Enriching Xhosa Culture:
The Transference of
Social and Material Culture in the
isiXhosa Translation of *The Prisoner of Zenda*

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Introduction

This article's concern is the material and social cultural aspects in the isiXhosa translation of *The Prisoner of Zenda* by Anthony Hope. *The Prisoner of Zenda* was written in 1894 and was translated into isiXhosa by G.B. Sinxo in 1958. The aim of this article is to investigate the translation strategies used to transfer aspects of culture. Of particular note, is the fact that translation strategies used in translating a novel often result in translation shifts. This article will therefore make the attempt to cast some light on translation shifts in this novel and to relate these to consequent isiXhosa literary development. Thus the research problem may be formulated: How is the foreign culture (food, clothes and social customs) represented in the target text? The authors hypothesize that the English material and social culture is transferred to isiXhosa, with no attempt at acculturating the original work to the material and social circumstances of the target culture. Otherwise put, the translator retained as many of the foreign cultural codes as possible. This article therefore attempts to address why Sinxo translates the way he does. In other words, the key question in this exploration is: why is the foreign culture retained in the isiXhosa translation?

The analysis takes the form of a comparison between a source text (ST) and a target text (TT) derived from two different cultures. In analysing

Sinxo's work, *Umbanjwa waseZenda*, Lambert and Van Gorp's (1985) descriptive model is used as a framework for the analysis. The analysis and comparison to be made will be contextualised within the prevailing Xhosa cultural norms and customs at the time when the book (*Umbanjwa waseZenda*) was translated.

The Nature of the Problem

Newmark (1988:94) defines culture as the way of life and its manifestations peculiar to a community that uses a particular language as its means of expression. Culture shapes people's behaviour and is reflected in the language they speak and write. Language and culture are therefore two sides of the same coin. Although there is an element of universality in languages, they differ in many ways as a result of their respective cultural embeddedness. Each language is firmly rooted in its own conceptual system and it follows, therefore, that what is acceptable in one culture may not be so in another. Hence, translating a novel is no simple matter as the original is embedded in the cultural literary system of the source language, which is often different from the cultural literary system of the translated text. In translating from English into isiXhosa there are cultural phenomena and expressions not readily available to the target culture, with resulting translation problems or constraints as an inevitable outcome.

As stated above, the research problem is formulated around the question as to how the foreign culture (food, clothes and social customs) is represented in the target text. The many differences in convention between the Western source and the Xhosa target culture are to be expected, and these directly concern food, clothing and social customs. Consider the following sentence: the King and his advisers are drinking wine while having dinner. In Xhosa culture, it is not customary for people to eat food and drink liquor at the same time. They would rather eat first and have drinks afterwards. Furthermore, they would also not drink wine but *umqombothi* (African beer) or brandy. Here is another example: the King is wearing canvas shoes and a pair of knickerbockers. This attire would certainly not suit an African King. The King usually wears *izidabane* (clothes made from animal skins). According to the source text, the King also wears a uniform. In Xhosa culture, there is no equivalent term for

uniform. The term *isinxibo senkosi* (king's attire) is normally used. By the same token, the Xhosa king would call his advisers by their clan names and not by their first names as is the case in the source text. When the King and his advisors fought Duke Michael's people they used helmets for protection. Xhosa men do not protect their heads when fighting as this would be regarded as a show of cowardice. In fact, the term *helmet* does not exist in isiXhosa. Xhosa men fight with sticks and spears and not with swords (Mlonyeni 2004:3-4).

The Nature of the Comparison

Descriptive Translation Studies determines the norms and constraints operating on the texts in a specific culture at a specific moment in history (Bassnett and Lefevere 1990; Hatim 1997). The relationship between translations and their originals may be described in terms of shifts or manipulations that have occurred (Hermans 1985). This approach is target-orientated as it examines the role of translations in the target culture.

Translation is a norm-governed activity. The term *norm* refers to an official standard or level of achievement an individual is expected to reach (Collins Cobuild Dictionary 1988:977). Norms can also be defined as evaluative measures for a certain behaviour or activity. Hence, norms were formulated to guide the translator and to perform certain functions, such as those in (1).

