

The analysis of the culture-specific items in Roberta Rich's *The Harem Midwife* and in its Turkish translation within the framework of watermark translation and retro-translation

Roberta Rich'in The Harem Midwife adlı eseri ve Türkçe çevirisinde yer alan kültüre özgü öğelerin özde çeviri ve aslına çeviri kavramları odağında incelenmesi

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Abstract

In *The Harem Midwife*, set in 16th-century Constantinople, American author Roberta Rich presents Ottoman culture from a Western perspective. As a foreign writer depicting the Ottoman world, Rich's portrayal reflects a mental translation of cultural elements, shaped by her own understanding of the foreign culture. This mental translation process is examined through Sündüz Öztürk Kasar's concept of watermark translation, which refers to the subtle traces of translation embedded in a text when an author writes about a culture she does not directly belong to. This study aims to explore how these cultural references are transferred and transformed both in the source and target texts within the framework of Javier Franco Aixelá's strategies for translating Culture-Specific Items (CSIs). This analysis highlights the strategies used to convey Ottoman life and examines the writer and translator's role in mediating these elements for English and Turkish readers. The most employed strategies by the watermark translator include transliteration, intra-gloss strategy, extra-gloss strategy, repetition, linguistic translation, and limited universalization. In contrast, retro-translators tend to rely more on strategies such as naturalization, deletion, repetition, and autonomous creation. Ultimately, this study emphasizes the importance of conducting comparative analysis within the context of watermark translation and retro-translation to understand how cultural elements transform.

Keywords: Watermark translation, retro-translation, Javier Franco Aixelá, translation of culture-specific items, translation strategies

Öz

16. yy. İstanbul'unda geçen olayları konu edinen *The Harem Midwife* adlı eserde Amerikalı yazar Roberta Rich Osmanlı kültürünü Batılı bir gözle kaleme alır. Osmanlı dünyasını yansıtan yabancı bir yazar olarak Rich'in bakış açısı yabancı olduğu bir kültüre ait öğeleri kendi anlamladığıyla şekillendirdiği bir tür zihinsel çeviri işlemi barındırır. Bu zihinsel çeviri süreci Sündüz Öztürk Kasar tarafından özde çeviri kavramıyla adlandırılmaktadır. Özde çeviri yazarın ait olmadığı bir toplum hakkında kaleme aldığı eserlerde gizlenen çeviri işlemlerini ifade eder. Bu çalışmanın amacı bu kültürel öğelerin kaynak ve erek metinlerde ne şekilde aktarıldığını Javier Franco Aixelá'nın kültüre özgü öğelerin çevirisi için sunduğu stratejiler odağında inceleyerek Osmanlı kültürüne ait öğelerin kaynak ve erek metinlerde geçirdiği değişim ve dönüşümleri saptamaktır. Yapılan karşılaştırmalı inceleme Osmanlı hayatını okura yansıtırken başvurulan stratejileri ortaya koymuş ve bu öğelerin aktarımında yazar ve çevirmenin rolünü açığa çıkarmıştır. Özde çevirmen tarafından tercih edilen çeviri stratejileri harf çevirisi, metin içi açıklama, metin dışı açıklama, tekrar, dilbilimsel çeviri ve sınırlı evrenselleştirme iken metni aslına çeviren tarafından tercih edilen stratejiler doğallaştırma, silme, tekrar ve özerk yaratım olarak sıralanabilir. Sonuç olarak, mevcut çalışmanın kültürel öğelerin dolaşımında yaşanan dönüşümü anlamlandırmak için özde çeviri ve aslına çeviri kavramlarıyla yapılan karşılaştırmalı incelemenin önemi ortaya koyduğu düşünülmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Özde çeviri, aslına çeviri, Javier Franco Aixelá, kültüre özgü öğelerin çevirisi, çeviri stratejileri

1. Introduction

Roberta Rich, born on January 9, 1946, is a former lawyer known for her collection of historical novels. The success of her initial book, *the Midwife of Venice* (2012), inspired her to create a sequel, *The Harem Midwife* (2013), which serves as the subject of investigation in this study.

The Harem Midwife (2013) is set in 16th-century Constantinople during the reign of the Ottoman Empire. The majority of the story unfolds within the Imperial Harem. The main characters of the book, Hannah and Isaac Levi, embark on a new life in the Ottoman Empire. Isaac owns a silk workshop, and Hannah, known as the finest midwife in Constantinople, serves the women in Sultan Murat III's vibrant harem. One night, the emperor asks Hannah to determine if Leah, a Jewish peasant girl, is a virgin. If Leah passes this test, she will be "honored" to be the mother of the next heir. However, failing the test would result in dire consequences for Leah. This poses a dilemma for Hannah. She should decide whether to save Leah from a dreadful fate by lying or to reveal the truth. As the story progresses, Leah unveils a dark secret that could condemn them both. Meanwhile, while Hannah is feeling sorry for her decision, a captivating woman from Venice emerges, posing a danger to Hannah's marriage.

This story, based on the experiences of two Jewish heroes inside Ottoman palaces, was written by a foreign author to these lands, Roberta Rich. In this work, where Rich includes many cultural elements of Ottoman life, she has performed several mental translations regarding this culture of which she is not a member and has brought together the original work's readers with a translation filtered through her own mind. This reminds the watermark translation which refers to the original texts that include the mental translation process of a writer while writing about a culture that s/he is not a member of (Öztürk Kasar, 2020, p. 3). Due to the interest sparked abroad by Ottoman life, numerous works have been written by foreign authors, especially about the Ottoman Empire and Istanbul of that period (see Wortley Montagu, 1790; Pardoe, 1845; Goodwin, 2006, 2007). All these examples can be considered instances of watermark translation involving the mental translation process, as they contain elements of the East by Western authors.

