

University of Tartu
Department of Semiotics

Fatemeh Tavakoli

CULTURAL SPECIFICATION IN
TRANSLATION
STUDY OF “THE CONFERENCE OF THE BIRDS”

Master Thesis

Supervisors:
Prof. Peeter Torop
Elin Sütiste, PhD

Tartu
2014

Contents

Preface	1
1 Introduction to the Book	6
I <i>The Conference of the Birds</i> as a Source Text	6
II <i>The Conference of the Birds</i> as a Target Text in Translation	24
2 Translation and Text	29
I Aspects of Translation	29
II Formation of Text	37
3 Empirical Examples	40
I The Penname and the Title	40
II Short Stories	44
III Symbolism in the Text	49
IV Translators' Strategies	57
Conclusion	64
Kokkuvõte	67

Preface

In this thesis the issues of translation of the influential Persian text *Manteq-o-Teir* from the 12th century is studied. It is known in English usually as *The Conference of the Birds* and in Estonian as *Lindude keel*. It is written by Attar, and its latest existing translations into English is in 2011 and into Estonian in 2012.

The main idea of the thesis is to explore how the dominant of a text can change in cross-cultural translation; how this change can affect the perceived genre of the text and what kind of misunderstandings on the part of the reader may follow as a consequence. The final aim is to understand the cultural communication behind the translation and representing a text in another culture.

The motivation behind choosing *The Conference of the Birds* by Attar as the subject of this thesis is its rich potential for being studied in different fields of semiotics. For example, its allegorical theme makes it an interesting object for semiotics of translation and cultural semiotics.

The thesis centres on two aspects of the text: first, the formation of meanings in *The Conference of the Birds* as a text itself, and secondly, in its translations. The formation of any text in a culture could be described as the result of communication between its signifiers within that culture. The translation of a verbal text can become a gateway for communication between cultures. The problem arises for the reader in another culture when misunderstanding happens. This issue is inevitable due to differences in the source and target cultural semiospheres. Hence beside the translation of the words, expressions and terms, a specified detailed description might be needed. Readers would consequently obtain a better understanding.

A translation can ignite the reader's interest in another culture. Each translation could be considered as a cultural phenomenon itself. When the target text is from a different age, a loyal translation could reflect the very essence of a culture, the spirit of the literature. For reaching such an aim, translator, in addition to transferring the words and ideas, has a cultural task which is transferring the culture.

The main theme of *The Conference of the Birds* is Sufism, a branch of Islamic mysticism. Among the most famous Iranian scholars who have written on Sufism and specifically about Attar, Abdolhossein Zarinkoob and Badi'ozzaman Foruzanfar have to be mentioned. Abdolhossein Zarinkoob was a prominent scholar of Iranian literature, history of literature, Persian culture and history from 1955 (Zarinkoob 1970). Badi'ozzaman Foruzanfar, was a professor of literature at Tehran University for several decades until 1970. He was a scholar of Persian literature, Iranian linguistics and culture. His masterpiece is *Sokhan va Sokhanvaran* (Speech and Orators), published in Tehran in 1929. It is about description and evaluation of the characteristics of 55 most well-known Persian poets. Beside all his other books about Sufism, he has written *Sharhe Aghval o Naghde Attar* (Attar's Biography and Criticism), published in 1960 in Tehran. Regretfully, these books have not been translated into English yet.

Among European scholars who have studied Attar and Sufism, the German orientalist Annemarie Schimmel and Hellmut Ritter need to be mentioned. Ritter has published extensively on Attar, for example *Das Meer der Seele* (Ritter 1955), translated into English as *The Ocean of the Soul* (Ritter 2003); also *Fariduddin Attar: Geschichten und Aphorismen des persischen Dichters und Mystikers* (Ritter 1955b) (Fariduddin Attar: Stories and Aphorisms of a Persian Poet and Mystic). Schimmel has written a foreword for a book of Attar titled *The Ilahi-nama: Book of God*. (Attar 1976). She has also published *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*, a complete historical and biographical reference of mysticism and Sufism in Islamic regions from the 7th century till now (Schimmel 2011).

While Iranian scholars like Zarinkoob and Foruzanfar in their writings about Attar focus on the elements from classical Sufi literature, the European scholars usually add western analytical approaches to Islam and Sufism beside each other parallelly. A good example is Schimmel who compares Attar's understanding of God in Attar's *The Ilahi-*

nama with Christian depictions. Schimmel adds a cultural dimension and diachronic analysis of Sufism in the Middle East for the western readers by focusing on the biographies of well-known Sufis.

The theoretical basis of this thesis rests mainly on the thought of different scholars in semiotics and translation studies. The focus will be on the ideas of Roman Jakobson, Juri Lotman and Peeter Torop among others. Approaches of several scholars are introduced with the aim of demonstrating how attitudes towards translation have changed over time. These approaches also reflect how literature can be an object of study from multiple viewpoints, with each scholar focusing on specific aspects of a text and its translations.

The theoretical part starts with Roman Jakobson, who asserts that “the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign” (Jakobson 1971: 261). He classifies the very basic types of translation. Jakobson also explains a universal capacity in languages: despite linguistic constraints that limit particular expressions of this universality, for Jakobson any text could be translated from any language on the cognitive level. He puts stress on mutual translatability between languages. But what seems more essential is the role of culture in forming specific expressions in a language. In addition cultural consideration plays a fundamental role in translation.

Besides considering Jakobson’s contribution, in order to account for the role of culture in translation, the present thesis draws on the ideas expressed by members of the Tartu-Moscow semiotic school, especially Peeter Torop. According to Torop, the main object of translation studies should be the translation process (Torop 2008: 377). This focus allows for a better consideration of the probable changes in the text’s meaning when the source culture is very different from the target culture, which is the situation also in the case of *The Conference of the Birds*. There is a considerable difference between the time and space of the 12th century Persia of this text’s production and the time and space of its translations.

Translating a text from a distant time, language and culture is challenging. That is why translation is not only transferring the words but also more like transposing a set of ideas from one culture into another one. What is even more challenging is the anticipation of where the translation might be ambiguous for the reader. Therefore, it is worthwhile

to consider how an explicit explanation for the reader is provided by the translator, for example to what extent the relation between different meanings of similar words in different cultures is clarified for the reader. So the final translation becomes the result of the interaction between elements of a language and culture at the same time, for both the translator and the reader.

The present thesis revolves around the translation and translatability of a multilayered text written in the context of Sufism in the medieval Iranian culture in which a major part of its classical literature is related to mystical elements. Some of Sufi expressions have become an integral part of culture, so to say cultural elements of the life in Iran. Even right now they are considered part of the oral culture and are used in everyday dialogues. While the vocabulary of a contemporaneous language can be translated with relative ease, the transmission of such terms and beliefs that are heavily grounded in a culture of many centuries ago offers a true challenge. The challenge might seem almost impossible to meet, at least without an expert of language and culture.

The comparative study of the English and Estonian translations is expected to show where the crucial parts of the source text are. The present thesis analyses such context-bound names and expressions which, without further explanation, might stay ambiguous for the reader of the translation.

The thesis also highlights those parts of the text which are clarified beyond being merely verbally translated by the translators. How does the translator as a cultural expert create a text that is more than a mere transmission of the words from one language into another one. Bridging distant cultures can be called the very art of a translator. This art begins with the title and extends to the last verse of the book. It can be seen in the decoding of the word bird as a part of the title as well as in all the other symbolic features of the text. Thus, the main focus of the thesis is the feasibility of translation, in general, and the translation of Sufi expressions and cultural terms, in particular. Special attention is paid to the strategies employed by the translators to familiarize target readers with a distant culture.

As a matter of fact, for poems, their rhythm and poetical quality in the language of origin is not transferred in translation. Besides, the main question is to what extent the

message of the author is conveyed despite cultural and temporal differences. In that way, translation is a gateway to understanding a new way of thinking and being, as the reader will follow and reach the idea of the author. Translation determines how close the reader's and the author's way of thinking will be after experiencing a text. This is the point where the translator's strategy of introducing an unknown culture with a text is transformed into an art.

This thesis consists of 3 chapters, which are divided into parts. The first part of the first chapter is about the introduction of the book. It describes *The Conference of the Birds* as the case study. The next two parts will introduce this book as a target text in translation. These parts explain interlingual translations of the book into English and Estonian and its intersemiotic translations. It is a study about cross-cultural translation in the frameworks of both semiotics of translation and cultural semiotics.

The second chapter is dedicated to the theoretical aspects of translation and cultural semiotics in translation. This chapter is followed by the last chapter which illustrates the previously discussed semiotical issues, probable changes after translation with empirical examples, and appropriate strategies for conveying the meaning. The thesis also discusses a range of possibilities of supplementing the information in translation in order to ensure the target reader's maximal possible understanding of the basic fundamentals of Sufism as an ideology. Also it would be argued that these existing translations would need further explanation in order to be able to convey the source text's original dominant.

Chapter 1

Introduction to the Book *The Conference of the Birds*

I *The Conference of the Birds* as a Source Text

One of the masterpieces of Persian literature is *Manteq-o-Teir* which is known in English usually as *The Conference of the Birds* by Attar. This book is from the 12th-century literature of Iran, a period of time in which mysticism, specifically Sufism ¹ was the prevailing theme of Persian literature. Depending on the editions, in Persian versions of *The Conference of the Birds* are approximately between 4300 and 4600 verses long.

The original title of the book is *Manteq-o-Teir*. In Arabic Manteq generally means “logic”². In this context, the author uses the word “logic” as a synonym for language, same as it is used in the Quranic Arabic (the Quran 27:16). The word Teir in Arabic means “bird”. Although the story is an allegory about a group of birds, there is a reason in using the word “bird” in singular form, as it refers to the main character, the hoopoe. The hoopoe is the one who guides others in search of their king, Simorgh. Simorgh is the

¹It is the mystical dimension of Islam with spiritual practices, rooted in pre-Islamic believes and pantheism but with Muslim affiliation. The follower of Sufism is a Sufi, who believes in divine presence of the God in everything in the World.

²Logic in the sense defined by *Oxford Dictionary* as “reasoning conducted or assessed according to strict principles of validity” <http://oxforddictionaries.com/>

most famous bird in Persian mythology, whose name literally means “thirty birds”. Of the forty birds who set out to find their king Simorgh, only thirty reach their destination, Simorgh, and find simultaneously their true existence.

In Persian the book is also known by another title, *Maqamate Toyur*, which literally means “The Positions of the Birds” in Arabic. The idea behind this title refers to the story. This title explains how birds reach better spiritual positions and mystical understanding after their journey.

Author

Farid-ed-din Abu Hamed Mohammad Neishaburi (c. 1145 – c. 1221) is better known in Iran by his penname Attar. More frequently he simply uses his penname Attar in his poems and rarely just his first name Farid.

*“O Attar, how long will you talk? I ask,
You are not the man for such a mighty task.”*
(Attar 2011: 252)

Attar literally means Perfume seller. It is said that before changing his profession he was working in an apothecary shop. Jami, a great mystic Persian poet of the 15th century, was the first one to tell the story of how Attar changed his life. It is a frequently told story about Attar and a Dervish, a person who is treading the Sufi path. It is said that the reason for Attar’s conversion was the following story.

One day he [was] working away happily in his apothecary shop. A dervish happened in and several times asked, ‘Something for God?’ Attar paid no attention to him. ‘Sir,’ the dervish asked, ‘How will you die?’ Attar said ‘Just as you will.’ ‘Can you die like me?’ ‘Certainly.’ The dervish placed the wooden bowl he was holding beneath his head, uttered ‘God,’ and surrendered his soul. Attar was transformed, closed up his shop embarked on this path.
(Losensky 2009: 7)

This kind of transformation is similar to what Attar describes in relation to some of the characters in his books. There occurs a sudden change in a Sufi’s life, due to which he transforms from a normal person with an ordinary profession into a mystic hero of great wisdom. Metaphorically, in theological sense, these personages become messengers of the hidden God, the *deus absconditus*. Undoubtedly Attar himself was a Sufi. That is why

he was able to describe the stages for a Sufi or an Aref, a person who has reached the God. He also clearly describes the fundamental concept of the Unity of Existence (*wahdat al wujud*). This concept is one of the main philosophical ideas in Islamic metaphysics. It describes that the entire universe is finite and relative. But God is the only infinite and true existence and the only truth. The rest of the existences in the world seem to be a shadow or a reflection of a possibility for being. The abstract of this idea could be summarized as Him being the only one and only true existence. (Chittick 1994: 53)

Understanding all of Attar's text needs deep consideration. On the one hand intensive symbolism and usage of literary devices makes understanding of his text difficult. On the other hand, part of this difficulty is due to his different time, therefore reflecting a different language and a different set of beliefs. Not only contemporary scholars are perplexed by Attar, but so have been also other thinkers during his time in the 12th and 13th century, in the golden age of Sufism. Rumi, Persian Sufi poet of the 13th century, is the best example among these thinkers. Once he acknowledged: "Attar has traversed the seven cities of Love, We are still at the turn of one street!" (Nasr 2008:130)

One might claim that understanding Attar's deep idea is related to other time with more mental maturity. Hence comprehending his thoughts should be postponed to the future. But the fact is, those who understand the logic of Attar could understand his prominent explanation in Sufism, in the past or present, despite the passage of time.

Language and structure of the source text

The language of the book is Persian, but for some exceptional parts Arabic is used. Besides the title of the book, in prologue some expressions of honour are in Arabic. Considering the religious function of these expressions, it is understandable why the author use them as such in a Persian text.

In original, this Persian text is in the style of *Masnavi* or rhyming couplets. It means the meter and length of each *Mesra* (hemistich) remains the same throughout the poems and each couplet has its own rhyme at the end. In Persian literature *Masnavi* is the best expressive form in poetry, due to absolute freedom in choosing variant couples of associations.

Due to the background of the author, *The Conference of the Birds* has intertextual links. It is intimately linked to Islamic thought, especially via references to the Quran. *The Conference of the Birds* starts with the praise of the God and epithets about the Prophet Mohammad, followed by admiration of the Prophet's descendants. The first chapters of the prologue contain praise for Abu Bakr the sincere, Omar, Osman and Ali, the four Caliphs or successors of the Prophet Mohammad after his death, according to Sunni Islamic doctrine.

The prologue is followed by other relevant stories about these characters for instance: Ali speaking against factionalism, Omar and the caliphate, the death of Ali, Mohammad at the well and the story of Ali and Abu Bakr. Continuing this section are stories about two other religious characters: Bilal, the first muezzin or caller for prayers; and story of Rabe'eh, the most famous female Sufi, is mentioned at the beginning (Attar 2011: 30–35). The symbolism of placing these stories at the same level of the Prophet and Caliphs could be explained by the uniqueness of these characters for Attar. The very last part of the prologue is the Prophet's prayer (*ibid.*: 37), following which the main story begins with the first meeting of the birds.

In addition to the main story about the journey of the birds, there are intervening chapters relating short stories with different themes. These short stories contain similar messages for educational purposes in mysticism.

Generally, the rhythm of the first chapters follows the pattern of a bird's excuse, the hoopoe's answer, and one other short story. Through this scheme the author conveys his desired message by means of different categories.

This technique of telling stories inside the main story is a very frequent literary device in oriental texts. In the third chapter of the present thesis, there will be a more detailed classification of the short stories and probable problems in translation of each part.

