

ATILIM UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION
TRANSLATION STUDIES MASTER’S PROGRAMME

TRANSLATING MANGA A CULTURE – SPECIFIC APPROACH

Master’s Thesis

Günsu Elif AYDEMİR

Ankara-2025

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Thesis Advisor

Prof. Dr. Nüzhet Berrin AKSOY

Ankara-2025

ETHICAL STATEMENT

I accept and acknowledge that I have prepared this thesis study, prepared in line with the Thesis Writing Guidelines of Atılım University Graduate School of Social Sciences;

- within the framework of academic and ethical rules;
- presented the information, documents, evaluations, and results in a way that meets the rules of scientific ethics and morality,
- I have referenced each work from which I have benefited while preparing my thesis, and that
- I hereby present a unique study.

I hereby also understand that I shall accept any loss of rights against my behalf in cases otherwise.

Date and Signature

Günsu Elif AYDEMİR

ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

This is to certify that this thesis titled “Translating Manga: A Culture – specific Approach” and prepared by Günsu Elif AYDEMİR meets with the committee’s approval unanimously as Master’s Thesis in the field of Translation Studies following the successful defense conducted on 26/06/2025

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ÖZ

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Bu araştırmanın konusu, son derece popüler bir manga olan *Attack on Titan*'dır. Araştırma, eserin Japoncadan İngilizceye çevrilmiş özgün tarzı, yapısı ve kültürel bağlamı ile bu unsurların çeviri süreci ve çevirmen üzerindeki etkilerini incelemeye dayanmaktadır. Manga, görsel unsurları ve kültürel ayrıntıları nedeniyle benzersiz zorluklar barındırmakta ve çeviriyi daha karmaşık bir süreç haline getirmektedir. Çalışmada, Aixela'nın *anizomorfizm* kavramı ve Zohar'ın *polisistem kuramı* kullanılarak kültürel unsurların çeviriye etkisi ve hedef kitlenin anlaşılması araştırılmaktadır. Ayrıca, Newmark'ın çeviri yaklaşımı çevirideki ayrıntıların ve anlam kayıplarının analiz edilmesi için bir çerçeve sunmaktadır.

Bu araştırma, mangalarda yer alan kültüre özgü ve evrensel öğelerin, farklı kültürlerde de anlaşılabilen duygular ya da kavramların, çevirmenleri basitleştirme, okur beklentisi, mecazi farklılıklar gibi risklerle karşı karşıya bıraktığını; bunun da çevirinin kaynağa bağlılığını ve hedef kültürdeki anlaşılabilirliğini etkilediğini öne sürmektedir. Çalışma, *Attack on Titan*'daki kültürel, politik, sosyolojik ve psikolojik unsurlar ile kullanılan çeviri yöntemlerini nitel analiz yoluyla incelemektedir. Manga çevirmenlerinin çoğunlukla sayfa düzeni, kültüre özgü öğeler, yayımlama yönergeleri ve türlere özgü gelenekler gibi normlara bağlı kaldıkları, ancak aynı zamanda yeni yollar da denedikleri varsayılmaktadır.

Araştırma, ayrıntılı bir inceleme için *Attack on Titan* ile sınırlandırılmıştır. Literatür taraması, manganın kültürel önemini ve çevirisinde karşılaşılan zorlukları vurgulayarak çalışmaya kuramsal bir temel sağlamaktadır. Bulgular, manga çevirisinde kültürel çeviri olgusuna dair daha derin bir anlayış geliştirmeyi ve bunun çeviri kuramı ile uygulamasına katkılarını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Manga çevirisi, Attack on Titan, polisistem çevirisi, çeviri çalışmaları, kültüre özgü öğeler

ABSTRACT

AYDEMİR, Günsu Elif. Translating Manga: A Culture – Specific Approach, Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2025.

The subject of this research is a very popular manga, “Attack on Titan”. The study will be based on analyzing its style, which was originally translated into English from Japanese, structure, and cultural context and the influence of these factors on the translation process and the translator. Manga presents challenges without comparison due to its visual factors and cultural details, making translation a more complex process. Using Aixela's concept of *anisomorphism* and Zohar's *polysystem theory*, the research explores the impact of cultural elements on translation, also the understanding of the target audience by looking into and understanding the cultures by using the aforementioned theories. Additionally, Newmark's approach to translation provides a framework for analyzing the details of translation and the potential loss in the meaning.

