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TRANSLATING HISTORY BEYOND LANGUAGE: OTTOMAN ISTANBUL IN ASSASSIN'S CREED REVELATIONS¹

Dil Ötesinde Tarihi Çevirmek: *Assassin's Creed Revelations*'ta Osmanlı İstanbul'u

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Abstract

This study examines how *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* "translates" the Ottoman past beyond language. Departing from localization and interlingual approaches that dominate video game research in Translation Studies, it analyzes the representation of Ottoman Istanbul through a framework defined as extralinguistic translation, anchored in multimodal translation, intersemiotic translation, and rewriting. In this regard, five purposively selected representational units are examined. Each unit is first mapped through Delabastita and Chiaro's multimodal approach, then analyzed through Peirce's icon, index, and symbol relations, and finally evaluated as rewriting through Said's Orientalism. The findings suggest that Ottoman Istanbul is constructed through a selective organization of recognizable visual and aural signs rather than a neutral accumulation of historical details. Visual-nonverbal elements carry the main representational weight, while aural elements reinforce the atmosphere of social, cultural, and religious life. Read together, the selected units point toward spectacle, selective exoticization, and partially eroticized representation. This indicates that the game's historical rewriting carries ideological implications shaped by inherited representational conventions. The study contributes to Translation Studies by situating video games outside the localization paradigm and demonstrating how historical representation can be examined through an integrated, interdisciplinary method within the field.

Keywords: multimodal translation, intersemiotic translation, rewriting, video games, *Assassin's Creed*

Öz

Bu çalışma, *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* oyununun Osmanlı geçmişini nasıl dilin ötesinde "çevirdiğini" incelemektedir. Çalışma, Çeviribilim alanındaki video oyunu incelemelerinde merkezi bir yer tutan yerelleştirme ve dillerarası çeviri odaklı yaklaşımların ötesine geçerek, çok düzgülü çeviri, göstergelerarası çeviri ve yeniden yazma kavramlarına dayanan "dil dışı" bir çeviri anlayışı çerçevesinde oyundaki Osmanlı İstanbul'u temsilini analiz etmektedir. Bu doğrultuda, amaca yönelik örnekleme yoluyla seçilen beş temsil birimi önce Delabastita ve Chiaro'nun çok düzgülü yaklaşımıyla haritalandırılmakta, ardından Peirce'in ikon, indeks ve sembol ilişkileri aracılığıyla analiz edilmekte ve son olarak Said'in Oryantalizm'i üzerinden yeniden yazma kapsamında değerlendirilmektedir. Bulgular, Osmanlı İstanbul'unu temsil eden tarihsel detayların sadık bir biçimde aktarılmasından ziyade, bilinçli seçimlere dayanan görsel ve işitsel göstergeler kullanılarak kurgulandığına işaret etmektedir. Görsel-sözel olmayan unsurlar temsil açısından ana ağırlığı taşıırken, işitsel unsurlar sosyal, kültürel ve dini yaşamın atmosferini pekiştirmektedir. Seçilen birimler bir arada okunduğunda, gösteri, seçici egzotizasyon ve kısmi olarak cinselleştirilmiş bir temsile işaret etmektedir. Bu durum, oyundaki tarihsel yeniden yazımın, geleneksel temsil kalıplarıyla şekillenen ideolojik izler taşıdığını göstermektedir. Çalışma, video oyunlarını yerelleştirmenin ötesinde bir inceleme nesnesi olarak konumlandırarak ve tarihsel temsilin disiplinlerarası entegre bir yöntemle Çeviribilim içerisinde nasıl incelenebileceğini göstererek alana katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: çok düzgülü çeviri, göstergelerarası çeviri, yeniden yazma, video oyunları, *Assassin's Creed*

Extended Abstract

This study examines the historical representation of Ottoman Istanbul in *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* (ACR) (Ubisoft, 2011) from a translation studies perspective. Moving beyond localization, audiovisual translation, and interlingual transfer, it argues that history-themed video games can also be

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examined as spaces where historical meaning is generated by audial and visual modes. The study adopts *extralinguistic translation* as its overarching framework to describe how the past is made visible, audible, and recognizable in the game world. In this framework, history is not approached as a fixed source text transferred into another language, but as a body of cultural memory, inherited representations, and historical knowledge that is reorganized into a digital game environment. Accordingly, the study focuses on how historical representation related to Ottoman Istanbul in *ACR* is translated beyond languages across multimodal channels and semiotic relations, and on what ideological implications become visible when the findings are read together.

This theoretical framework is built on three anchors that inform the three-stage analysis. The first is multimodal translation, which approaches historical representation as a construction produced by the coordinated functioning of audial and visual modes rather than by linguistic material alone, and is operationalized using the four-channel model developed by Delabastita (1989) and Chiaro (2009) to examine how audial and visual modes work in multimodal products. The second is intersemiotic translation, which frames historical representation as meaning transformation across sign systems. Following Jakobson (2021), Dusi (2015), and Petrilli and Zanoletti (2023), this anchor treats the game's representations as signs and examines them via Peirce's semiotic approach (Chandler, 2007). The third anchor is rewriting, which discusses the ideological implications of the historical representation. Historical game studies also support this anchor, since history-themed games are understood as selective reconstructions of the past rather than neutral reproductions, organizing historical meaning through choices of inclusion, exclusion, emphasis, arrangement, and representational form (Chapman, 2016; Kapell & Elliott, 2013; McCall, 2023). Lefevere's (2017) rewriting theory and Hermans' (2022) discussion of historiography and translation further support this view, while Said's (2003) *Orientalism* provides the critical lens through which the overall pattern produced by the selected examples is discussed in terms of spectacle, exoticization, and, where relevant, eroticization.

Methodologically, the study follows a qualitative and descriptive design guided by the above framework. *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* was selected because it offers a globally circulated representation of Ottoman Istanbul within one of the most widely known historical video game franchises. The *Assassin's Creed* franchise has exceeded 200 million sales worldwide on PC, PlayStation and Xbox platforms (TweakTown, 2022). The analysis focuses on the PC version of the game that took 20 hours to beat. Data were collected during gameplay via screenshots and short video recordings. The basic unit of analysis is a historically coded representational unit identifiable independently of plot progression. The selection of these units was organized through a deductively constructed functional categorization informed by Chapman's (2016) concept of *lexia*, which refers to narratively charged units through which historical meaning is carried in games (p. 119). Adjusting the concept to the game's representational materials, the categories are defined as *Architectural and Urban Environment*, *Material Culture*, and *Public Practices and Rituals*. Five units were selected for the analysis through purposive sampling, *the Bazaar*, *the Janissary Elite Guard*, *the Public Courtyard*, *the Belly Dancers*, and *the Minarets/Call to Prayer*, for their recurrence and visibility across all stages of the game.

The analysis is conducted in three stages informed by the theoretical anchors. Initially, the selected units are mapped through visual-verbal, visual-nonverbal, audial-verbal, and audial-nonverbal channels. Each channel is evaluated according to its contribution to historical representation. The analysis then examines the same units through Peirce's icon, index, and symbol relations, distinguishing dominant and peripheral relations where necessary. Finally, the resulting multimodal profiles and interpretants are evaluated as rewriting via the lens of *Orientalism* in order to discuss the ideological readings enabled by the overall pattern of representation.

The findings show that *ACR* constructs Ottoman Istanbul through a selective organization of audial and visual signs rather than through a neutral approach. At the multimodal level, visual-nonverbal elements carry the main representational weight, while audial elements add social, cultural, and atmospheric density through crowd sounds, vendors' calls, ambient sound, and the call to prayer. At the semiotic level, the selected units produce meaning through overlapping icon, index, and symbol relations: architectural forms and urban silhouettes create iconic recognizability, spatial placement and in-game positioning produce indexical meanings, and culturally learned associations activate symbolic readings related to Ottoman-Islamic identity, military authority, and Eastern entertainment imagery. When evaluated as rewriting through *Orientalism*, the overall pattern indicates that *ACR* rewrites Ottoman Istanbul as a recognizable historical environment shaped by spectacle, selective exoticization and limited eroticization. The Bazaar and the Public Courtyard contribute to visual-audial spectacle, the Janissary

Elite Guard to authority and danger, the Belly Dancers to eroticized exoticism, and the Minarets/Call to Prayer to Islamic visual-audial coding. The ideological reading, however, emerges from the way these units function together after the multimodal and semiotic analyses, rather than from treating them as Orientalist categories from the outset.

