

# *Women Translators of Religious Texts*

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# Translation and religion

Sacred texts, or holy texts, have traditionally embodied core values of particular cultures, guiding beliefs and behavior and influencing not only the lives of isolated individuals but also of very large numbers of people, shaping the history of entire nations and continents, redrawing boundaries of states, and influencing cultural production.

‘religious’ (of, relating to, pertaining to, or devoted to religious beliefs or observances; Latin etymology, *religio*, from *religare*, which means ‘linking’ or ‘binding fast’ BUT, according to Cicero, from *relegere*, ‘read again’) / ‘sacred’ or ‘holy’

The biblical story of the tower of Babel, in the Book of Genesis 11:1-9

Translation it is that openeth the window, to let in the light; that breaketh the shell, that we may eat the kernel; that putteth aside the curtain, that we may look into the most holy place; that removeth the cover of the well, that we may come by the water.

“The Translators to the Reader”, preface of the King James Bible (1611, reproduced in Burke 2009: 224)

The translation of sacred texts raises a number of very sensitive issues; it questions the nature of translation itself, and even its possibility.

According to Jean-René Ladmiral (1990: 122), biblical translation—and perhaps, by extension, the translation of holy texts from all religions—functions as a paradigm for translation in general.

Sacred text translation has accompanied the development of reflection on translation throughout the ages, challenging scholars and practitioners.

# *Women, translation, religion*

Who translates religious and, especially, sacred texts? Why? For whom?

While translation has often been associated with the feminine (Chamberlain 1988), it appears that, throughout the centuries, very few women have translated within the realm of the holy. Why? Which are the implications?

# Themes

- why didn't / do / don't (more) women translate or retranslate religious and, especially, sacred texts?
- experiences of translation, collaborative translation, editing, publication, teaching, researching
- challenges and opportunities
- translation strategies (including the question of language)
- experiences translating texts from different religions and working in different parts of the world and periods
- minds, bodies, texts
- the reception of translations by women
- translations by women and the advent of contemporary media

# Contributions

- Les femmes traductrices des textes religieux dans le christianisme orthodoxe et leur identité féminine
- “An eloquent woman is never chaste” or the Sapphic voice of Mary Sidney, Countess of Pembroke as psalmist
- Unveiling the uncharted translatorial experience of female Qur’an translators in Turkey
- Anti-essentialism in Qur’an translation
- Non-feminist women translators of the Bible: Swedish translator Viveka Heyman as a case in point
- Significance of women’s involvement in (re-)translating of the Chinese Bible
- Natalie Duddington’s religious translations from Russian: Faith in translation

- Female translators and paratextual authority: the controlling frameworks of religious translation
- Unmuting and reinterpreting the *Mahabharata* through feminist translation in *The Palace of Illusions* (2008)
- Julian of Norwich: A female translator of the divine
- Religious space as a stage for love: Translating Sikh scripture as a woman
- “One God equally alive under *any* name”: Wanda Dynowska-Umadevi and spirituality in translation between India and Poland
- Queen Katherine Parr as a translation bell-wether: The instances of Mary and Elizabeth Tudor
- Traduire Andal – retracer la féminité indienne à travers le prisme contemporain féminin