There are many studies on this concept of watermark translation, which is quite new in translation studies. Didem Tuna (2020), in her article titled "Yazarın zihninde bir çeviri edimi: özde çeviri ürünü olarak kaynak metin ve aslında çevirisi" (An act of translation in the author's mind: The source text as a product of watermark translation and its retro-translation) also focuses on the translations of Alexandre Dumas's book *Ali Pacha* into Turkish and French in the context of watermark translation, retro-translation, and indirect watermark translation concepts. Sündüz Öztürk Kasar and Halise Gülmüş Sırkıntı (2021), in their article titled "Çeviri göstergebilimi bağlamında bir özde çeviri örneği: The Clown and His Daughter" (A watermark translation within the scope of the semiotics of translation: The Clown and His Daughter) explore the concept of "watermark translation" through a comparative analysis of Halide Edib's *The Clown and His Daughter* with *Sinekli Bakkal*, which is discussed in the context of "self-translation" and Öztürk Kasar's concept of "retro-translation". It examines how Edib communicates the cultural cues of her heritage to English readers, observes the transformation of these cues as the text returns to its original cultural context, and analyzes the diverse translation methods and audiences that influenced Adivar's writing, employing a descriptive approach. Sündüz Öztürk Kasar and Kübra Çelik (2021), in their article titled "Bir özde çeviri örneği The City of the Sultand and Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1836 ve aslında çevir-

ilerinde kenti temsil eden göstergelerin aktarımı” (The transfer of the urban signs in *The City of the Sultan and Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1836* as an example of watermark translation and in its retro-translations), focus on the urban signs of Istanbul in the travelogue *The City of the Sultan and Domestic Manners of the Turks in 1836* and how these urban signs are transferred to the target language in the context of watermark translation and retro-translation concepts. Didem Tuna and Begüm Çelik (2021), in their article titled “From wiping out of the meaning to over-interpretation: The translator as covert co-author in the rewriting of Istanbul”, examine the image of Istanbul reflected in Eric Ambler’s work *The Light of the Day* and the transformations of orientalist clichés in the source and target texts, focusing on the watermark translation and “Systematics of Designification in Translation” by Öztürk Kasar (2020). The most recent studies on this topic include: Gülmüş Sırkıntı (2022), “Oryantalist söylem aktarımında aslına çevirenin sesi: Behind Turkish lattices: The story of a Turkish women’s life başlıklı eserin oryantalizm bağlamında çözümlenmesi ve çeviri değerlendirmesi” (The voice of the retro-translator in conveying orientalist discourse: An orientalism-oriented analysis and translation evaluation of the work titled Behind Turkish Lattices: The Story of a Turkish Woman’s Life), Gülmüş Sırkıntı (2023), “Yazınsal çeviride etik ikilemler: Türkçede Bab-ı Ali’nin baş tercümanlarından Andrew Ryan’ın hatıraları” (Ethical dilemmas in literary translation: The memoirs of Andrew Ryan, one of the chief translators of Bab-ı Ali), Öztürk Kasar (2023) “Deux cas de « traduction en filigrane » dans la littérature de migration : *Das Leben ist eine Karawanserei* d’Emine Sevgi Özdamar” [Two cases of watermark translation in migration literature: *Das Leben ist Eine Karawanserei* by Sevgi Özdamar], Sündüz Öztürk Kasar, Sadriye Güneş and Mehmet Sarı (2024) “Karanov, Macarov ve Naçov’un İstanbul’u anlatan Bulgarca eserlerinin ve Türkçe çevirilerinin özde çeviri bağlamında incelenmesi” (Analysing the Bulgarian works of Karanov, Madzharov and Nachov on Istanbul and their Turkish translations in the context of watermark translation), Sinem Sancaktaroğlu Bozkurt & Yeşim Sönmez Dinçkan (2024), “*Kim Bu*: Bir özde çeviri örneği olarak Joan Kim Erkan’ın *Lady Who* başlıklı eserinin ve aslına çevirisinin incelenmesi” (*Kim Bu*: A study of Joan Kim Erkan’s novel *Lady Who* as a watermark translation and its retro-translation into Turkish), Öztürk Kasar (2024) “Typologie des traductions en filigrane au prisme de la sémio-traductologie” (Typology of watermark translations through the lens of semio-translation studies).

Building on these recent studies that explore the intricate dynamics of translation and the shifting representations of Istanbul, this study turns to a specific case of cultural transformation, examining how the mental translation process manifests in the source text (ST) *The Harem Midwife* (2013) and its Turkish translation *Aşk Her Şeye Rağmen: Bir Harem Masalı* (2015). This study aims to find out the marks of the mental translation process infused in the ST and discover the changing nature of cultural references by comparing it to its Turkish translation.

2. Watermark translation and its reflection on literary translation

“Watermark translation” [traduction en filigrane] is a concept put forward by Sündüz Öztürk Kasar (2012, 2020) in the studies “Traduction de la ville sous le point de vue sémiotique: Istanbul à travers ses signes en trois langues” and “The examination of the concept of watermark translation in the integrated context of the semiotics of translation and urban semiotics”. “Watermark translation” refers to the texts written as an original work in the source culture, but includes a mental translation process in essence. In other words, the represented literary and cultural context

by the text differs from the literary and cultural context in which the text is created. The writer experiences a mental translation process while writing and this translation process infuses the texture of the text like a watermark embedded in a banknote. The mentally translated cities, places, historical events, or names may create a sense of reading a translated work in the reader. Similar to flashing a light on a banknote to see the watermark, to pursue the mental marks of translation on the text, one should meticulously focus on these marks (Öztürk Kasar, 2020, pp. 3-4).

To clarify it better, Öztürk Kasar evaluates “watermark translation” in contrast to “pseudo translation”. While “pseudo translation” refers to the texts that are published as translated work despite being original, “watermark translation” points to the works that are published as originals, but include a translation process in essence (Öztürk Kasar, 2020, p.4).

There are two distinct types of “watermark translation” that can be observed:

“Watermark translations refer to the process of translating from the context of one’s home to the context of a foreign country”: This type of watermark translation refers to the texts written by a writer living abroad about his/her own country. Through these writings, the writers carry their home country to the linguistic and cultural context of the foreign country where they reside. That is, these kinds of texts are written about the home country with the use of a foreign language. Here, the writer puts the cultural context of the home country into a mental translation process and carries it to the linguistic and cultural context of a foreign language (Öztürk Kasar, 2020, p.4).