This research hypothesizes that the culture-specific and universal elements, which are emotions or concepts that can be understood across all cultures, in manga challenge translators with the risk of simplification, audience expectation, metaphorical differences, hence affecting the loyalty of the translation to the source and its understanding in the target culture and contributes to translation studies by examining the delicate process of translation, focusing on the cultural-specific approach. The research studies on the cultural, political, sociological, and psychological elements in *Attack on Titan* and the translation methods used by using qualitative analysis. It is assumed that the translators of manga try to stick to the norms, such as page layout, culture – specific items, publishing guidelines, genre conventions, most of the time but also tries to discover new ways.

The study is limited to *Attack on Titan* for a detailed examination. The literature review emphasizes manga's cultural significance and the hardships involved in its translation, providing a theoretical foundation for the research. The findings look for advanced understanding of cultural translation in manga and its implications for translation theory and practice.

Keywords: Manga translation, Attack on Titan, polysytem theory, translation studies, culture-specific items

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INTRODUCTION:

History of Manga

Throughout history, written sources have enjoyed widespread popularity across the globe. However, for the past century, this interest has shifted towards comics. People of all ages, cultures, and backgrounds have been reading comics due to the fast pace of life, having little time for reading books, or simply because of their personal interests. While comic consumers are primarily children, teenagers, and young adults, both Western and Asian comics appeal to people from all age groups and cultures. In the last few decades, many individuals have turned their attention to Asia, particularly Japan, for comics. Comics in Japan, henceforth referred to as *manga*, have seen a dramatic rise in global popularity, leading not only to various adaptations but also to the formation of large fandoms that follow every aspect of *manga*. However, as the flames of popularity spread, people also wonder about the origins of *manga* itself.

Considering the origin of *manga*, the authors mention *emakimono*, which is painted narrative scrolls. These scrolls were satirical and also black and white, portraying aristocrats, warriors, or priests disguised as animals such as rabbits, monkeys, and other creatures. Jean-Marie Bouissou discusses the points that may connect *emakimono* with *manga* in “*Manga: A Historical Overview* (2010)”. He states that the first point is the content itself. Most of the content in these scrolls has also found its way into *manga*. The subjects are mostly, but not limited to, spirits, demons, confrontations with enemies, oddly-looking yet good-natured beings, and so on. These elements can be seen even in 21st-century *manga*. Modern *manga* exhibits familiarity and a significant similarity between human and nonhuman characters that underlie some *manga* (p. 18, 2010). The second point he mentions is the technique employed. These scrolls feature a mix of drawings and writings, although they lack the speech balloons found in *manga*. Considering the techniques used in the scrolls, *manga*, and *emakimono* are somewhat related.

On the other hand, while other cultures had similar narrations, they failed to keep this culture alive, whereas *emakimono* thrived until the Edo period (1603 – 1867) (p.19, 2010). The relatively easy acceptance stemmed from the cultures already being familiar with it. Although it can be argued that scrolls and *manga* are not directly

related, their shared use of graphic narration constitutes a long-standing tradition in Japanese culture.

The other narration that *manga* can be related to is Zen painting, which, to put it simply, uses absurd enigmas to confront their disciples with the inanity of rational thought as a path to enlightenment (p. 19, 2010). After a long and bloody turmoil, big cities came back to life, and the popular culture of urban people flourished again, thanks to the authoritarian regime. This opened new avenues for expression, such as *Kabuki* theater, illustrated novels, and *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints). As Ito states (2005) *ukiyo-e*, literally means “the pictures of the floating world”, was a genre of popular folk pictures which included *sumo* wrestlers, landscapes, birds (p. 460). The art is quite simplistic, lacking complex anatomy for the characters, which is something *manga* fans are familiar with.

On the other hand, *kabuki* can be played for long hours, even for a whole day. The plot is rich and takes inspiration from history and daily gossip; blood is shown on stage, and people love a small quantity of supernatural elements (p. 20, 2010). It is apparent that *manga* still feeds on this tradition.

Manga, Politics, and War

The traditional Japanese art changed when the regime and public encountered the West. Even though contemporary *manga* draws from its predecessors, it also incorporates significant elements of Western culture. After the West introduced lithographic painting, the tradition in Japan transformed into a type of low-cost media. In addition to lithographic painting, the West provided a model for this new media type. In the last quarter of the 19th century, weekly cartoons containing speech balloons and frames were published, and this trend quickly carried over to Japan. Around this time, Japan was experiencing political changes, including the first-ever election in the country, the confrontation of democratic reformists against the authoritarian mainstream, rapid industrialization, and social turmoil. As a result of these changes, people sought to embrace modernity. At the start of the 20th century, the reformist Fukuzawa Yukichi added *Jiji Manga* to his newspaper, *Jiji Shinpo*. The word *manga* was used for the first time with this publication (p. 22).