1   (a)   determining the selection of text for translation;
    (b)   determining the decisions made in the translation
          process (additions, omissions and stylistic preferences);
    (c)   determining the basic choice translators make between
          adherence to the source system on the one hand and striving
          to meet the expectations of the target system on the other.

According to Lambert and Van Gorp's model, the description of the comparison of a source and target text occurs on four levels, as in (2) (Lambert & Van Gorp 1985:52-53):

2   (a)   Preliminary date (for example)
          -title and title page (for example, presence or absence of

genre, author's name, translator's name);
-metatext (on title page, in preface, in footnotes in the text or
separate);
-general strategy (partial or complete translation).

(b)   Macro-level (for example)
-division of text;
-titles of chapters, presentation of acts and scenes;
-internal narrative structure;
-authorial comment, stage directions.

(c)   Micro-level (i.e. shifts on phonic, graphic, micro-syntactic,
lexico-semantic, stylistic, elocutionary and modal levels (for
example))
-selection of words;
-dominant grammatical patterns and formal literary
structures
(metre, rhyme);
-perspective and part of view of narrative modality.

(d)   Systematic context (for example)
-oppositions between micro and macro levels and between
texts and theory (norms and models);
-intertextual relations;
-intersystematic relations.

Within Lambert and Van Gorp's (1985) descriptive model the specific
characteristics of a translated text (or multiple translations of the same
original) are described in terms of constraints or norms governing from
within the target system at a particular time. This may have influenced the
method for translating the ensuing product.

Analysis of the Source and Target System
Analysing the System of The Prisoner of Zenda

The following information on Anthony Hope, was provided by De Villiers
(1894:viii): Hope was born in 1863 in Upton, England, from a middle class

background and a religious home. His father was a minister and the headmaster of a school for the sons of poor clergymen. Hope was educated at Marlborough School and later at Oxford University where he graduated with a first class in Classics, whereupon he qualified and practised as lawyer. During his professional career, Hope developed an interest in writing and wrote numerous short stories and sketches, published in various periodicals. This was followed by the publication of a number of books, amongst which was *The Prisoner of Zenda*, which appeared in 1894. England of this period, as now, was ruled by a monarchy. The executive powers were seated in the person of Queen Victoria. The Crown was inherited by strict rules of descent, which provided a privileged position to the direct lineage of the Sovereign: sons before daughters in order of succession, and always according to seniority. When the daughter succeeded to the throne, as in the case of Victoria, she became Queen Regnant and the executive powers of the Crown were vested in her as fully and effectively as though she were a male heir to the throne (Central Office of Information 1971:3).

Hope's publications had a positive reception. Encouraged, Anthony Hope gave up his professional career and concentrated exclusively on his writing. He spent the rest of his life writing, but never equalled the success achieved by *The Prisoner of Zenda*. During the First World War he served in the Ministry of Information and was knighted for his services in 1918. Hope died in July 1933.

Analysing the System of Umbanjwa Wasezenda
Early Translation into isiXhosa
Most of the early material written in Xhosa was translated by missionaries from English, as no written literature preceded their arrival in the Cape Colony in 1779. The language barrier proved a serious obstacle for both English and isiXhosa speakers (Satyo 1993:65). The Bible, and any additional literary material at their disposal, was written in English. A huge challenge was to devise a set orthography for isiXhosa, up till then an exclusively oral language. John Bennie, a missionary, accomplished this by December of 1923 (Satyo 1993:68). This is considered the dawning of a new era for isiXhosa literature. Meanwhile, the earliest Bible translation into Xhosa, mostly the work of the Wesleyan missionary William B Boyce (Smit

1970:203), was done in 1833. The translation of the New Testament was completed in 1854 and that of the Old Testament in 1869, both by J. W. Appleyard (Satyo 1993:69). The translation of the Bible into isiXhosa had almost as great an influence on the isiXhosa language as the authorized version had on the English language. It was firstly a momentous contribution to raising the level of literacy amongst the amaXhosa and, secondly, it had a great influence on the standardisation of the isiXhosa language. It therefore comes as no surprise that Bible translation and Christianity either influenced or dominated entirely, the work of the isiXhosa writers coming from this milieu. Christian themes predominated and so did themes centred on western and traditional culture. The pioneers in this field were the disciples of Ntsikana kaGabha, a convert to Christianity under the guidance of Dr van der Kemp (Satyo 1993:73). These writers may be regarded as the forerunners of isiXhosa literature (Vilakazi 1945:257).