“Watermark translations refer to the process of translating from the context of a foreign country to the context of one’s home”: This type of watermark translation refers to the texts that are written about a foreign country to the readers sharing the same linguistic and cultural context with the author. The mental translation process in such texts is from a foreign language to the mother tongue. The reasons for penning this kind of text may include feelings of admiration or insultation, as well as being objective towards the foreign culture. Irrespective of the factors involved, writing such texts necessitates a detailed comprehension of the foreign culture. Even with extensive knowledge about it, variances in interpretation may still leave marks on the content (Öztürk Kasar, 2020, p. 5).

The advent of “watermark translation” has introduced two new concepts, which are “indirect watermark translation” [Fr. Traduction en filigrane indirecte] and “retro-translation” [Fr. retro-traduction]. Öztürk Kasar (2020, p. 7), explains these two concepts with the help of the book *Janissary Tree* (2006) which was written by an English writer, Jason Goodwin about a series of imaginary events taking place in the 19th-century’s Ottoman capital, Istanbul.

The linguistic and cultural context in which the book, *Janissary Tree* (2006) is written is different from the one that it addresses. In other words, it is penned about the Ottoman world in English by an English writer. For this reason, this book sets an example of “watermark translation”. However, the translation of this book into a third language, namely into French, is evaluated as an “indirect watermark translation”. According to Öztürk Kasar (2020, p.7), this kind of text can be accepted almost as a translation from a second language. On the other hand, the translation of the text into its source culture from which it arises is called “retro-translation”. In the name of *Janissary Tree*, this source refers to “Turkish”. Therefore, the Turkish translation of the *Janissary Tree*, known as *Yeniçeri Ağacı* (2016), is evaluated as an example of “retro translation”.

Despite being a new concept, “watermark translation” has provided a basis for a number of research in the field of translation studies as stated above. By aiding in the exploration of the textual

layers, the term is believed to pave the way for unveiling the hidden worlds, especially in literary texts that emerge from the fusion of two or more cultural and linguistic contexts.

3. Translation of culture-specific items (CSIs) in literary works

The term “culture-specific item” is a difficult notion to define, and the challenge stems from the aspect that everything in a language-even the language itself- is entirely shaped by culture as Javier Franco Aixelâ (1996, pp. 56-57) states in his book chapter titled “Culture-specific items in translation”. Aixelâ (1996) pinpoints the common tendency to name “local institutions, streets, historical figures, place names, personal names, periodicals, works of art, etc.” as CSIs because these are the linguistic elements whose translation into another language might be challenging. However, according to him, it is hard to limit these items within the linguistic units mentioned above. Instead, he asserts that in the process of translation, a CSI isn't inherently present; rather, it emerges from conflicts that stem from linguistic references in the ST. When these references are transferred to a target language, they can present translation challenges due to either their nonexistence or their varying significance in the cultural context of the target language. He defines Culture Specific Items (CSI) as textual elements that pose a translation challenge when transferring them from the ST to the target text (TT), especially when this challenge arises from the absence of the referenced item in the target culture or its different intertextual significance for the readers of the TT (Aixelâ, 1996, p.58).

For the sake of methodological effectiveness, Aixelâ found it practical to categorize all potential strategies used for handling CSIs in translation. This classification also aims to organize them according to the extent of intercultural manipulation involved. He classified the translation strategies utilized for CSIs into two main categories: conservation and substitution, with each category comprising five subcategories.

The conservation strategy includes “repetition”, “orthographic adaptation”, “linguistic (non-cultural) translation”, “extra-textual gloss”, and “intra-textual gloss” while the substitution strategy comprises “synonymy”, “limited universalization”, “absolute universalization”, “naturalization”, “deletion”, and “autonomous creation.” (Aixela, 1996).

When using the “repetition” strategy, a translator retains as much of the original reference as possible. Aixelâ (1996) exemplifies this strategy by transferring the most place names without making any changes like Seattle in the source language and Seattle in the target language. However, he also mentions about the cons of applying this strategy. It might lead to its exoticization in the target language as it would seem unfamiliar to the target reader despite its faithful nature. This highlights a key paradox in translation and a major flaw in the traditional concept of equivalence: something that appears identical, even in its written form, may be perceived entirely differently by the receiving audience.

“Orthographic adaptation” strategy involves techniques such as transcription and transliteration, which are primarily employed when the original reference is written in an alphabet different from that used by the target readers. “Linguistic(non-cultural)” translation strategy refers to word-for-word translation. According to Aixelâ, units of measure and currencies are very frequent instances of this strategy like translating the US dollar as dolar in Turkish. Similarly, objects and institutions unfamiliar to the target culture but recognizable due to their similarity or equivalence to those in the native culture are typically included in this category.

“Extra-textual gloss” refers to the strategy of adding more information about a CSI to the TT mostly in the form of footnote, endnote, glossary, commentary/translation in brackets, in italics, etc. “Intratextual gloss” refers to the strategy of making a hidden or partly revealed CSI explicit in the TT. It might be in the form of adding the surname of the characters or changing pronouns into real names.

Under the “substitution” category, Aixelâ proposes the strategy of “synonymy” which refers to using synonym or parallel references in order to refrain from repeating the same CSI. The second strategy under this category is named as “limited universalization” which refers to replacing an unfamiliar word with a common one in the target language. Translators apply this strategy when a CSI is too obscure for the target reader. The third one is “absolute universalization”. This strategy is similar to the previous one; however, in this strategy, instead of preferring a more common CSI, the translator deletes any specific foreign connotations and chooses a more general reference. “Naturalization” is similar to the domestication strategy. Here the translator turns a foreign CSI into a familiar one in the target culture. Hilal Erkazancı Durmuş (2022, p. 1716) exemplifies it as translating the word “akçe” as “cent” into the target language. “Deleting” strategy, as the name suggests, means omitting the CSI in the target language as it might be ideologically or stylistically unacceptable for the target readers. The last strategy under this category is “autonomous creation” which means adding some culture-specific references which are not available in the ST into the TT.