As Ito states *manga* has humor, satire, exaggeration, and wit. It does not exist in a vacuum and is immersed in a social environment which includes history, politics,

economy, etc (p. 456, 2005). Although it has existed in various forms for a long time, modern *manga* peaked after Japan's defeat at the end of WWII. American comics, cartoons, and other graphic narratives served as a source of inspiration for Japanese *mangaka* (*manga* artists) in creating modern *manga*; this influence even led to some products resembling Disney aesthetics.

However, after the war, original themes began to resurface but to reach that stage, *mangaka* had to endure the same censorship following the assassination of Prime Minister Hamaguchi Osachi in 1930 and the invasion of Manchuria in 1931, as a militaristic regime took power. During this period, 1920s and 1930s, the government had control over speech and thought. The artists and editors who had subversive and rather dangerous ideas were intimidated and most of them were imprisoned (Ito, 2005, p. 464). In summary, before the war, Japan incorporated comics from outside the country and blended them with its narratives. Regrettably, for *manga* to attain its current status, Japan had to endure the defeat of WWII and seven years of U.S. occupation. Following this period, *manga* discovered a significant market among teenagers and young adults.

After Japan's big defeat in WWII, modern *manga* (*kindai manga*) is considered to have appeared in 1947 with *The New Treasure Island* by Tezuka Osamu. He can be considered the father of modern *manga* and even was nicknamed "the God of Manga." This new era, started by Tezuka Osamu, had more complex storylines and imitated cinema with new techniques. Along with Tezuka Osamu, many of these first-generation *mangaka* were too young to fight in WWII, but they could comprehend the trauma and tragedy it caused on their nation. As Jean – Marie Bouissou mentions in his article "*Manga: A Historical Overview*", there were four main elements in modern *manga* that gave it a complexity and intensity.

The first element was the survival of young people bounded by friendship. The second was the mecha genre, which involves robots used by teenagers. The other one was scientific adventure. Lastly, the fourth element was the result of the U.S. occupation in a way. This fourth element involved topics such as freedom and democracy, which can be found primarily in comics produced in the U.S. and U.S. consciousness. Even though the traditional ways Japan had before the war failed, they did not disappear entirely and were protected by the nation, so this conflict between the values had a combination of regret, protest, and passion for protest, which were the

main inspiration points for *mangaka* after the war, as mentioned before (Bouissou, p. 25, 2010).

After *manga* reached a certain point in Japan, it expanded over the U.S., Europe, and the rest of the world. Not only *manga* but also the side products of the industry started to show up all around the globe. The screen adaptations of *manga*, such as anime, OVA, movies, sponsorships in various other industries like food, cleaning and additionally cosplaying (dressing up and acting as a specific character), fanfictions (stories including characters from a specific *manga* with the original plot or a new one), fandoms (group of people that follow every aspect of a *manga*, music group, book, etc), scanlations (unofficial translations of *manga* that were scanned to specific applications and translated) have helped *manga* and its culture to spread around the world and created a billion-dollar industry. This industry has created a big bubble that has people from every group of age and culture communicating with their language and terms that are independent from the outside world. The people outside this bubble have difficulties communicating with the ones in the bubble about *manga* since it has its own culture and context. As a result of this bubble and new culture, the spread of *manga* needed the help of translation, also the theories in the translation studies. The decreasing number of people who read books, the changing hobbies of younger generations, modernity, the tempo of life, the way comics and *manga* can be consumed more quickly than other literary elements, and many other elements have caused the creation of a new area in translation studies.

Japanese communication relies on contextual clues in communication, timing of silence, tone of voice, etc. and these points can be expressed in *manga* very clearly, in a way, creating its own terminology across the world (Ito, 2005, p. 457). Since *manga* has its own particular culture that it has formed around the globe, it also can act as a bridge and mirror for the political, social, psychological, and sociological states of Japan and other countries and cultures it may have. Some *manga* embodies not only culture-specific items but also addresses the aforementioned elements in the context of Japan or the world. Naturally, this situation makes *manga* a fantastic area to work on regarding translation because it has limited space. However, even the smallest phrase may significantly impact the audience and can change the plot's fate. For the reasons above, studying the chosen *manga*'s, *Attack on Titan*, translation addresses a gap by focusing on the challenges posed by *manga*, a medium which combines visual

storytelling and culture – specific contexts. While *manga* has become an inseparable part of global popular culture, there is still limited scholarly attention on how it is a unique blend of text, image, and culture, which also affect translation strategies and target audience's reception.