The study contributes to Translation Studies by offering an integrated and interdisciplinary method for examining video games beyond their verbal and localized assets. By bringing multimodal translation, intersemiotic translation, and rewriting into a single *extralinguistic translation* framework, it shows how historical meaning in a digital game can be described, semiotically justified, and ideologically discussed without reducing translation to verbal transfer. It also positions history-themed video games as legitimate objects of inquiry in Translation Studies, not only because they contain translatable verbal assets, but because they translate cultural memory, historical atmosphere, and ideological representation through audial and visual signs. The study is limited to five purposively selected units from the Istanbul episodes of *ACR* and does not examine gameplay mechanics, production processes, or player reception. Future research may extend this framework through larger corpora, comparative analyses across different historical games, and reception-oriented studies that examine how players interpret such translations of the past.

Introduction

Critical approaches to historiography argue that the past is not simply passed on as a neutral, linear story. Rather, it is rebuilt through choices about what to include, how to organize it, and how to interpret it, and those choices are shaped by present positions and power relations. In this view, historical narrative does not reflect the past "as it was" but creates an interpretive space that is continuously reconfigured (Benjamin, 2009). Hermans (2022) similarly argues that historiography cannot be treated as neutral transmission, since it organizes the past into narratives shaped by perspective, selection, and judgments, which can be understood here as a form of ideological positioning (pp. 7–10). This study adopts the same premise and treats historical representation in *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* (Ubisoft, 2011) as a site of translation where meaning is constructed rather than transmitted.

Historical video games reconstruct the past by coordinating audial and visual modes and place the player inside that reconstruction, enabling historical meaning to be produced at an experiential level. Such products foreground "history" as a representational field built through deliberate selection, arrangement, staging, and evocation rather than transfer of information (Chapman, 2016). With its global popularity and success, *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*, hereafter *ACR*, an action-adventure video game developed by Ubisoft Montreal and published by Ubisoft in 2011, comes to the fore as a significant example in this regard. Released across PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, and Microsoft Windows platforms, it is the fourth major installment in the globally successful *Assassin's Creed* franchise, one of the best-selling video game series in history with over 200 million copies sold worldwide (TweakTown, 2022). Set predominantly in Ottoman Istanbul of the early sixteenth century, the game constructs a historical urban environment through a dense layering of architecture, material culture, ambient sound, and staged public practices, turning this world into a navigable and action-driven historical experience. *ACR* does not merely reference history as backdrop but systematically builds it as an immersive representational field through audial and visual means, offering a historical environment shaped by specific multimodal, semiotic, and ideological choices. The game was selected as the corpus of this study as it provides a productive object of scrutiny for translation studies, once the concept of translation is extended beyond interlingual transfer. Against this backdrop, this study examines the historical representation of Ottoman Istanbul in *ACR* through the framework of *extralinguistic translation*, arguing that the game's multimodal construction of the past constitutes a translational act operating beyond interlingual transfer.

Adopting a translational logic that has been gaining ground in recent scholarship extending the boundaries of translation studies beyond interlingual exchange, the study treats history as the intangible source and the game world as the target. Here, history is understood not as a fixed text but as a body of cultural memory, inherited representation, and accumulated

historical knowledge, while the game world functions as a multimodal reconstruction of the past through visual, auditory, spatial, and figurative resources. Okyayuz and Sancaktaroğlu Bozkurt (2022) demonstrate, through the case of Nasreddin Hodja stories as intangible cultural heritage, that the transformation of meaning across media constitutes a translational process, since it involves the systematic reorganization of meaning across semiotic modes rather than merely the transfer of linguistic content. The present study carries this logic to the digital game medium and approaches this as *extralinguistic translation*, operationalized through a three-stage analytical procedure whose conceptual architecture is presented in the theoretical framework section.

This framework contributes to translation studies in two respects. Conceptually, it expands the scope of translation beyond interlingual exchange by treating the multimodal and semiotic construction of historical meaning as a translational problem. Methodologically, it offers a three-stage analytical procedure that integrates multimodal, intersemiotic, and ideological perspectives into a coherent and sequentially structured framework, addressing a gap that existing localization, cultural studies, and game studies approaches have left open.

The ultimate aim of the article is to show that video games can be examined in translation studies not only through localization and interlingual transfer but also as environments where historical representation can be constructed and operated as translation beyond language. The corpus is limited to the Istanbul episodes of *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*. The analysis focuses on five representational units selected through purposive sampling for their high historical representativeness and their capacity to illustrate distinct configurations of multimodal and semiotic functioning across the three analytical stages. This limitation is adopted to demonstrate how historical meaning is built through audial and visual modes in concrete and bounded cases, rather than to claim a comprehensive account of the entire game. Toward this goal, the study addresses the following research questions:

- (1) In *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*, how is the Ottoman past constructed multimodally through the coordination of audial and visual modes?
- (2) Within the framework of Peirce's model, what types of interpretants do the selected examples produce at the icon, index, and symbol levels?
- (3) In the context of rewriting historical representation, particularly within debates on Orientalism, what ideological readings do these interpretants enable?

1. Literature Review

Video games have become an increasingly visible object of inquiry in Translation Studies, yet this interest has developed mainly along specific research lines. One major line examines games within the framework of localization, focusing on the linguistic, cultural, technical, and market-oriented adaptation of game content for different target locales (O'Hagan & Mangiron, 2013, pp. 19–21; Bernal-Merino, 2015, pp. 1–3). In this context, the translatable material of games often includes interface texts, menus, help messages, tutorials, system messages, narrative passages, non-voiced dialogues, subtitles, dubbing, and other in-game audiovisual assets (O'Hagan & Mangiron, 2013, pp. 8–10; Mejías-Climent, 2021, pp. 22–23). A second line approaches games through audiovisual translation, especially because modern games frequently merge cinematic sequences, voiced dialogues, subtitles, dubbing, and interactive gameplay (O'Hagan & Mangiron, 2013, pp. 122; Mejías-Climent, 2021, pp. 163–164). These two lines are not fully separate, since game localization often includes AVT modes and accessibility-related practices. Although this literature acknowledges the multimodal and semiotic complexity of video games, translation analysis usually remains centered on linguistic transfer, localized assets, audiovisual transfer, accessibility, and user-oriented concerns.

In parallel, multimodal and intersemiotic perspectives have increasingly expanded the conceptual boundaries of Translation Studies. Kaindl (2013) argues that multimodality requires translation research to consider verbal and non-verbal modes together, although the field has

often struggled to integrate multiple sign systems into systematic analysis (p. 257). A later formulation states this point more strongly: in the twenty-first century, translation can be understood as a multimodal practice and translatorial action as a multimodal semiotic act (Kaindl, 2020, pp. 64–66). Intersemiotic approaches further support this expansion. Dusi (2015) revisits Jakobson's notion of intersemiotic translation and argues that meaning reorganization across semiotic systems involves transformation, selection, and re-presentation rather than a mechanical transfer between sign systems (pp. 181–184). Recent work on multimodal translation similarly suggests that Translation Studies needs to move beyond word-centered models and address the interaction of visual, auditory, spatial, material, and cultural modes (Boria & Tomalin, 2020; Gambier, 2023; Petrilli & Zanoletti, 2023). However, these perspectives have not yet been directed toward the non-linguistic construction of historical meaning in video games.