Tiyo Soga, the first ordained black minister, was the most prolific isiXhosa translator of the time. His literary output includes *Uhambo lomhambi*, a praiseworthy translation of the first part of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Jordan considered his translation the greatest contribution to isiXhosa literature (1973:39). At the time of his death in 1871, Soga was working on a translation of the *Acts of the Apostles*.

Among the amaXhosa were also the first vernacular authors to compose original works in the new genres introduced by the Europeans, such as the novel and formal drama (Gérard 1981:35).

Translation into isiXhosa in the 1950s

Translation into isiXhosa has been popular since the 1950s. The driving force was the shortage of isiXhosa books and translated books were needed to fill that gap. It is therefore not farfetched to suggest that translation thus came to play a crucial role in the development of isiXhosa literature. Most well-known and prominent isiXhosa writers such as G.B. Sinxo, S.E.K. Mqhayi, B.B. Mdledle, A.C. Jordan, J.J.R. Jolobe and R.L. Peteni, to mention but a few, have made a significant contribution in the writing of isiXhosa texts and the translation of English works into isiXhosa. Authors such as R.L. Peteni and A.C. Jordan translated their own books. R.L. Peteni is one prominent isiXhosa author whose novel first appeared in English as

Hill of fools. He then translated it into isiXhosa, entitled *Kwazidenge*. A.C. Jordan translated his isiXhosa original, *Ingqumbo yeminyanya*, into English entitled, *The wrath of the ancestors*. This work emphasizes the theme of conflict between traditional and western values (Jordan 1973:41). These translations were carried out as a result of interest and a love of literature as motivating factor, and were not necessarily motivated by financial gain. Their translated versions were published and read in African schools.

The translators mentioned above, belong to the old generation of isiXhosa literary authors who are still very popular. Their works are frequently prescribed in schools and at tertiary institutions and are regarded as classics. The original isiXhosa versions are still frequently re-issued. G.B. Sinxo stands out as the person that has translated more books than any other isiXhosa writer.

According to Even-Zohar's polysystem (Even-Zohar 1990:45-47), three main socio-historical moments are identified in which translated literature may acquire a central position in the literary system of a minority language and could furnish canonized models for the entire system:

3   (a)   When a literature is 'young' or in the process of being established;
       (b)   When a literature is either "peripheral" or "weak" or both;
       (c)   When a literature is experiencing a "crisis" or turning point.

The statement in 3(a) is relevant to this article. Translation has boosted isiXhosa literature when there was a shortage of isiXhosa books to fill the demand, especially in school. *Umbanjwa waseZenda* was translated during this crucial period.

The Translation of Umbanjwa Wasezenda

The translator, Guybon Budlwana Sinxo (1902-1962), was born at the Holy Trinity Mission, Tini Location, in Fort Beaufort, Eastern Cape. His father was a teacher in one of the schools established by the missionaries. Sinxo's grandfather served as a leading councillor of Chief Kama. Sinxo qualified as a teacher in 1920 and taught at various schools in the Eastern Cape. He also worked as a clerk for an attorney, as editor of an isiXhosa paper *Umlindi*, as

casual interpreter and as temporary social welfare officer. During this time he worked in Port Elizabeth, East London and Johannesburg.

In 1958, when *Umbanjwa waseZenda* was translated, South Africa was no longer officially a British colony, but under governance of the Apartheid rule of the then South African government. Nonetheless, the Queen of England (Elizabeth II) was still the ceremonial head of South Africa. As was the case for other languages, British colonisation greatly influenced isiXhosa, in this particular case, via the Glasgow missionaries. Outwardly, the influence is best indicated by the many towns in the Eastern Cape that were given names by the British Government, such as King William's Town, Adelaide, Queenstown and Grahams Town. Even today older people refer to this area as "Kolonie". This might have influenced G.B. Sinxo in selecting *The Prisoner of Zenda* as a source text.

Polysystem theory stresses the fact that translated literature operates as a system in that translation norms, behaviour and policies are influenced by other co-systems. In this instance the source text cultural system influenced the translation. As stated in (4) there are two factors, among others, which may have influenced the translation.