Subject of the Thesis

This thesis focuses on the Japanese *manga* *Attack on Titan* (Shingeki no Kyojin) and its cultural translation from English into Turkish. *Attack on Titan* is a truly popular *manga* and anime series and a cultural phenomenon that almost seamlessly mixes Japanese and Western cultures, especially Norse. The study examines how these culturally specific elements are preserved, adapted, or changed in translation and what factors contribute to the series' popularity.

Attack on Titan handles the fact of fragility of humanity by showing the true nature of monsters and human beings. As a result of this hard truth, the popularity of *Attack on Titan* has been rising since its first publication.

Purpose

The primary aim of this thesis is to explore the cultural translation of *Attack on Titan* and investigate the reasons behind its success in target cultures, especially in Turkish. The study has two main objectives:

1) The first objective is to identify the cultural, mythological, and narrative elements that have contributed to the global popularity of *Attack on Titan* and also the contribution of these elements to the world-building and narrative.

2) The second objective is to analyze the strategies used in translating the *manga* from English into Turkish, focusing on how these strategies affected and dealt with culture-specific content.

By doing so, the thesis seeks to contribute to the growing field of *manga* translation within Translation Studies, highlighting the role of cultural mediation in the international dissemination of *manga* as a genre.

Methodology

One of the most fundamental sources that introduces methodological approaches in translation research is *The Map: A Beginner's Guide to Doing Research in Translation Studies* (Williams & Chesterman, 2014). The book provides a comprehensive guide for beginners in translation studies.

The Map (Williams & Chesterman, 2014) also provides a clear explanation of the qualitative and comparative methodologies applied in this thesis. As it is explained a particular aspect of the source text can be taken and examined in terms of corresponding sections in the translation (Williams & Chesterman, 2014, p. 19).

Additionally, the main goal in a comparative study is mostly for discovering correlations and even the equivalences between the two sides of translation (Williams & Chesterman, 2014, p. 84).

On the other hand, qualitative research provides a more subjective comprehension on the analysis and it requires empathy and imagination (Williams & Chesterman, 2014, p. 102).

In the light of these points this thesis includes:

- A textual analysis of selected parts of *Attack on Titan* in the official English translation and Turkish translation.
- The identification and comparison of culture-specific elements such as mythological references, symbols, and names across these two translations.
- An evaluation of the translation strategies employed, including domestication, foreignization, localization.
- The contextualization of findings within theoretical frameworks from translation studies as well as cultural and mythological references embedded the *manga*.

Illustrated by Hajime Isayama (2009–2021), *Attack on Titan* (*Shingeki no Kyojin*) is a globally influential and widely acclaimed manga that combines dystopian narrative with rich cultural symbolism. The story follows Eren Yeager and his closest friends, Armin Arlert and Mikasa Ackerman, as they struggle to survive against the Titans, giant humanoid beings that threaten humanity's existence. While the plot is

initially framed as a survival story within walled cities, the narrative gradually unfolds into a complex exploration of political power, cycles of violence, oppression, human nature, and even genocide.

Thematically, the manga reflects both Japanese post-war traumas, including defeat, fear of external threats, and restrictions on freedom, and universal anxieties such as militarization and genocide. Central motifs such as “the walls” symbolize confinement and isolation, whereas the Titans embody both external enemies and the inner monstrosity of humankind.

From a translation perspective, *Attack on Titan* is particularly significant because of its use of culture-specific elements, mythological references, and layered metaphors, which frequently pose challenges in the transfer process. The English translation, published by *Kodansha Comics (New York)* between 2012 and 2021, was essential in expanding the series’ popularity among Western audiences and elevating its global status. The Turkish edition, *Titana Saldırı*, was published by *Gerekli Şeyler Yayıncılık* between 2015 and 2022, likewise consisting of 34 volumes, and represents the first complete official Turkish translation of the manga.

This work has been chosen as the primary case study because it embodies the intersection of popular culture, mythology, and translation challenges. Its international success provides a unique opportunity to observe how a Japanese cultural product enters different literary systems and adapts to them. At the same time, its narrative richness, filled with symbolic and culture-specific items, allows for a comprehensive application of qualitative and comparative methodologies, making it an ideal subject for the aims of this thesis.