Recent studies confirm that video game research in Translation Studies continues to develop mainly around localization, AVT, accessibility, reception, and user-oriented concerns. Although these studies display methodological variety, their primary analytical focus often remains attached to linguistic transfer, translated game assets, subtitle quality, dubbing, audio description, censorship, transcreation, player preferences, or market-oriented localization practices. Zhao et al. (2025), for example, examine the translation of vulgar expressions in the Chinese-to-English localization of *Black Myth: Wukong*, while Zhang and Mangiron (2025) approach game audio description through accessibility and target-language production. Liu et al. (2025) provide a systematic review of localization research from 2012 to 2023 and identify recurring themes such as transcreation, indirect translation, and censorship. Reception-oriented studies similarly remain close to translated verbal or audiovisual assets, as seen in Deckert and Hejduk's (2024) experimental work on subtitle quality and player satisfaction, as well as Sciberras's (2021) discussion of user preferences and standardization in game subtitling. In the Turkish context, Temuçin et al. (2024) show that video games are most frequently studied under localization, especially in MA-level postgraduate research. Similarly, Afzali and Zahiri (2022) examine Iranian players' expectations regarding in-game text translations in relation to market dynamics, competitive structures, and player communities.

The Assassin's Creed franchise has also attracted scholarly attention in relation to cultural representation, historical meaning, transmedia storytelling, design, and localization. Komel (2014) examines Orientalist patterns in the first Assassin's Creed game, while Cole (2022) discusses cultural heritage and historical representation in *Assassin's Creed Odyssey*. In the Turkish context, Selçuk (2020, 2022) approaches the series as a transmedia narrative, and Dereli (2023) examines Orientalist tendencies in the visual and design structures of *Assassin's Creed* and *Tomb Raider*. Taşkiran (2019), although not concerned with *Assassin's Creed*, is also relevant because he analyzes Orientalist discourse in digital games through semiotic analysis. Within Translation Studies, Al-Batineh et al. (2025) focus on Arabic localization practices across the *Assassin's Creed* series. These studies show that the series and digital games more broadly have been examined through representation, Orientalism, transmedia, design, and localization. Yet they do not directly address the translational dimensions of how audial, visual, spatial, and cultural signs produce historical meaning in these games.

This gap becomes more visible when historical game studies is considered, since this field has already shown that games do not merely contain history but simulate, recreate, subvert, and rewrite the past using selective forms of representation (Kapell & Elliott, 2013, pp. 6–7). Historical games can also place past agents, spaces, objects, and choices within physical, spatial, and cultural contexts rather than reducing history to written explanation or factual recall (McCall, 2023, p. 11). Chapman's *Digital Games as History* (2016) is a foundational contribution in game studies and examines historical video games as historical environments. By foregrounding how historical meaning is produced through game form, Chapman underscores the importance of form since it "has a role in determining content" and provides a

conceptual grounding for treating history-based games as multimodal configurations of representation (2016, pp. 18–19). Yet these insights have not been taken up within translation studies. For this reason, history-based games require attention not only to what they narrate, but also to how they construct historical meaning through audial and visual means.

These three bodies of literature reviewed here point toward a broader shared gap. Localization and AVT research acknowledge the multimodal complexity of video games but keeps translation analysis anchored to linguistic transfer and adapted assets. Multimodal and intersemiotic perspectives within Translation Studies have expanded the conceptual boundaries of the field, yet these perspectives have not been systematically applied to video games as objects of translational inquiry. Cultural studies, game studies, and media research examine historical meaning, Orientalist representation, and design in games like *Assassin's Creed*, but without adopting a translational framework. The result is that the question of how historical meaning emerges through audial and visual means in history-based games remains unaddressed as a translation problem. It is this gap that the present study seeks to fill by proposing an *extralinguistic translation* framework and applying it to the Ottoman Istanbul environment of *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*.

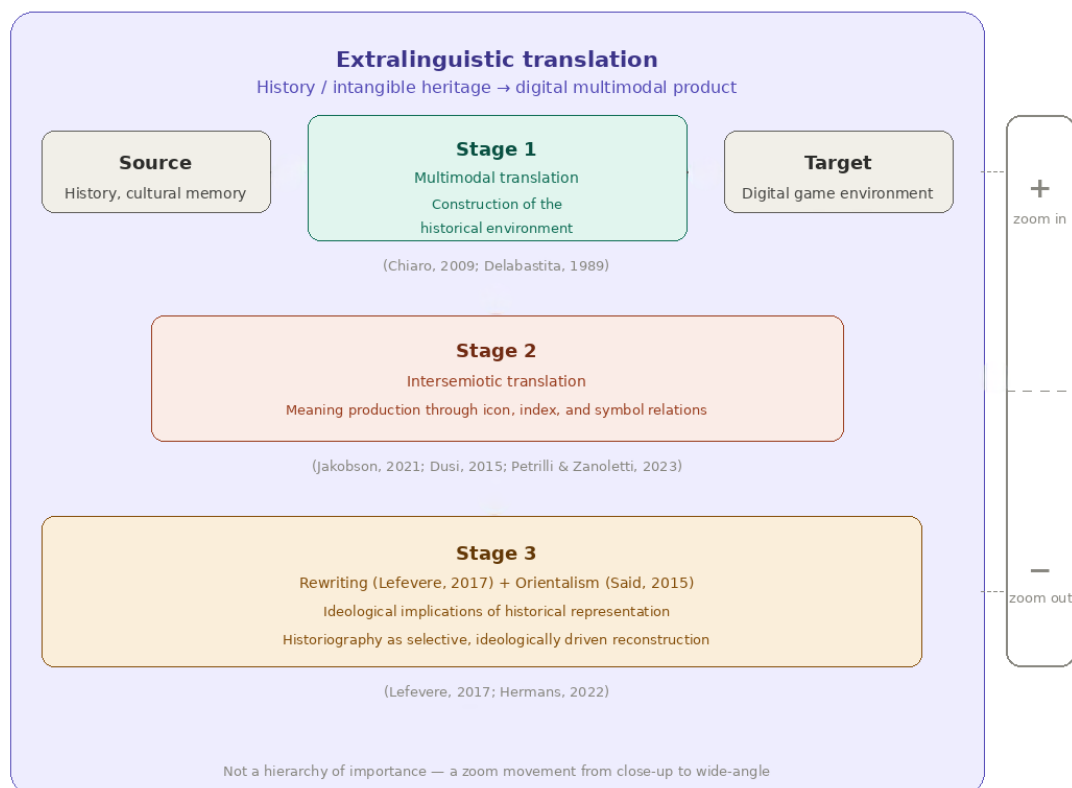
2. Theoretical Framework

This section explains how the study's overarching concept of *extralinguistic translation* is operationalized for the analysis of historical representation in *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*. As established in the introduction, *extralinguistic translation* names a form of translational meaning-making that is not limited to transfer between languages, but extends to the transformation of cultural memory, inherited representations, and historical knowledge into multimodal forms. In this study, this concept is used to read how Ottoman Istanbul is translated beyond language in *ACR* as a structured digital and multimodal target environment. To make this reading analytically workable, the concept is organized through three theoretical anchors, each of which also functions as an analytical stage: multimodal translation, intersemiotic translation, and rewriting. As theoretical anchors, they provide the conceptual grounding for the study's translational framework. As analytical stages, they organize the examination of historical representation in *ACR* into a sequential zooming-out movement, from the close-up of multimodal construction, through the mid-range of semiotic meaning production, to the wide-angle of ideological implication.

