



Bible Translation and Feminism in Burkina Faso: Some Reflections Drawn from the Dioula and Mooré Biblical Versions

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Abstract - This paper considers translation as the reflection of norms, and culture as a man-dominated frame in which occur daily interactions. Hence, any culture-based translation process in a man-dominated frame tends to replicate or deepen women's inferior image. Taking for granted women's inferiority in Burkinabe patriarchal society, this paper examines the degree in which the existing state of women's inferiority has been transferred into Bible translation. The analysis shows that the mapping of Bible translation into culture by the use of dynamic /functional equivalence maintains and sometimes widens existing biblical inequalities between men and women. It reveals that the feminist trend has had no positive effect on Bible translation in that country. The methodology used is analytical and critical. Verses dealing with the relationship between men and women were selected in French, used as a source text in most Bible translations in Burkina Faso, and Mooré and Dioula, two Burkina languages. The analysis was made through a linguistic comparison of the selected verses to show how the differences between men and women were deepened in the Mossi and Dioula versions as compared to French. Translation shows a reflection of some traditions of Burkina Faso, thus creating a vicious circle for the feminist fight in this country.

Keywords: Translation - Bible - Feminism - Culture - Dioula - Mooré

Résumé - Cet article considère la traduction comme le reflet des normes dans une société donnée, et la culture comme un cadre dominé par le genre masculin dans lequel ont lieu les interactions de tous les jours. Ainsi, tout procédé de traduction basé sur la culture cible dans un contexte dominé par le genre masculin tend à reproduire ou à empirer l'image inférieure de la femme. En partant du constat que la femme est inférieure à l'homme dans la société patriarcale du Burkina Faso, cet article examine comment cet état d'infériorité a été transféré dans les traductions bibliques. L'analyse démontre que le fait d'inscrire les traductions bibliques dans un cadre culturel, à travers l'équivalence dynamique, maintient et quelquefois renforce les inégalités déjà existantes dans la Bible entre les hommes et les femmes. Le mouvement féministe n'a pas eu d'effet positif sur les traductions bibliques au Burkina Faso. La méthodologie utilisée est analytique et critique. Des versets traitant des rapports entre les hommes et les femmes ont été sélectionnés en Français, utilisé comme langue source dans plusieurs projets de traduction biblique au Burkina Faso, mais également en mooré et en dioula, deux langues du Burkina Faso. Une analyse comparative des versets sélectionnés démontre comment les différences entre les hommes et les femmes ont été maintenues ou renforcées dans les versions Mooré et dioula par rapport au français. La traduction a reflété certaines traditions du Burkina, créant un cercle vicieux qui freine la lutte des féministes dans ce pays.

Mots clés : Traduction - Bible - Féminisme - Culture - Mooré - Dioula

1. Introduction

Bible translation has always been a passionate issue in that it brought about many contradictory approaches on what translation should be. From Cicero to Saint Jerome, there have been a lot of approaches whose criticism gave way to

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the formulation of further translation techniques and theories. Modern theories in the field of Bible translation include the "dynamic equivalence" (Nida 1964, 1998) which advocates the use of culture to produce an accepted text in the target audience. Translation reflects the cultural norms of any society. The very existence of a translated text in a society gives clues on the norms in that society (Tourey 1995). Preliminary norms act on the choice of texts to be translated while operational norms impact the matrix of the text. In Burkina Faso, for instance, which is mostly a patriarchal society, culture is a male - dominated frame. Leaning on such a frame to produce an acceptable version to the target audience implies reproducing or widening inequalities between men and women.

Feminism advocates equality between men and women in society. The "male orientation", "male emphasis" or "patriarchal concerns" in Bible translation were addressed by authors such as Blomberg (2005), Bullard (1987), Hess (2005) and Bock (2005), which means that there has been a change of attitude towards the biblical language in favor of feminist actions throughout the world. The existence of this debate in such a sensitive field as Bible translation is evidence of the evolution of mentalities in those parts of the world.

This paper intends to show whether the use of culture through dynamic equivalence worsens women's plight in Bible translations in Burkina Faso. The following research questions will be dealt with:

Did the feminist movement throughout the world have an impact on Bible translation in Burkina Faso regarding Bible translation?
Did the strategies used by Bible translators in Mooré and Dioula, especially dynamic equivalence, reflect the feminist trend or do they widen inequalities between men and women?

The study targets the following objectives:

- To show that the influence of norms and culture in translation strategies widen the inequalities between men and women in societies like Burkina Faso's where all the power is seemingly in the hands of men ;
- To show that the feminist movement has had no impact on Bible translation in Burkina Faso regarding the use of dynamic equivalence as a translation strategy.