In this study, it is considered that Roberta Rich, by writing about a culture unfamiliar to her, applies a kind of translation process to the cultural elements of that culture. A comparative analysis of the strategies used by the writer of the ST and the translation strategies applied by the Turkish translator when these cultural elements return to their original culture is important for revealing whether the translation strategies used in watermark translation and retro-translation differ.

4. Data analysis

In this study, CSIs were categorized into three groups: clothes and accessories, Ottoman dishes, and local professions. In the following section, since the ST is considered a form of translation, the translation of these items will be analyzed comparatively within the framework of Aixelâ’s translation strategies for CSIs in both the source and target texts.

4.1. *Clothes and accessories*

The story, set in the Ottoman period, includes a variety of clothing unique to the people living within Ottoman territories. These traditional garments are emblematic of Ottoman culture, and due to their cultural specificity, they present a unique challenge for translators. In this analysis, we consider the ST as a form of translation, as it was written by an English novelist about a story set in Ottoman lands, to which she does not belong. The analysis below will explore the mental translation process undertaken by the author in the ST and how it is culturally transferred in its Turkish translation.

Example 1:

The following excerpt describes Leah wearing a costume traditionally worn by young male dancers, in an attempt to attract the emperor’s attention. Her sole desire is to impress the emperor and ensure her safety within the Ottoman palace.

Table 1. Shalvar and a silk shirt

<p><i>The Harem Midwife</i> (Rich, 2013)</p>	<p>“Instead of harem trousers held up with an embroidered sash and a tunic of fine silk print, Leah wore a shalvar—loose pantaloons—and a silk shirt with a length of fabric around her waist.” (pp. 216-217) *Shalvar = loose trousers worn by Turkish women (p. 374)</p>
<p><i>Aşk Her Şeye Rağmen: Bir Harem Masalı</i> (Rich, 2015 trans. F. Aytuna 2015)</p>	<p>“Haremde giyilen nakışlı kuşakla sarılmış pantolon ve ince emprime ipek tunik yerine şalvar ve beline kadar uzanan ipek bir mintan giymişti” (p.160).</p>

The analysis of the ST reveals that the writer used three different strategies to transfer “şalvar,” which refers to wide pants worn in the Ottoman period in various colors and is still used in rural areas of Turkey by peasant women. Firstly, the writer transferred this item of clothing as “shalvar,” preferring to transliterate it to familiarize the reader with how it is pronounced in its own culture. Since this transliteration doesn’t provide any clue about its meaning, she also used an intra-textual gloss strategy by adding a description of how it looks—“loose pantaloons.” In addition to this text-inserted explanation, she also added the word “shalvar” to the glossary and gave the following description: “loose trousers worn by Turkish women” (p.374). By doing so, she exemplifies her use of the extra-textual gloss strategy, as proposed by Aixelâ. The different choices of the translator to transfer this cultural element make it clear that the ST is, in fact, a translated text. These are all examples of the writer’s mental translation process.

When we compare this excerpt with its Turkish translation, the translator’s choice is simply to transfer it back into its own culture as “şalvar.” Since the Turkish reader is already familiar with this clothing, no detailed explanation is necessary, as it is in the ST.

Another traditional item of clothing is called “mintan”, which generally refers to a silk shirt and was worn mostly by Ottoman women. The writer does not use transliteration this time. Instead, she translated it by explaining it as “a silk shirt.” This choice suggests a more straightforward explanation, likely because the term “mintan” is either less obscure to the audience or not as critical to the narrative’s cultural context as “şalvar” is. The fact that the writer chooses to provide an explicit description (“a silk shirt”) makes it easier for readers to grasp the meaning without requiring further explanation. By replacing an unfamiliar word with a common one in the target language, the writer exemplifies the use of the limited universalization strategy. This explanation also brings its own culture, “mintan”, into a more familiar context. Since the translator is an expert in both cultures, he translated it using the established term for it in Ottoman culture, i.e., he used the naturalization strategy.

Example 2:

The other traditional item of clothing is a veil worn by Muslim women, namely “yaşmak”.

Table 2. Yaşmak

<i>The Harem Midwife</i> (Rich, 2013)	“She turned to see a figure dressed in travelling attire—a long, dark blue pelisse and yaşmak—approaching the Valide.” (p.357) Yaşmak: “a veil worn by Muslim women wrapped around the upper and lower face so only the eyes are exposed.” (p. 375)
<i>Aşk Her Şeye Rağmen: Bir Harem Masalı</i> (Rich, 2015 trans. F. Ay- tuna 2015)	“Başını çevirip bakınca uzun, lacivert bir kaftan ve yaşmaktan oluşan seyahat kıyafeti giymiş bir kadının valide sultana yaklaştığını gördü” (p.258).

In the source text (ST), the writer adopts a different strategy by retaining the original name of the clothing item as it is used in its source culture. Unlike the previous example, which demonstrates the transliteration of *shalvar*, this approach disregards how the term might resonate within Turkish culture. This discrepancy can be viewed as an inconsistency in conveying Ottoman cultural elements to English-speaking readers. With that choice, the writer exemplifies the use of the “repetition” strategy, which refers to the direct use of the word without making any changes in the target language. However, by adding the definition of this item of clothing to the glossary, the writer also resorts to the extra-textual gloss strategy to make it understandable to the foreign reader. Therefore, although it may be difficult to see the mental translation process in the text, its marks can be found in the glossary section. In the Turkish translation, the translator kept the word “yaşmak” as it is in the ST. Thanks to Turkish readers’ familiarity with this item of clothing, he preferred to use the “repetition” strategy and did not add any definition.

Example 3:

Another mark of the writer’s mental translation process can be found in the transfer of an accessory that is used by Turkish people to be protected from bad eyes.

