everyone. His style is at the same time of outstanding literary quality. Gibran's own sketches and paintings accompany his literature, thereby adding to its artistic value, meaning and interpretation. His works are an extraordinary combination of literature, artworks, dance and musicality.

He was exposed to Eastern and Western theology and his works speak to a diverse audience, bringing them together in a divided world.

There is a remarkable parallel between the thought processes and philosophies of Gibran and those of the South African people, especially in *The Prophet*, which deals with everyday aspects of life: freedom, work, friendship, love, children, death, etc. The need for translations of his works in the African languages was obvious.

The project was initiated and proposed in 1998 by me, then of the Department Sport, Recreation, Arts and Culture, Gauteng, to the Lebanese Embassy, the Gibran National Committee in Lebanon and the World Lebanese Cultural Union (WLCU) in SA.

Prof. Ntuli completed the Zulu translation and Prof. Serudu the translation in Northern Sotho. The translations were certified by Prof. Msimang and Prof. Groenewald, respectively, as requested by the Gibran National Committee in Lebanon.

Since 2005 I am acting privately as consultant and project manager of arts and culture projects. The Department Arts and Culture has now funded the continuation of the translations and publication in more South African languages for the 2005/6 book year, namely Sesotho, Xitsonga, Setswana and IsiXhosa. The Gibran National Committee has granted copyright to my company, Pooka CC, for the new translations and publications.

The Gibran National Committee requested that the translations should be certified by a tertiary institution or a lecturer in the specific language at a tertiary institution.

PROJECT MANAGER:

Annie Botha (AJM) for Pooka CC

Tel: 044 533 0705

Cell: 082 967 2889

E-mail: unicorn@icon.co.za

Postal Address: POSTNET, Suite #57, Private Bag X1006, Plettenberg Bay, 6600

AJM
SEPT 2006

Appendix B: Additional explanatory notes to the translators and editorial associates

GIBRAN.transl.A&C.translators.info1.0906

TRANSLATION OF *THE PROPHET* BY KAHLIL GIBRAN INTO THE OFFICIAL LANGUAGES OF SOUTH AFRICA.**ADDITIONAL EXPLANATORY NOTES TO THE TRANSLATORS AND EDITORIAL ASSOCIATES****1. Translation of the text**

Translators will receive a copy of the original text.

Special attention should be given to the typography used by Gibran. The translation should be in verse form.

Please number your pages according to your own translation.

2. Translation of the Index

Page numbering of the set text will be done by the designer.

3. Introduction to be written in English and translated into the specific language.

An Introduction to the translation should be written by the translator in English and also translated into the specific language.

The introduction gives an overview of *The Prophet*, as well as similarities and differences between the philosophies and the literary aspects of Gibran and the specific language. Careful attention should be given in the handling of excerpts from the original text.

A copy of the Introduction to the Zulu text, written by Prof. Ntuli, is included as an example.

4. Translation of an *Introduction to Gibran's artworks* for *The Prophet*.

Gibran has created specific artworks to accompany and enlighten the text of *The Prophet*. In the Zulu and Northern Sotho other works of Gibran were chosen. I am hopeful that we will be able to get the artworks on CD from Lebanon.

This Introduction will be printed in English and the translated text.

The text of the Introduction to artworks will be given to you as soon as possible.

5. Translation of the names of the artworks and copyright text

The text of the included artworks will be printed with the artworks, as well as copyright details. This will also be given to you as soon as possible.

6. Translation of texts of dustcover.

As per example of the Zulu copy – a photocopy included – the following:

On dustcover:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely 'A. Ntuli', with the year '2006' written below it.

Appendix B: Continued

2.

Front page: title, writer and translator – in the translated language

Inside flap front: A short review of Gibran and the book – in translated language

Inside flap back: A short review on the translator – in translated language
as well as a clear small black and white photograph to be presented as soon as possible.

Back: An excerpt taken from the Introduction - in the language

I will also select a few sentences from the certification of the editorial associate in English.

7. Certification by the editorial associate nominated by the translator.

One of the prerequisites of the Gibran National Committee is to have the translation certified by a tertiary institution or a lecturer in the specific language.

The editing associate has to edit, evaluate, make recommendations to the translator and comment on the value of the translation as translation, as literary work in its own right, as well as the contribution of the translated text to the world standard of the language.

8. Editing of proofs in conjunction with the editorial associate.

The editing associate has to do the proof-reading of the set text and give advice on corrections. This should of course be done in close cooperation with the translator.

The final translated manuscript must be supplied to me in MS Word format on CD.

It is incumbent upon the translator to safe-guard the translation by retaining electronic copy/copies of the manuscript.

The translator must also, as soon as the manuscript is completed, e-mail a copy of the completed translation to my address.

Afu Bolha
Sept 2006

Appendix C: A letter by Ntuli (2005) endorsing the translation of *The Prophet* into other indigenous South African languages

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2005-04-15

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**Translation of Kahlil Gibran's "The Prophet"**

I was privileged to be one of the first two translators of this great classic into local indigenous languages. I was responsible for the translation into IsiZulu. The leader of the project was Ms Annekie Botha who proved to be one of the most capable and conscientious editors I have ever worked with.

I agreed to be part of the project after discovering the depth and richness of ideas contained in the book. It transcends religious demarcations and challenges every individual in a number of ways. The writer gives us fresh insight into topics such as "Marriage", "Freedom", "Giving", "Work". IsiZulu literature has been enriched by the addition of this translation.

I fully support any effort to have this classic translated into as many local languages as possible. In many issues the book deals with, it endorses the African philosophy known as *ubuntu/botho*. Apart from this, there are many sections of the book the style of which is reminiscent of African traditional praise poetry, izibongo.

I hope it will not be too long before other communities are able to access this great work in their own languages.



PROFESSOR DBZ NTULI