The current study is built around the following hypotheses:

The recourse to culture to produce a culturally-accepted translation in Burkina widens inequalities between men and women.

Due to the relative similarities between Semitic cultures and the African ones, translators did not encounter many difficulties in translating verses advocating the subordination of women to men.



2. Methodology

The methodology is analytical and critical. We rely on the literature available on biblical studies (Maly 1970, Blenkinsopp 1970, Kugelmann 1970), translation studies (Toury 1995, Nord 1997, Nord 1991, Chesterman 1993, Nida 1964) and feminist actions on Bible translation (Bloomberg 2005, Bullard 1987, Hess 2005, Bock 2005) to build the analysis. Norms and culture in translation (Toury 1995), the dynamic equivalence (Nida 1964), the skopos theory (Nord 1991) together constitute the theoretical framework of the current study and main themes on translation we shall discuss. A textual comparison of some verses about women conditions translated into two Burkina languages, Mooré and Dioula, is also presented to complete the analysis. These verses were selected among those establishing a kind of hierarchy between men and women or just referring to the relationships between them. The French version used in this study is TOB (*traduction oecuménique de la Bible*) translated and published in 1988 by *Alliance Biblique Universelle*. The Mooré version used is *Sebr Sôngo* translated in 1998 by *Alliance Biblique Universelle* and the Dioula version, *Ala ka Kuma*, produced in 2008 by *Alliance Biblique du Burkina Faso*.

A documentary review introduces the analysis, followed by a comparison of some biblical verses in Mooré and Dioula to French (and sometimes Greek) and then a discussion is provided before some concluding remarks.

3. Theoretical Review

3.1. Norms and culture in translation

Every human activity is regulated by norms which seem to be closely related to culture defined by Nord (1997: 33) as “whatever one has to know, master or feel in order to judge whether or not a particular form of behavior shown by members of a community in their various roles conforms to general expectations and in order to behave in this community in accordance with general expectations unless one is prepared to bear the consequences of unaccepted behavior.” For Vermeer referred to by Nord (1997), special emphasis must be put on the dynamic quality of culture in that it focuses on human action and behavior. For him, culture is “the entire setting of norms and conventions an individual as a member of his society must know in order to be ‘like everybody’ - or to be able to be different from everybody” (Vermeer 1987: 28) quoted by Nord (1997: 33).

Norms can be defined as “the social reality” of “correctness notions” (Chesterman 1993: 5). For Nord (1991) they are different from conventions which are less binding. They govern any human activity and translation is no exception.



However, norms need to be validated. Some are validated by norm authority and others by the whole society. They can be expected to operate not only in translation of all kinds, but also at every stage in the translating event and hence to be reflected on every level of its product. There are preliminary norms and operational ones (Toury 1995: 58). Preliminary norms have to do with two main sets of consideration which are often interconnected: those regarding the existence and actual nature of a definite translation policy and those related to the directness of translation. Translation policy refers to those factors that govern the choice of text types to be imported through translation into a particular culture/language at a particular point in time. Operational norms direct the decisions made during the act of translation itself. The importance of norms makes it possible to understand the general environment surrounding any act in society and Bible translation is no exception.

3.2. Bible Translation

The Bible is the holy Book of Christianity and the most translated book in the world. The history of its translation has been very complex. According to Nida (1998: 23), it can be divided into three main periods: the Greco roman period (200 BC to AD 700), the reformation period (16th and 17th century) and the modern period which covers the 19th and 20th century. The first translation was the Greek Septuagint version of the Hebrew Old Testament in the second century BC. This translation influenced the canon, vocabulary used in the scriptures, and principles of translation. The canon of the Bible has been defined differently over time and by different groups; the Catholic Bible includes books not taken into account in the Protestant Bible. The term "canon" refers to the closed corpus of biblical literature regarded as divinely inspired. For Catholics, "the question of the canon was finally decided at the council of Trent, which in Session IV, on 8 April 1546 fixed the extent of the vulgate" (Ruger, 1989 : 301). Books outside the canon are called Apocrypha (14 books of the Septuagint). Most translations were based on the Greek Septuagint, so the cultural and sociolinguistic impact the latter had, were perpetuated till the modern era. During the Greco Roman period, there have been some translations into Latin of the New Testament (Nida 1998). Many other translation undertakings started just after. Soon after, some versions revealed unsatisfactory and needed to be revised. Saint Jerome was committed to this task, which he did in a very satisfactory way according to church leaders (Nida 1998). He is considered as the one who set the principles of Bible translation which influenced later Bible translations.