In Persian versions, there is one and the same word, Hekayat (meaning 'anecdote'), used both for the titles of the episodes of the main story as well as for the titles of the short stories within the main story of the book—except for the prologue, the epilogue, and the stories about individual birds, which have different titles.

Summary of the main story

“The world’s birds gathered for their conference

And said: ‘Our constitution makes no sense.

All nations in the world require a king;

How is it we alone have no such thing?”

(Attar 2011: 43)

This is a symbolic story about a group of birds who decide to find their mythological leader, Simorgh. Attar does not describe where this story happens. In the first chapter, the birds assemble and the hoopoe tells them about the existence of their king Simorgh, who lives beyond Kaf’s mountain peak and proposes they all go on a journey to find Him. From the beginning, the hoopoe describes the mystic and mysterious character of Simorgh: he mentions that though the majestic Simorgh lives in a far-off place, he is always close to the birds (Attar 2011: 43). One by one, each bird makes an excuse why it cannot join the quest, but the hoopoe has a wise answer for everybody.

Attar uses the strategy of using birds to represent different types of human character, psychologically and metaphorically, in order to show the weaknesses of human beings. Among all negative features, Attar emphasises that pride is the main barrier to obtaining a higher aim.

In the following chapters there are also anecdotes and *bons mots*, conveyed by means of philosophical stories, about various themes in different fields of mysticism and religion³. At the end of their quest, the birds discover that they themselves are that myth, Simorgh. There is a symbolic meaning behind the story. It shows that despite the obstacles, the birds’ effort results in a better understanding of themselves. This attempt is a metaphor for the search for the truth. Whilst searching for an understanding of the truth, the human being finds all the answers inside himself. The hoopoe appears as the guide who knows the way and the answer to all the questions. The hoopoe is addressed whenever any bird has a doubt:

³The third chapter of this thesis, deals with the structure of the book, gives more detailed explanations of the different types of stories in *The Conference of the Birds*.

*“Another bird said: ‘Hoopoe, you can find
The way from here, but we are almost blind–
The path seems full of terrors and despair.
Dear hoopoe, how much further till we’re there?’”*
(*ibid.*: 180)

Attar explains his ideas in a hidden way, with frequent metaphoric expressions. Mostly his similes are about the soul. In a metaphoric sense, the soul is captive in the cage of the body. The soul is set free and attains the fullest peace only when it reaches its origin, the God. At the same time it is considered that every creature is God’s reflection and that everybody has the same capacity and possibility for reaching the God or the truth. What is important is the attempt and persistence on the way. In Sufism the entire universe is seen as a collection of God’s reflections, therefore also as a guide for reaching him (Ritter 2003: 9). Thus the movement of every particle has to be toward this truth. During this movement the soul will be released after many levels of purification. This could be experienced in this life as it is for each Sufi.

Mysticism and Sufism as the background for *The Conference of the Birds*

Mysticism, or spiritual realisation, is part of each religion with features such as: provision of an experience related to spiritual travelling, acquisition of cosmological knowledge and emotional fulfilment (Russell 1993: 73–75). One of the most well-known mystical sects of Islam is Sufism. For several centuries, it was the main channel for thought and scholarship. The majority of Iranian poets and philosophers were under its influence from the 12th century onwards (Dabashi 2012: 145).

There are different ideas about the etymology of the word Sufi. Among them the most dominant one relates the word’s etymology to the appearance of Sufis. According to this view, the word Sufi is derived from *suf*, which in Arabic means ‘wool’. As a sign of religious mendicancy, Sufis used to wear coarse woollen garments, expressing thus their strict rejection of any kind of worldly pleasures. At the same time it also manifested their

attitude against the orthodox Islam (Zarrinkoob 1970: 139).⁴

The fundamental reason for the conflict between Sufis and other sects of Islam is due to differing ideas about worshipping the God. The Sufi insists that God should not be worshipped out of hope or fear but solely for God's sake. This idea explains the basic difference between the ordinary ascetic and mystic. The Muslim clergymen relied on superficial interpretation of Islamic commands. Therefore the main reason of worshipping for them had to do with reaching either hell or heaven, whereas for Sufis the main aim was reaching the divine love of God (*ibid.*: 155).

The other dominant belief in Sufism is that there is no way from outside to reach the God. The way, and the only way, is inside and within the soul. So the whole attempt starts from each individual soul and continues within it. At the same time it is considered that every creature is God's reflection and that everybody has the same capacity and possibility for reaching the God or the truth. What is important is the attempt and persistence on the way. In Sufism the entire universe is seen as a collection of God's reflections, therefore also as a guide for reaching him (Ritter 2003: 9). Thus the movement of every particle has to be toward this truth. During this movement the soul will be released after many levels of purification. This could be experienced in this life as it is for each Sufi. Therefore there is no boundary between the universe and the soul of the Sufi. He sees both the world and his soul as a united fact and as the reflection of the God.

Sufism is the dominant theme of classical Persian literature in the medieval era.

Sufi philosophy found a most hospitable soil in the domain of Persian poetry. The Persian poetry of classical times was so extensively influenced by Sufi philosophy that almost every great lyric poet of that period was a Sufi, as nearly every great Sufi of the time was a poet. Indeed, the influence of Sufism on Persian poetry was so considerable that if the Sufi poets had not appeared on the literary stage, Persian literature would have remained for long centuries no more than a court literature limited to a panegyric character. It was in the works of Sana'i, Attar and Rumi, that the oppressed classes were finally given a voice in literature, and social injustice, on which hardly a word could be uttered by a court-poet, was sharply criticised in the *bons mots*.

(Zarrinkoob 1970: 139)

We witness also how these 12th-century sagacious poets used mystical expressions to describe the eternal love, the love of the God. They used symbolically the frequent descrip-

⁴Although some of the Sufis refused to wear any visible signs of their tendency to Sufism—which also helped them survive the radical rejection and reaction from orthodox Muslim clergymen.

tion of physical beauty for talking about the divine lover. In a significant way, worldly poetry turned into mystical matters poetically.

Mysticism tells emphatically that the meanings of things do not lie on their surface, but must be searched for on a deeper level. In Sufism, it is the search that gives purpose and direction to the Sufi's life. On another layer, namely, the case of reading Sufi literature, the act of reading is the start of the search and gives meaning to the reader. Mostly the way of explaining the meanings is hidden and mysterious itself. For this purpose, possibly one of the best forms is allegory, "the perfect form for a mystical poem, because the form exemplifies what the content is telling." (Darbandi & Davis 2011: xiv). To a great extent, literature in Sufism is simple at first glance. But these simple texts are intensely symbolic and mysterious with many layers of meanings.

The Conference of the Birds by Attar belongs among the most important texts in Sufism. The symbolism within it makes it a remarkable eternal legacy for the tradition of Sufism and an interesting source for study. In this book Attar is following the cultural and philosophical background of seeing the self as a winged creature.

The Conference of the Birds symbolically expresses the Sufi belief in the unity of the world and the soul. The different types of birds despite their variety find one true existence at the end. At the beginning there is uncertainty among the birds, they have doubts and different ideas about the undefined existence of Simorgh. Every individual bird just knows there is such an existence but without any clear or exact identification of Him. Without knowing the precise way to the mount Kaf—for them it is just a random place name—, they start questioning the very existence of their destination. Finally, when they arrive at the mount Kaf, they see nothing but themselves. This new united existence is unlike their previous one, where each one of them alone was finite and incomplete.

Kinds of characters: Comparison of the birds

The main characters of the story in *The Conference of the Birds* are birds. Among these birds some are real and others imaginary. The hoopoe, parrot, francolin, nightingale, peacock, dove palm, dove and falcon are from the first group. On the other hand, the Homa (symbolic bird of luck in Persian mythology) and Morqe zarrin ("golden bird" in

Persian) are from the latter.

In nature bird migration is for being able to access food, but in *The Conference of the Birds* the symbolic aim of the birds' journey is reaching enlightenment. In the text, the group of birds is a mixture of different species, although it is quite impossible in real wildlife. Attar himself came from Neishabur, in northeast Iran, situated in a fertile plain at the foot of a mountain range. This region does not have a variety of different climates, and yet, strikingly, Attar chose a group of birds from extremely various latitudes for his book. This combination of differences seems to indicate that there must have been a certain reason for it in the poet's mind: with this variety, he could explain different characteristics of human beings metaphorically.

The hoopoe and Simorgh

In *The Conference of the Birds*, the hoopoe is representative of a Sufi master or prophet. He is the one that lends himself to other birds who are willing to reach the truth. The hoopoe also is the one who knows the spiritual way to the destination. Only after clarifying the situation, route, and direction of the birds' migration by the hoopoe, we see submissive reaction from the birds.

In a very symbolic way Attar explains that at the end the birds see the reflection of themselves. It is the very moment they discover that the mythical bird, the eternal Simorgh is no one but Si-morgh, literally 'thirty birds' in Persian, i.e., themselves. The result of their voyage with its difficulties is at the same time an inner discovery. Simultaneously, in the moment of self-recognition, the truth from all aspects is discovered by them. They discover that the truth is a collection of more than one individuality and all of them are the very same thing, none of them far from it. So the hoopoe is an inner guide as he is a part of Simorgh. In a metaphoric way, it shows the need of a knowledgeable source for a Sufi to reach self-recognition.

Seven Valleys

In the chapter “A bird asks how long the journey is” (Attar 2011: 180), the hoopoe declares that before reaching the goal, there are seven valleys on their way. Before joining the Simorgh, the birds should pass the Seven Valleys of Quest, Love, Understanding, Independence and Detachment, Unity, Astonishment, and finally Poverty and Nothingness.

*“The first stage is the Valley of the Quest;
Then Love’s wide valley is our second test;
The third is Insight into Mystery,
The fourth Detachment and Serenity -
The fifth is Unity; the sixth is Awe,
A deep Bewilderment unknown before,
The seventh Poverty and Nothingness -
And there you are suspended, motionless,
Till you are drawn—the impulse is not yours -
A drop absorbed in seas that have no shores.”*
(*ibid.*: 180–181)

The hoopoe describes the feature of each valley for the birds. He informs them that from the very beginning, in the first valley, there are hundreds of difficulties:

*“There years must vanish while you strive and grieve,
There is the heart of all you will achieve.”*
(*ibid.*: 181)

In the second valley, the Valley of Love, one should not search for any worldly reason for his journey. For Attar, love equals seas of fire full of threats and the lover should be brave enough to flare, burn and sacrifice his life and heart. Despite the obstacles on the way to reaching love, during the journey, love itself will guide who is willing to reach it:

*“Love leads whoever starts along our Way,
The noblest bow to love and must obey.”*
(*ibid.*: 187)

In the Valley of Understanding, the passenger learns that understanding is different from knowledge. By conquering this stage, lover will have an “insight into hidden mysteries” (*ibid.*: 194). In comparison with knowledge, it is understanding which is more valuable, showing the hidden truths, the origin and essence of everything. Understanding is gained by suffering, but it remains in existence forever (*ibid.*: 194).

On the next stage, in the Valley of Independence and Detachment, the seeker does not aspire to obtain anything from the material world. After passing this valley the passenger will be self-sufficient and free from all attachments. The seeker will become indifferent to whatever there is in the world (*ibid.*: 200).

With regard to the next valley, the hoopoe explains one of the fundamental beliefs in Sufism. The Valley of Unity refers to the idea how apparently different beings make up one whole existence. In this pure Unity, the meaning of this One as a number is different from singularity: instead, it is multifarious, made up of a sundry of beings. This whole unity is the only complete truth. When all the seekers achieve the unity, they forget themselves. Thus, the hoopoe clarifies one of the main ideas of Sufi metaphysics which is Unity of Existence:

*“This is the oneness of diversity,
Not oneness locked in singularity.”*
(*ibid.*: 206)

After passing from the Valley of Unity to the Valley of Astonishment and Bewilderment suffering and pain are resumed, which makes the birds long for death. The hoopoe alerts the birds that this gnawing pain does not even let them recognize days and nights. It is the stage where they doubt everything and they feel their hearts are empty but still full of love:

*“I have no certain knowledge anymore
I doubt my doubt, doubt itself is unsure.”*
(*ibid.*: 212)

The hoopoe does not describe the very last valley clearly. He mentions that “it is a state the mind has never seen.” (*ibid.*: 220). The hoopoe says that it is not possible to explain

the last Valley of Poverty and Nothingness which ends with deprivation and death. That is why death always remains a secret. This valley is characterized with contradictory ideas, for example: what passes will remain and who sinks will be blessed. Besides, the hoopoe turns into a herald of glad tidings, by promising that in the last valley a profound tranquillity and eternal rest will be found (*ibid.*: 219).

The part about Death comes quite late in the book, almost in the final chapters before the epilogue. This is followed by the culmination—the unveiling of the secret of Simorgh, in the section “The birds discover the Simorgh” (Attar 2011: 234), after which there comes the conclusion. Another interesting fact is that the hoopoe’s description of the Seven Valleys is remarkably long in Attar’s text, whereas the following part describing the actual journey of the birds (Attar 2011: 229) forms only eighteen couplets. Apparently it seems that what is told by the hoopoe about what might happen on the way, should be considered already as what birds experienced.

The cultural background of seeing the Self as a winged creature

As expressed in Julia Kristeva’s theory of intertextuality (Kristeva 1980), relations with previous texts may have a significant role in shaping a text’s production and reception. Studying the background of the formation of a text is interesting from at least two aspects: from the author’s and from the reader’s side. First, analysing it from the author’s side will result in knowing how the author has been influenced by previous texts. On the other hand, this approach may be about as relevant also for the second aspect, that of the reader’s side. It can be assumed that the majority of both the source and target text readers of *The Conference of the Birds* are intellectuals, possibly with significant interest and knowledge of philosophy and literature. Therefore, such reader’s understanding of this text might be influenced by her/his previous readings. The similarity or dissimilarity between what s/he had read before and what s/he is experiencing with this new text might impact her/his understanding of Attar’s text.

The idea of using birds as a metaphor for expressing desired thoughts is utilised world-wide. In the western literature, the first famous text related to this topic is a play titled in Greek as *Ornithes* (The Birds), written by Aristophanes in 414 B.C. At the beginning of

this play, people are searching for their king who has been metamorphosed into a hoopoe. People believe the king might know a place where they could find a better life. Although it is a satirical play, the serious theme of searching and hoping for a utopia, situated in the sky, called Cloud Cuckoo Land as a distant idealistic place is seen here. Finally, people decide to build a city in the sky and live there instead of Athens.

During the play, the hoopoe has the role of reciting all the lyrics. With this, the hoopoe mesmerises all the world's birds with different characters and habits. Another interesting fact is that the hoopoe is always the one who guides and persuades the rest when they encounter difficulties. This play employs poetical means and a fantasy to express the age-old hope of finding a better place to live. In addition there are ideological references to the gods believed in ancient Greece (Aristophanes 2007).

Despite the ideological differences between the two authors, the monotheistic Attar and the polytheistic Aristophanes, there are apparent similarities between *The Birds* and *The Conference of the Birds*. In *The Birds*, Athenians (or, in general, 'people') are represented as birds, similarly to the text of Attar who metaphorically relates various human personalities to different birds. In both, birds (i.e., people) have an optimistic idea about finding a desirable peaceful eternal place. In addition, similarly in both texts the hoopoe appears as an enthusiastic and wise leader guiding the rest, being also the one who knows how to solve controversies.