The first theoretical anchor is multimodal translation. Multimodal translation refers to translational processes in which meaning is reorganized through the coordinated functioning of multiple semiotic modes rather than via linguistic transfer alone (Kaindl, 2020, pp. 64–66; Boria & Tomalin, 2020, pp. 4-5). Approaching *ACR* through *extralinguistic translation* requires treating it as a multimodal meaning production system, since meaning in video game texts is produced not only by written or spoken language but through the simultaneous coordination of audial and visual modes, thus involving multimodal meaning-making possibilities that extend well beyond interlingual translation (Kress, 2010, p. 79; Jewitt et al., 2016, p. 2-3). In the context of historical video games, this multimodal character becomes particularly consequential, since the meaning such games produce is carried not primarily by explicit verbal narration but by form, by how space, objects, sound, and visual arrangement are organized (Chapman, 2016, p. 18; Kapell & Elliott, 2013, pp. 6–7). This is why historical representation in *ACR* cannot be examined through linguistic analysis alone, and why multimodal translation constitutes the first theoretical anchor of the *extralinguistic translation* framework proposed here. The analytical tool employed at this stage is the four-channel model originally proposed by Delabastita (1989, p. 101) and further used by Chiaro (2009, p. 143). The model categorizes audial and visual modes into four distinct channels, namely visual-verbal, visual-nonverbal, audial-verbal, and audial-nonverbal, and enables a systematic mapping of how each channel participates in constructing historical representation.

The second theoretical anchor is intersemiotic translation. Building on the multimodal organization examined in the first anchor-stage, this anchor addresses how the resulting configurations produce meaning through sign relations. The past is not found in the game; it is reorganized as representation through selection and design. This requires asking not only what is shown but how it functions within a sign order shaped by both in-game context and broader historical-cultural knowledge. Jakobson's foundational definition of intersemiotic translation as “an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems” (Jakobson, 2021, p.157) opened the conceptual possibility of examining meaning-making across semiotic systems as a translational act. Dusi (2015) extends this framework significantly, arguing that intersemiotic translation should not be reduced to simple “transcodification” but involves transformation, selection, and re-presentation across different substances of expression (pp. 182–184). This understanding is relevant to *ACR* because the game reconstitutes Ottoman Istanbul through audial and visual means rather than through a simple transfer of historical content. The analytical tool employed at this anchor-stage is Peirce's semiotic model as outlined by Chandler (2007). Peirce's triadic model of representamen, object, and interpretant (pp. 29–33) makes it possible to examine how meaning emerges through relations of icon (resemblance), index (direct or contextual connection), and symbol (convention), rather than treating representation as direct depiction (pp. 36–44).

Image 1. Analytic Framework of Extralinguistic Translation



The third theoretical anchor is rewriting. The meanings examined through the first two anchor-stages do not exist in a neutral space; they are shaped by the selective and interpretive choices that govern which historical elements are included, how they are organized, and what associations they activate. Lefevere (2017) conceptualizes rewriting as a selective and interpretive reconstruction that inevitably carries ideological orientations, and he explicitly extends this logic beyond literary translation by associating historiographies with rewriting on the grounds that both involve the selective, perspective-driven reconstruction of the past (pp. 6–7). Hermans (2022) reinforces this point by treating historiography as a form of historical

writing that cannot be reduced to neutral transmission, since it necessarily involves interpretive acts in the construction of the past (pp. 7–10). Historical video games operate according to the same logic: they do not neutrally reproduce the past but make choices about what to represent, how to represent it, and what to foreground (Kapell & Elliott, 2013, pp. 6–7; McCall, 2023, p. 11). If historiography is rewriting in Lefevere's (2017) sense, and if historical video games function as interactive historiographies (Chapman, 2016), then the representational choices that constitute *ACR's Ottoman Istanbul* can be read as a form of rewriting and therefore as a translational act with ideological implications. The analytical tool employed at this anchor-stage is Said's Orientalism as a critical lens. Said (2003) defines Orientalism as a structured “style of thought” grounded in an “ontological and epistemological distinction” between East and West, and as a “discourse” through which knowledge about the Orient is produced and regulated (p.2). This logic operates through what Said calls “imaginative geography” (2003, p. 49), where representation follows inherited narratives and typologies rather than historical complexity. Said identifies several recurring patterns through which Orientalist discourse operates in cultural production: the Orient is staged as spectacle, as a visually overwhelming environment that invites the gaze (Said, 2003, pp. 102–104); it is exoticized through the foregrounding of difference and cultural distance (Said, 2003, pp. 58–59); and it is eroticized through the association of Eastern bodies, spaces, and practices with sensuality (Said, 2003, pp. 186–190). Since *ACR* is produced within a Western production context while representing Ottoman Istanbul, these patterns constitute a relevant critical lens for evaluating whether the interpretants identified through the intersemiotic analysis intersect with Orientalist discourses as part of the rewriting process examined in this stage.

The three theoretical anchors thus form a sequential analytical logic in which multimodal translation, intersemiotic translation, and rewriting build on one another, each operationalized by means of a distinct analytical tool. The following methodology section specifies the analytical boundaries, selection criteria, and procedures through which this framework is applied to the corpus.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and in-depth analytical approach to examine how historical representation in *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* is constructed, how it produces meaning through sign relations, and how these meanings situate within the broader process of historical rewriting. The three stages of analysis are not independent procedures but form a sequential and building logic in which the multimodal profile established in the first stage provides the input for the semiotic analysis in the second, and the interpretants produced in the second stage provide the basis for the ideological evaluation in the third. Accordingly, the section addresses corpus construction and data collection, sampling and selection criteria, and the data analysis procedure used to examine the selected representational units.

The corpus of the study consists of historically coded representational units identified in *Assassin's Creed: Revelations*. These units are not treated as isolated visual details, but as elements that contribute to the construction of Ottoman Istanbul as a historical game environment. The game was played to completion on PC (Microsoft Windows), with a total gameplay duration of approximately twenty hours. Data were collected through screenshots and short video recordings taken during gameplay, with attention to recurrent visual, auditory, spatial, and cultural representations that contribute to historical meaning-making in *ACR*. The basic unit of data is a representational unit in the game world that can be identified independently of plot progression, such as an architectural structure, an object, an occupational figure, or a recurring public practice. Since these representations are not limited to single narrative sequences, they were examined as accessible and recurring components of the game environment rather than as scene-bound events.

To determine which historical representations would be examined, a functional categorization was developed on the basis of Chapman's (2016) concept of *lexia*, which refers to basic narratively charged units in games (p.119). This categorization was constructed deductively, drawing on the concept in question as a starting point, and subsequently operationalized in relation to the specific content of *ACR*'s Ottoman Istanbul environment. The categories were differentiated according to the type of semiotic resource through which historical meaning is primarily carried: spatial and architectural organization, material objects and figures, and observable cultural practices. Each category was defined to capture a distinct mode of historical meaning-making rather than to describe surface-level visual features. In other words, the categories do not refer to isolated visual details, but to multimodal units such as spaces, objects, figures, sounds, architectural forms, and cultural practices that carry historical and semiotic significance within the game environment. The categorization includes: (i) *Architectural and Urban Environment*, including market areas such as bazaars, public courtyards, mosques and other monumental buildings, street layouts, and public open spaces; (ii) *Material Culture*, including clothing and uniforms, headgear, armor and weapons, tools, and occupational figures, as these are primarily defined through material cues; and (iii) *Public Practices and Rituals*, including market and sales routines, observable daily-life practices in public spaces, and ritual indicators such as calls to prayer.

The examples were selected through purposive sampling because the aim of the study is not to generalize about all historical representations in *ACR*, but to examine representative cases that demonstrate how historical meaning is produced by multimodal signs. This selection was guided by four criteria: representativeness across the categories outlined above, recurrence within the game environment, accessibility across different stages of gameplay, and independence from a single plot sequence. Accordingly, the analysis focuses on five representational units, namely *the Bazaar*, *the Janissary Elite Guard*, *the Public Courtyard*, *the Belly Dancers*, and *the Minarets/Call to Prayer*. This selection makes it possible to examine historically coded units that operate as persistent components of the game's representation of Ottoman Istanbul.