Table 3. *Nazar boncuğu*

<i>The Harem Midwife</i> (Rich, 2013)	“As she sang, she stroked the milky blue quartz that dangled from a lanyard around her neck. The pendant, her nazar boncuğu, offered protection for both Jews and Muslims against the Evil Eye.” (p.12) “nazar boncuğu: an amulet believed to be protection against the Evil Eye. In modern Turkey, it is common to see nazars hanging in houses, shops, and offices and worn as jewellery.” (p. 372)
<i>Aşk Her Şeye Rağmen: Bir Harem Masalı</i> (Rich, 2015 trans. F. Ay- tuna 2015)	“Leah ninniye mırıldanırken bir yandan da boynundaki kordona bağlı camgöbeği renkli taşı okşuyordu. Bu nazar boncuğu hem Yahudileri, hem Müslümanları kem gözlerden koruyordu” (p.11).

The writer follows the same procedure with the previous example and keeps the word “nazar boncuğu”, which is “an amulet believed to protect against the Evil Eye” (Rich, 2013, p.372), as it is in its source culture, adding a detailed explanation both in the text and in the paratext (the glossary at the end of the novel). By adding the word “pendant” before the Turkish term “nazar boncuğu”, the writer exemplifies her use of the intra-textual gloss strategy, while the definition

added to the glossary is an example of the writer's use of the extra-textual gloss strategy. When compared to its Turkish translation, it is clear that both the defining adjective in the text and the definition at the end of the book were excluded, but the word "nazar boncuğu" was kept in the same form. It would have been repetitive to include the explanation or defining adjective in the translation, as it is a well-known term among Turkish readers. By using the deletion and repetition strategies, the writer allows the word to return to its source culture in its pure form.

4.2. Ottoman dishes

The food culture of the Ottoman Empire is very popular among Westerners as it can be understood its huge place in Istanbul travelogues. This novel also takes its part in its huge mentions. From pastries to delights, it gives place to a wide range of Ottoman meals.

Example 4:

The following excerpt exemplifies a dining table laying in the Ottoman palace.

Table 4. *Deserts and other pastry*

<p><i>The Harem Midwife</i> (Rich, 2013)</p>	<p>"The sticky lokum had disappeared from the platters, the fried dumplings lay in crumbs, and the yufka pastry was broken and scattered. "Of the pomegranate pulp, which had been beaten into sheets, then dried, cut into "pieces, and dredged in sugar, all that remained on the silver serving trays was a piece the size of Hannah's little finger." (pp.271-272)</p> <p>"yufka: Turkish bread, thin, round, and unleavened" (p.371)</p> <p>"lokum: Turkish delight—sticky candies dusted in confectionery sugar" (p.375).</p>
<p><i>Aşk Her Şeye Rağmen: Bir Harem Masalı</i> (Rich, 2015 trans. F. Ay-tuna 2015)</p>	<p>"Servis tabaklarındaki lokumların hepsi bitmişti. Kızarmış hamur tatlısının kırıntıları kalmıştı. Börek küçük parçalar şeklinde dağılmış durumdaydı. Yaprak haline gelene kadar dövülüp kurutulmuş ardından küçük parçalar şeklinde kesilip şekere batırılan nar pestilinden geriye gümüş servis tepsilerinde sadece Hanna'nın serçe-parmağı kadar bir parça duruyordu." (p.197).</p>

The excerpt begins with a very popular touristic delight that can be regarded as a representative of Turkish culture. The writer transferred this traditional treat using its Turkish transcription, "lokum". However, in the glossary, one can find its detailed definition. Therefore, it can be said that the writer used both transliteration and extra-textual gloss strategies. Another dessert mentioned in the excerpt above is "the fried dumplings". This was a very popular dessert in the Ottoman palace, and it has maintained its popularity to this day. In Turkish, it is known as "lokma". However, instead of its Turkish transcription, the writer replaced it with a general name, "the fried dumplings" which provides information about how it is made. Therefore, this can be referred to as an example of limited universalization. The other dish is "the pastry" that can be seen on Turkish dining tables as an appetizer and can be made with multiple fillings. This time, the writer preferred a different strategy. She used half English and half Turkish by transferring it as "The yufka pastry", which

stands as a clear mark of the mental translation process in the ST. The writer also added a definition of what “yufka” means to the glossary. With these choices, the writer exemplifies her use of repetition and limited universalization strategies. The last dish in this excerpt is another delight, known as “pestil”, which is especially popular in the Eastern parts of Turkey. The writer doesn’t mention its Turkish name; however, she makes it clear through a detailed explanation of how it is made. By doing so, she exemplifies the use of the intra-textual gloss strategy.

The comparative analysis of the Turkish translation reveals that the additional definitions were deleted from the TT. “Lokum” is kept as it is in the ST without any detailed explanations. Therefore, it can be said that the Turkish translator applied repetition strategy. The “yufka pastry” became “börek,” which is the common word used in Turkish to describe the food in the writer’s mind. On the other hand, although a detailed explanation of “pestil” is included in the TT, the translator also used the term “pestil” to make it clear to the target audience. With these choices, the translator exemplifies the use of the naturalization strategy.

Example 5:

The following excerpts show the examples of Ottoman dishes transferred into English using the same strategy by the writer.

Table 5. Plov and meze

<p><i>The Harem Midwife</i> (Rich, 2013)</p>	<p>“Mountain girls often looked young because of their meagre diets of plov and gruel” (p.100). “plov: rice” (p.373). “Hannah accepted a plate of mezes from Kübra and a glass filled with sherbet” (p.124). “mezes: hot or cold appetizers, usually served as snacks or as the prelude to a meal” (p.372).</p>
<p><i>Ařk Her řeye Rağmen: Bir Harem Masalı</i> (Rich, 2015 trans. F. Aytuna 2015)</p>	<p>“Dağlı kızlar pilav ve un çorbası gibi yetersiz yiyeceklerle beslendikleri için genellikle küçük görünüyordu” (p.74). “Hanna, Kübra’nın uzattığı meze dolu tabağı ve řerbet bardağını alarak teşekkür etti. Limon ve narla yapılmıř soğuk řerbet, keskin tadıyla son derece lezzetliydi” (p.91).</p>

In the first example, the writer used the transcription of a meal made from rice, which has taken place on Turkish people’s dining tables for hundreds of years. The writer chose to transfer this meal’s name as she heard it, so with that choice, the Turkish “pilav” is turned into “plov”. By doing so, she exemplifies the use of the “transliteration” strategy. However, since it doesn’t mean anything in the target culture, she added a definition of its contents to the glossary. This represents the extra-textual gloss strategy.