Another remarkable text treating the Self as a winged creature is from philosophy. In Plato's *Phaedrus* (around 370 BC), in the chapter 246a-b, he is describing the dialogue of Socrates and Phaedrus, in which the soul⁵ is resembled to a group of winged horses. Plato quotes: "A soul, says Socrates, is like the natural union of a team of winged horses and their charioteer. While the gods have two good horses, everyone else has a mixture: one is beautiful and good, while the other is neither." (Plato 1995: 32–33) This description expresses symbolically Plato's view of the soul as a collection of dualities. The idea of

⁵As the main feature of this dialogue in *Phaedrus*, Plato discusses three parts essential for the human nature. These are the 'rational' part, the 'spirited part' and the 'appetitive part'. This quotation refers to the 'spirited part' of the Self. In Sufism, greater emphasis is placed on this spiritual part of the self (the soul), more than on other divisions.

forming a whole from intelligent elements appears also in Attar's *The Conference of the Birds*, where the most complete whole, Simorgh, is depicted as consisting of other birds.

Among the Persian scholars, for the first time the same theme is brought up by Shahab al-Din Suhrawardi, an Iranian thinker and philosopher, in his *Risalat al-Tayr* (The Treatise of the Bird, written around the 12th century). The main story is about the journey of a group of birds, expressing symbolically the possibility of reaching their relative freedom and the God by traversing different valleys. As in *The Conference of the Birds*, the same term *al-haqq* or *haqq* is used both for the truth and the God. Metaphorically the story describes how in each existence, there is an internal prophet who makes it possible to strive for and reach the God.

Suhrawardi himself elaborated this idea in his esoteric work *Avaze Pare Jebrael* (The Chant of Gabriel's Wing, written in the 12th century) in which he describes symbolically how an active intellect has two wings. The work seems a good elaboration of empiricism, rationalism and the gnostic mode of cognition in a Sufi text (Amin Razavi 2013: 20), meaning that Suhrawardi also believes first in the divine origin of the soul and secondly in the existence of dualities or different aspects in each intellect.

In a sense there is a fundamental similarity between this Illuminationist ⁶ idea of Suhrawardi and Attar. Attar uses this idea in the main part of his book, *The Conference Of The Birds*. In Attar's text, this world is a reflection of a divine reality, in which there is a way for reaching the origin or the source of creation. The way to the source is shown by the hoopoe, the messenger or the prophet. In both books, the hoopoe has in principle the same nature as all the other members of the group. It seems most likely that it is due to his reliable wisdom that the hoopoe appears as a prophet for reaching the truth.

In all these described examples, the emphasis is on the role of the winged creatures for reaching a utopia. The origin of this theme might be related to the idea that the wings of a bird are a device for ascension. This view is supplemented by another assumption, namely

⁶Illuminationism is a school of Islamic philosophy in the medieval era under the influence of Neo-Platonism, characterized by its belief that the mysteries of the world can be understood through metaphysics rather than through the laws of the physics. Therefore the reality is a continuum in which physics is a reflection of divine metaphysics. (Amin Razavi 2013: xix)

that the God or the gods exist somewhere in the skies, in an above or upper sphere. So with the advantage of having wings there emerges the possibility of reaching this place in the skies. So it may be concluded that quite universally, creatures with wings have metaphorically divine advantages. In the mind of the authors, in comparison with human beings, the winged creatures are in a more idealistic state.

Meaning behind the plot

What is dominant in this text is the Iranian tradition in literature for gathering and listing the aphorisms and axioms in a moral text. Considerably more work will be needed to determine the educational background of this text in order to understand to what extent it has been used as an educational material or academic source in previous centuries.

The birds' quest takes them through seven valleys, in the first of which a hundred difficulties assail them. They undergo many trials as they try to free themselves of what is precious to them and change their state. During their journey they face seven great obstacles which Attar metaphorically names The Seven Valleys of Love. After passing through these obstacles, only thirty birds remain and they understand that the sought-for truth is themselves. In fact, what they were searching for is within their souls and the obstacles during this journey purified their essence. So despite all the outward differences, for those who persist in their aim, they are the same in the origin and potential for reaching *al-haqq* equally. *Al-haqq* is the specific terminology in Sufism, originally from Arabic and used same for the concept of Reality, God and Truth.

Convergence between the stories

Attar uses the same poetic devices for both the short stories and the main one. Hence, the same poetic devices as in the main story can be seen in the story of Sheikh San'an (Attar 2011: 68), the longest of the "short stories". Attar uses here the motif of travelling as a vehicle for starting a new story. The story is about a religious man who starts his journey to find out the meaning behind his dream. On his way, he falls in love with a Roman Christian girl. The Sheikh is then described as going through more or less the

same stages which Attar presents as spiritual stages in the main story. For describing the Sheikh's love towards the girl, Attar uses religious terms. This device reflects the idea of divine love, or regarding a human lover as the God in Sufism. In other words, it could be said that the lover is the reflection of the God or truly pure love on the earth.

*“Her mouth was tiny as a needle’s eye,
Her breath as quickening as Jesus’ sigh;
Her chin was dimpled with a silver well
In which a thousand drowning Josephs fell;”*
(Attar 2011: 69)

Also:

*“‘Bow down to God.’ ‘I will,’ replied the Sheikh,
‘Bow down in dust, but for my idol’s sake.
...
The Sheikh replied: ‘A Christian monastery
And not the Ka’abah’s shade suffices me.’”*
(*ibid.*: 72)

To highlight the similarity between the earthly and divine love even more, Attar uses the motif of changing religion. As changing religion is considered one of the greatest sins in Islam, it could be interpreted as a metaphor for sacrificing everything on the way of love. The same strategy was described in regard to the journey of the birds on which they abandoned almost everything they had.

*“The Sheikh exchanged religion’s wealth for shame,
A hopeless heart submitted to love’s fame.”*
(*ibid.*: 70)

*“He said: ‘I fling the beads away from me;
The Christian’s belt is my sole sanctuary!”*
(*ibid.*: 71)

*“And one reproached him: ‘Have you no regret
For Islam and those rites you would forget?’”*

(ibid.: 72)

*“News spread among the Christians that this Sheikh
Had chosen their religion for love’s sake.”*

(ibid.: 76)

*“Had cast aside his Christian clothes, the bell,
The belt, the cap, freed from the strange faith’s spell.”*

(ibid.: 82)

From a narrative point of view the same dialogical form which Attar uses from the beginning of the main part, is utilised again in this story. After announcing his decision to stay close to the Roman girl, the Sheikh enters into a dialogue with his pupils. During this quite long conversation Sheikh’s pupils try to change the Sheikh’s mind. Also there are long dialogues between the Sheikh and the girl, when he is describing his love for her, and at the end of the story during the girl’s valediction.

*“Weeping to see the lovely child embrace
The search for Truth. Then, as her comely face*

...

*She was a drop returned to Truth’s great sea;
She left this world, and so, like wind, must we.”*

(ibid.: 85)

The main aim of this story is about finding the truth that is mentioned in the last verses. The story ends with deprivation and death, which Attar categorises also in the Seven Valleys of Love as the final stage in Sufism.

Conclusion

The first chapter of the present thesis has introduced Attar’s *The Conference of the Birds*. Attar’s book is an excellent example of a difficult text for translation. From the linguistic

aspect, it presents the Persian language of the 12th century and the Arabic language of the 7th century. From the ideological aspect, Attar presents his thought first of all as a Sunni Muslim and secondly as a Sufi. Neither of these sects are dominant beliefs anymore in Iran for the Persian readers, and even much less so are they in the other parts of the world, including for the English and Estonian readers. Translating and conveying all these aspects for a target reader is a true cultural challenge. For reaching the optimum understanding of the readers, additional explanations of these aspects are needed. This chapter has described the choice of the languages used for producing the text of *The Conference of the Birds* as well as the differences in ideologies.

Also a summary of this allegory is supported. This short section is followed by an explanation of how this relatively simple story is conveying ideological aspects. Specifically, Attar is explaining his ideas in the hierarchical part of his book “The Seven Valleys” (Attar 2011: 180). Therefore it is the most important part to understand the view toward Sufism in his book. Without pointing the meaning of this part, *The Conference of the Birds* is reduced from a great source of Sufi literature into a simple allegory.

Attar is undoubtedly under the influence of other texts in producing *The Conference of the Birds*. The most important of these texts is the Quran. The title of Attar’s book is derived for a verse in the Quran. In the third chapter of this thesis will be more detailed explanation which gives proof to this fact. Besides, there are other fundamental similarities between his text and some other masterpieces in philosophy and literature. The same may be true for the reader as well: the background of having read the other relevant texts influences also the reader’s understanding of *The Conference of the Birds*. This intertextual background is one of the greatest challenges in translation. In the third chapter, there will be a more detailed discussion of problems related to translating the title and of how meaning can be kept with mentioning the correct reference.

As to its structure, Attar’s book is made of the main story and short stories in between the main one. What is so interesting about Attar, is that he uses the same style of narration in both parts. The best example is provided by the longest short story, the story of Sheikh San’an (Attar 2011: 68). In the third chapter of the thesis there will be more details about the different types of short stories in *The Conference of the Birds* and about the possible

problems for a reader to understand these stories.

The second part of the first chapter is devoted to various translations of *The Conference Of The Birds*, including artistic interpretations in different media. It is interesting to see to what extent *The Conference of the Birds* as one constant verbal text can be a source for new interpretations.

Since the main concern of the thesis is the probable misunderstandings in translation of this book in the verbal form, this part provides also an introduction to the different translations of Attar's book into English and Estonian languages, as well as the history of the verbal translations of this book into English and Estonian.

II *The Conference of the Birds* as a Target Text in Translation

1. Different types of translations

For this case study, there are very rich sources with intersemiotic translations in different genres and media. In the field of theatre, there are many plays worldwide based on *The Conference of the Birds*; for example, the play directed by Aaron Posner in Washington, D.C., named as *The Conference of the Birds*, at Folger Theater during October and November 2012. Also very successful performances were presented in Dance Meridian, in the third international festival of dance, music and mysticism in Prague in October 2009. The whole festival of Dance Meridian 2009 was inspired by Attar's *The conference of the Birds*. These plays were with an open discussion with Professor Luboš Kropáček of Charles University about Attar and his book. Also the festival was followed by workshops with the same theme.

It has also been a source of inspiration in music. The most famous one is the jazz music album titled as *Conference of the Birds: David Holland Quartet*, by David Holland and Sam Rivers-Anthony Braxton and Barry Altschil, released in 1973. It is a collection of musical pieces composed with bass, reed, flute, percussion and marimba. Individual parts of the composition are related to the book through thematic titles, such as: "Four

Winds”, “*Q and A*”, “*Conference of the Birds*”, “*Now Here Nowhere*” and “*See Saw*”. The book’s mystic quality is seen in these names as well.

Another musical version is an operatic spectacle, *La Conférence des oiseaux*, composed by Michaël Lévinas and performed by Ensemble L’Itinéraire (Martine Viard; Michaël Lonsdale; Daniel Berlioux; Michel Swierczewski), released as an album in 1987 in Paris by Adès. There is also a music album *Conference of the Birds* by a stoner and psychedelic rock group, Om, (album was released in San Francisco, CA: Holy Mountain in 2006). These different musical versions reflect the high potential of Attar’s *The Conference of the Birds* for being a rich source of inspiration for other artistic texts.

This diverse intersemiotic translation in music is especially interesting, insofar as music is the most abstract form of the arts. One can explore how an ideological text is translated via intersemiotic translation into a form beyond the boundaries of language, culture and society. In this regard, music specifically is capable of generating new meanings in shadow of improvisation. Pouring it into the form of music makes the possibility of perceiving it in limitless ways due to characters of receivers. In other words it could be said that here a new language is used for describing a verbal text. Furthermore, each of the receivers has his own translation.

In addition, in naming the musical pieces, the letters and words are not used as a natural language but rather as a metalanguage for connecting aural texts to the verbal text of the source. It shows the capability of an artistic text to have infinite dialogues and be a source for languages and metalanguages in different semiospheres after the initial authorship.

In addition, there is also a calligraphic version of the book. The calligraphy is by Farah K. Behbehani, with eighty four coloured illustrations of Jali Diwani calligraphy. A line from the Arabic version of the poem that captures each bird’s essence is also illustrated and explained (Behbehani 2009).

Calligraphy is a way for presenting an artistic visual manifestation for each word. If another layer of meaning is added to the already abstract calligraphy, a calligram is produced. The result is multiple layers of intersemiotic translation of one word into a visual shape. Calligraphy and therefore calligram are results of such way of thinking.

In a sense, calligram captures the essence of each word in the visual form or reflects its meaning by visualising it. In Islam, the prohibition to paint animals and human beings, together with the simultaneous tendency to visualise words, resulted in the popularity of calligraphy and calligram as the most appreciated abstract art in Iran during the medieval era.

This translated version has a unique importance. For the first time, this book is translated in a new form of a visual-verbal text. This version creatively uses calligraphy in the form of calligrams, or texts in which the calligraphy or typeface forms a visual image, presenting a complete collection. It therefore puts the reader into a new form of a visual dialogue with *The Conference Of The Birds*. There is also possibility of generating curiosity of interpretation and having a dialogue in new form with previous parallel text in parallel. Hence, at the first layer there is a linguistic translation of the text, and in the next layer, there is an artistic translation of the key words into the visual images.

There is yet another sense in which the calligraphic translation of *The Conference of the Birds* is important. The calligraphic translation is the result of imagining a visual manifestation for each word, in other words, an intersemiotic translation of each word into a visual shape. The same theme is seen in Attar's story: Simorgh changes into its meaning, not a name of a bird, but a collection of thirty birds. The secret of Simorgh can be decoded by visualising its name for Persian readers. Needless to mention, there could be no such understanding for the readers of translations in other languages.

In conclusion, one probable touchstone for determining the depth of an artistic text is considering new ways for its interpretation into various artistic texts. My approach in this part of the thesis is based on the following two questions. For understanding the cultural value and impact of this text, first, to what extent does its translation serve as a source for communication and metacommunication? Second, to what extent do different types of translation provide for different ways of thinking? These new ways of thinking in the reader make for another process of translation, since according to Juri Lotman "the elementary act of thinking is translation" (Lotman 2001: 143). Hence, there are limitless processes of translating by readers, renewed day by day.

2. Verbal Translations of the book

English

Attar's *Conference of the Birds* was for the first time translated into English in 1889 by Edward Fitzgerald under the title *Bird Parliament* and published in a book named as *Letters and Literary Remains* (edited by William Aldis Wright). Over the last four decades, many verbal interpretations of the text have been created.⁷

The most famous and recent translation into English is by Dick Davis and Afkham Darbandi, published in 1984. In 2011 a new edition of Davis' and Darbandi's translation from 1984 was published, with extended comments, epilogue, prologue and amended translation. The present thesis relies on this latter edition for the examples of translation.

Estonian

History of translation from Persian to Estonian. *The Conference of the Birds* is not the first or the last translation from Persian classical literature into Estonian. Among the most famous pioneers among translators of oriental languages, one can mention Uku Masing and Haljand Udam. Uku or Hugo Albert Masing received his doctorate from the University of Tartu in 1948. He is "best known to Estonians for his expressive yet intellectually complex poetry" and his translations from oriental languages (Miljan 2004: 333–334).