Eugene Nida is one of the most prolific writers on Bible translation. His principles of equivalence, "formal equivalence" and "dynamic equivalence"



(Nida 1964: 159), influence a lot further Bible translations. “Formal equivalence focuses attention on the message itself, in both form and content (...). A translation of dynamic equivalence aims at complete naturalness of expression and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture” (Nida 1964: 159). The choice of the form of translation depends on its *skopos* and the commissioner (Nord 1991) who sets his or her objectives and validates the translation. For example, church leaders were the commissioners of Bible translation. The numerous punishments experienced by former Bible translators (Delisle and Woodsworth 2012, Foz 1998) are evidence that the setting of Bible translation principles are done in conformity to the will of church leaders and to sociolinguistic and cultural factors. Church leaders are mainly men. So far, there haven't also been many women engaged in Bible translation in the role of the commissioner. The first one to have acted as such was Mrs. Montgomery in 1924, according to Bullard (1987:121), and her version is said to have a feminine touch as she clearly sided with women in passages against women or where there was an ambiguity in the gender of the person referred to.

4. Results

4.1. Similarities

Verse 1

Gn 3: 16

French : Il dit à la femme : « Je ferai qu'enceinte, tu sois dans de grandes souffrances; c'est péniblement que tu enfanteras des fils. Ton désir te poussera vers ton homme et lui te dominera ».

Dioula : Ala y'a fɔ ye muso ko : “ Ne bena i ka deen woloko gwɛɛya kosɔbɛ. I bena tɔrɔ wolowaati la. I cɛɛ niɛ bena ke i la, ale bena ke i kuntigi ye”.

Literal translation : God said to the woman: « I will make childbirth very difficult for you. You will suffer a lot during delivery. You will have desire for your husband and he will be your chief »

Mooré: B lèèg n yeela pagâ : « fo sâ n wa tûtê, f naong na yàà wùsg-wùsgo, yaa toog pùgê la f na n dog f kamba, f na n tùlga f sàda ne tùlsem kâsenga la yê n na n dà naam la a soog fo. »

Literal translation: He then said to the woman: “when you are pregnant, your suffering will be immense; it is in suffering that you will give birth to your



children; you are going to desire your husband with great desire and he will reign and own you.”

The Dioula and Mooré versions follow the French one almost verbatim. The difference lies in the translation of the word “dominate” (from Latin, *dominus* which means lord, chief). Both versions refer to chiefs’ prerogatives of reigning over their subjects but the Mooré version added another prerogative, that of ownership, to show that to “dominate” is to reign over the people you own.

Commenting on this verse, Eugene H. Maly (1970: 13) gives historical and theological details. He says that “the present condition of woman as wife and mother is seen as a punishment of the first sin. The punishment is threefold: Woman bears children in pain; her desire for her husband, despite its consequences, is controlled with difficulty; man dominates woman in the domestic and social order. Man’s domination, although part of the order of creation, is intensified by sin beyond the divinely willed measure.” This presentation of the relationship between man and woman finds an echo in the Mooré and Dioula cultures of Burkina Faso where men dominate women in the domestic and social order. The desire for the husband can be seen in the framework of polygamy where many women fight one another for the same husband. Some already married women even woo girls for their husbands. A case is given in Soyinka’s drama, *The Lion and the Jewel*, where one of the tasks of the chief’s senior wife, namely Sadiku, is to find new girls for her husband at a regular basis.

Verse 2

1Co 11, 7-10.

French : L'homme, lui, ne doit pas se couvrir la tête, parce qu'il est l'image et le reflet de Dieu; quant à la femme, elle est le reflet de l'homme. Ce n'est pas l'homme en effet qui a été tiré de la femme, mais la femme de l'homme; et ce n'est pas l'homme, bien sûr, qui a été créé pour la femme, mais la femme pour l'homme. Voilà pourquoi la femme doit avoir sur la tête un signe de sujétion, à cause des anges.

Dioula : Cɛɛ man kan ka fugulan biri a kuun na, bari ale ye Ala jaa, n’a bonyafen ye, nga muso, ale y’a cɛɛ bonyafen ye. ⁸Bari mogo dantuma na, cɛɛ ma bo muso la, nga muso le bora cɛɛ la. ⁹Cɛɛ ma dan muso kama, muso le danna cɛɛ kana. Melekew koson, muso ka kan ka fani biri a kuun na min b’a dira ko a ye mogo do ta ye.