In the Turkish translation of the novel, the word “plov” is translated as “pilav”. That is, it returns to its source culture by departing from the mental translation marks of the writer. The familiarity of Turkish people with that food led to the deletion of the extra definition provided in the ST. This suggests that the Turkish translator employed deletion and naturalization strategies, as the term is already well-known in the target culture.

In another example, the writer mentions appetizers served in the Ottoman palace. However, instead of using an English word for it, she preferred to use the Turkish word “meze”. Although it’s the name used for appetizers in Turkish, she applied English grammar rules to it and made it plural by adding -s at the end. This suggests that the writer initially used the repetition strategy, maintaining the original term but adapting it slightly for the English-speaking audience. Since the word “meze” might not create a mental image for the source reader, she also included a definition of the dish in the glossary, which further exemplifies the use of the extra-textual gloss strategy. In the Turkish translation, the translator brings the term “meze” back into the target culture, leaving it untranslated, as it is well-known to Turkish readers. Additionally, the definition of “meze” from the ST is omitted in the Turkish version. This indicates that the translator used repetition and deletion strategies in this case as well.

Example 6:

Another example from Ottoman food culture is “dolma”, a popular dish in Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, and Balkan cuisines, consisting of vegetables, vine leaves, or other plant leaves stuffed with various fillings.

Table 6. *Börek and dolma*

<p><i>The Harem Midwife</i> (Rich, 2013)</p>	<p>“Dozens of ladies-in-waiting flanked the Valide, some fanning her, some carrying trays of dolma, grape leaves stuffed with ground lamb, and börek, flaky pastry filled with spinach and cheese” (p.117). “börek: a family of pastries made of a thin flaky dough known as phyllo, with varying fillings” (p.367). “dolma: grape leaves stuffed with ground meat, rice, or herbs” (p.369).</p>
<p><i>Aşk Her Şeye Rağmen: Bir Harem Masalı</i> (Rich, 2015 trans. F. Ay-tuna 2015)</p>	<p>“Validenin yanına dizilmiş onlarca nedimenin bir kısmı onu yelpazeyle serinletiyor, bir kısmı dolma ve börek dolu tepsiler getiriyordu” (p. 86)</p>

The word “dolma” comes from the Turkish verb “dolmak”, meaning “to be stuffed”. In the ST, the writer refers to this popular dish by its Turkish name. However, she also adds an explanation right after the words “dolma” and “börek,” as these terms would be unfamiliar to the target audience. In addition to the in-text explanations, detailed descriptions are provided in the glossary section. These choices can be regarded as the use of repetition, intra-textual gloss, and extra-textual gloss strategies.

In the Turkish translation, the translator brings these terms back to their source culture by retaining the words “dolma” and “börek”. Since these dishes are well-known to Turkish readers, both the in-text explanations and the dictionary definitions are omitted in the TT. This illustrates the use of repetition and deletion strategies, as outlined in Aixelâ’s terms.

4.3. Local professions

As the story takes place in the Ottoman capital, it is highly possible to encounter names of occupations that were very popular during the Ottoman reign. The Ottoman titles which are the key

to the governance structure of the Ottoman Empire will be analyzed under the ‘‘Local professions’’ heading.

Example 7:

When analyzing a story taking place in the Ottoman period, it’s nearly impossible not to read a scene taking place in the hamam which seems to be a very oriental figure, especially in the eyes of Westerners. The following excerpt shows the time Hannah passes in the hamam.

Table 7. Bath attendant

<i>The Harem Midwife</i> (Rich, 2013)	‘‘Hannah had once been invited to enjoy herself in the hamam, scrubbed by a bath attendant and then immersed in the steaming pool. She now knew how it felt to be a potato boiling in a pot’’ (p.213)
<i>Ařk Her Őeye Raęmen: Bir Harem Masalı</i> (Rich, 2015 trans. F. Aytuna 2015)	‘‘Bir keresinde Hanna’yı da hamamda yıkanmaya davet etmiřlerdi. Bir natır onu göbek tařına yatırmıř, ardından keselemiřti. Artık bir tencerede hařlanan patatesin nasıl bir Őey olduęunu iyi biliyordu’’ (p.157).

In this excerpt, the writer describes what Hanna does in that mystic place. While she is enjoying her time in the steam, a bath attendant scrubs her, which is very common in hamam. Spending time in hamam is a unique activity in the Ottoman lands. Since Westerners do not have such a tradition, there is no word in English for the people working there to scrub the bathers. Therefore, the writer transferred this role to ‘‘bath attendant’’. By replacing an unfamiliar word with a more common one in the target language, the writer exemplifies the use of the limited universalization strategy.

In the Turkish translation, this job is brought back to its source culture with the well-known term ‘‘natır’’. In addition, the translator added some details to this excerpt using his own background knowledge. While the phrase ‘‘being laid on the heated stone’’ is not present in the ST, the translator included it in the TT, as target readers are more familiar with the scene described in the ST. By doing so, the translator demonstrates the use of both naturalization and autonomous creation strategies.

Example 8:

A similar procedure was applied to the translation of the ‘‘taster’’ working in the Ottoman Palace both in the source and target texts.

Table 8. The chief taster

<i>The Harem Midwife</i> (Rich, 2013)	‘‘Not a dish of food passed the Sultan’s lips without the Chief Taster trying it first’’ (p. 62).
<i>Ařk Her Őeye Raęmen: Bir Harem Masalı</i> (Rich, 2015 trans. F. Aytuna 2015)	‘‘Çeřnicibařının kontrol etmedięi tek bir tabak yemek padiřahın önüne gelmezdi’’ (p.47).