Haljand Udam, "Estonia's first traditionalist", graduated from the University of Tartu and continued his studies in Tashkent and Moscow Universities (Sedgwick 2004: 223). He defended his thesis *Pärsiakeelse Sufismiterminoloogia semantilised erijooned (On the Special Semantic Aspects of the Persian Sufi Terminology)*. He has translated from classical Persian literature (from Rudaki, Saadi and Khayyam) into Estonian, in addition to his

⁷For instance in English: poem in prose by Shambhala, in Boulder, Col., 1971; by John Heilpern in Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1978; by Peter Sís in New York: Penguin Press, 2011; specifically for children by Alexis York and Demi Lumbard in Bloomington by Wisdom Tales, 2012; in selected by version in San Francisco, CA: Holy Mountain, 2006; selected by Raficq Abdulla by New York: Interlink Books, 2003; by Anne Fairbairn by North Fitzroy, Vic.: Black Pepper, 1995; by Jean-Claude Carrière and Peter Brook by Chicago Dramatic Pub. Co., 1982.

other translations from Arabic and Urdu. The most universally famous of his translations is *Robiyat e Khayyam* translated into Estonian under the title *Nelikvärsid* (Hajjam 2000).

The most recent translation from Persian literature is *Päikesesõnad*, a selection of Rumi's poems, translated by Doris Kareva and published in 2013. In Estonian, there exists only one translation of Attar's text: *Lindude keel*, translated by Kalle Kasemaa and published in 2012.

Ideas followed by the Estonian translator. One of the most recent translations of classical Persian literature is Kalle Kasemaa's *Lindude keel* from Attar's *The Conference of the Birds*, published in 2012. Kasemaa has also made a translation of *Munkidh min al-Dalal* (Deliverance from Error) by the Iranian thinker Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali, an 11th and 12th century thinker, under the title *Eksitusest päästja; Lampide orv* (Al-Ghazali 2007). There are similarities between the ideas of Attar and Al-Ghazali in addition to their chronological proximity. First, they both opposed the Greek philosophy. In *Tahafut al-Falasifa* (*The Incoherence of the Philosophers*), Al-Ghazali emphatically rejected the Hellenistic philosophy as well as criticised the twenty teachings of Muslim philosophers (Griffel 2009: 5). We see the same attitude in Attar, as expressed in this example:

*“Better, by God, the ‘B’ for blasphemy,
Than ‘P’ that stands for their philosophy.”*

(Attar 2011: 252)

Secondly, a tendency towards Sufism is the main theme of their texts. Attar is famous due to his texts about Sufism, and Al-Ghazali has six books specifically about Sufism.⁸

The chronological relation between Al-Ghazali and Attar, as well as Al-Ghazali's influence on Attar's text, is also seen in the chronology of their translations into Estonian. Relevant to this fact is that the dominant theme of these authors is theology, the same as that of the translator himself who is a famous expert in this field.

⁸Al-Ghazali's most important works are about Sufism: *Mizan al-'amal* (*Criterion of Action*), *Ihya' ulum al-din* (*Revival of Religious Sciences*), *Bidayat al-hidayah* (*Beginning of Guidance*), *Kimiya-yi sa'adat* (*The Alchemy of Happiness*), *Nasihah al-muluk* (*Counseling Kings*), *Minhaj al-'Abidin* (*Methodology for the Worshipers*). (Griffel 2009: 275–286)

Chapter 2

Translation and Text

I Aspects of Translation

1. Jakobson's idea about translation

Roman Jakobson commences his argument about translation with references to philosophy. At the beginning of his well-known article *On Linguistic Aspect of Translation*, he refers to Bertrand Russell who has stated that knowing things is possible when there is a nonlinguistic acquaintance with them. According to Jakobson, instead there should be at least an acquaintance with the meaning assigned to these words in the lexical code of language. He also concluded that every word is a linguistic and semiotic fact with meaning. Each time an unfamiliar word needs to be introduced in a language, “an array of linguistic signs is needed” . (Jakobson 1971: 260)

Hereby a new definition for translation is needed. As far as a word is not simply naming things, the meaning of a linguistic sign becomes “its translation into some further alternative sign especially a sign “in which it is more fully developed” (*ibid.*: 261). In this regard, translation is considered as reported speech, and the translator recodes and transmits a message from another source (*ibid.*: 262).

According to Jakobson three ways of interpreting exist for a verbal sign.

- Intralingual translation, in which a sign is translated into other signs of the same language, for example in rewording and using synonyms, considering that there

is no complete equivalence. In this regard translation is a process where a text is translated into other signs of the same (natural) language.

- Interlingual or *translation proper* takes place from one language into another language. Although there is ordinarily no full equivalence between code units, the message may serve as an adequate interpretation of alien code. In fact units cannot be completely identified with their standard equivalents in other languages. The translator recodes and transmits a message received from one source to another source. Therefore two messages are in two different codes.
- Intersemiotic or transmutation is a translation of verbal signs by means of nonverbal sign systems. (*ibid.*: 261–262)

In any existing language some examples of metalinguistic operation in need of revision and redefinition from the past times can be found. Examples are for instance in borrowed words, neologisms or semantic shifts. Paying attention to this fact is more essential in translation as far as “any comparison between two languages implies an examination of their mutual translatability, widespread practices of interlingual communication, particularly translating activity, must be kept under constant scrutiny by linguistic science.” (*ibid.*: 268).

Considering this fact, the richer the context of a message, the smaller the loss of information. The grammatical structure of language shapes the mythological attitudes of a community as well as influences the unconscious personification of things (*ibid.*: 265–266). There are probably good examples in each culture which prove how different ways of thinking and perception of a word in a language can result in different expressions or rituals or even superstitions, following a logic connected to this particular language. Mostly this meaningful logic is not conveyed via translation. After recoding the words into a new language, what is lost is the reason and relation between linguistic units that have shaped a belief or a ritual in a culture. Expressions which are found inside each culture are examples of cultural heritage with a linguistic background. Some elements seem to be untranslatable on the account of the uniqueness of the features of each language

and culture. Such examples show that apart from conveying the cognitive level, the words and grammar themselves may prove to be problematic in translation.

In this sense in addition to interlingual translation or translation proper there is a crucial need for supplementary explanation, in order to understand better how a term or an expression has formed in the past and due to not changing the words, this expression is still kept in language.

A suitable example from *The Conference of the Birds* is the following:

*“From fish to moon, all particles attest
To him, and make His essence manifest,
Although the earth and heavens, one by one,
Sufficiently attest to all He’s done”*

(Attar 2011: 5)

One might ask what is the reason behind making and keeping such an expression after centuries despite there being other words that can express similar oppositions. According to Darbandi and Davis, “From fish to moon [is] a common expression in medieval Persian verse, meaning ‘from depths to the heights’ ” ((Darbandi & Davis 2011: 264). Considering the physical position of these objects, the logic behind making such an expression is understandable, but what is not conveyed is the fact that in Persian the two words, fish (mahi) and moon (mah) look and sound very similar, pointing to a poetic motivation for the choice of these particular words to express the opposition.

Kalle Kasemaa’s translation of *The Conference of the Birds* from Persian into Estonian does provide this poetic explanation, too: “Sõnamäng: ‘kuu’ on pärsia keeles *mah*, ‘kala’ *mahi*” (“Word game: the ‘moon’ is *mah* in Persian, ‘fish’ is *mahi*”) (Attar 2012: 285). This closeness in pronunciation of these words makes a new layer of meaning on account of their companionship in a phrase and is nicely mentioned by the translator. Professor Kasemaa’s comment is added for a section that has been translated differently in Estonian and the English versions. Apparently for Professor Kasemaa, the translation needed this description, while for English translators there was not such a need to explain more. This section is part of the story of the Prophet Jonah. In the original text the exact verbal

translation from Persian into English could be the following: “Again look at Jonah who lost his way, for sometimes someone has come from the moon into a fish.” In the English version, this is presented as follows:

*“And Jonah, who was lost, and whose sad tale
Brought him inside the belly of the whale”*

(Attar 2011: 14)

The Estonian translation follows more closely the original: “Vaata Joonat, kes eksinult sattus lainete kantuna kuu juurest kala kõhtu, kuhu jäi mõneks ajaks” (“Look at Jonah, who having lost his way, was carried by the waves from the moon to the fish’s stomach, where he stayed for some time”) (Attar 2012: 27).

To sum up, it might happen that due to linguistic parameters inside a language an expression is formed and remains unchanged for centuries in one culture. Translation of expressions with knowing the equivalent of each word in other language is possible but what is missed after interpretation is the logic for appearance of such a phrase in the culture of origin. In other words what is obtained after translation is a new group of words for conveying the meaning but not necessarily the idea behind text and its artistic values. Hence, the result is new disengagement of words with linguistic logic after translation and partial maintaining of mutual meaning. The verbal translation of such a text could only transfer the first layer in meaning but not the reasons and facts for using it. Adding more explanations for reader could expand and clarify new aspects of the culture of origin.

Last but not least, the question of translating leads to the Italian aphorism *traduttore, traditore*: *translator, traitor*. This adage might be correct in case of not supporting different aspects of meaning in a text. A more explicit analysis of each translation would compel us to think about how to answer the questions posed by Jakobson in response to the Italian adage: “Translator of what message? Betrayer of what values?” (Jakobson 1971: 266).

2. Definition of translation

Until quite recently, translation studies was regarded only as a limited part of the humanities, but by now it has acquired its own scientific framework. Translation now is regarded as a self-contained field of study. Before, translation was studied mainly in terms of the source and target language. But now in addition to that, it has become more about the process of translation. Translation has also obtained significance in other fields of study. For example, the study of cultural translation could be mentioned, which could be briefly explained as the study of main cultural factors in translation, in addition to explaining how translation is rooted in cultural changes and developments.

Perhaps one of the most general definitions of translation is offered in the *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics, Media and Communication* where it is mentioned that translation comes from Latin *translatere*, ‘to transfer’, and means “conversion of writing or speech from one natural language to another” (Danesi 2000: 233).

According to Gideon Toury in his article “Translation: A Cultural-Semiotic Perspective” (1986) in *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics*, one of the major obstacles for the scholarly treatment of translation has been the ambiguity between the process and the product inherent in the term ‘translation’. For preventing such a problem, Toury advocates a distinction between three basic terms: translating as a series of operations, translatability, and translation as an entity. The main concern of semiotics of culture, according to Toury, is to present the relationships and interdeterminacies between the three types and levels of phenomena denoted by these labels (Toury 1986: 1111–1112):

- 1) Translating as a series of operations whereby one semiotic entity is transformed into and replaced by, another entity, pertaining to another [sub-]code or semiotic system.
- 2) Translatability as the initial interchangeability of two semiotic entities, pertaining to two different systems, under certain postulated equivalence condition.
- 3) Translation as an entity pertaining to a single semiotic system while, at the same time, presupposing the existence of another logically and chronologically prior entity in another system along with the factual equivalence between the two entities. (Toury

1986: 1112)

For a greater focus on cultural aspects, it seems essential to follow the ideas of Tartu-Moscow School of Semiotics in which translation is treated as translation of cultural texts. For example, for Vladimir Toporov translation is due to the existence of differences and the state of being aware of these differences, as described in the following paragraph:

[...] being different—in both merits and demerits which in their totality constitute the uniqueness of a given language and a given culture, something that ultimately becomes true of all the languages and cultures. Having found themselves isolated culturally and linguistically, separated but unable to live without each other, without contacts - friendly, neutral or hostile - people had to learn to assess the world and themselves by the instruments of their language and their culture, to control them-selves, to become aware of the cultural and linguistic diversity and to understand its meaning, and draw the conclusion and turn towards or away from others to strenuously look for a chance in the wide sea of ‘the others’ or to passively wait till the ‘others’ find you, or to set oneself in opposition to everything foreign and build a tiny Tower of Babel with the resources of an imaginary single culture severing it from the common roots.

(Toporov 1992: 34)

For Toporov, language and the act of translation as a transaction between languages obtain a deeper meaning. Translation is more than a simple act of changing the linguistic appearance and rephrasing the message, as for Toporov, language becomes more than an instrument of thought: it is a meaning carrier and container of the wisdom of the world. But man has a way of forgetting the wisdom of the past epochs, and only language, if one accords it due attention, sometimes reminds us of this wisdom and of its role as a repository of wisdom. Hence for Toporov, the choice of cultural and linguistic pluralism results in arriving at a “new road for man” where understanding a foreigner is exchanging the values and assets of the present or of what is “inherited from the distant past” (*ibid.*: 33)

According to Peeter Torop, the translation process “takes place within a translator’s mind but also within language, culture and society” (Torop 2007: 350). Torop argues that in order to obtain the possibility of optimum description of translation process, an elementary model of translation is needed. This would make it possible to compare and describe translations and translation cultures. Torop has proposed an “a posteriori typology” that would account for different kinds of translation based on agent, medium, register, system and orientation towards language (*ibid.*: 350). This categorisation is based on a “universal

principle, regardless of a particular language and diversity of languages” (*ibid.*: 351): for all kinds of translation, the process happens between two texts or messages, the first of which is in the source language and the second is translation in the target language, with the process following one or the other of the two main teleological strategies, oriented either towards the source or the target.

By defining an elementary model with a limited number of terms, it is possible to categorise possible translation types. Considering “culture as a translation mechanism” and various translation processes, Jakobson’s tripartition is not sufficient for discerning the cultural variety of translations. Therefore Torop proposes additional categories such as “interlinguistic translation, metatextual translation, in- and intertextual translation and extratextual translation” (Torop 2008: 256). It seems in analysing a translation, relying on Jakobson’s idea only does not necessarily show all the possible aspects of a text and culture. For reflecting various hidden mechanisms in a culture and the process of its translation, understanding other scholars’ ideas is needed.

3. Cultural translation

Zeno, founder of the Stoic school of Athens, viewed philosophy from his pantheist perspective as a system of the divine logos as the principle of change within it (Marty 2010: 250). Many centuries later, there is the possibility of comparing this idea with semiotics. Semiotics views each culture as a system. In a metaphoric sense, literature is its divine spark and capacity of using logos or divine reason. In ancient Greece, a literary text had a greater possibility of remaining isolated inside its culture, while in the world of today, in the stream of globalisation, there are limitless possibilities of getting to know other cultures. One gateway to multiculturalism and pluralism is through translation of these divine reasons from each culture.

The same idea can be extended to the level of society. “The ideal of humanity as a collection of free and equal beings, possessing the same basic rights and to whom notions of hospitality, openness to others and freedom of movement is primordial, underlies much thinking about translation, cultural contact and the intercultural from antiquity to our own

times” (Cronin 2006: 8). Translation seems to be an intensified link of relations which makes distant cultures meet and offers opportunity to discover patterns of thinking of another time and space.

What these contemporary understandings of the cosmopolitan offer is, the possibility of thinking about translation as a way not only of thinking but of being and acting in the world. In other words, more complex and differentiated understandings of the concept allow us to escape the idle and dispiriting debates about theory versus practice that have blighted certain kinds of writing over the years.

(*ibid.*: 10)

In this sense, translation is not only the matter of transferring a verbal text from one language into another, but it is more about interpreting the human being’s legacy.

This view changes the translator’s perspective in regard to the boundaries of literature and culture. Literature can be considered not only a cultural phenomenon but the very phenomenal essence of a culture. Therefore the translator’s task is to present literature to the universal human cultural heritage. In this sense “Faithful translation as a cultivation tool” builds a social intercultural bed for interaction between cultural groups (Cronin 2009: 199). This idea is reminiscent also of the Romantic theory of cultural translation with well-known figures like Humboldt who believed “translation is always already cultural translation” (*ibid.*: 199).