4   (a)   The translator wants to introduce the source text cultural system to the target text system as both English and isiXhosa have high regard for royal families.

        (b)   The historical background of South Africa and of the translator.

The Macrotextual Systems of The *Prisoner of Zenda* and *Umbanjwa waseZenda*

Anthony Hope was a good novelist. He managed to grab the reader's imagination and was also very good at keeping his readers in suspense. For example, when Rudolf goes to the castle of Zenda on Antoinette's orders, one cannot help but wonder what is going to happen next. Even the titles of chapters trigger curiosity. The fact that Rudolf is a person of royalty is clear from the very first page. In terms of the focalisation, Rudolf Rassendyll is an internal focalizer. He is both the narrator and the character playing the leading role. He is the one who causes the main action in the story. This

information is linked to the plot, the main event of which is the King's coronation.

The theme of the book is about the celebration of the virtues of loyalty, honour and devotion, and the condemnation of the wickedness of betrayal and deceit. Rudolf Rassendyll takes the risk of impersonating the King to save him from embarrassment because he is too drunk to be crowned. This shows loyalty. Princess Flavia, after discovering that the man she loves (Rudolf Rassendyll) is not the King, ends up having to marry the real King for the sake of her country even though she does not love him. This shows devotion and loyalty to her country. Black Michael is a cruel, brutal hypocrite. He kidnaps the King and imprisons him. He professes to be ignorant of the fact that Rudolf is impersonating the King. He intends to assassinate Rudolf Rassendyll and the royal advisers so that he can become King.

The book is a novel and both texts are narrative prose. The source text has twenty-two chapters while the target text has thirteen. The setting of the book in both the source text and the target text is the same, namely the country of Ruritania. The structural components of a novel such as story level, events, characterisation, theme and focalisation, among other things are the same in both the source and the target texts.

There are not many differences as the translator moves close to the source text. In *Umbanjwa waseZenda,* the story is told by Rudolf Rassendyll as in the source text. The translator transfers the names of the characters and the setting. The events of the story are also arranged chronologically as is the case in the source text. The only difference is that some chapters of the source text are combined to make one chapter in the target text. Sinxo has proved himself as a skilful author. His creative ability to translate *The Prisoner of Zenda* without distorting the message and his impeccable use of language bears testimony to his linguistic prowess. The theme of *Umbanjwa waseZenda* is the same as in the source text.

The Micro Structural Analysis of *The Prisoner of Zenda* and *Umbanjwa waseZenda*

As the translator is translating from a foreign language (English) into his mother tongue (Xhosa) he has to devise some cultural compromises by

selecting and balancing the characteristics common both to source and target cultures (Baker 1992). Transference (5) and omission (6) are the two main translation strategies used.

5   Transference
     (a)   ST: *Zenda* (Hope 1894:53)
            TT: *EZenda* (Sinxo 1958: 47)
     (b)   ST: *Cellar* (Hope 1894:37)
            TT: *Isela* (Sinxo 1958:23).
     (c)   ST: *Cigarette* (Hope 1894:5)
            TT: *Isigarethi* (Sinxo 1958:10), (instead of *umdiza*).

Transference is the process of transferring a source language item to a target language text unchanged; the source language item then becomes a loan item in the target language (Naudé 2000:18). The implication is the enriching of the target culture.

6   Omission
      ST: *I took my dear Michael and kissed him on the cheek* (Hope 1894:30).
      TT: Deleted.

The source text phrase *kiss him on the cheek* is deleted in the target text, because this gesture is offensive in the target culture.

Transference and Omission of Social Culture
Proper Names

Naming is a very fundamental phenomenon because life revolves around objects with names. Naming is part of the social framework of reference. Note that names in Xhosa/African culture carry specific meanings as opposed to naming practices in English/Western culture. Raper (1987:78) refers to the proper name as the *designator* when referring to the sound system, the inherent meaning as the *designatum* and the entity to which the name refers as the *denotatum*. Proper names in isiXhosa have lexical meaning, but this is not the case with English names. Personal names in

Umbanjwa waseZenda have been transferred from the source text. In this case the referring function becomes primary as in (7).