Literature Review

This thesis is built upon three main pillars: the historical development of manga, polysystem theory, and the analysis of culture-specific items, supported by complementary cultural and methodological perspectives. Even-Zohar’s Polysystem Theory conceptualizes literature and culture as dynamic systems in constant interaction, while Aixela’s Culture-Specific Items framework defines translation as a process of rewriting shaped by cultural proximity or distance, a view further refined by Pym’s notion of translation as a negotiated cultural transaction. The historical trajectory of manga, examined by Bouissou and Ito, situates the medium as both an

artistic form and a reflection of Japanese cultural identity, while mythological perspectives drawn from Sturluson's Prose Edda and O'Donoghue's From Asgard to Valhalla provide intertextual parallels with themes in Attack on Titan. Additionally, Williams and Chesterman's The Map offers methodological grounding through qualitative and comparative approaches. Collectively, these frameworks establish the theoretical, historical, and cultural foundation of the study, situating it within existing scholarship while underscoring its originality and relevance.

Also, Celotti states while translating comics, in which *manga* is a type of, the cultural factors, like political correctness, show influence on the translation. This influence can lead to the omission of visuals of violence or insults (2014, p. 50). Celotti also states that the translator must decide a message on the comic outside of the balloon is visual or verbal. By deciding on this the translator can move further with the translation of the verbal messages (2014, p. 52).

Additionally, most of the *manga* are not culture – specific, so many of them borrow from other narratives, these narratives might be the target audience, such as teenagers, or middle – aged people. Since most of the works are not culture – specific, Jüngst states that almost formally equivalent translation fulfils the intended communicative function but also verbal text is in large parts is translated in a dynamically equivalent style (2014, p.76). So, it is actually a question of fulfilling the intended function of translation.

Overall, this review is crucial because it establishes the theoretical, historical, and cultural foundation of the study. By integrating Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory, Aixela's framework of Culture-Specific Items, and Pym's intercultural approach, it situates the thesis within recognized scholarly traditions while highlighting its interdisciplinary scope. The historical background of manga (Bouissou; Itō) and mythological intertexts (Sturluson; O'Donoghue) demonstrate how Attack on Titan can be analyzed not only as a cultural product but also as a medium shaped by broader narratives.

Additionally, the perspectives of Celotti (2014) and Jüngst (2014) provide methodological insights specific to comics translation, underlining the issues, such as the interplay of visual and verbal signs, political correctness, and functional

equivalence. These frameworks do not only contextualize the research but also provide practical tools for the analysis.

Ultimately, this review ensures that the thesis is not an isolated case study but part of an ongoing academic conversation in the literature, while emphasizing the originality and relevance of applying these approaches to *Attack on Titan*.

Hypothesis

This study involves the two following hypotheses:

1) The first is that *Attack on Titan's* global popularity and success can be attributed to its hybrid but natural narrative structure, which mixes Japanese cultural elements with Norse myths. This also makes it even more accessible and appealing to a broader audience.

2) The other hypothesis is that in translating *Attack on Titan*, which was originally in Japanese, from English to Turkish, domestication and foreignization strategies were used, with important choices made to preserve or manipulate the original context. These strategies play a crucial role in how the cultural elements are perceived by the target audience in general.

Research Questions

Because of the reasons that are presented, two main questions emerged:

1) What were the elements that have made *Attack on Titan* popular in the target cultures?

The first key question is, of course, the reason of popularity of *Attack on Titan*. As previously stated, *manga* often draws upon its native culture for narrative inspiration, as much as it stands on Norse mythology.

However, *Attack on Titan* stands out by incorporating not just elements from Japanese culture but also there are significant influences from European traditions, or myths, especially Norse mythology. Considering the impact of social media in this century, different myths belonging to distinct and more gripping cultures from all over the world feel a lot more fascinating. Examining these cultural references offers insight

into the *manga*'s narrative structure and how they resonate with the audience apart from its origin point.

2) What methods are used in the translation from a cultural perspective?

The second focus of this study is the examination of translation methods used to render this *manga* into other languages, specifically from English to Turkish. This thesis investigates whether these methods reflect the cultural range of the original text, and whether they preserve or adapt these specific influences in the context of the target culture. These points aim to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how culturally specific content is mediated through translation in the dissemination of *manga*.

Significance of the Study

This thesis aims to fill significant gaps in the existing literature on manga translation by situating *Attack on Titan* within a cultural and theoretical framework. While the previous studies on manga have focused on the challenges of visual – verbal interaction and the domestication or the foreignization of terms, less attention has been paid to the role of culture – specific items in translation strategies. By employing Aixela's framework for culture – specific items, the study highlights how cultural closeness or distance determines the translator's decisions and how these choices influence the reception of *manga* in different target culture, in this study's context the Turkish audience.