In Jakobsonian terms, interpretation of each “sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign” in the sphere of language. According to Jakobson, there is a universal capacity in languages which allows for a general translatability, despite its delimitation by linguistic constraints (Jakobson 1971: 261).

Translation from a cultural perspective seems more challenging than this mentioned definition. The problem in cultural translation seems more crucial. The question arises where the translator tries to find the most appropriate alternative target sign for the original one in the source text. Is there such a universal capacity for cultural concepts, as it is for language? Although it is the age of proliferation in connections between cultures and of the tendency towards multiculturalism, in this cultural trading how much possibility is there of finding a similar notion in different cultures? This highlights again the distinction between interlingual, intralingual and intersemiotic translation in Jakobson’s theory of translation.

When the message is a verbal text, choosing a strategy by the translator to obtain the best way for mediating the cultural features among semiotic variations on both sides seems essential. Needless to mention, languages do not have the same types of terms with exactly the same meanings. Each term has a specific context which makes it meaningful for its semiosphere. Hopefully the similarities between the human cultures' range of cultural experiences and major cultural elements are sufficient to provide a basis for mutual understanding. With optimism, Nida has said that "certainly the similarities that unite mankind as a cultural species are much greater than the differences that separate" (Nida 1964: 55).

As each language has its own grammatical and semantic structure, also each culture has its own semiotic structure which has to be paid attention in translation. In searching for equivalents to convey elements of another culture, the translator may face translatability or the lack of it. Accordingly, in case of interpreting an "untranslatable" cultural term, the necessity of providing more explanation for the reader can be seen.

II Formation of Text

How was the literary text *The Conference of the Birds* produced? There is no doubt that literature, in the absence of visuality but intense presence of visualising, has the great power to create mental images. For example, there are limitless possibilities of imagining an ideal mythical personage, in the most desirable situation according to the personal aesthetics of any reader by means of his imagination. That is exactly when and how literature becomes borderless. In comparison with other cultural texts, literature has its advantages. For example in visual cultural texts, each single element represents iconic features of an idea. In literature, vice versa, any iconic explanation or description could point to infinite references. In this sense its feature is opposite and broader than in other visual cultural texts.

According to Dahlgren, for a text to become literature, the intention of the author to present it as such and the reader's acceptance of the text as literary discourse is enough. Literature can present a higher or lower degree of literariness, or contain more or fewer el-

ements of rhetoric (such as metonymies and metaphors). Also, the more connotational—as opposed to denotational—elements present, the higher the level of literariness. (Dahlgren 2009: 54.) Thus, one question is about estimating the degree of literariness, in other words about distinguishing a translation of a text with literary values as literature, whether in the form of poem or prose.

In standard prose language the informative function of language prevails, but in most novels and especially in poetry the presence of the elements of connotation and inference is strong. In a users' manual, denotation is preferred over connotation. Denotation is related to what is explicit, and to the furthest extent possible non-ambiguous. A users' manual is by definition a text with low degree of literariness. Conversely, poetry, where tropes, allusions, connotation and inference—triggering elements are common, is a genre with an extremely high degree of literariness.

(*ibid.*: 56)

The Conference of the Birds as an artistic text has an allegorical storyline dealing with mystical and philosophical issues with creative poetic imagery. This text is prominently enunciating mythical and mystical terms. One of the aims of the author in producing such a text could have been construction of a reality, to arrest “the reader’s normalised perception of reality and to inform this perception with a restructured notion of what for the author is truer reality” (Harker 1988: 6–10). As each text has its unique conceptual universe, it demands to be read in a certain way. As a result in this example the author tries to convey to the reader his ideological perspective about ontological oneness of the truth or the God. For understanding the author’s aim, the way that this text should be read and the way to reach the author’s aim is different.

Understanding differences is more essential in a situation where the author, by means of different languages, creates interplay of usual and unusual terms and ideas. Partly, the result of such a text is experiencing a new world with features of imagination in allegory. For example, *The Conference of the Birds* includes (im)probabilities like birds having a language, planning to reach a higher aim and receiving moral exhortation from animals. When meaning is extended in this borderless sense in such a new universe, there has to be a new perspective to understand the whole concept.

Foucault commences his *Archaeology of Knowledge* by asking, “What is a concept? What is a text?” (Foucault 1972: 5). Both are fundamental questions in each circumstance and undoubtedly also in the case of the example mentioned here. The author forms a higher layer of perception for the reader by means of literary devices. A compelling reconnaissance of the relationship between the myth and mystics is made by the author. The existence of both of these themes in one unique text can be discussed from the perspective of intrasemiosis (semiosis by means of one semiotic resource) and intersemiosis (semiosis by means of multiple semiotic resources).

As literature is based on verbal language, its semiosis differs from other kinds of texts in a fundamental sense. From this perspective, this kind of cultural text typically unfolds syntagmatically as a chain which is sequentially processed. Therefore meaning culminates progressively as the text is unfolded for the reader.

For *The Conference of the Birds*, the first important point is transition from the realistic to the symbolic form for describing an abstract idea. In this text symbolism is used for explaining how a Sufi can reach his final aim, the God. The first hidden meaning concerns how the described love stories are related to celestial love. On the first layer love stories are always everlasting desirable clichés for readers. In addition to this superficial theme, Attar describes the heavenly love of the God, adding at the end his message about celestial love besides and in comparison with worldly love. In order to follow both aims of the author, the reader is kept in suspense until the end. That is why between the hemistichs of each love story, in the dialogues among personages, amphibological and metaphoric phrases are found. This strategy is based on trusting that the receiver of the message could “feel more than speech can say” (Williams 1980: 85).

Besides this feature of the text, there is also a possibility of ambiguity. There is probable hazard that the descriptions in the literary text are regarded as corresponding to the historical facts and geographical knowledge. This threat is there also for the reader of the original text. The knowledge of history and geography interferes with experiencing the text. The reader might consider rationally where the journey starts, ends, and how logical passing this distance is in the time mentioned in the story.

Chapter 3

Empirical Examples

I The Penname and the Title

1. The Author's Penname

Specific literary features are displayed in the penname of the poet. Attar as a penname is chosen by the author for its poetical meaning and function. It means 'perfume seller' and at the same time also 'one who sells medicine'. In Attar's own words:

*“O Attar, with these mysteries' musky scent,
You've filled the wide world and its firmament-,
The earth's horizons are scent-soaked by you,
And lovers' longings are provoked by you.”*

(Attar 2011: 247)

It used to be a tradition during the medieval era that authors chose for themselves an artistic penname, often conveying some concept. Inevitably, repetition of this penname is easier than of the full given name which is followed by the name of the poet's city of the origin. Without this knowledge, the perception of the reader drops to a very superficial level. In other words, from understanding the concept which the author has chosen to describe himself, it becomes merely a name or even just a phonetic sign.

2. translation and otherness in the title

The title appears as a system for introducing the whole orientation of the book, and it is important due to making the first impression. Due to its Arabic origin, already in the source text the title sounds as a foreign expression. This is a result of having a strong stress in pronunciation and an accent between the two words. The original Arabic title *Manteq-o-Teir* describes and persists more on the metafunction of using another language in this cultural context.

The conscious usage of an Arabic title for a Persian text and its derivation from the Quran are important facts that remind of the historical period in which Arabic was frequently used as the language of science, during the 9th and 14th century. The author chose an Arabic title as it was common in the medieval era in Islamic regions. The title also refers to a religious text. For a reader in the culture of origin, such composition leaves the impression of the originality of the text and at the same time it shows the sophisticated and educated side of the author. Together with its persistence on referring to the past, the title converges with the story line .

These features are exactly what can be easily lost in translation. Source text readers see and understand the motivation for choosing this kind of title very differently from readers of translated versions. In translations, this reference to the past is not observed, and the lack of demonstrating the mentioned convergence between the title and the text inside is seen.

The title carries also certain narrative functions. For Persian readers, besides the mentioned features of the title, the very first impression left by the title is that it points to one bird. In the beginning, this singular form refers to the leader of the birds, the hoopoe. By the end of the story it is understood that it refers to the final goal, Simorgh. The whole story is revealed as the technique of choosing this title. It is used to show the totality in one singular word, Bird, despite the plurality of stories inside the text.

The unfolding of these layers of the title strengthen the interest and the attention of the reader. At the same time it is the desire of the author and the essential factor for keeping motivation of the reader. The more information about the title the reader gains,

the more the reader changes into a precise, competent receiver. With this encyclopedic or ideological explanation for informed reception, the reader's knowledge becomes more closely connected to the knowledge of the author.

According to Dirk Delabastita, one of the features that may be problematic for translation is "the complex organisation of the message" (Delabastita 1993: 27). A text's complex patterning and multilayeredness is likely to affect translational recoding process. It seems even more crucial in a poetical text. In such a text there are features like line, metre, sound repetitions, syntax and isotopies. They are interacting with each other, underlying the linguistic and cultural meanings. Therefore the best translation could be the best process of transferring textual-functional clusters of these various features. In a poetical text this might result in the idea that "poetry cannot be translated but only recreated" (*ibid.*: 32). This holistic strategy and traditional idea are reflected in the translators' effort that tries to find balance between translation and adaptation.

The title of a book can be considered as a semiotic resource. Surely any title interacts with the reader to create the first layer of meaning and conception. The first challenge in translation commences with the title of the book, as title is a semantically powerful key to interpretation. Also it is the first thing that tells us what the following text might be about (Sütiste 2001: 2). In the original text of *The Conference of the Birds* the author implied a strategy with choosing a semiotised title, which results in perceiving a new layer of meaning for the knowledgeable reader. The knowledge about the aim and origin of the title changes the mechanism of facing and understanding the text from the beginning.

The title in original language is *Manteq-o-Teir*, two words originally from Arabic. In this syntax with the definite article, it makes a complete expression in Arabic. In addition it is originally from the Quran, chapter An-Naml, verse 16:

And Solomon inherited David. He said, 'O people, we have been taught the language of birds', and we have been given from all things. Indeed, this is evident bounty.
(The Quran: 27:16)

Not knowing this fact and therefore not mentioning it, transforms the judgement of the reader totally. Any explanation about this background explicitates the main theme of the book. Hence it cannot be considered a simple fable story, but with more layers of doctrines.

The title in all three languages manifests an imaginary story about birds. What is even more important is in Persian version the title is chosen from Arabic with literal meaning of logic of the bird. Bird in singular form refers to the hoopoe as it appears as the guide for the rest of group. In English version this singular word is changed into plural form, Birds. Besides, the word *Conference* is translated as an equivalent for the dominant theme of the first chapters which is dialogues between birds. Thus the main idea of the first chapter is chosen as a title of the book. In Estonian version, the chosen title, *Lindude keel*, could be translated into English as ‘language of the birds’. It emphasises language as a device for transferring ideas and is closer to the original title.

In addition to the symbolic meaning of the title, what needs even more attention is facing the otherness. In the Persian text, the only reason for choosing another language for the title was the sophisticated tradition of using Arabic for philosophical texts during the medieval era. In comparison it could be said that Latin has had almost the same function in the European region. In translation this function of using Arabic in the title disappears both in its linguistic aspect and meaning. Here the discussion concerns the question of conveying this load of signification also in translation. For example one idea might be using Latin equivalent for gaining more or less the same impression as in case of the source text. It might be hypothesised that choosing to convey the title in another language could influence the author’s perceivability as reflecting a somewhat different world in terms of Ludwig Wittgenstein (quoted by Samovar 2009: 221).

The question of reflecting a different world becomes even more crucial when pen-name is compared with the title. They both apparently carry a concept from their own time. The penname as a name of an individual inevitably is not translated. But the title, according to choice of the interpreter and his/her estimate of the cultural perception of readers, is translated and changed. It seems that for a title, due to its feature and nature for carrying a concept, it is better to be translated from kernel level to kernel level in the receptor language without manipulation in structures (Nida 1969: 487). Among all words which have kinship in meaning in target and source language, it seems having a model to translate such limited metaphors with deep semantic meaning is the best strategy, as “the kernel structures of different languages are surprisingly similar, so that transfer may be

affected with the least skewing of the content” (*ibid.*: 489).

For readers of both English and Estonian translations, comprehension of the text could be totally changed with receiving information about the background of the literary features. The process of reading and understanding is affected by the extra-textual knowledge of the title. With regard to the title, for both of these groups in case of not mentioning the title’s origin, there is a possibility of comparing it to other cultural sources, since there are similarities in various cultures in using the metaphor of a winged creature.

II Short Stories

Within the body of the main story, Attar uses different types of short stories. Through this scheme the author conveys his desired message by means of different categories. This technique of telling stories inside the main story is a very frequent literary device in oriental texts. The short stories concern different characters, with each category of characters holding possible misunderstandings for the reader if s/he is not aware of the context. In the following, the characters of the different types of short stories are described.

These short stories concern different characters and in each category there might be misunderstanding for the reader if he is not aware of the context. Different types of short stories are about:

Well-known mystic Sufi characters

Most of them are famous Sufis such as Hallaj, Shebli and Adham who are mentioned frequently also in other Attar’s texts. The main reference for these characters is the prose work *Tazkirat al-Auliya* (Attar 1990), which has been translated into English, among others, by Arthur John Arberry in 1990¹.

Undoubtedly, without knowing such a complementary text, the reader would face a

¹However, there are other translations of the mentioned book but according to different transliterations for the name of the author, it is written differently in diverse languages. It is also titled as *Memorial of God’s Friends: Lives and Sayings of Sufis* translated with an introduction by Paul Losensky (Attar 2009). The German version is *Frühislamische Mystiker* translated by Gisela Wendt (Attar 1984).

list of new names without any biographical and cultural-historical background. In order to provide some background for these names, a great amount of additional information needs to be added in the translation in the form of footnotes or commentaries.

General unknown Sufi characters

In this section, as with the first theme, the reader must understand the ideological frame of the system of the beliefs in Sufism without mentioning a specific name. For instance, general titles such as “Dervish” and “Sufi” are mentioned. This is one of the most challenging parts for translation. Because these concepts are not native to the western culture, the translator must find a cultural and linguistic group of words and phrases for expressing these terms. Some of these titles might seem untranslatable. They are formed inside the Iranian culture for referring to a special heretical sect of followers in Sufism. These titles exist only in Persian and not in other languages. The problem of translation of these words into English and Estonian is clearly between non-related cultures and languages. Being aware of this fundamental difference and having no equivalence in other cultures, there is no other solution for the translator other than importing these words into his translation. It would be fair to say that the best translation would be transliteration of these words with sufficient explanation of their meaning, etymology and usage. It is important to note that even for the native Persian readers, mentioning these titles in a text is usage of archaisms, whereas for the readers in other languages, these words are the result of cultural exchange that goes together with experiencing a new text. (Bassnett 1998: 72–85)

One of the challenges for any translator is the translation of *untranslatable words*. Untranslatability can be due to cultural differences, so there are words outside of the frame of the target language. In this example, Sufi expressions are a part of cultural exchange. Readers, however, need more explanation for understanding these notions which can be new for them. Translation of such specific non-existent notions and terms of Sufism will result in long verbal descriptions. The first plausible suggestion for making one familiar with these terms, according to Homeidi is, that the translation should include the transliteration of the names and cultural terms. Also the English translation could be followed by the commentary. Alternatively, the reader may be advised to consult a

specialised dictionary or other references. (Homeidi 2004: 22)

The main theme of almost all of the stories in this category is about considering the God in any situation, loving all the creatures and being modest before people. Although they are culturally bound terms related to Sufism, these themes can be found in Christian and Jewish mysticism as well.