The writer emphasized the important role of the ‘‘taster’’ working in the Ottoman Palace kitchen by mentioning how he tasted food before the emperor. While doing so, she referred to the

person as the “chief taster”. Therefore, it can be said that the writer employs literal translation strategy while transferring this traditional job. In its Turkish translation, the translator used the well-known term “çeşnicibaşı”, which the target audience is likely familiar with. Similar to the previous example, while the writer employed the limited universalization strategy, the Turkish translator resorted to naturalization due to his familiarity with Ottoman culture.

Example 9:

The following excerpt includes three different titles specific to Ottoman places.

Table 9. Ottoman titles

<i>The Harem Midwife</i> (Rich, 2013)	“The Grand Vizier Mehmet Sokollu, was not happy. Mustafa, the Chief Black Eunuch, was not happy. The Valide was not happy” (p.48).
<i>Aşk Her Şeye Rağmen: Bir Harem Masalı</i> (Rich, 2015 trans. F. Aytuna 2015)	“Sadrazam Sokollu Mehmet Paşa bu durumdan memnun değildi. Kızlar ağası Mustafa memnun değildi. Valide sultan memnun değildi” (p. 38).

The writer mentally translates the Ottoman titles by using the name “Sadrazam Sokollu Mehmet Paşa”, which turns into “The Grand Vizier Mehmet Sokollu”, “Kızlar ağası Mustafa”, which turns into “Mustafa, Chief Black Eunuch”, and the mother of the emperor, known as “Valide Sultan” in Turkish, which is mentioned as “The Valide” in the ST. It can be said that the writer employs both repetition and literal translation strategies while rendering these titles in the source language. In the Turkish translation, all the Ottoman titles are translated into Turkish using their common forms from the Ottoman period, which corresponds to the naturalization strategy.

It is noteworthy that the translator refrains from literal translation, demonstrating his professionalism in both the source and the target languages, as well as his understanding of the cultural context.

5. Conclusion

In this study, the literary work *The Harem Midwife* (2013) by an American author, set in Ottoman society, and its Turkish translation by Fethi Aytuna, *Aşk Her Şeye Rağmen: Bir Harem Masalı* (2015) are examined through the concepts of watermark translation and retro-translation proposed by Sündüz Öztürk Kasar (2012, 2020). The transformation of cultural elements in these works is analyzed within the framework of Aixelâ's (1996) strategies for translating CSIs. Rich employs various strategies to make Ottoman cultural elements understandable to English-speaking readers, despite not being a member of the Ottoman culture. The cultural elements reflecting Ottoman culture are analyzed under the categories of clothes and accessories, Ottoman dishes, and local professions. As a result of the analysis, it was found that Rich, in *The Harem Midwife*, uses mental translation to bring Ottoman concepts, entities, and objects into the Western world, presenting an example of watermark translation. On the other hand, the translator, Fethi Aytuna, in his Turkish translation, transforms Rich's mental translation marks into his own source culture, creating an example of retro-translation.

The ST analysis reveals that the strategies used for translating clothing and accessories include transliteration, intra-gloss strategy, extra-gloss strategy, and repetition strategies. For the transla-

tion of Ottoman dishes, strategies such as intra-textual gloss, extra-textual gloss, limited universalization, and repetition are employed. In the transfer of the local professions, the strategies used are limited universalization, repetition, and literal translation.

The analysis indicates that the ST author employs a variety of strategies to convey culture-specific elements from Ottoman culture into a Western context. The extensive use of these strategies highlights the challenges involved in translating CSIs. To address this difficulty, the author does not rely solely on repetition but also incorporates both intra-textual and extra-textual glossing techniques. The use of varied techniques highlights the writer’s effort to clarify these cultural concepts for the English reader. It also reflects the considerable effort invested in understanding and conveying the actual meanings of these cultural items while writing this text, ultimately resulting in a carefully crafted translation. While there are some inconsistencies in the transfer of cultural items—for instance, the writer employs transliteration for *shalvar* but uses a repetition strategy for *nazar boncuęu*—the frequent use of the extra-textual gloss strategy demonstrates the writer’s intention to familiarize foreign readers with the meanings of Ottoman cultural elements. This variety of the strategies used in transferring the cultural items in the source text supports its being a “watermark translation” (Öztürk Kasar, 2012) in itself. Accepting an original literary work as a translation within the framework of “watermark translation” (Öztürk Kasar, 2012) paves the way for broadening the concept of translation.

On the other hand, the translator adopts a different approach when transferring CSIs from the ST. As an expert in both languages and cultures, the translator chooses strategies that differ from those of the original author. When translating clothing and accessories, for example, the translator uses the repetition strategy for transliterated cultural terms. Since the target audience is familiar with these cultural items, there is no need for additional glosses, as this would be redundant for readers with knowledge of Ottoman culture. Instead, the translator opts to omit any extra explanations. The most frequently used strategies in the analysis of cultural item transfers are naturalization, deletion, and repetition. Additionally, in one instance, the translator uses autonomous creation, adding extra information based on his background knowledge, which can be regarded as a strategy that enhances the translator’s visibility in retro-translation.

The comparative analysis of both the source and target texts reveals the challenges inherent in translating culture-specific elements. Despite the author’s thorough research on Ottoman culture, certain traces of mental translation—showing divergences from the original—highlight the necessity of not only comprehensive research but also direct engagement with the culture being depicted. The same considerations apply to retro-translation, where the translator must possess a deep understanding of both cultures in order to effectively reintegrate cultural elements into the source culture.