Literal translation : A man should not wear any hat on his head, because he is the image and honor of God, but, the woman is the man’s honor ; for, at the



beginning, the man was not taken from the woman but it is the woman who was taken from the man. Men were not created for women but the opposite. Because of the angels, women must cover their heads, to show that they belong to somebody

Mooré: ⁷Rao ka tog n teeg a zug bũmb ye, tu rap yaa Wẽnnaam ne b ziira wẽnego; sã n ya paga, y ẽla rao wã ziiri. ⁸Sɪd me, ka pag n deng taoore tu rao vutma yi a neng ẽye, yaa rao n denge. ⁹Ka rao wã la b naan n kō pag ye, yaa paga la b naan n kō raoa. ¹⁰Yaa r ẽyĩnga, la malɛk rãmba waoogr yĩnga, pag zug tog n teeg bũmb sẽn wilgd t'a ka so a meng ye.

Literal translation: A man should not have anything on his head, because man is the image of God's glory; as for women, they are man's glory. In fact, it is not the woman who came first so that man's life comes from her, it is man who came first. It is not man that was created for the woman, it is the woman who was created and given to man. It is because of this and for angels' glory, that a woman's head should be covered with something to show that she does not own herself.

There is no difference in meaning between French and local versions as regards the relationship between men and women in the translation of this verse. The biblical scholar Richard Kugelman (1970: 270) in his commentary on this verse gives the following explanation: "Some Christian women, influenced perhaps by the liberal atmosphere of cosmopolitan Corinth and emboldened by the attitude of 'the knowledgeable' toward their freedom, were attending the assemblies without wearing a veil. Paul reprobates this behaviour as unbecoming to a woman, because God has established a hierarchy, in both the natural and the religious spheres, in which the female is subordinated to the male sex. This hierarchical subordination of the woman should be recognized in her behaviour and dress. The veil is a symbol of this subordination." This commentary helps understand better this verse. In Burkina Faso, when a man owes respect to another man, he is expected to take off his hat while talking to this person. This does not apply for a woman to another woman or to a man, or for a man to a woman. So, within the Church, God's house, the man removes his hat to express his subordination to God who is his lord. Similarly, within the family at home, men, as heads of families, may wear hats while their wives remove their veils as they are in their men's hands and protection or as signs of respect and subordination to their husbands.

Verse 3



1Co 14: 34-35.

French : Que les femmes se taisent dans les assemblées, car il ne leur est pas permis de prendre la parole; qu'elles se tiennent dans la soumission, selon que la Loi même le dit. Si elles veulent s'instruire sur quelque point, qu'elles interrogent leur mari à la maison; car il est inconvenant pour une femme de parler dans une assemblée.

Dioula : Bari Ala te koferekenin tigi ye, nga heretigi lo. Muso ka kan ka je lajen yorow la i n'a fo a be ke Ala ka jama cema yoro be la cogo min na. Sira ma d'u ma ka kuma, olu ka kan ka to yeremajigi la, i ko a fora Ala ka sariya la cogo min na. N'u b'a fe ka koo do faamu, u ka kan k'u ceew jininga soo kon. N'o te, a daganin te muso ka kuma Krista ta jama cema.

Literal translation : because God does not like unfair things, but he is the owner of peace. A woman must not speak where people are gathered as it is done within the people of God. They do not have the right to speak, they must stay humble as it is prescribed in the law of God. If they want to understand some things, they have to ask their husbands at home. Otherwise, it is not allowed to women to speak within the assembly of God.

Mooré: ³⁴bt pagba ra yaag b noor ye. B ka tar sor n gom ye; bāmb sēn tōe yaa sakr bala, la Noorā n dat rē. ³⁵B sā n dat n sok n bāng būmbu, b gū yir n sok b sūdb rāmba. Ka tog tt pag gom kuung suk ye.

Literal translation: May women not open their mouths. They are not allowed to speak ; what they can do is just to obey, and it is the Law that wants this. When they want to ask in order to know something, let them wait until they are back home and ask their husbands. It is unbecoming for a woman to speak in an assembly.

There is no major change in the translation of this verse in Mooré and Dioula as compared to French. Richard Kugelman (1970: 272) in his commentary on this verse clarifies that it was a wish that "The custom of the churches of Palestine (of the saints) prohibiting women to speak publicly in the Christian assembly should be observed also in Corinth. Thus Paul abrogates the Corinthian practice of permitting women 'to prophesy' in the assemblies (11:5). As one of many churches that have received the gospel, they should not presume to institute practices contrary to the customs of the primitive Palestinian communities." Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning here that the first woman who ever tried a translation of the whole Bible (Mrs Montgomery), gave another version of this verse (Bullard 1987). For her, Paul did not mean



that women should keep quiet, but she interprets the passage as « a quotation from the earlier Corinthian letter to Paul. 'In your congregation, you write, 'as in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silence...for it is shameful for a woman to speak in church'. What was it from you that the word of God went forth, or to you only did it come? ». So, one's interpretation of the passage dictates one's translation of it; translation is dependent on interpretation.