The most important point is that so far as there is no specific mentioned name for a story, the storyline seems to be open and general for the reader. In other words, the reader can link it to any desirable imaginary character. Hence, the process of acceptance of the characters is faster in the absence of an attempt for identifying persons.

Islamic revered figures

These are chapters with specific names of persons accepted as prophets in Islamic tradition, such as Khezr and Zulnun. The same phenomenon that we saw in the previous section recurs here. The only difference is that, in translating this chapter for a Muslim reader, even without adding footnotes for more explanation, there would not be a huge obstacle for understanding. For example, Khezr is also known by al-Khidr, and the only matter of significance is the likeness between Persian and Arabic pronunciations of these names. For the latter name there is no problem since it is an Arabic derived name and could be considered internationally comprehensible.

The salient features of these characters are highly discipline-bounded. In other words, they are meaningful names for Muslim readers. As the full meaning of these characters is apparent and accessible only to the Muslims, reading these parts could be problematic for a non-Muslim reader. The problem rises for the non-Muslim reader who, due to not having background in such a tradition, is likely to perceive these names in the same way as the first category of Sufi characters. By adding the supplementary description, information about cultural attitude is conveyed at the same time. By presenting these characters, what is offered by translation is, in fact, not only knowledge about characteristics of a culture, specifically in one geographical region, in this case Iran, but also about a much vaster general area carrying Islamic tradition.

Caliphs in Islam

The exception in the structure of the book is the chapter named as *How Sheikh Abu Bakr's self-satisfaction was reprovved* (Attar 2011: 163). This chapter is included inside the main body of the text whereas the rest of the parts about Caliphs are added at the beginning. Again for this example, the same procedure as described above is needed in translating this text for non-Muslim readers for them to have a better understanding and recognition of the Caliphs.

Common characters in Islam and other Abrahamic religions

This category is about the variety of common notions, from names of prophets to angels. The dialogue and understanding between the reader and culture is formed as these words sound familiar to the reader. The main obstacle here is the possibility of some ambiguity that might create problems in case the reader has no familiarity with cultural specification of the source culture. For instance for the names Abraham, Jesus, Joseph and Solomon, despite the same names and almost the same pronunciation, different meanings could be perceived. With different ideological and cultural backgrounds, even in Semitic religions, there is difference in meaning behind them.

The very best example in this case is the tale of Joseph. He is the most frequent character in Attar's book. Attar mentions Joseph's name or refers to his story fifteen times during the whole book, which shows the importance that this story has for Attar as it also has for other Muslims. In the Quran, Joseph's story is mentioned as the best story:.

We relate to you, the best of stories in what We have revealed to you of this Quran although you were, before it, among the unaware.
(The Quran: 12:3)

Attar tells different parts or the whole story of Joseph (Attar 2011:151), following the Quranic idea about the importance of this story. Attar treats this tale in the same manner as the Quran which presents Joseph's story as needing consideration: "Certainly were there in Joseph and his brothers signs for those who ask." (the Quran: 12:7). As to the character of Joseph, he clearly reflects the Islamic story (the Quran: 12: 1–111). Although there is no such literary device used in the Quran, in many chapters of Attar's book Joseph

becomes a metaphor for the celestial beauty or the divine love. Attar uses here the same approach as other Sufi poets: they use talking about a supremely beautiful character for conveying the meaning of love of the God.

Another example is the case of *Eblis* which is another name for Devil in Islamic tradition. Understanding of this name is different due to differences in religious teachings. For more explanation for the reader, both ontological and epistemological analyses of culture become subject of the study. In the last part of this chapter there will be a discussion about empirical examples of these sections and how these verbal signs could be objects of study in cultural semiotics and be analysable in translation.

Specific historical characters in the history of Iran

This part contains names from the historical period of the author's life. Mainly these are the names of those who governed Iran around the same century. Basically, these kings are described as knowledgeable characters from the beginning or as persons who gained knowledge by the end of the story.

Borrowed historical characters

This section is about non-Iranian characters, ranging from historical to philosophical ones. Interestingly, the theme of these short stories may be in contrast with the recorded historical facts. For example, a character like Alexander is described as a prototype of a wise faithful Sufi that differs from the usual understanding of a western reader. According to Attar in the story *Alexander the Great facing death* Aristotle calls Alexander by the title of "Faith's king" (Attar 2011: 251). The main aim seems to be conveying the meaning of the mystical story instead of representing a historical or philosophical character to the reader of the target text.

Fictional or literary characters

This section is the most diverse and forms the majority of the short stories with general themes in literature for educational purposes. The themes vary with different characters.

Some of them are retelling the stories known among other cultures and nations as well.

Other legends

There are also common stories based on legendary love stories of the region. An example is the legend of Majnun and Leili. It is a story frequently told in the Middle East by many poets in different languages. In these parts the earthly love becomes a device for describing the eternal celestial love. In other words it explains the meaning of love by parable and exemplum.

III Symbolism in the Text

1. empirical examples: The symbol of bird

Choosing birds as the main characters of the book is due to a deeply rooted metaphor in Sufism. At the first layer, a probable explanation is based on the dominant feature of flying in birds, so that symbolically, they are disconnected from the earth and inhabit a better place. In literature, the position of the bird transformed into a spiritual bird that could pass the field of eternity and reach the tree of oneness. The most famous example could be a citation by Bayazid Bastami, a Sufi from the 9th century:

I became a bird with a body of Oneness and wings of Everlastingness, and I continued flying in the air of Quality for ten years, until I reached an atmosphere a million times as large, and I flew on, until I found myself in the field of Eternity and I saw there the Tree of Oneness. . . And I looked, and I knew that all this was a cheat.
(Schimmel 2011: 49)

Another connotation of the symbol of birds relates to the theme of searching. In Sufism it is interpreted that as a bird starts to fly, it is probably searching for something. Also, since it is flying, it is disconnected from its origin. This separation from origin is a frequently repeated motif in other Sufi masterpieces, most famously in a verse by Rumi: “Listen to the reed how it tells a tale, complaining of separations” (Rumi 2004: 23). Also, the same nature of the characters and their goal denotes this idea of having fundamentally the same nature with the creator as well as being and reaching the Godhead.

At another layer, another probable reason for choosing the symbol of bird might have been the influence of *Miraj* which is, according to Islamic beliefs, the spiritual ascension of the Prophet Mohammad. It has a visible mark in the literature of Sufism. Hence, the theme of abandoning earth is repeated as a sublime goal with a spiritual interpretation (Zarrinkoob 1970: 204).

In addition, the seekers and the aim having the same nature could be related to another Sufi discipline described by Ibn Arabi. He was a mystical philosopher of the 12th and 13th centuries. According to his conception of the “unity of being” (*wahdat al-wujud*), the essence of everything has the very same oneness with the God. Hence He is nothing but everything, nowhere but everywhere, and all directions are toward Him. (*ibid.*: 204)

By accepting this idea at the end of their journey when the birds find themselves as the reality of truth, they reach the state “in the course of which the Gnostic ‘sees’ nothing but the God” (*ibid.*: 204). Therefore the meaning of “experience is but a subjective realisation and that the ‘being’ is by no means to be confused with the ‘non-being.’ ” (*ibid.*: 117)

Last but not least, those who crave the truth are supposed to attain it. The only destined way to perfection is via oneself by means of understanding it.

2. Symbolism in space

Utopia as a fiction is at once an imaginary space and a critical space in which the present space is recognised along desirable values. The social view of fiction goes beyond the limitations of the self-encapsulated game that a theory of fiction as make-believe implies. (Bouissac 1998: 240–241)

In this mystic text of *The Conference of the Birds*, utopia is the destination where heroes finally reach their desire. It is where they find the truth and the meaning of their existence as a higher creature and the place that the goal is victoriously attained.

Lotman, in his interpretation of symbolic name and symbolic space, describes the meaning and impression behind a distant utopia (Lotman 2001: 191). Utopia in the case of this story is slightly changed. As at the beginning it is presented as an actual name in a real geographical place. As the story continues, according to an unwritten contract between the author and reader, the perception of Kaf as a name of a place changes. Hence, later geography is used as a scale for ethics and for signifying a better place. Even more

precisely it is for distinguishing the opposition of symbolic places: the heaven vs. the hell or the desired utopia vs. the current place. In other words, the goal is described with a symbol as a righteous geographical destination.

Besides, according to the nature of myth, the place of a mythical bird should be “in-corruptible and eternal” (*ibid.*: 171). This imaginary place creates such a mysterious impression in the mind of the reader. Interestingly, by the end of the story, this utopia changes into a state of mind and understanding. It is another example of the movement from the world of outside into inside—corresponding to the Sufi belief that the answer to everything is nowhere else but inside. That is why utopia is discovered within oneself.

3. Symbolism in plot

The whole purpose of the plot is a symbolic journey to a specific destination. In other words, it could be interpreted as a story about the mankind’s thirst for understanding, the obstacles to reaching it, and final redemption. This symbolic journey goes through different stages, from ignorance to wisdom. Attar expresses the different stages of reaching the truth symbolically. It is via passing through a variety of places named as valleys. The arrangement of these valleys according to chapters of the book are: The Valley of the Quest (Attar 2011: 181), The Valley of Love (*ibid.*: 186) The Valley of Detachment (*ibid.*: 199), The Valley of Unity (*ibid.*: 206), The Valley of Bewilderment (*ibid.*: 212), and The Valley of Poverty and Nothingness (*ibid.*: 219). The valleys are in the same order as the spiritual stages in a Sufi’s search for truth.

According to Juri Lotman, a “journey through the space [is] treated as an allegory of moral regeneration” (Lotman 2001: 173). Attar uses the same approach as a device for expressing the culture of Sufism in a new system of coded messages. In this text, names of places are instead of situations of an individual in a specific time. This powerful generator of new information indicates Attar’s idea in recreation of the system of beliefs as a mysterious land. Although there are no such places in reality, in cultural context the making of such “cultural geographical reality” is possible: “Humanity, immersed in its cultural space, always creates around itself an organised spatial sphere. This sphere

includes both ideas and semiotic models and people's recreative activity." (*ibid.*: 203). And clearly the final aim is reaching to the destination, the place of rejoicing.

A symbolic theme is seen on all levels. On the one hand, the destination is the place of Simorgh; on the other hand, after the journey it is discovered that the destination was the journey itself, as it is understood that Simorgh was that group of thirty birds themselves. In addition, the symbolic journey is shaped with seven valleys or levels for reaching the truth.

At the beginning, the hoopoe introduces himself using the terms related to symbolic travelling in different places and different times as a source of knowledge. The hoopoe claims:

*"For years I travelled over many lands,
Past oceans, mountains, valleys, desert sands,
And when the Deluge rose I flew around
The world itself and never glimpsed dry ground;
With Solomon I set out to explore
The limits of the earth from shore to shore.*

...

*We have a king; beyond Kaf's mountain peak
The Simorgh lives, the sovereign whom you seek,
And He is always near to us, though we
Live far from His transcendent majesty."*

(Attar 2011: 43)

The birds' journey could also be interpreted as their motivation to move away from the current earthly and temporal situation towards the contrasting heavenly and eternal life, although there is no description of geographical features as oppositions in spatial sense. The important fact in need of attention according to Lotman is the "journey as a movement in a religious and moral sense" (Lotman 2001: 172) and here it is shaped as such.

4. Symbolism in destination

The discussion about utopia could be developed in yet another way. In the text, Mount Kaf is situated somewhere in China:

*“It was in China, late one moonless night,
The Simorgh first appeared to mortal sight –
...
Their private fantasies uniquely true!
(In China still this feather is on view,
Whence comes the saying you have heard, no doubt,
‘Seek knowledge, unto China seek it out.’)”*
(Attar 2011: 45)

Needless to mention, this fictional China is different from the geographical one. China could be considered as a conveyor of the meaning of a land of mysterious knowledge. It is also imagined as a faraway place difficult to reach, difficult to stay and even more difficult to understand the sciences of there. The same description that Lotman used in describing the semiotics of city could be applied on a vaster scale to China as a region. “The city is a complex semiotic mechanism, a culture-generator, but it carries out this function only because it is a melting-pot of texts and codes, belonging to all kind of languages and levels. The essential semiotics polyglotism of every city is what makes it so productive of semiotic encounters.” (Lotman 2001: 194.) References to a bizarre place in the 12th literature make an intensive complex of significances, and at the same time, the name ‘China’ creates a mysterious impression. For the people of the 12th century, it has the connotation of a very unknown language and therefore of an undiscovered culture. So, inevitably, it seems as the best symbol for the hierarchy of producing layers of meaning differently: “The place of hybridisation, recoding, semiotic translations, all of which makes it into a powerful generator of new information” (*ibid.*: 194). It is exotic at different layers, not only due to its geographical position but also due to cultural aspects. Consideration of these deep differences in cultural layers creates in the mind of the reader an imaginary unique semiosphere with regard to China. Attar makes up his own set of facts about this

region and presents it as an organised symbolic sphere in a specific place. Because of pre-suppositions in the minds of readers coinciding with this imaginary premise of the author, the cycle for coding and recoding of a creative message seems to be successful. For the Persian culture of Attar's time, acceptance of China for the homeland of a mythical bird is believable.

As Lotman explains in his *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*:

Each genre, each culturally significant kind of text makes its own selection of the facts. A fact for a myth is not one for a chronicle, so from the point of view of the addresser, a fact is always the result of selecting out of the mass of surrounding events an event which according to his or her idea is significant.

(Lotman 2001: 203)

Therefore China as a believed mythical fact is understandably distinct from a geographical fact in science. A fact in a text, embodied by events, is meaningful within the text itself and is not necessarily meaningful outside. Therefore for the addressee, the fact should be interpreted according to the sender's attitude.

The feasibility of transferring such a complex idea as the one related to China in the 12th century Iran into a new culture is debatable. Discussing about this imaginary utopia could be possible from another point of view here. As it is described as a mount in China, in this context the way of understanding the landscape is much more related to ways of imagining, for readers who have different cultural backgrounds. Without knowing the importance of signifiers in the culture of the original text, there is also the thread of misinterpreting the signs due to social and cultural context both exotic and foreign. In this sense, reading is at the same time interpreting a new set of values in Persian culture, a significant carrier of meaning for expressing cultural values.

The nest on the top of a mount as an artefact could present both culture and cultural figures with carrying multiple encoded messages within it. To compile rhetoric for it, the mountain could be explained as an important place in Persian mythology due to its frequent appearance in different myths. The mountain is shown as an indicator of a cultural identity with this cultural motivation behind it. In the context of *The Conference of the Birds* the nest is not considered as a materialised object but due to referring to the word *mountain*, it rather reflects an idea. The idea behind mentioning the mountain is referring to its mythical sense: it is considered as a manifestation of the dominant tradition of

thinking about the mountain as a sacred place in Zoroastrianism and its frequent examples (Russell 1993: 83).