In the first stage of analysis, historical representation in *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* is approached as a case of multimodal translation, since the historical meaning associated with Ottoman Istanbul is reorganized across modes and media within the digital game environment. The analysis examines how Ottoman Istanbul is represented as a historical setting through the coordinated use of audial and visual modes. The selected representations are analyzed through the four-channel model (Delabastita, 1989, p. 101; Chiaro, 2009, p. 143), which explains how audial and visual modes operate in multimodal products across four channels: visual-verbal, visual-nonverbal, audial-verbal, and audial-nonverbal. This model is of use for mapping the multimodal organization of representational units in multimodal products, such as films, television series, cartoons, and video games. For the analysis, each representational unit taken from *ACR* is positioned in relation to these four channels, and the active channels are recorded in data tables to outline the multimodal profile of each example. To systematize this mapping, the channels are marked through a three-level qualitative hierarchy: *Absent*, *Peripheral*, and *Dominant*. These labels indicate whether a channel contributes to the construction of historical representation or not. The outcome of this stage is to map how historical representation is organized across multimodal channels, establishing the groundwork for the semiotic analysis that follows in the second stage.

The second stage examines the semiotic functioning of the representational units whose multimodal organization was mapped in the first stage. Building on the conceptual clarification established in the theoretical framework, this stage treats the selected examples as units where historical meaning is reorganized through sign relations operating across audial and visual modes, or channels. The focus is on specifying how sign relations function in concrete in-game representations and what interpretants can be argued as an outcome. To this end, the analysis

draws on Peirce's (Chandler, 2007) distinction between icon, index, and symbol as the operative analytical tool.

The analysis in the second stage is conducted through a two-step procedure for each representational unit. The first step evaluates which sign mode is dominant: iconic, indexical, or symbolic. This evaluation draws on the modality profile established in the first stage and on the sign relation that most strongly drives meaning in the example. If the representamen bears a perceivable resemblance to its object through visible similarity or formal association, the example is treated as iconically dominant (Chandler, 2007, pp. 40–42). If contextual adjacency, spatial positioning, or pointing relations between the representamen and its object are prominent, indexical dominance is taken as the basis (Chandler, 2007, p. 42–44). If recognizability depends on conventional, culturally learned, or historically acquired knowledge rather than resemblance or contiguity, the example is approached through symbolic functioning (Chandler, 2007, pp. 38–39). The aim at this step is not to fix the representation into a single exclusive category but to reveal the possible channels of meaning that operate within the very same representation.

The second step proposes the interpretant that the relevant representation can produce, based on the dominant relation identified in the first step. The interpretant is not treated as a free or subjective reading but as a proposed meaning effect grounded in how the representation operates within the game and the sign relations it establishes with cultural realities outside it. Each interpretant is included in the analysis only if it is explicitly justified along one or both of the following axes:

(A) The in-game context supports the interpretant by grounding it in the representation's positioning within the scene, accompanying sounds, environmental arrangement, narrative situation, and its relation to other simultaneous representations.

(B) The cultural-historical context supports the interpretant through recognizable representations, associations established in social memory and historical knowledge, typologies, and nomenclatures.

For each interpretant, one axis of justification may be sufficient, though in some cases both could be used together. This justification process functions as a control mechanism that specifies the evidential basis of each interpretant and the conditions under which it remains valid, rather than leaving interpretation open-ended. The results are recorded in tables where each sign mode is addressed in a separate row and marked through the same three-level hierarchy used in the first stage: Absent, Peripheral, and Dominant. Absent indicates that no grounded meaning can be established through the relevant mode. Peripheral means that the mode in question operates at a secondary and supportive level. Dominant denotes that meaning production in the relevant mode carries a decisive and structuring role. Importantly, interpretants that cannot be substantiated are marked Absent and excluded from evaluation.

The third stage opens the findings of the first two stages to ideological evaluation, treating historical representation not as descriptive reproduction but as a process of rewriting that may be associated with specific discursive orientations. The ideological implications of the selected units are not assessed individually but discussed in the discussion section after their multimodal profiles and semiotic functions have been established, since Orientalist implications emerge not from isolated signs but from the cumulative effect of repeated visual, auditory, spatial, and cultural patterns across the game environment. Since Lefevere's (2017) rewriting framework and Hermans' (2022) emphasis on the constructed nature of historiography do not themselves provide concrete tools for applying ideological critique to individual representations, the evaluation proceeds from the interpretants proposed in the second stage, considered as a whole.

The critical lens applied at this stage is Said's (2003) Orientalism, which serves as an evaluative framework for assessing the ideological implications of the interpretants produced through the intersemiotic analysis. The focus is on three discursive patterns through which Orientalist representation operates: the staging of the Orient as spectacle (Said, 2003, pp. 102–104), its construction as a foreign and distant world marked by strangeness and difference (exoticization) (Said, 2003, pp. 58–59), and its association with licentious sexuality and fantasy (eroticization) (Said, 2003, pp. 186–190). For each pattern, the interpretants are evaluated in terms of whether ACR's construction of Ottoman Istanbul activates, reinforces, subverts, or complicates these orientations. This evaluation is grounded in the recognition that historical games actively select and foreground what they show rather than reproducing the past naturally (Chapman, 2016, p. 18; Kapell & Elliott, 2013, pp. 6–7; McCall, 2023, p. 11). The fact that other representational choices were available makes the selectivity of ACR's historical rewriting analytically significant.

The aim of this stage is not to label the game as Orientalist or to pass judgment on individual costumes, objects, or spaces in isolation. Rather, the analysis asks whether the interpretants produced across the selected units, when read together, intersect with Orientalist discursive patterns within a process of historically inflected rewriting. Since the corpus is limited to five purposively selected representational units, the findings do not claim to characterize the game as Orientalist. What they do is reveal whether and how historical meaning in ACR is ideologically steered through recurring representational preferences, and in doing so, they frame historical representation as an *extralinguistic translation* process that operates not as neutral re-presentation but as selective and ideologically inflected reconstitution of the past.

4. Analysis

Focusing on a limited number of representational units that contribute to the construction of historical atmosphere in the game, the analysis aims to make visible the multimodal and semiotic resources through which this atmosphere is produced, as well as the ideological implications carried by these units.

The analysis proceeds through the sequential application of the first and second analytical stages defined in the Methodology section. In the first stage, each representational unit is examined in terms of multimodality, describing how it is constructed through visual-verbal, visual-nonverbal, audial-verbal, and audial-nonverbal channels. In the second stage, the same units are treated as signs, and the icon, index, and symbol relations they establish with their objects, as well as the interpretants producible through these relations, are formulated with justification. The third analytical stage, which evaluates these findings as a whole through the critical lens of Orientalism, is carried out in the Discussion section.

Example 1. The Bazaar (Architectural and Urban Environment)

(i) Multimodal Profile

The Bazaar functions as an enclosed interior space whose historical atmosphere is built through the coordinated use of architectural form and ambient sound.

Table 1. Multimodal Profile - The Bazaar

Channel	Level
Visual-Verbal	Absent
Visual-Non-verbal	Dominant
Audial-Verbal	Dominant
Audial-Non-verbal	Dominant

In multimodal terms, the Bazaar is built primarily through the **visual-nonverbal** channel. Stone textures, domes and arches, ornamented columns, interior light, stall layouts, rugs, and spice sacks establish the space as “historical” without any need for written or spoken explanation.

This visual construction is reinforced by **audial-nonverbal** cues. Crowd murmur, footsteps, ambient echo, and continuous movement make the Bazaar feel like a lived public space rather than a static backdrop. The **audial-verbal** channel is also active through vendors’ calls and short Turkish utterances that evoke everyday buyer–seller exchange, adding social specificity beyond generic noise. By contrast, the **visual-verbal** channel is excluded, since interface text and in-game written prompts fall outside the scope of analysis.

Overall, the Bazaar provides a dense multimodal profile in which architecture and sound jointly produce historical atmosphere. Within the first stage, this example shows how a historical setting can be made perceptible through multimodal organization, without relying on interlingual narration to explain the past.