Verse 4

Eph 5: 21-23

French: Soyez soumis les uns aux autres dans la crainte du Christ. Que les femmes le soient à leurs maris comme au Seigneur : en effet, le mari est chef de sa femme, comme le Christ est chef de l'Eglise, lui le sauveur du Corps.

Dioula : Krista nyasiran koson, aw k'aw yeremajigi nyogon ye. O la, musow, aw k'aw yerε majigi aw cεew ye, i n'a fo aw b'a ke Matigi ye cogo min na. Bari cεε le y'a ka muso kuntigi ye, I n'a fo Krista ye a ka jama kuntigi ye cogo min na, min y'a farisogo ye, a kera min kisibaga ye.

Literal translation: Because of the fear to Jesus Christ, be subject to one another. For this reason, women, be subject to your husband as you do to the Lord. For, the man is the head of the woman the same way as Christ is the master of his people which is his body and which he has saved.

Mooré : ²¹Zoe-y Krista la y sak taaba. ²²Bt pagba sak b stdb rāmba wala b sēn sakd Soaala. ²³Sida yaa paga zu-soaba wala Krista sēn ya Tinginga zu-soaba tt bāmb la Yīnga fāagda.

Literal translation: Fear Christ and be obedient to one another. Let women obey their husbands as they obey the Lord. The husband is the wife's head as Christ is the Church's head, he is the saviour of the body.

There is no difference in meaning between French and local versions as regards the relationship between men and women in the translation of this verse. The biblical scholar, Joseph A. Grassi (1970: 348), in his commentary of the letter to the Ephesians, said: "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ: This saying begins a *Haustafel*. It announces a principle that will be successively applied to the relations between husband and wife, children and parents, slaves and masters. Christ's self-sacrificing love for others (5:1) is now the model for home life." He tells the readers that anything that has been said is to be understood in the sense of being "subject to one another." To "be subject



to one another” supposes that everyone must be subject to the other part; women are asked to obey their husband and the husband is compared to the Lord. Later, on verse 25, instruction is specifically given to the husband: “husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her.”

Verse 5

Dt 22: 22-23

French : Si l'on prend sur le fait un homme couchant avec une femme mariée, tous deux mourront : l'homme qui a couché avec la femme et la femme elle-même. Tu feras disparaître d'Israël le mal. Si une jeune fille vierge est fiancée à un homme, qu'un autre homme la rencontre dans la ville et couche avec elle, vous les conduirez tous deux à la porte de cette ville et vous les lapiderez jusqu'à ce que mort s'ensuive: la jeune fille parce qu'elle n'a pas appelé au secours dans la ville, et l'homme parce qu'il a usé de la femme de son prochain. Tu feras disparaître le mal du milieu de toi.

Dioula : Ni cɛɛ dɔ minena nyamɔɔɔya keyɔɔɔ lani mɔɔɔ wɛɛ ka muso ye, u fila bɛɛ ka kan ka faga, cɛɛ nin, ani a lara ni muso min ye. O la, aw bena kojugu bo Isirayɛlidenw cɛma. Ni cɛɛ dɔ ye sunguru maminenin kunben dugu kɔɔ ka la n'a ya, aw bena u mine ka taga n'u fila bɛɛ ye dugu donda la, k'u bon ni kabakuru ya k'u faga. Aw ka sunguru nin faga bari a tun be dugu kɔɔ, a do ma kule ka mɔɔɔ wele ka n'a demɛ. Aw ka cɛɛ nin faga, bari a jenna ni mɔɔɔ wɛɛ ka muso ye. O la, aw bena kojugu bɔ aw cɛma

Literal Translation: if a man is caught committing adultery with another man's wife, both must be killed, the man and the woman he slept with. This way, you will withdraw evil from the people of Israel. If a man meets in town a girl who has a fiancé and sleeps with her, you must lead them both out of the city and stone them to death. You must kill the girl because when she was in the city, she did not cry for help. The man must be killed because he slept with another man's wife. This way, you will throw evil out of us.

Mooré: B sā n ling yoaad ne pag sɛn tar sɪda, b kuuda b yiiba fāa, paga ne raoā. Yiis wubd a woto buud Isirayɛl sɔka. ²³ B sā n zoe n kāaba pa-kul sɪda tt ned a to seg-a tɛnga pug n sāam-a, ²⁴ y talld-b la b yiib fāa n yiis tɛnga noore la y labd-b lame n ku. Y kuuda bi-puglā tt yella maama tɛnga sɔka la a pa kelem ye. Y kuuda raoā t'a kēe ne a to paga. Yiis wɛng f sɔka.