The special reference to China seems to indicate an emphasis on a culture. Though imaginary, it conveys a set of ideas about the adoration of all those who live there and are considered intellectuals who know different fields of sciences. Probably this choice “has every chance of being mythical” and gives the best attempt of the author for contributing its connotation in a very short metaphorical form (Barthes 1957: 194). Here the word ‘China’ in addition to duplicating the message of the location of a mythical bird in one place, adds more curiosity and gives it more potential for believing in it as such. In other words, it places two myths in parallel and resemiotizes the existence of such a bird in a mysterious place. Manifestation of this landscape as it is described shows how it is highly mediated by culture according to the mental expectation of the author and reader.

5. Symbolism in time

*“It was in China, late one moonless night,
The Simorgh first appeared to mortal sight”*
(Attar 2011: 45)

Attar mentions the “moonless night” which is related to a frequently described doctrine in Sufism. The meaning behind this metaphor is the staying of the soul in darkness and the hope of finding the God is the very moment of “ecstatic illumination, that acute sense of darkness and deprivation” (Cammann 1976: 202). This celestial moment relieves spiritual darkness thoroughly. Hence “a literal portrayal of Sufi seekers is travelling through the darkness toward the Ultimate Light on that spiritual journey known as the Tariqat” (*ibid.*: 202). Hereby the symbolic usage of the duality of dark and light is demonstrated.

6. Symbolism in number

The intense attempt of the birds is to reach the unique, One bird. This emphasis on the *one* is related, on the one hand, to the monotheistic belief of Islam, on the other hand,

to the accentuation of *Tawhid* in Sufism. “*Tawhid* consciousness acknowledges divine personification through apparitions (*zuhurat*) and manifestations (*tajalli*). This is to be understood as distinct from the Christian concept of the incarnation of divinity in the person of Jesus.”(O’Connor 1998: 495) From this perspective, the numbers could be interpreted as obtaining oneness of *tawhid* via uncountable *tajalli* due to the numbers of the birds not being clear at the beginning of the story in the birds’ very first gathering. In addition, all these limitless *zuhurat* and *tajalli* are structured particles of the One. So, it is concluded that the one unique truth is made of different manifestations and at the same time, it is nothing but the collection of all these different manifestations.

Conclusion of symbolism

Symbols of each culture are highly intertwined with special sets of meaning in the own texts and context rooted in a system of thought. Without considering this chain of meanings and references, translation would result in a linear sentence without extra referents. Studying symbolism beneath each culture in literature and an attempt to find hidden referent is reminiscent of a poem by Sheikh Mahmoud Shabestari in *The Secret Garden* quoted by Hardin:

*“If yonder raindrop should its heart disclose,
Behold therein a hundred seas displayed.
In every atom, if thou gaze aright,
Thousands of reasoning beings are contained.”*
(Quot. in Hardin 1973: 571).

Last but not least, in comparative analysis of symbolism in literature, diachronically inside a language or synchronically between different languages, “Therein two worlds commingled may be seen” (*ibid.*: 571). Symbolism in each culture presents the situation of a simple word carrying loads of meaning in different layers. It also reflects historical and cultural background and conceptions related to a word. The analysis of the usage of each symbolic element signifies many kinds of reasoning and deciphers new worlds.

IV Translators' Strategies

1. Ways of providing information by translators

Part of translation is experiencing a new culture. This is for both translators and readers. Both of them, at the end, will find new ways of extending areas for seeing facts. One channel of understanding a new culture is translation. Therefore, it is a mental device for changing cultures socially and the way of seeing individually. Formation of and change in a culture is never linear. It is the same as the way of introducing and presenting a new culture. This is the way that cultures influence each other by means of different media.

Beside translations of textual messages, a more creative process is explaining how a term is formed in a culture, why it has this specific meaning, and what is the meaning of its appearance in a special context. A good example of this category are special cultural phrases in one tradition or religion. Explanations for such phrases and terms can be provided in order to create better understanding and to develop cultural and communication processes. They can be added as a necessary supply for creating a dialogue between different cultures.

A culture's capacity for analysis reflects its ability to describe and to understand itself. In the process of description and understanding, an important role is played by the multiplicity of texts, by the interrelatedness of communication with metacommunication.
(Sütiste, Torop 2007: 189)

The Conference Of The Birds is a good example of culture being deeply embedded in a text. According to the nature of the text in Persian, there are plenty of expressions from a distinct culture. On the one hand, translation from the Persian of the 12th century is a challenge; on the other hand, what is even more difficult is conveying and reflecting the Arabic phrases in the text. The main challenge for the translator is keeping the quality of such a multiply foreign text with a comprehensive equivalent in any other language.

In the Estonian translation of Attar's book, beside the text, sufficient analysis of visual cultural texts and artefacts is added. Here the key examples are given in forms of calligraphy and calligrams. These examples can be explained on the object level and metalevel, with special attention to the dialogue between old and new ideas. These schemes prove that each culture develops in its own way, has its own technological environment, and its

own traditions. The analysis of the result can explain the whole process of communication and metacommunication in the translation of the text and in the addition of supplementary artistic types of texts in Persian culture.

When from a totally different culture a translation is made for the first time into another culture and language, for translator instead of transferring the words, there should be frames for introducing a new culture. For reaching such a goal two main strategies are possible, foreignization and domestication (Venuti 1998: 240–244).

Foreignization is the attempt to retain the otherness of the source text by keeping the features of the original text. Domestication, on the contrary, is the attempt to render the other as familiar as possible. The translator, according to his discretion, may choose one of these tendencies. The result of the translation is “a multi-faceted entity” as it has at the same time both features (Gottlieb 2005: 2), although one of these features is more dominant for a specific expression in translation. Any equivalent expression always falls somewhere between foreignization and domestication (Hewson & Martin 1991: 122).

It might happen that despite the effort of the translator for making sense of new equivalents with these strategies, the reader faces an ambiguous text. It highlights the importance of added introduction, explanations, comments, footnotes, subtitles and epilogues.

2. English translators of *The Conference of the Birds*

The supplementary information provided by translators in English and Estonian versions of *The Conference Of The Birds* is different. In the English translation by Dick Davis and Afkham Darbandi, in different editions of the same texts, information about the poet and social situation is provided. In the last edition from 2011 by Penguin Publications there is an introduction added at the beginning of the book. Topics of this introduction branch into various directions. The introduction starts with a short biography of Attar, general information about his birthplace, penname and its meaning. This is followed by ideological topics such as the doctrine of Sufism and analysis of Attar’s epilogue. It also contains a brief history of Islam. Finally, there is a note on the translation and the reason for choosing poems in twenty two syllables and translation into pentameter. (Darbandi &

Davis :ix–xxvi)

At the end of the book there is also a biographical index for unfamiliar characters. The reason for its inclusion is the very right assumption that, perhaps, the western reader would have no knowledge of or have different conceptions about these people. Part of this problem for the latter group is related to different meanings for the same name in different cultures. For example, characters like Alexander the Great, Joseph, David, Jacob and Gabriel are understood differently in Persian culture. This part provides essential explanation for preventing a perplexing situation for the reader.

There are also notes added at the end of the book, describing mainly literary techniques, references or reasons of similes mentioned in the prologue, epilogue and the main text.

3. Estonian translator of *Lindude keel*

Due to the huge differences in the fundamental aspects of the source and target cultures such as time, space and ideology, the translator supplies information to improve the reader's better understanding of the source text and culture. The translator presents information on different aspects of source culture. It seems without these supports, the understanding of Estonian readers would remain incomplete. In other words, without this supplementary part, the translation would be just words in a text recoded from one language into another one. The reader might face more unanswered questions or abstract vague meanings without a clear message. Understandable words and phrases are supported with information about the cultural background.

For this case study, the Estonian translation cannot be considered as an interpreted text only. The result is a polysemiotic reference more than a verbal text. The reason for such a claim is that the translator supports his translation with influential examples from the culture of origin. This translation communicates in deeper channels with Estonian readers. Due to the great knowledge of the translator and his familiarity with the culture of origin, it is not just a text with equivalent words in Estonian. Instead, it becomes a text with good encyclopedic explanations for introducing the entire foreign culture.

The supplements in Estonian translation can be divided into two different categories, visual and verbal materials. The reader's interest is first caught by presenting the first page of the book in the original language. It contains the title and the author's full name, his penname, the name of the editor and introducer of a specific edition, publication, and the name of the seller, all in calligraphy and style of *nastaliq*. Obviously, since the title of the book is always mentioned on the very first page of each translation, there is no informative reason for including this page from the source text. Instead, what seems so interesting and crucial here is the intention behind it. The intention seems to be to create more questions and increase the enthusiasm and curiosity of the reader. With this visual sample, without mentioning the translation, intensified motivation for understanding a text from a new culture is started. The idea beneath seems to be related to opening new ways of communication for knowing another culture. Since *nastaliq* used to be the most dominant type of text writing, a familiarity with a new tradition of presenting the text is generated and advanced here.

Due to writing in a different language, there is obviously no chance for conveying clear meanings and significations from the culture of origin for the Estonian reader. Apparently, however, understanding and guessing the meaning behind this text in new cultural environment is not far from mind. Without translation and explanation of this very first page, an introduction for a productive dialogue is formed. Although translation is a dialogue itself, here without even mentioning the meaning of these phrases, communication at different levels becomes possible.

Since calligraphy in Persian culture has an important role, presenting such a sample at the beginning has an impressive effect on the reader. The frequency of presenting these cultural samples is repeated in a different way and with other purpose.

Another part of the added index to Estonian translation is examples of calligrams (Attar 2012: 347). Calligrams are a part of traditional calligraphy in Islamic regions. The main aim of this art is resembling writing to a visual shape. These are mostly shapes of animals and plants. A very dominant type of calligrams is writing religious words to create a visual image of its closest symbol. These calligrams are a good example of polysemiotic material. In a sense, they are still verbal material but they function with a

different purpose.

For making sense of these visual messages, an explanation of this tradition is added by the translator. The challenging part is that the translator does not treat these calligrams as just visual objects created for aesthetic reasons, nor does he present them as verbal messages. He also adds the main goal, meaning and further explanation for each one. The translator's explanation is from one verbal text into another verbal text. The first verbal text refers to the meaning of the words themselves, whilst the second one refers to the emphasis of the reason. In other words, translation is carrying a communicative intention in an artistic way. On the first level, a calligram is presented as an artifact; i.e., as an example of calligraphy. On the second level, explanation is added as a device for understanding the meaning behind the artistic words. These conventionalised forms of writing manifest the degree of freedom in writing. The supplementary explanation proves the possibility of another usage of verbal text in an exotic culture. Hence with offering such an additional material, the source and target texts are semiotically nonequivalent.

Calligrams, from another viewpoint, are a different way of seeing. Mainly, when representing a living creature, a calligram shows how a word can have another meaning. Surprisingly, the example is from the main theme of the book in the original language. It is when a word, Simorgh, presents Si-morgh (thirty birds). This example shapes a new idea for the reader how various meanings of a word might be found at different levels within itself.

Hereby in the Estonian text a collection of three provided examples from the 19th century is presented. The first one is an artistic manifestation of the first five sacred characters in Islam, better known by the term *Ahl al-Kisa* or "People of the Cloak". The exact transliteration of these names is mentioned for the reader. For the second one, the whole expression is transliterated with Estonian characters. The Islamic honorific which is presented is "Ali ibn Abi Talib radija' llahu ta'ala anku", the literal translation in Estonian is also added in parentheses: "Ali ibn Abi Talib, olgu Kõigekõrgemal Jumalal tema üle hea meel" (Kasemaa 2012 : 347–348) which can be translated into English as "May God Be Pleased with Him".

The last example is a part of an Islamic creed, a praising phrase for the God. "La

ilaha illa huwa, rabbi l-amin” is translated as “pole Jumalat peale Tema, maailmade Isanda”(ibid.:348). In English, this can be translated as “There is no God except him, the creator of the worlds”. By adding the exact transliteration of these phrases besides the Estonian translation, the translator makes the attempt to simultaneously domesticate and foreignize these new terms. In other words, in a sense the identity of these universally known words for Muslims is retained. The translator repeats the very same expressions according to how it is in Persian text with Arabic words. Also, he translates the meaning behind the text for the Estonian reader. It seems that with his strategies, the translator is able to reach the satisfaction of any reader with or without knowledge of Islamic terminology.

What is more, the translator introduces further references about this tradition. One of the best references which is mentioned with details is “Calligraphy and Islamic Culture” by Annemarie Schimmel in 1990. In this section all the possible channels for becoming more familiar with Iranian culture are provided by the exact translation, transliteration and extra references.

Another challenge is translation of a number of religious terms related to Islam. These phrases are constant expressions in Islamic terminology for appreciation and adoration of the God or religious characters. In Estonian translation, these are treated as ordinary text. Therefore they are changed into terms, which is more acceptable in the target language. As far as these are well-known with colossal usage in Islamic texts, even in case of texts in other languages these are repeated in Arabic mostly. For the Estonian readers who are not familiar with this terminology, the exact translation is brought. For example, the Estonian translation begins with “Armulise ja helde Jumala nimel”(Attar 2012:19) (“In the name of God, gracious and generous”). This example can be presented as a case of domestication. It is completely and exactly translated into Estonian. Without any exception, all Islamic texts begin with “In the name of God, the Most Compassionate, and the Most Merciful” in Arabic. For the reader in Islamic regions there is no need of providing translation in any other language, due to the sufficiency of the Arabic term. Due to a smaller probability of such situation in target culture, the translator chooses the highest level of domestication.

Another example might be expressions of honour and respect after the name of the

Prophet Mohammad, the phrase “God Bless Him and Grant Him peace” in Estonian—“Jumal õnnistagu teda ja andku talle rahu” (Attar 2012: 32)—is given. Also similarly after the caliphs’ names, an exact translation of the phrase “razi allal anho” is added: “Olgu Jumalal temast hea meel” (*ibid.*: 40) (“May God Be Pleased with Him”). With all these examples, different laudatory titles for each category are used for showing admiration and praise. For the Estonian readers they are translated literally into Estonian to fill the gap of not knowing the general phrase. Hence the cultural identity of these terms is changed and just their meaning is conveyed by domestication.

Conclusion of the applied strategies

In conclusion, the main aim of this chapter has been to put greater emphasis on how in absence of these examples and explanations a reader might be puzzled or even baffled. A good example of an attempt represents and explains indirectly a new system of beliefs to the reader. In English translation, it is supported by exact verbal text. In Estonian version, intersemiotic examples and explanations are provided. Also only in the Estonian translation, the process of becoming familiar with the source is supported by visual materials, which are also followed by verbal explanations. This information about these materials could be considered as intersemiotic translation. It is where one or more channels of communication used in the translated text differ(s) from the channel(s) used in the original text.

All these samples, their frequency and different way of conveying the meaning behind them enlighten the reader with regard to the nature of the text. They also show the historical and cultural situation which has formed this specific text from a unique point of view. All these religious phrases, although they are translated, could function as a metalinguistic device. However their analyses are also added in Estonian translation to provide more information. This dialogue is formed by reflecting the proper meaning of these phrases and cultural semiosphere for their formation.

Conclusion

“The world is names and signs. . . ”

(Attar 2011:6)

The Conference of the Birds is a rich source for study in the field of semiotics. The first chapter of this thesis introduces the book, author, plot, the different hidden meanings behind the story and different aspects of the text. In addition, it demonstrates the cultural background for the formation of such a text. Undoubtedly, Attar was educated in philosophy and literature, and, presumably, so are those who choose to read this text. Those who are working in the fields of literature or philosophy might already be familiar with the intertextual backgrounds of Attar’s book from readings of, e.g., Greek literature and philosophy. The interest in Attar’s book is followed by reading the ideas of other Iranian thinkers like Suhrawardi and Al-Ghazali. The ideology behind Greek texts is completely different from Attar’s, but with Iranian thinkers similarities are seen. Just as Attar was influenced by other texts in producing his book, his readers might be influenced by other texts in their readings as well.