(ii) Semiotic Reading

The second stage approaches the Bazaar as a spatial ensemble in which audial and visual components operate together to produce meaning, rather than as a single architectural detail or decorative backdrop. The analysis identifies the sign relations through which the space becomes recognizable and formulates the interpretants that can be grounded on that basis.

Table 2. Semiotic Reading – The Bazaar

Relation Type	Level	Interpretant	Justification (A/B)
Icon	Dominant	This setting is an enclosed bazaar/marketplace.	(A/B) Domes, arches, columns, enclosed circulation, and stall layouts make the “covered bazaar” typology recognizable through resemblance.
Index	Peripheral	This space functions as a lively site of trade and encounter.	(A) Vendors’ calls, background crowd noise, intelligible snippets of Turkish, footsteps, and reverberation point to the space’s function “here and now.”
Symbol	Peripheral	The space is coded as a public commercial setting belonging to Ottoman Istanbul.	(B) Rugs, sacks of spices, ornamental detailing, and display styles create a conventional association with widely shared Ottoman/Istanbul representations in cultural memory.

The table above shows that the dominant functioning in the market area is iconic, and that visual elements such as the interior architecture, domes, arched passages, and stall layout make the Bazaar recognizable through resemblance. The accompanying crowd acoustics, vendors’ calls, and environmental sounds support the Bazaar’s indexical functioning as a lively space of trade and encounter.

Readings at the symbolic level, in turn, rely on a culturally learned repertoire of associations related to Istanbul/Ottoman public life, so they do not rest on direct labeling, and they display a rationale-dependent form that may vary from one example to another. This result points out that the Bazaar representation is not reduced to a single relation type, and that secondary modes of functioning can complete meaning production alongside the dominant one.

Example 2. Janissary Elite Guard (Material Culture)

(i) Multimodal Profile

This example is examined under Material Culture category and focuses on how the Janissary Elite Guard is made visible and recognizable within the game's historical atmosphere.

Table 3. Multimodal Profile – Janissary Elite Guard

Channel	Level
Visual-Verbal	Absent
Visual-Non-verbal	Dominant
Audial-Verbal	Peripheral
Audial-Non-verbal	Absent

In this example, the visual-verbal channel is not active: there is no diegetic written label or on-screen textual identifier attached to the figure during moment-to-moment gameplay. Although the guard can be described in non-diegetic menu panels, such material is excluded from the analysis because the focus is limited to in-world multimodal construction. The main carrier of recognizability is the visual-nonverbal channel. Headgear and mask form, costume design, equipment layout, and weapon configuration create a coherent visual repertoire that marks the character as an elite military figure without requiring explicit naming. Status and function are communicated through silhouette, gear, and visual differentiation from ordinary soldiers. The audial-verbal channel is present but secondary. Short utterances and combat exclamations do not identify the figure historically. Instead, they reinforce authority and threat during confrontation. The audial-nonverbal channel does not contribute in a figure-specific way in this example, since environmental sound remains background and does not generate a distinctive meaning tied to the guard. Overall, the Janissary Elite Guard is constructed primarily through visual dominance, while limited audial-verbal reinforcement supports the figure's threat profile in combat. The historical identity of the guard is therefore anchored less in explicit naming than in a multimodal profile where visual coding carries the representational weight.

(ii) Semiotic Reading

The second analysis conducted for this representational unit examines through which semiotic relations the Janissary elite-guard figure is made meaningful in the game. The aim here is not to discuss the figure's historical accuracy, but to show through which sign relations the game renders this figure recognizable, threatening, and functional as a representational unit. Accordingly, the analysis proceeds within the framework of icon, index, and symbol relations by considering the figure's visual design, spatial context, and in-game function together.

Table 4. Semiotic Reading – Janissary Elite Guard

Relation Type	Level	Interpretant	Justification (A/B)
Icon	Peripheral	This figure evokes a sense of an elite military guard.	(A) The helmet/mask form, ornamented armor, dual-sword use, and the figure's distinctive imposing silhouette make the "elite guard" recognizable through visual resemblance, but since the design does not fully overlap with historical Janissary imagery, the iconic relation does not operate at a dominant level.
Index	Dominant	This figure points to high threat and authority.	(A) The figure's difficulty to defeat, its positioning as an elite enemy, and its appearance in specific areas and critical missions link it causally to power and danger.
Symbol	Dominant	This figure evokes an image of a mysterious and closed military structure.	(A) The use of a mask and the silent, disciplined stance, combined with the game's narratives of hidden organization, draw on a culturally

Relation Type	Level	Interpretant	Justification (A/B)
			established military-mystery template.

When these semiotic relations are considered together, meaning production around the Janissary elite-guard figure concentrates on indexical functioning. The figure's difficulty to defeat, its positioning as a high-level threat in combat, and its appearance in critical areas link it directly to authority and danger, establishing the basis for the "authority and danger" interpretant. The visual design supports this reading through formal cues that activate an "elite guard" schema, and recognizability is achieved through a functional figurative package. At the symbolic level, framing the figure as "Janissary Elite Guard" sets a conventional frame that triggers the player's prior knowledge and ties the indexical threat to an Ottoman military identity. This structure shows that the figure is organized in the game as a representational unit shaped around the threat-authority function and the principle of recognizability, not as a detailed reproduction of a historical military unit.

Example 3. Public Courtyard (Architectural and Urban Environment)

(i) Multimodal Profile

This example is examined under the Architectural and Urban Environment category and aims to show how Istanbul's public spaces are constructed as an in-game environment.

Table 5. Multimodal Profile – Public Courtyard

Channel	Level
Visual-Verbal	Absent
Visual-Non-verbal	Dominant
Audial-Verbal	Peripheral
Audial-Non-verbal	Peripheral

In this example, the visual-verbal channel is absent, as there is no in-world written label or textual indicator related to the courtyard. On the other hand, the visual-nonverbal channel is dominant. A domed fountain within a stone-paved courtyard, surrounding stone building textures, arched window openings, and façade details such as motifs and grille-like elements establish the courtyard as a recognizable type of public space without requiring a verbal explanation. The crowd and variations in clothing, including veiled female figures, colorful garments, and clothing on some male figures that may give an impression of foreignness, complete this architectural frame as a social environment. The audial-verbal channel operates at a peripheral level. Short fragments of speech can be heard in the background, supporting the impression that the courtyard functions as a space of everyday encounter and movement. Finally, the audial-nonverbal channel likewise remains peripheral. Crowd murmur and environmental sounds reinforce the sense of public density and continuity established by the visual construction.

The courtyard example shows how a public space can be made historically readable through visual cues, with sound functioning as a supporting layer rather than a primary carrier. The architectural frame stays at the center, and the crowd presence helps fix the space as public and lived-in environment. The sound layer strengthens the sense of continuity without shifting attention away from the visual setup.

(ii) Semiotic Reading

Building on the multimodal profile established above, this stage identifies the sign relations through which the courtyard becomes meaningful as a historical public space.

Table 6. Semiotic Reading – Public Courtyard

Relation Type	Level	Interpretant	Justification (A/B)
Icon	Dominant	This setting is a public courtyard belonging to Ottoman Istanbul.	(A/B) The domed fountain, arched structural forms, stone paving, arcaded façades, and architectural ornamentation establish a visual resemblance to a historical courtyard typology.
Index	Dominant	This setting is a lively public area where everyday movement and encounters take place.	(A) The figures' movement in the courtyard, audible speech fragments, and crowd murmur indicate that the setting functions as an in-world public-use area.
Symbol	Peripheral	The setting is coded as a representational area associated with "Ottoman public life."	(B) The fountain form, window grilles, architectural motifs, and the figures' clothing styles evoke a culturally learned set of associations with Ottoman public-space imagery

This analysis shows that the courtyard setting produces meaning primarily through iconic and indexical relations. While the architectural structure and spatial arrangement establish historical recognizability through visual resemblance, the presence of figures and environmental sounds reinforce the perception of the setting as a lived public environment. Symbolic readings operate through the setting's cultural associative field and remain context sensitive.