Literal translation: If an adulterous man is caught with a woman who has a husband, both should be killed: the woman and the man. Throw out abomination of this kind out of the midst of Israel. If an unmarried girl is already promised to a man and if another man meets her in town and despoils her, both should be brought out to the border of the town where they should be stoned to death. The girl should be killed because the business was done in the middle of the town and she did not cry out. The man should be killed because he slept with another man's wife. Drive away the evil out of your midst.

The following remarks can be done: the Dioula and Mooré versions do not translate the word "virgin" because it is implied respectively in the word 'sunguru' (a girl) and "pa-kuli" (unmarried girl)". These versions are reflective of the conceptions of girls in Burkina Faso (unmarried=virgin) in the society. Besides, we notice two major changes in the Mooré version which seem against men: in French it is said "if a man is caught..." In the Mooré version, they speak of 'an **adulterous** man... caught', alluding to what this man wants to do with the woman, namely to sleep with her. The phrase 'adulterous man' specifies that the man is committing a sin. Indeed, in the Mossi society, to sleep with another man's wife is a crime. So, this specification is likely to be given for that reason; both men and women are sinners. In the Mooré version, the insistence on the sin committed by the man can be understood in terms of responsibility. Both men and women are guilty, but the Mooré version insists more on men's accountability and this reflects reality. Women do not bear the same charges probably because they are thought inferior. Hence, this specification "adulterous man" can be understood as an additional charge against men, but also as evidence of women's inferiority in her inability to bear any responsibility.

The biblical scholar Joseph Blenkinsopp (1970: 115), in his commentary on this verse in Deuteronomy says that "The second law, on adultery, forbidden in the 'ten words' (Dt 5:18; Ex 20:14), carries the death penalty for both parties here and in Lv 20:10. According to the Hammurabi Code (§129; ANET 171, 181), both parties were drowned; the Assyrian laws also attached the death penalty to adultery, although both these laws and the Hammurabi Code granted wide discretionary power to the injured husband." By saying "here", he means that elsewhere the death penalty is not for both parties, only for the woman. The laws of these societies give power to the injured husband and nothing to the injured wife. It can then be said that the use of dynamic equivalence here works on women's favour as blame and punishments for biblical women are transferred to Mossi men, discharging Mossi women.

So far, as a general remark, it can be asserted from the verses above, that translation from French into Mooré and Dioula reproduced inequalities noticed in the verses as regards relationships between men and women which are



sometimes reflexive of the conceptions in Burkina Faso. In the following selection, differences are more marked to the detriment of women.

4.2. Differences

Let us analyze the following examples:

Verse 1

Mark 12 : 19

French : « Maître, Moïse a écrit pour nous : si un homme a un frère qui meurt en **laissant une femme**, mais **sans laisser d'enfant**, qu'il **épouse la veuve** et donne une descendance à son frère».

Dioula: "Ni cɛɛ dɔ saara k'a ka muso to k'a sɔrɔ a muso ma den sɔrɔ, a dɔgɔcɛ" ka kan k'o muso nin ta, janko ka den sɔrɔ muso nin ma, ka k" a kɔrɔcɛ sii ye».

Literal translation: if a man dies leaving his wife childless (before she could have a child), his younger brother must have the wife to have children for his brothers.

Mooré: ¹⁹«Soaala, a Moyiiz ra kōo tōnd noor kānga: <Ned yao bɪ a kēem sā n ki n bas pag sēn pa rog biiga, pakr ne kēema bɪ ne yao wā tɪ b rik pug-kōorā n dog biig n kō sēn ki-a wā.>

Literal translation: "Lord, Moses gave us this law: 'If somebody's younger or older brother dies and leaves a woman who has not given birth to a child, it is a duty for the older or younger brother to take the widow and give birth to a child for the one who died.'"

The analysis of these verses in local languages reveals many facts: there is a similarity between what is prescribed in the Bible and some traditions in Burkina Faso. The French version spoke of a childless man. The man is the childless person, but in Mooré and Dioula, the childless person is the woman because in these cultures, babies and children are women's; it is only when they reach a certain age that they become men's. Though the result is the same in both French and these two languages, that is, the couple is childless, one may see, in the Mooré and Dioula translations using dynamic equivalence, an accusation of woman of the guilt of childlessness when there is no child in a family, as it is still the case in Burkina Faso. In addition, the levirate is still practiced and the person who is allowed to inherit the woman is the younger brother. In the Dioula version, it is specified that the younger brother can inherit the wife, which is actually the case. There is no word to say 'brother' in



general in Dioula. One needs to add the adjective 'younger' or 'older'. The same goes for Mooré which the Mooré version expressed by adding the adjectives 'younger' or 'older' to the noun brother, which is incongruent in Mossi culture because people are not allowed to inherit their younger brother's wife. Therefore, one can assert that dynamic equivalence was observed in the Dioula version here while the Mooré one seems to have applied "formal equivalence."