7   (a)   ST: *Michael (Hope 1894:97)*
              TT: *Michael (Sinxo 1958:45)*
       (b)   ST: *Rupert (Hope 1894:97)*
              TT: *Rupert (Sinxo 1958:45)*

In fact all personal names in the ST are transferred to the TT unchanged and there are no phonological adaptations.

Place Names

Place names also play a significant role in a novel. The setting or the place in which the events occur has a bearing on the development of other elements of the novel like plot, characterisation and the language use or the novelist's style. The forest of Zenda is a battlefield where Rudolf (the King's cousin), Sapt and Fritz are locked in combat with Michael and his adherents. The castle of Zenda is Duke Michael's hideout. Each place name is used purposely in this novel. Most place names are transferred from the source text to the target text as they are, for example. Alps, Ruritania, Paris, Strelsau, etc. Most of the action in this novel occurs in three areas, i.e. the forest of Zenda and the castles of Zenda and Strelsau. There are a few place names that have been domesticated, perhaps to serve accessibility as in (8).

8   (a)   ST: *England* (Hope 1894:1)
              T: *Ngilani* (Sinxo 1958:2)
       b)   ST: *German* (Hope 1894:1)
              T: *Jamani* (Sinxo 1958:2)

These place names have been domesticated to suit the target text culture. This strategy is very similar to transference, but is used when an item is adopted from the source language with slight modification to remove some of the foreignness (Naudé 2000:18). The translator does not perceive a problem in transferring or domesticating names because of the English colonised background. Most isiXhosa speakers who were born prior 1990

have two names, one English and one isiXhosa name. This practice stems from the time of the missionaries, who referred to the English names as Christian names.

Terms of Address

Terms of address are the words and phrases used for addressing one another in spoken or written communication. Depending on the structure of the language, such words comprise pronouns, verbs and nouns (Ndlovu 1997:92). In isiXhosa, as in Zulu, the main forms of address are nouns. Forms of address also express kinship and relationships between people. The King addresses Sapt, Fritz and Rudolf as in (9) by saying,

9   ST: *"Gentlemen, my friends – Rudolf, my cousin"* (Hope 1894:19).
           T: *"Manene, zihlobo zam, Rudolf, mntakwethu"* (Sinxo 1958:11)
               (Gentlemen, my friends, Rudolf, my brother).

The form of address in (9) indicates the relationship of these people to the King. However, the translator translates *my cousin* as *my brother*, perhaps to indicate with greater clarity their proximity to each other. Terms of address also include personal titles as in (10).

10   ST: *Colonel Sapt* (Hope 1894:15)
       T: *Khenele Sapt* (Sinxo 1958:9)

The personal titles have been maintained in the target text as they appear in the source text.

Gestures and Habits

This category refers to the behavioural patterns that are practised by a particular community. Consider the examples in (11)

11   (i)   ST: *The Cardinal Bishop slipped in front of Black Michael,*

and kissed my hand and presented me with a letter
(Hope1894:30)
TT: *Wavova wanga isandla sam* (Sinxo 1958:19)
(He curtsies and embraces my hand)

(ii)   ST: *I took my dear Michael and kissed him on the cheek*
(Hope1894:30)
TT: *Kweza ke ngoku uMichael omnyama* (Sinxo
1958:19)
(Black Michael then comes.)

The translation strategy used in (11) is omission. This strategy means that the source text term is not rendered in the target text at all. The translator does this when he feels that the information is offensive to the target readership. The source text terms *kiss* and *kissed* are omitted, because isiXhosa men do not greet each other by kissing one's hand. This gesture is only applicable to the source culture.

Organisations
This category deals with customs, activities, procedures and concepts. Customs refer to all the arts and social activities and behavioural aspects that are unique or practised by a given community. The amaXhosa and English as mentioned, have different customs, rituals and ceremonies. The translator has to use certain strategies in order to translate these cultural specific items as in (12).