Example 4. Belly Dancers (Material Culture)

(i) Multimodal Profile

This example is selected to analyze how a historical and cultural figuration is organized multimodally in the game environment through a group of dancer non-player characters (NPCs) encountered inside the palace. The analysis draws on the NPC arrangement that the player encounters through exploration and that remains open to interaction during gameplay rather than on a specific narrative scene. The belly dancer figures are positioned, in this context, as part of the palace's environmental design.

Table 7. Multimodal Profile – Belly Dancers

Channel	Level
Visual-Verbal	Absent
Visual-Non-verbal	Dominant
Audial-Verbal	Peripheral
Audial-Non-verbal	Absent

As for the multimodal profile of this example, it is constructed mainly through the visual-nonverbal channel. The dancers' colorful and attention-grabbing costumes, bodily movements, and group positioning make the figures easy to distinguish in the environment. In the visual-verbal channel, there is no written label or explanatory text.

Moreover, there are short spoken expressions accompanying the belly dancers. These utterances, however, do not function as a primary channel that carries the meaning of the example, but as an environmental element that supports the visual arrangement. In the audial-nonverbal channel, no independent sound use that directly carries the example is observed.

In conclusion, this example shows that the game's historical atmosphere can be reinforced through figurative arrangements based on bodily performance, costume design, and group positioning, alongside architectural and decorative elements. The belly dancers generate

rapid recognizability and strong cultural connotations through the visual–nonverbal channel without requiring any written or explanatory text.

Colorful costumes, bodily movement, and group composition also make the figures distinct and meaning bearing within the palace environment, while the short-spoken expressions function as a supporting auditory layer that aligns with the visual construction rather than carrying an independent narrative. In this respect, the example makes clear that historical representation is not limited to linguistic content but can also operate effectively through figurative elements within a multimodal setup that supports the impression of an authentic in-world environment.

(ii) Semiotic Reading

The second analysis for this representational unit aims to show how the dancer figures are made recognizable in the game and through which semiotic relations this recognizability is produced.

Table 8. Semiotic Reading – Belly Dancers

Relation Type	Level	Interpretant	Justification (A/B)
Icon	Dominant	These figures are “Oriental dancers” situated within a palace context.	(A/B) Open bodily movements, flowing costumes, rhythmic poses, and ornamentation establish a recognizable figure type through visual resemblance.
Index	Peripheral	These figures index a palace-based practice of entertainment and leisure.	(A) The figures’ placement around the Topkapi Palace environment and their clustering in specific areas link them to a specific spatial and social context.
Symbol	Peripheral	These figures evoke an image of entertainment perceived as “specific to the East.”	(B) The belly dancer figure relies on a culturally established representational pattern rather than a historical necessity.

As a result, this example shows that the belly dancer figures rely primarily on an iconic relation. Bodily movement, costume design, and group positioning establish an “Oriental entertainment” figure rapidly and with low ambiguity. Spatial placement reinforces this reading at an indexical level by linking the figures to a palace-based practice of leisure and entertainment. In this way, they cease to function as random NPC decoration and become attached to a specific context of social use. At the symbolic level, since the figures are not coded through an explicit cultural explanation in the game, their meaning is produced largely through the viewer’s prior knowledge and widely circulating representational patterns. This layered functioning shows that the dancer figures are structured less as a one-to-one reproduction of a historical practice and more as a representational unit that intensifies the cultural atmosphere of the palace setting while also being tied to a specific in-game function such as distraction and blending into the crowd.

Example 5. Minarets and the Call to Prayer (Architectural and Urban Environment / Public Practices and Rituals)

(i) Multimodal Profile

The fifth representational unit examines how the urban skyline of Ottoman Istanbul is constructed in ACR. The unit of analysis is not a single building but the recurring minaret profiles visible in panoramic views, elevated vantage points, and cinematic transitions, together with the call to prayer that recurrently accompanies these visual configurations. These architectural and auditory elements together frame the urban environment within a historical and cultural register.

Table 9. Multimodal Profile – Minarets and Call to Prayer

Channel	Level
Visual-Verbal	Absent
Visual-Non-verbal	Dominant
Audial-Verbal	Absent
Audial-Non-verbal	Peripheral

The dominant channel in this example is visual-nonverbal. The repeating minaret forms in the skyline make the landscape readable as historical Istanbul through continuity and repetition across the city view rather than through a single isolated structure. The visual-verbal channel is absent, as no in-game written label or textual indicator anchors the skyline as a named historical reference. The audial-verbal channel carries a peripheral role: the call to prayer, rendered in Arabic, is audible at recurring intervals across the game environment. While it does not function as dialogue or explicit narration, it operates as a culturally coded vocal marker that reinforces the historical and spatial framing established by the visual channel. The audial-nonverbal channel is also peripheral, with ambient sounds such as crowd noise and wind supporting the atmospheric construction of the urban environment without carrying primary representational weight. Taken together, this example demonstrates that the recognizability of the historical environment is built on the visual continuity of architectural motifs, with the auditory layer functioning not merely as atmospheric reinforcement but as a culturally significant coding device that extends the representational reach of the example into the domain of public practice.

(ii) Semiotic Reading

The semiotic analysis of this unit examines how the minarets stabilize Istanbul's historical and cultural identity at a spatial level through sign relations rather than as isolated architectural elements.

Table 10. Semiotic Reading – Minarets in the Urban Skyline

Relation Type	Level	Interpretant	Justification (A/B)
Icon	Dominant	Islamic / Ottoman urban skyline	(A/B) The minarets' slender vertical form and recurring silhouette produce a recognizable city image associated with Islamic architecture through visual resemblance.
Index	Peripheral	Presence of religious practices	(A) The minarets' placement alongside mosque structures, together with the occasional call-to-prayer-like vocal ambience, indirectly points to the space's religious function.
Symbol	Peripheral	Ottoman-Islamic identity	(B) The minaret is an architectural code conventionally associated with Ottoman Istanbul on the basis of historical and cultural knowledge; the recurrent call to prayer similarly operates as a culturally learned auditory marker.

This analysis shows that the minarets' historical recognizability in the game is established primarily through visual resemblance, enabling Istanbul to be read as an "Ottoman-Islamic" space through the recurring vertical forms in the city skyline. Contextual placement and occasional accompanying auditory elements, such as call to prayer, broaden the meaning potential of this visual construction. The dominant relation that carries the representation,

however, remains concentrated at the level of iconicity. In this way, the minarets function not merely as an architectural detail in the game, but as a marker that visually stabilizes urban identity.

5. Discussion

This section focuses on the study's third research question and discusses what ideological readings historical representation in *Assassin's Creed: Revelations* enables through translation beyond language, conceptualized in this study as *extralinguistic translation*. The aim is to reveal what overall pattern becomes visible when the multimodal profiles and the interpretants produced in the preceding analysis are read together. It does not re-examine each interpretant for each example in the Analysis section. In this stage, rewriting in Lefevere's (2017) sense is treated as a translational dimension of historical representation offered in ACR, because the past is reorganized through selection and rearticulation rather than simply transmitted. Accordingly, the focus here is not on isolated details but on how the examples, once combined, steer the general orientation of the historical image.

The Bazaar and the Courtyard, in this regard, clearly show how ACR puts Istanbul on the 'stage' through the dense use of aural and visual resources. When the interior space of the bazaar is combined with layered domes, arched passages, colorful fabrics, and crowd sounds, it offers the player a navigable historical stage. The Public Courtyard, in turn, extends this stage into open space by incorporating everyday life through a domed fountain, stone paving, crowd murmur, and ambient sound. This density constructs history not only as something to be referenced, but also as a spectacle to be seen and experienced by the player. Said states that "the Orient is the stage on which the whole East is confined" (2003, p. 63), and that a broad cultural repertoire is placed on this stage. This does not suggest that the Bazaar and the Courtyard are simply Orientalist in themselves, yet their recurrence, colorful and polyphonic visual/aural density, and strong spatial framing turn Istanbul into a spectatorial field for the Western player. In this sense, ACR rewrites the past in Lefevere's (2017) sense; in doing so, however, it also moves close to the Orientalist model of spectacle in which the East is staged for viewing.