Verse 2

1 Corinthians 7 : 2

French : «Toutefois, pour éviter tout dérèglement, que chaque homme ait sa femme et que chaque femme ait son mari»

Dioula : « Nga, kakalaya kosɔn, a ka nyi cɛɛ kelen kelen be ka muso furu, muso kelen kelen be ka sigi cɛɛ fe."

Literal translation : however, because of adultery, each man must get married and each woman must stay with a man.

Mooré : La sɛ̃n na n yɪl ɛ̃ti y pɔ̃s ne yeɪ kɛga, bɪ rao tar paga, ti pag me tar sida.

Literal translation: "So that you may be away from bad things, let each man have a wife, and each wife have a husband."

There is not much to say about the Mooré translation which seems to have reproduced the neutrality of the French version but this is not the case in Dioula where there is an ambiguity against women. It is not clearly said in that version that each one, man or woman must have only one partner. The number of wives with whom man gets married is not clearly stated; they said that men should get married. However, it is clearly said that 'each wife must stay with one husband'. Consequently, this verse, taken as such, does not forbid polygamy, which is still practiced in Burkina. The French versions are clear with the possessive adjectives 'sa' and 'son', which show that it is singular. In the Greek version, terms like *εκαστος* (*ekastos*) (each man), *εκαστη* (*ekastē*) (each woman) and the expression *τον ιδιον ανδρα* (*ton idion andra*) (her own husband) prove clearly that everyone, man or woman is allowed to have only one person. The ambiguity of the Dioula version reflects the traditional conception of marriage. The following verses dealing with repudiation reinforce this perception of women's lower status, as compared to men.

Verse 3

Mark 10 : 11-12

French : Si quelqu'un **répudie** sa femme et en épouse une autre, il est adultère à l'égard de la première. Et si la femme **répudie** son mari et en épouse un autre, elle est adultère.»



Dioula : «Mɔgɔ o mɔgɔ y'a ka muso gwen ka dɔwɛɛ ta, o tigi be kakalaya kɛ. A b'a muso fɔlɔ hake ta. Ni muso min bɔra a cɛɛ fɛ ka taa furu dɔ wɛɛ ma, a be kakalaya kɛ».

Literal Translation: Any man who **repudiates his wife** to marry another one commits sin towards the first one. If a woman **leaves her husband** and gets married to another one, she commits adultery.

Mooré: «Ned ning sɛn yiisd a paga n le k ɛne pag a to, yaa yoob la a maanda. ¹²Sã n ya pag n yi n bas a sida n ti rik rao a to, yaa yoob bal la a maanda.»

Literal translation: “Anybody who **puts out his wife** and enters with another wife, it is adultery that he is in. If it is a woman who **goes out and leaves her husband** and takes another man, it is adultery she is in.”

The same word is applied to both man and woman in the French version, namely ‘répudier’, while in Dioula and Mooré, the man ‘repudiates’ or ‘puts out’ while the wife ‘leaves her husband.’ Hence, the wife can neither repudiate nor put out her husband unless she builds her house and takes her husband in, which is not yet admitted in Burkina Faso cultures. The husband is referred to in both Mooré and Dioula as the “owner of the house.” As the head of family and owner of the house, the husband decides what to do, who to keep in his house or repudiate. The wife who ‘goes out’ or ‘leaves’ her husband is offending her husband in the same way the wife is offended when she is put out.

The Greek term is nonetheless the same for both man and woman: απολυση (apoluonê). The same way goes for the word ‘épouser’. When it is the man who ‘épouse’ it is said ‘he takes a wife’ while for the woman it is said, ‘to get married to,’ ‘she gets attached to someone else.’ She cannot ‘take’, for she is powerless in traditional society. Indeed men are considered as decision makers and women must be meek and humble.

5. Discussion

Translation is manipulation and has had subversive roles in texts related to Bible translation and feminism as Alvarez and Vidal (1996:6) put it: “with the appearance of the polysystem theory, translation takes on a principle role in shaping the literary polysystem and assumes an important subversive power which can be illustrated by examples of translations of the Bible and in texts related to post-colonialism and feminism.” It is quite impossible to produce an absolute neutral translation because depending on the *skopos* of the translation, choices are unavoidable and the translation commissioner has the main role to



play in determining the priorities. Translation commissioners were rarely women.