In addition, Even – Zohar's *Polysystem Theory* is applied to the dynamics of dominant and peripheral systems within literary context. This thesis extends the scope of the theory by applying it to a contemporary and globalized medium. In doing so, it shows how manga functions as a peripheral and central cultural product, depending on the target and its system, and how the translation can play a decisive role in shaping the position within a literary and a cultural polysystem.

Another contribution would be the intertextual dimension of the analysis. The study has concentrated on *Attack on Titan*'s cultural framework by examining the parallels with Norse mythology. This approach illuminated the transnational and intercultural resonances of the *manga*, demonstrating how mythological elements can be reimagined in modern Japanese popular culture and translated for international audiences.

In sum, this research provides a contribution by connecting translation theory, cultural analysis, and intertextual study within the context of manga. It positions *Attack on Titan* as a rich case study through which to explore how translation negotiates between cultures, adapts mythological and cultural narratives and shapes the reception of Japanese popular culture.



CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

In the post – World War II era in Japan, *manga*, as a whole concept, gained even more popularity. Artists like Osamu Tezuka and his works like "Astro Boy" (1952) made him known as the "Godfather of *Manga*". His works showed diverse genres, more complex characters that had not been seen until that point in history, and a cinematic storytelling, which was widely accepted and became the norm in the industry. This norm has become one of the reasons why *manga* has been such a worldwide sensation for the past decades and probably next, too. Moreover, not only has it become a sensation, but it has also found its way into other industries like film, TV, and even comics – cons. Surely, this becoming – a – sensation situation for *manga* has also caused a growth in demand for translation, not only for the written elements in a *manga* but also the contextual and cultural elements. However, the capacity of translating *manga* was interrupted by the lack of interest and also the hardships of a new genre. This situation led people to translate *manga* unofficially, which is called *scanlations*. A *scanlation* can be described simply as a translated *manga* that is first scanned into an online database and then translated to a desired language by the fanbase. These are not official translations at all, but they have been a great help in improving the translation and its popularity in the *manga* industry, since sometimes it is not easy to reach a desired *manga* series because of the price, logistics, etc. Although scanlations are the product of the modern world, they have helped *manga* to reach every age, sex, culture, etc., since the internet has gotten easier to reach for the past decade. Also, these scanlations are the products of fandoms, groups of people who follow a specific *manga* in almost every aspect. As a result of the knowledge they hold for a specific *manga*, their translations help other people to get to know the fanbase and other elements in the story and even the culture and elements they belong to. Therefore, people who are interested in those *manga* naturally get involved way more than a casual fandom.

This intense involvement can be explained by what Anthony Pym states. He uses the term "interculture" to refer to the elements found in intersections or overlaps of cultures, when two or more cultures are somehow combined at once (2014, p.177). He states that his understanding of interculturality should not be confused with multiculturality. In multiculturality, more than one culture can exist within the same context, whereas interculturality consists of two or more constantly interacting. As a

result of this definition, *manga* cannot stand alone outside of its own culture, or even if it can, comprehension of the genre would decrease significantly since it was created with many contextual and cultural elements. It needs to connect with the culture it is in; because of this situation of *manga*, translators and translations, whether official or not, stay right between the cultures and make them overlap so that the audience can understand and take pleasure in what they read.

An example is Cathy Sell's *Manga Translation and Interculture*, where she points out the cosplaying culture. She says cosplay is an illustrative example of overlapping cultures and forming an identity of their own, so these elements begin to evolve in the intercultural space, which Pym mentions as somewhat independent elements. We can observe that cosplay is more subtle and focused on the characters and lore of *manga* in Japan and most of Asia, but the same thing is not true of cosplay and roleplay culture in the West. In the West, cosplay is more confident, where they may perform skits or wear their costumes out in public, a situation that is mostly highly discouraged in Japan (Sell, 2011, p. 95).

On the other hand, although graphic novels and comics can be compared to *manga*, they are different in format and style. However, while Japan was introducing *manga* to the West, they also tried to tune the differences. American newspapers started weekly supplements, including cartoons, which used balloons and frames similar to the modern comics we see today, and this format was copied in Japan soon enough, in the middle of the 1890s (Boissou, 2010, p. 22). This change, of course, was not sudden at all. Japan was already undergoing a political change and industrialization. Even more, when the first national election was held in Japan in 1889, democratic reformists confronted the authoritarian mainstream. This was followed by years of confrontation between reformist parties and the imperial government (2010, p. 22). This resulted in Japan embracing modernity as a country, whether it was wanted or not. This period was when many *mangakas* earned a reputation. Throughout the labor movement and reformists' strengthening, *manga* was used for political expression, and at the same time as these developments, mainstream media turned *manga* into a mass entertainment source. Magazines for teenagers published *manga* along with other genres. Unlike United States or France, it was published by businesses that entered the industry from the beginning, whereas in United States and France comics were published mainly by small businesses as stated by Boissou (2010, p. 23). It is even

speculated that Kodansha, one of the biggest publishers in Japan, printed 950,000 copies of *Yônen Kurabu* in 1931.