12   ST: *"Let those in front ride on", said I, until they are fifty yards ahead. But do you, Marshal, and Colonel Sapt and my friends, wait here until I have ridden fifty yards" (Hope 1894: 28).*
TT: *"Mabahambele phambili, abo baphambili", ndatsho. "mabahambe bade babe ziinyawo ezingamashumi amahlanu phambi kwam. Wena, mphathiswa, nawe Khenele Sapt nani zihlobo zam, yimani apha ndide ndisuke kuni amanyathelo angamashumi amahlanu"* (Sinxo 1958:18).

The source culture custom in (12) is transferred into the target text. As reflected in this extract, other people were moving in front of the King and his aides, who are riding in the middle of the procession. This reflects respect for the King and the way security is conducted in the source culture. In Xhosa culture the King and his aides, as leaders, are supposed to be in front.

There are different procedures and social or political activities in the source culture and the target culture. Consider the examples in (13).

13   (i)   ST: *Of what followed next, I remember nothing. I*
              knelt before the altar and the Cardinal anointed my
              head. (Hope 1894:29).
              TT: *Ndiphantse ukungakhumbuli nanye into kule*
              mithananangu, ngaphandle kwelo xesha ndasithathayo
              Isithsaba kuMbingeleli omkhulu ndasibeka entloko.
              (Sinxo 1958: 19).
              (I almost don't remember any of those events except when I
              was crowned by the Cardinal).

      (ii) ST: *Then back we went through the streets to the*
              Palace (Hope 1894:30).
              TT: *Emva koko ke sabuyela eBhotwe sihamba ngezo*
              zitalato (Sinxo 1958:19).

      (iii) ST: *I was in a carriage now, side by side with*
              Princess Flavia (Hope 1894:30).
              TT: *Ndandikhwele ekarini ngoku sigudlene amacala*
              Nenkosazana (Sinxo 1958:19).

In (13) a transference strategy is used. The translator has translated the source culture procedures and activities into the target text unchanged. In the past the King's coronation used not to be combined with church procedures, the Cardinal would have no role to play in the target culture (see 13(ii)). In relation to 13(ii) it would not be practical for the Xhosa King to move up and down the streets because he would be expected to preserve his dignity. In 13(iii), the King moves side by side with the princess. In the target culture

the expectation is that the princess will be with other women after the coronation, and not side by side with the King. The King would be with other men, specifically his aides.

Transference in Material Culture

Culture specific terms unique to the source language are transferred into the target text as reflected in (14).

14	ST:	*Wine* (Hope 1894: 18)
	TT:	*Iwayini* (Sinxo 1958: 11)
(iv)	ST:	*Cigarette* (Hope 1894: 17)
	TT:	*Isigalethi* (Sinxo 1958:18)
(iii)	ST:	*Uniform* (Hope 1894: 23)
	TT:	*Iyunifomi* (Sinxo 1958: 15)
(iv)	ST:	*My Helmet* (Hope 1894:25)
	TT:	*Ihelmet yam* (Sinxo 1958:16)
(v)	ST:	*Revolver* (Hope 1894: 41)
	TT:	*Ivolovolo* (Sinxo 1958:18)
(vi)	ST:	*Cellar* (Hope 1894: 38)
	TT:	*Isela* (Sinxo 1958: 23)

Conclusion

The conclusions are summarised as follows:

(a)   The translator decides to translate a novel *The Prisoner of Zenda* and manages to transfer it into the target language as a novel *Umbanjwa waseZenda*.

(b)   In the translation process he decides mostly to transfer source text items into the target text.

(c)   The translator chooses to adhere to the source text system in trying to introduce the source culture royal life system into the target culture.

The source text material cultural specific terms as well as the source text customs and royal procedures are transferred into the target text. In the

process source text words are transferred to the target text unchanged, the source language word becomes a loan word in the target language. This is done to *enrich* isiXhosa and to introduce the target text readership to the source text royal life. A striking example is the order of the procession of the King, his aides and dignitaries after the coronation. The King is in the middle, amongst other people, and not in front as would happen in the target culture. This shows that security is highly regarded in the source culture more especially for the royal family. These royal procedures are nowadays practised in the target culture to ensure the security of the royal family. Sinxo omits those aspects that are culturally offensive according to the target culture and those he feels are not important. As a result the message is not distorted.

Research into the translation tradition of isiXhosa novels is necessary before more general conclusions can be made regarding the norms that determine the way foreign material has been imported into the isiXhosa narrative system.

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