The *Janissary Elite Guard* armor and masks operate as iconic and indexical signs recalling the military power of the Ottoman army. Yet, when this visual construction is combined with the figure's threatening function in gameplay, it may also activate a representational memory in which the Islamic and Ottoman East is associated with fear, danger, and military pressure. Said notes that, for Europe, Islam was historically perceived through "fear and a kind of awe" and came to symbolize "terror, devastation, the demonic, hordes of hated barbarians" (2003, p. 59). He also states that the "Ottoman peril" represented "a constant danger" for European Christian civilization (Said, 2003, p. 59), and later adds that Islam, "in either its Arab, Ottoman, or North African and Spanish form," had "dominated or effectively threatened European Christianity" (Said, 2003, p. 74). In this context, the Janissary representation carries Orientalist associations through its masked visual design, elite enemy status, and threat-based gameplay function, connecting Ottoman military identity with a longer representational pattern in which the East becomes readable through fear, danger, and visible difference.

The *Belly Dancers*, by contrast, produce a more explicit relation with exoticization and eroticization. Through colorful costumes, rhythmic movement, bodily display, and relative silence, they turn the Eastern female body into a stylized object of visual attention. Said notes that the Orient was imagined as a place of "romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (2003, p. 1), and later became associated with "the exotic, the mysterious, the profound" (2003, p. 51). The *Belly Dancer* figure is especially relevant to Said's discussion of *Kuchuk Hanem*, whom he describes as "a dancer and courtesan" and whose representation depends on Flaubert's authority to speak for her rather than her own voice (Said, 2003, p. 186). Within ACR, the dancers are similarly positioned less as historically explained

subjects than as visually available figures that intensify the palace atmosphere through sensual movement, costume, and spectacle. This eroticized exoticism in turn contributes to a selective rewriting in which Ottoman Istanbul becomes legible through recognizable signs of difference, sensuality, and visual display.

The *Minarets/Call to Prayer* unit extends this exotic coding at the level of urban space and sound. The recurring minaret forms and the call to prayer transform the skyline of Istanbul into a recognizable Islamic visual-auditory marker. This marker gives the player an immediate image of an “Ottoman-Islamic city,” but it also stabilizes the city through a limited set of highly recognizable religious signs. The repeated presence of minarets and the call to prayer foregrounds exoticization by making Ottoman Istanbul readable through otherness and culturally marked sound. Said’s reference to the Orient’s “strangeness,” “difference,” and “exotic sensuousness” (2003, p. 72) is relevant here because the game’s urban soundscape and skyline, while marking a historical city, produce a sensory image of the East as religiously and culturally distinct. Therefore, the minaret and call to prayer combination functions as a recurring visual-auditory code that supports the game’s rewriting of Istanbul as an immersive but selectively framed Oriental space.

Considering these five examples together reveals a distinctive pattern of representation. The dense spectacle of the Bazaar and the Courtyard, the fear-oriented military coding of the Janissary Elite Guard, the eroticized exoticism of the Belly Dancers, and the religious soundscape produced through the Minarets/Call to Prayer collectively organize Ottoman Istanbul through distance, difference, sensuality, and visual-audial display. This pattern corresponds to “imaginative geography” since the city is made legible through recurring signs that dramatize the distance and difference between what is familiar and what is placed as distant (Said, 2003, p. 55). The ideological reading, therefore, does not emerge from treating the selected units as Orientalist categories in advance, but from the cumulative effect produced by their multimodal and semiotic functioning. In this sense, *ACR*’s representation of Ottoman Istanbul supports a selective visual-audial rewriting of the past, in which spectacle, exoticization, and eroticization become available as interpretive patterns.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the historical representation of Ottoman Istanbul in *Assassin’s Creed: Revelations* through the lens of *extralinguistic translation*, a concept that moves translation beyond interlingual transfer and into the realm of multimodal, intersemiotic, and ideological meaning-making. By operationalizing this concept through a three-stage analytical framework, namely multimodal translation, intersemiotic translation, and rewriting, the study demonstrated how historical meaning is reorganized through audial and visual modes, how sign relations are activated within these multimodal units, and how these meanings may also produce ideological associations. The main argument of the study is that history can be translated beyond words, and that historical video games can be read from a translational perspective when the concept of translation is moved beyond an exclusively interlingual focus.

The first and second research questions were addressed through the Analysis section. In the first stage, the study examined how the Ottoman past in *ACR* is constructed multimodally through the coordination of visual-verbal, visual-nonverbal, audial-verbal, and audial-nonverbal channels. This stage showed that the game’s historical environment is not built through verbal explanation alone, but through the coordinated use of architecture, figures, objects, sound, movement, and recurring visual-audial cues. In the second stage, the same representational units were examined through Peirce’s icon, index, and symbol relations, and the interpretants produced through these relations were systematically justified. These two stages formed the descriptive and analytical basis of the study by showing how individual units such as *the Bazaar*, *the Public Courtyard*, *the Janissary Elite Guard*, *the Belly Dancers*, and *the Minarets/Call to Prayer* are translated into the game environment and what meaning

associations they produce.

The third research question was addressed in the Discussion section, where the multimodal profiles and interpretants were read together within the framework of rewriting and Orientalism. This stage showed that the selected units do not produce ideological meaning in isolation. Instead, their combined functioning produces a broader pattern of representation. Together, the units frame Ottoman Istanbul as a staged historical space. This overall framing resonates with Said's (2003) notion of 'imaginative geography' (p. 49), in which difference is dramatized through representational form. In this regard, *ACR*'s Ottoman Istanbul is not simply reproduced as a historical setting but is selectively rewritten as an immersive and recognizable Oriental space. The game is not reducible to Orientalism as a whole. The *extralinguistic translation* of the Ottoman past nonetheless enables Orientalist interpretive patterns through spectacle, exoticization, and, where relevant, eroticization.

The main contribution of the study to Translation Studies lies in its response to the broader call to move beyond language-centered models of translation. By bringing together multimodal translation, intersemiotic translation, and rewriting, the study proposes an integrated and interdisciplinary way of examining video games as translation-related objects. It shows that translation in digital games does not have to be limited to localization, subtitles, dubbing, interface texts, or other verbal assets. Historical meaning may also be translated by means of audial and visual signs, via the organization of atmosphere, with the construction of recognizable figures and objects, and through the ideological associations produced by these signs. In this respect, it demonstrates that video games can be analyzed not only as products to be localized, but also as multimodal environments where history, culture, and ideology are translated beyond language.

The scope of the study was deliberately limited in order to allow for this in-depth analysis. Only five representational units were examined, and the focus was confined to the Istanbul episodes of *ACR*. This purposive sampling made it possible to examine how meaning is produced in concrete examples, but the findings do not claim to generalize to all historical games or even to all parts of *ACR*. Moreover, the ideological readings proposed here emerge from the interaction of the selected units and from the way their multimodal profiles and semiotic interpretants are brought together in the Discussion. A broader examination of further units within *ACR* might strengthen this pattern, while other historical games may produce different configurations of visual-audial rewriting. The study also did not consider player reception, game mechanics or the production side of game development, which could further illuminate how historical meaning is negotiated.

Future research can develop the framework offered in this study in several directions. For example, comparative studies may apply it to different cultural and historical settings in order to test how visual-audial rewriting operates across products. Reception-oriented studies could examine how players interpret these representations and whether the ideological readings identified in textual analysis are confirmed, resisted, or transformed by player experience. Further studies may also extend the framework to other digital and transmedia forms, where historical and cultural memory is reorganized across images, sounds, spaces, and interactive structures. Such work would help expand the place of multimodal, intersemiotic, and ideological analysis within Translation Studies and further support the claim that translation beyond language is a productive field of inquiry.

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