In addition to all of these, as mentioned before, the assassination of Prime Minister Hamaguchi Ôsachi in 1930 and the invasion of Manchuria in 1931 put a hold on the development of more democratic ways since a militarist regime came to power. As a result of this regime, *manga* was used for war propaganda. For example, in *Shônen Kurabu*, in 1931, a dog named Narakuro routed the Chinese, who were depicted as pigs (Boissou, 2010, p. 24.).

This and many other examples show that before the war, Japan enabled the foreign form of comics and made it possible for them to mix with its kind, *manga*. What took modern *manga* to develop was a Japan that was traumatized by the war and the occupation of the U. S. and an incredible effort by the publishing industry.

Although *manga* artists offered a depressing and dark representation of the United States after the war and some characters died brutal deaths in heroic battles with their enemies, some of the *manga* had an opportunity to rise among the others. The rise of this new type matured with the baby boomers and their needs. In addition to baby boomers' support back in the day, the publishers acted wise by working with various sponsors and other industries, including but not limited to toy, food, and drink industries. After Tezuka's *Tetsuwan Atomu* was sponsored by Meiji, a chocolate company, in 1963, *manga* entered its profitable era. After that, *manga* was sponsored by many areas of businesses and publishers continued to release their media as a mix, such as weekly, paperback comics, reissues, TV and OVA series, animated and live action films, musicals, advertisement, merchandising, music. After the 90s, with the help of World Wide Web, this media mix was included in video games, novels, short stories and sometimes even fashion magazines. (Boissou, 2010, p. 28). This mix helped the audience feel like one with the characters and the story and decreased their sense of alienation from the rest of the population. Again, with the World Wide Web post baby boomer generations enabled fandoms to build communities more easily. As a result of publishers' market segmentation and maturation strategies, *manga* has become a mass industry with no competition worldwide (Boissou, 2010, p. 28).

Even though a vast audience loves *manga*, it has a massive influence on society thanks to its ability to keep pace with development worldwide, not only in Japan.

Manga and its artists examine and analyze the changes in people's attitudes to their societies and each other. As of the end of the first decade of the 21st century, thanks to the right choices and media mixes, Japan has become the world's second-largest exporter of cultural products (Boissou, 2010, p. 29). Unfortunately, the industry's success has been in trouble with the circulation of magazines since the 1990s. The declining birth rate, competition with video games, and the decrease in interest of baby boomers have been a problem for the publishers. Moreover, some even consider these problems as the death of magazines, but the ever – changing world offers new places for publishers to put into their mixes, such as phones, computers, and tablets. The audience has already accepted new ways to read and reach to their favorite content, whether official or not (Boissou, 2010, p. 30).

Considering all of these elements, it was inevitable for *manga* to become a sensation all over the world and create its own particular culture. No matter which *manga* or the genre, all readers love sharing the same basic elements in this particular culture. As Pym states, some overlaps are created by the differences between the cultures and translations, and translators and translations, again, create and strengthen these overlaps, and as a result of this cycle, new texts can be developed within the intercultural itself (Sell, 2011, p. 94). The cultural elements a *manga* can bring into another culture include many components, from food to fashion. This situation brings us to the polysystem theory Itamar Even – Zohar developed.

Also, in addition, in this study, *Polysystem Theory* developed by Itamar – Even Zohar will be applied to understand how *Attack on Titan* operates within and across different cultural systems in the context of translation. Polysystem theory states that human – related patterns, such as language, literature, culture, etc., form a structured but heterogeneous system, not an isolated whole. According to Even – Zohar, these are dynamic and interact with each other, forming a "polysystem" (1979, p. 288). In this framework, translated works, especially literature and genres like *manga* that cross national and cultural boundaries, find specific positions in the literary system of the target culture and language. This position affects how texts are translated and how the audience perceives them.

The reason why Even – Zohar's theory is applicable and more beneficial is that *manga* is inherently intercultural. It has a strong foot on Japanese culture, past and national traumas but is also profoundly influenced by all of Asia, Europe, and the USA.

It has simply become a global phenomenon shaped by the interactions it has with other and very different cultures.