The history of Bible translation teaches how canonical books were chosen and how the validation of early translations was made (Nida 1998). Norms play an important role about what should be accepted and, the personality, as well as the deep convictions of the validators appear in their decisions. Those who were in charge of validating translation were male authorities and women had no word to say. All the power is given to men and in that respect there are similarities between Semitic cultures and West African cultures, especially those in Burkina Faso. Indeed, in some Moose areas, traditions even forbid the gathering of men and women at the same place and Camara (1976) reported the same fact for the Malinke (Dioula speaking) society. Religion is considered as men's affair and women are set apart, because they are considered as immature beings, hence, not allowed to get close to the sacred. So, they are not allowed to take the floor publicly and have nothing to say in religious issues (Camara 1976). In these conditions, no-one, not even women themselves could think of equality between them and men.

Polygamy and divorce help understand clearly what position a woman held in "pagan" families at the time of Christ: a servant, a tool of man—a plaything of his passions and this situation still prevails in Burkina Faso. Civardi (1961: 4-5) says that at the time of Jesus, "ordinarily, the consent of a young woman was not required in marriage. Her father gave her to whom he wished, or whoever paid most for her. Among some peoples, there were also laws that gave the husband absolute power over his wife: he could punish her at will, sell her as a slave or even put her to death. The Divine Redeemer raised woman from this state of degradation by restoring her primitive dignity as a companion of man, like unto himself." So, Jesus played a feminist role; He was one of the first feminists who tried to reestablish woman's dignity.

The dynamic/functional equivalence is presented by Bock (2005) as the approach backing the feminist trend in Bible translation in the fact that it helps to put the biblical text in its context and to bring necessary adjustment. In the Mooré and Dioula versions, the most used approach is the dynamic/functional one even though the use of formal equivalence can also be reported in some Mooré verses, namely in Mark 12: 19. However, the analysis of the translated biblical verses into Mooré and Dioula reveals that the dynamic/functional approach did not serve the feminist trend since this approach leans on culture to produce an acceptable version in the target audience.

Nowadays, the fight for equal treatment between men and women is a preoccupation in many countries, especially the said "developed ones." This has brought about a great deal of reflection about the masculine bias in Bible translation and a new vocabulary, the 'inclusive language debate' (Ellingworth



1987, Bloomberg 2005) which does not concern Mooré and Dioula, since these are not gendered languages. As Ellingworth (1987: 46) rightly puts it “ the problem involves five main factors: on the one hand, the biblical culture and languages; on the other hand present day receptor languages and culture, and between them the translation process itself.” So, how to find cultural equivalent terms in Mooré and Dioula to translate cultural biblical realities in such a way as to do equal justice to both halves of human race? This has never been an important preoccupation for Bible translators in Burkina since there is no demand from Burkina women themselves. In Africa in general, fights for the emancipation of women is seen as utopia. Women themselves, in this part of the world, do not believe that equal treatment and rights is possible between them and men. In this context of lack of pressure from feminists, the use of dynamic/functional equivalence in translation creates a kind of vicious circle because, Bible translators rely on the culture and beliefs of the target audience, which supports women’s inferiority to men. What they translate using dynamic/functional equivalence is taken again as a reference to tell the few Burkina feminist-oriented women that their fight is vain because even “God decided that they are inferior.” Therefore, culture and religion influence each other in the case of Bible translation to keep Burkina women inferior to men.

6. Conclusion

Any action undertaken in a given society is influenced by the norms and/or culture of that society. Norms are validated by authorities and they have hardly been women throughout the world. Translation is supposed to reproduce the ‘same story’ in another language and unfortunately neutrality is difficult in that field. The strongest tend to impose their interpretation upon the weak. The use of dynamic equivalence in Bible translation has negatively influenced feminists’ fights because it transferred the existing social inequalities into the place where the Bible itself contains references where men are presented as women’s masters or chiefs. It shows the authority on the one hand and the meek on the other. Unlike some western countries where women started to claim their rights on the ground of Bible translation, feminism has had no impact on Bible translation in Burkina Faso, for, translators have used the norms of the target environment which may be seen by feminists as being detrimental to women. Hence, the divide between men and women are reproduced in Mooré and Dioula biblical translations and sometimes widened. This can be due to the structure and vocabulary of the target languages but also to the fact that local realities have been taken into account. The research hypotheses proved right to a great extent because translators did not have problems in transferring verses advocating the subordination of women to men. Similarly, the recourse to



culture to produce a culturally-accepted translation in Burkina Faso widened inequalities, especially in the Dioula version.

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