Another interesting aspect is how a text is produced inside a culture, and even more: how does a culture treat a translated text within itself? There exists a vast variety of translations of *The Conference of the Birds*. Aside from verbal translations, there are many intersemiotic translations of the book in the occidental world, mostly in the visual medium of theatre as well as in music.

The second chapter demonstrates various theories that have striven to cope with issues of translation and text, presenting different approaches of scholars, such as Roman Jakobson, Peeter Torop, Dirk Delabastita. Each approach can propose an explanation of

a layer of meaning in the text of *The Conference of the Birds* and its translations. The aim is to show how semiotics enriches the way of analysing culture, text and translation from a linear point of view into a more dimensioned perspective.

Exchanging thoughts across different cultures is always challenging. In this exchange, conveying the information and meaning is successful if the reader considers the meaning of each term in its context. The third chapter analyses empirical examples, emphasising probable problems for the translator and the reader, respectively. It discusses how to clarify the context and translators' strategies in representing cultural terms and expressions. For the sake of understanding the author's expectations, the reader needs some awareness of his values and beliefs.

The first part describes how the explanation of the origin of the title shows the ideological features of the book. Inside the main text, in different categories of short stories, different references might be needed for the reader to gain the optimum understanding of the book. In these examples, western readers have to know that their previous information from their own cultural references might be completely different from what the author's. Problems arise when the sources which Attar studied, do not correspond with the ones familiar to his present-day readers. The first thing which needs to be paid attention to, is that the author is under the influence of Islamic thought and of Sufism. This is clear from the title of the book, the content of the prologue, and the types of the different short stories Attar tells in his work. In all these categories, each sign derives its meaning from a specified hierarchy of beliefs in a special context.

The number of English translations from classical Persian literature, Sufism, and specifically from Attar, is considerably larger than the number of Estonian translations. This fact draws attention to the conclusion that the characteristics of supplementary information for the Estonian reader have to be different from that for the English speaking readership. That is why the variety and types of the information provided by Kalle Kase-maa re different from the verbal explanations of Afkham Darbandi and Dick Davis. Both of these translations choose a different approach in the process of foreignization and/or domestication in their works.

The English translators introduce different references to the same author, or provide

other Islamic references. They benefit from the availability of texts which have been translated into English, and point these out for the reader. Therefore, abundant footnotes and explanations with references to cultural, ideological, and historical background of the text are added.

The Estonian translator introduces transliterations into his translation, for example, for the Islamic honorifics. He also provides visual examples of sacred texts in calligram, which is a creative way of making the Estonian reader more familiar with Iranian and Islamic culture. Being aware of the differences between the source and target cultures, he introduces a foreign culture with examples of calligrams. Thus, he provides a verbal interlingual translation in prose, and adds to it intersemiotic texts. With this strategy, he helps the reader to become more familiar with such a text and culture through different channels.

Kultuuritunnused tõlkes: Attari Teose

Lindude Keel Analüüs

Kokkuvõte

Käesoleva magistr töö uurimisobjektiks on Pärsia kultuuris oluline 12. sajandi teos “*Manteq-o-Teir*”, autoriks on Attar, ja selle tõlked. Inglise keeles kannavad tõlked tavaliselt pealkirja all *The Conference of the Birds*, eesti keeles on see ilmunud pealkirja all “*Lindude keel*”. Kõige viimane ingliskeelne väljaanne sellest tekstist ilmus 2011. aastal; eesti keeles ilmus tõlge 2012. aastal.

Uurimistöö peamiseks ülesandeks on uurida seda, kuidas võib kultuuridevahelise tõlke puhul muutuda teksti dominant, kuidas võib selline muutus mõjutada teksti žanri tajumist ning milliseid lugejapoolseid vääritimõistmisi võiks sellest tekkida. Töö eesmärgiks on mõista tõlkeprotsessi ja teiste kultuuride esitlemise kaudu sündivat kultuuridevahelist kommunikatsiooni.

Magistr töö keskmes on uuritava teose kaks aspekti: tähenduse moodustumine esiteks teoses “*Manteq-o-Teir*” eneses ja teiseks selle tõlgetes. Uurimistöö peamiseks teoreetiliseks alusteks on mitmed teadustööd semiootika ja tõlketeaduse vallast. Keskseteks nimedeks, kelle ideedest lähtutakse, on Roman Jakobson, Juri Lotman, Peeter Torop jt.

Inglis- ja eestikeelsete tõlgete võrdlev analüüs peaks välja tooma selle, millised on lähteteksti kõige olulisemad kohad. Käesolev magistr töö keskendub kontekstist sõltuvatele nimedele ja väljenditele, mis võiksid täiendavate selgitusteta jääda tõlke lugejatele ebaselgeteks. Üheks näiteks sellisest nimest on Joseph, mis on lähteteksti seisukohalt võtmetähtsusega: Joseph on kõige sagedamini esinev tegelane “*Manteq-o-Teiris*”. Veel ühe

näitena probleemidest võiks ära mainida religioosse sisuga austavad tiitlid, mis on eriti tähenduslikud just ühe spetsiifilise Islami sekti jaoks.

Ajaliselt, keeleliselt ja kultuuriliselt kaugete tekstide tõlkimine kujutab endast alati tõsiselt väljakutset. Just seetõttu ongi tõlkimine mitte lihtsalt sõnade teise keelde ümberpanemine, vaid pigem terve mõtete kompleksi ülekandmine ühest kultuurist teise. Kuid veelgi suurem väljakutse on aimata ära, milliste kohtade peal võiks tõlge lugejale ebaselgeks jääda. Seetõttu tasub vaadata ka seda, kui üksikasjalikke selgitusi tõlkija oma lugejatele pakub, näiteks millises ulatuses selgitatakse lugejale seoseid, mida sama sõna eri tähendused võivad tekitada. Tundmatute tegelaste puhul sarnase kontekstiga sobivate viidete sissetoomine näib olevat lugeja seisukohalt hea mõte. Transliteratsiooni lisamine ning tähenduse ja konteksti selgitamine on võimalikud strateegiad, mida kasutada austavate pöördumiste kõige optimaalsema mõistmise tagamiseks. Seega sünnib lõplik tõlge keele elementide ja kultuuri elementide vastastikmõjudest, ning seda nii tõlkija kui ka lugeja jaoks.

Bibliography

- [1] Al-Ghazali, Abu Hamid 2007. *Eksitusest päästja; Lampide orv*. Kasemaa, Kalle. Tartu: Ilmamaa.
- [2] Amin Razavi, Mehdi 2013. *Suhrawardi and the School of Illumination*. New York: Routledge.
- [3] Aristophanes 2007. *The Birds*. Translated by Henderson, Jeffrey. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- [4] Attar, Farid Ud-Din 2012. *Lindude keel*. Translated by: Kasemaa, Kalle. Tartu: Ilmamaa.
- [5] — 2011. *The Conference of the Birds*. Translated by Darbandi, Afkham and Davis, Dick. New York: Penguin Classic.
- [6] — 1990. *Muslim Saints and Mystics: Episodes from the Tadhkirat Al-Auliya ('Memorial of the Saints')*. Translated by Arberry, Arthur J. . London: Penguin (Non-Classics).
- [7] — 1984. *Frühislamische Mystiker: Aus Farududdin'Attars Heiligenbiographie*. Translated by Wendt, Gisela. Amsterdam: Castrum Peregrini Presse.
- [8] — 1976. *The Ilahi-nama: or, Book of God*. Translated by Boyle, John Andrew. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- [9] Barthes, Roland 1957. *Mythologies*, Paris: Editions du Seuil.

- [10] Bassnett, Susan 1998. Translation Across Culture, in *Language at Work, British Studies in Applied Linguistics*. No. 13, pp. 72–85.
- [11] Behbehani, Farah K. 2009. *The Conference of the Birds: A Study of Farid Ud-din Attar's Poem Using Jali Diwani Calligraphy*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- [12] Bouissac, Paul 1998. *Encyclopedia of Semiotics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- [13] Cammann, Schuyler V. R. 1976. Religious Symbolism in Persian Art. *History of Religions*. Vol. 15, No. 3, pp. 193–208.
- [14] Chittick, William 1994. *Imaginal worlds*, Albany: State University of New York press.
- [15] Cronin, Michael 2006. *Translation and Identity*, London; New York: Routledge Taylor and Francis Group.
- [16] — 2009. Cultural translation: An introduction to the problem, and responses, *Translation Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, pp. 196–219.
- [17] Dabashi, Hamid 2012. *The World of Persian Literary Humanism*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- [18] Dahlgren, Marta 2009. Connoting, associating and inferring in literary translation. *Journal of Literary Semantics*. Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 53–70.
- [19] Danesi, Marcel 2000. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics, Media and Communication*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- [20] Darbandi, Afkham & Davis, Dick 2011. Introduction. — Attar, Farid 2011. *The Conference Of The Birds*. Translated by Darbandi, Afkham and Davis, Dick. New York: Penguin Classic. pp. ix–xiv.
- [21] Delabastita, Dirk 1993. *There's a Double Tongue: An Investigation into the Translation of Shakespeare's Wordplay, With Special Reference to Hamlet*, Amsterdam: Rodopi.

- [22] Foruzanfar, Badi'ozzaman 1929. *Sokhan va Sokhanvaran* (Speech and Orators). Tehran: Kharazmi Publications.
- [23] — 1960. *Sharhe Aghval o Naghde Attar* (Attar's Biography and Criticism). Tehran: Zavar.
- [24] Foucault, Michel 1972. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Translated by: Sheridan, Alan. New York: Pantheon Books.
- [25] Gottlieb, Henrik 2005. *Multidimensional Translation: Semantics turned Semiotics*. EU-High-Level Scientific Conference Series. MuTra 2005 — Challenges of Multidimensional Translation: Conference Proceedings in Copenhagen.
- [26] Griffel, Frank 2009. *Al-Ghazali's Philosophical Theology*. New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [27] Hajjam, Umar 2000. *Nelikvärsid. Pärsia keelest tõlkinud, seletused ja kommentaarid kirjutanud Haljand Udam*. Tallinn: Tallinna Raamatutrükikoda.
- [28] Hardin, Nancy S. 1973. Doris Lessing and the Sufi Way. *Contemporary Literature*. Vol. 14, No. 4, Special Number on Doris Lessing, pp. 565–581.
- [29] Harker, John W. 1988. Literary Communication: The Author, the Reader, the Text. *Journal of the Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 5–14
- [30] Hewson, Lance, & Martin, Jacky 1991. *Redefining Translation*. London: Routledge.
- [31] Homeidi, Moheiddin A. 2004. Arabic Translation Across Cultures. *Babel* 50:1, pp. 13–27.
- [32] Jakobson, Roman 1971[1959]. *On Linguistic Aspects of Translation. Selected Writings*, Vol. 2. The Hague: Mouton, pp. 260–266.
- [33] Kasemaa, Kalle Introduction. — Attar, Farid 2012. *Lindude keel* Translated by: Kasemaa, Kalle. Tartu: Ilmamaa.

- [34] Kristeva, Julia 1980. *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- [35] Lotman, Yuri M. 2001. *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture*. New York: I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd.
- [36] Losensky, Paul 2009. Introduction. — Attar, Farid ad-Din 2009. *Memorial of God's Friends: Lives and Sayings of Sufis*. New York: Paulist Press.
- [37] Marty, Elsa J. 2010. *A Dictionary of Philosophy of Religion*. New York: Continuum International Publishing Group.
- [38] Miljan, Toivo 2004. *Historical Dictionary of Estonia*. Maryland: Scarecrow Press, Inc.
- [39] Nasr, Seyyed Hossein 2008. *The Garden of Truth: The Vision and Promise of Sufism, Islam's Mystical Tradition*. New York: Harper Collins.
- [40] Nida, Eugene A. 1969. Science of Translation. *Language* Vol. 45, No. 3. pp. 483–498.
- [41] O'Connor, Kathleen M. 1998. The Islamic Jesus. *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*. Vol. 66, No. 3, pp. 493–532.
- [42] Plato 1995. *Phaedrus*. Translated by Nehamas, Alexander. Woodruff, Paul. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- [43] Rumi, Jalalu-ddin 2004. *Mathnawi*. Translated by: Nicholson, Reynold A. Konya: Metropolitan Municipality. Vol. 1.
- [44] Ritter, Helmut 2003. *The Ocean of the Soul*. Brill. Leiden: The Netherlands.
- [45] — 1955. *Das Meer der Seele. Mensch, Welt und Gott in den Geschichten des Farīduddīn 'Aṭṭār*. Leiden: E. J. Brill.

- [46] Ritter, Helmut, Sundberg, Alan F. 1995. *Fariduddin Attar: Geschichten und Aphorismen des persischen Dichters und Mystikers. Übersetzt von Hellmut Ritter*. Neu-Isenburg: Ed. Tiessen.
- [47] Russell, James R. 1993. On Mysticism and Esotericism among the Zoroastrians. *Iranian Studies*. Vol. 26, No. 1/2, pp. 73–94.
- [48] Samovar, Larry A., Porter, Richard E., McDaniel, Edwin R. 2009. *Communication Between Cultures*, Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publication.
- [49] Sedgwick, Mark 2004. *Against the Modern World: Traditionalism and the Secret Intellectual*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [50] Schimmel, Annemarie 2011. *Mystical Dimensions of Islam*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press.
- [51] — 1990. *Calligraphy and Islamic Culture*. New York : New York University Press.
- [52] Sütiste, Elin, Torop, Peeter 2007. Processual boundaries of translation: Semiotics and translation studies. *Semiotica* 163-1/4, pp. 187–207.
- [53] Sütiste, Elin 2001. A Crow On a Bare Branch: a comparison of Matsuo Bashô's haiku "Kare-eda-ni..." and its English translations. *Studia Humaniora Tartuensia*, 2(1), pp. 1–21.
- [54] Toporov, Vladimir N. 1992. Translation: Sub Specie of Culture, *Meta: journal des traducteurs. Meta: Translators' Journal*, Vol. 37, pp. 29–49.
- [55] Torop, Peeter 2008. Translation and Semiotics. *Sign System Studies* 36.2. pp. 375–395.
- [56] — 2007. Methodological Remarks on the Study of Translation and Translating. *Semiotica* 163(1/4): Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, pp. 347–364.
- [57] Toury, Gideon 1986. A Cultural-Semiotic Perspective. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Semiotics*. Sebeok, Thomas E. (Ed.) Berlin; New York: Mouton de Gruyter. Vol. 2, pp. 111–124

- [58] Venuti, Lawrence 1998. Strategies of Translation. In M. Baker (Ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Translation Studies*, pp. 240–244). London: Routledge.
- [59] Williams, Alan 1980. Is sound recording like a language? *Yale French Studies*, No. 60, pp. 55–61.
- [60] Zarrinkoob, Abdol-Hosein 1970. Persian Sufism in its historical perspective. *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 3/4, pp. 139–220.
- [61] Online Oxford Dictionary of English. Available <http://oxforddictionaries.com/> Online Reference, Last visited 22nd March 2014
- [62] The Quran. Available <http://quran.com/> Last visited 24th May 2014