Geniřletilmiş Özet

Amerikalı yazar Roberta Rich tarafından kaleme alınan *The Harem Midwife* (2013) adlı eser iki Yahudi kahramanın Osmanlı saraylarında yaşadığı deneyimleri konu edinir. Eser Osmanlı topraklarına yabancı olan Rich tarafından İngilizce dilinde kaleme alınmıştır. Osmanlı topraklarına ait bu hikâyeyi kaleme alırken Rich, pek çok kültürel göstergeyi zihinsel bir çeviri işlemine tabi tutmuş ve okur için anlaşılır bir hale getirmeye çabalamıştır. Bu durum Sündüz Öztürk Kasar (2012; 2020) tarafından ortaya koyulan “özde çeviri” ve “aslına çeviri” kavramlarını aklı getir-

mektedir. “Özde çeviri” yazarın ait olmadığı bir dil-kültür ortamına ait olguları kendi dil-kültür ortamına aktarırken uyguladığı zihinsel çeviri işleminin izlerini barındıran çevirileri ifade ederken, “aslına çeviri” bu tür metinlerin kendi dil-kültür ortamlarına geri dönüşünü ifade etmektedir.

Batı’da Osmanlı yaşamına duyulan merak nedeniyle, özellikle Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve dönemin İstanbul’u hakkında İngilizce dilinde birçok eser yazılmıştır (bkz. Wortley Montagu, 1790; Pardoe, 1845; Goodwin, 2006, 2007). Tüm bu Doğu’ya ait kültürel unsurların Batılı yazarlar tarafından kaleme alındığı örnekler birer özde çeviri olarak değerlendirilebilir. Bu çalışmanın araştırma nesnesi olan *The Harem Midwife* (2013) başlıklı eserde de Roberta Rich kendisine yabancı bir kültür hakkında yazarken o kültürün içerdiği kültürel unsurlara yönelik bir tür çeviri işlemi uygulamıştır. Söz konusu eserin *Aşk Her Şeye Rağmen: Bir Harem Masalı* (2015) başlıklı Türkçe çevirisi ise Osmanlı kültürüne ait öğelerin çıkış kültürüne geri dönüşünü ifade etmekte ve bir tür aslına çeviri olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı söz konusu özde çeviri ve aslına çevirilerde Osmanlı kültürüne ait öğeleri Franco Javier Aixelâ (1996)’nın kültüre özgü öğelerin çevirisi için ortaya koyduğu stratejiler aracılığıyla inceleyerek bu öğelerin geçirdiği değişim ve dönüşümleri ortaya koymaktır.

Aixelâ (1996) kültüre özgü öğelere yönelik çeviri stratejilerini “koruma” ve “yer değiştirme” başlıkları altında sınıflandırmıştır. “Koruma” stratejisi altında “tekrar”, “yazımsal uyarlama”, “dilbilimsel çeviri”, “metin dışı açıklama”, “metin içi açıklama” stratejilerinden söz ederken “Yer değiştirme” başlığı altında ise “eş anlamlılık”, “sınırlı evrenselleştirme”, “mutlak evrenselleştirme”, “doğallaştırma”, “silme” ve “özerk yaratım” stratejilerinden söz etmektedir.

Bu çalışmada bir özde çeviri olarak ele alınan *The Harem Midwife* (2013) başlıklı eserde özde çevirmen olarak değerlendirilen kaynak metin yazarı Rich, Osmanlı kültürüne özgü öğeleri İngiliz diline aktarırken pek çok çeviri stratejisine başvurmuştur. Eserde yer alan kültürel öğeler kıyafetler ve aksesuarlar, Osmanlı yemekleri ve meslekler başlıkları altında sınıflandırılmıştır. Yapılan inceleme neticesinde özde çeviride yazarın harf çevirisi, metin içi açıklama, metin dışı açıklama, tekrar, dilbilimsel çeviri ve sınırlı evrenselleştirme stratejilerine başvurduğu görülmüştür. Osmanlı kültürüne ait öğeler İngiliz diline aktarılırken zaman zaman çıkış kültüründeki sesletim okura yansıtılmak istenmiş ancak İngiliz okurda bir imge oluşturmayacağı için sıklıkla metin içi ve metin dışı açıklamalara başvurulmuştur. Kaynak metnin sonuna eklenen sözlük eserin içerdiği zihinsel çeviri izlerini gösterir niteliktedir. Nitekim yazar metninde hem okura yabancı unsurlara yer vermiş hem de bunları çeşitli stratejiler aracılığıyla açıklayarak bir özgün metindense çeviri metin nitelikleri taşıyan bir eser ortaya koymuştur.

Fethi Aytuna çevirisiyle Türkçeye kazandırılan ve bu çalışmada bir aslına çeviri olarak değerlendirilen *Aşk Her Şeye Rağmen: Bir Harem Masalı* (2015) başlıklı eserde ise Aytuna yazardan farklı çeviri stratejilerine başvurmuştur. Söz konusu kültürel öğelerin çıkış kültürüne dönmesinde Aytuna, Aixelâ (1996)’nın kültürel öğelerin çevirisi için öne sürdüğü doğallaştırma, silme, tekrar ve özerk yaratım stratejilerinden yararlanmıştı. Özde çeviri ile kıyaslandığında aslına çeviride daha az çeşitte stratejiye başvurulduğu dikkat çekmektedir. Nitekim söz konusu kültürel öğeler tekrar kendi dil ve kültür ortamlarına geri dönmekte dolayısıyla çeviride kültürlerarası farklılığın yarattığı zorlayıcılığı barındırmamaktadır. Özde ve aslına çevirilerde farklılaşan çeviri stratejileri yazar ve çevirmenin hedef kitlenin artalan bilgileri ve ihtiyaçlarını göz önünde bulundurduğunu göstermektedir.

Sonuç olarak, yapılan karřılařtırmalı inceleme kültürel öğelerin çevirisinde karřılařılabilecek zorlukları gözler önüne sermektedir. Yazarın Osmanlı kültürü üzerine yaptıđı derinlemesine arařtırmalara rađmen, zihinsel çevirinin izleri olarak ifade edilebilecek orijinal metinden sapmalar sadece kapsamlı arařtırmaların deđil, aynı zamanda betimlenen kültürle doğrudan etkileşimin de gerekliliđini vurgulamaktadır. Aynı deđerlendirmeler aslına çeviri için de geçerlidir; çevirmenin, kültürel öğeleri kaynak kültüre etkili bir şekilde yeniden aktarabilmesi için her iki kültürü de derinlemesine bilmesi gerekliliđi açıktır.

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