For instance, *Attack on Titan* is deeply rooted in Japanese culture and history. However, one of its strongest roots is also Norse mythology. These interacting, sometimes overlapping, cultural influences and heavy references position *Attack on Titan* within the heterogeneity described in the polysystem theory, eventually making it an ideal framework for analyzing and studying how *manga* translation navigates and adapts cultural systems in different contexts. Also, *manga* like *Attack on Titan* are categorized as *seinen* in Japan but in Western marketing it is shown as *dark fantasy*” to align with that specific culture.

Human-related patterns are a whole, belonging to a system. Thus, they are not so different. As Zohar puts it, the idea of semiotics should be seen as systems and not conglomerates of discordant elements, which is the leading idea of modern science. When these are viewed as systems, it has become easier and possible to describe and even explain how various semiotic aggregates operate (1979, p. 288). As the idea of structuredness does not need to be identified as homogenous anymore, a semiotic system must be an open and heterogeneous structure. Because of this, it is rarely a uni – system and necessarily a polysystem, which is a system that intersects with each other and partly overlaps. Although the members are interdependent, the options function as a structured whole (1979, p. 290). However, it should not be thought that uniformity should not be postulated for a system to work and function as a whole. Moreover, synchronism deals with the idea of language function but does not account for the function of language in specific situations since language itself is a polysystem. The heterogeneric nature of culture and language can be reduced to a majority, the result would not be fruitful as the system would become homogenetic (1979, p. 291). Both theories mentioned, interculturality and polysystem, can be adapted to *manga* since it involves multiple cultures and is definitely not homogenetic.

Another clue on its involvement in polysystem is that, in the *manga*, there can be representations of different sounds, such as rain, gun sounds, or any other sounds that can occur in a given condition. As a result, *manga* uses onomatopoeia and mimetic expressions almost flawlessly. Because of this, *manga* has its own words and expressions that may not be understood in daily life or by people not interested in *manga*. For example, originally Japanese expression *niko niko* can be used for smile

by multiple and different fandoms, mostly verbally, in everyday use by global fans since it is a very popular expression used by the character Nico Yazawa in *Love Live!*. This expression has become almost an inside joke between different fandoms, even those unrelated to the aforementioned *manga*, and almost anyone interested in *manga* and anime can easily understand this. In addition to this example, Japanese has a lot of mimetic words for emotions and feelings, unlike Turkish and English, and some of these words are unique to *manga*. Because of this, some of these words do not register within the daily consciousness of Japanese readers either. Even more, these words are not necessarily part of the story or context but mostly part of the artwork for aesthetic reasons. Also, since the *manga* is traditionally drawn by hand, these words make it easy for *mangaka* to make the readers see the interrelatedness of images and text because, in the *manga*, the text and images cannot be considered separately (Sell, 2011, p. 99). These strategies *mangaka* uses make *manga* easier to translate and reach a broader audience. Although these expressions do not have any direct equivalence in the target language, or even if they do, it could be seen as absurd on paper by the readers, they are still helpful for both the translator and the audience. Because of these reasons, some translations of *manga* leave these expressions as they are, except for romanizations, without any changes since the audience is quite familiar with these. Another point to this subject is that, in the translation process, the romanization of these expressions is relatively standard. However, it is not the most suitable way to translate it either since non – Japanese readers' understanding of these expressions is solely based on the phonetics of their own language, so these sounds may not express anything to them. However, this method can achieve these mentioned expressions as new vocabulary in the target language (Sell, 2011, p. 99). Also, the point of the reader's desire for text to be foreign is because the audience of *manga* and/or webtoons is already familiar with these expressions and such elements, and most of the readers want them to stay as close as possible to the original text. So, a new translation of these can be pointless for the readers. In addition to these points, this process is also helpful for publishers and translators. By doing so, publishers and translators save money, time, and labor when these are left untranslated since there will be one less thing the translator has to worry about.

While Even – Zohar's theory provides a system – wide understanding of how *Attack on Titan* functions between and within the cultural and literary systems, it does

not fully clarify the strategies translators use when encountering culture – specific items. To account for this limitation, the study incorporates Javier Franco Aixela's framework on *Culture – Specific Items* (CSIs), which offers a more text-focused approach. Aixela's model identifies the strategies translators use to bridge cultural gaps at semantic, symbolic, or lexical levels, whereas *Polysystem Theory* explains a more structural forces that influence whether the translation leans toward the source or target.

Furthermore, Aixela defines culture-specific items (CSIs) as textual elements tied to a particular culture that pose different challenges when transferred to another linguistic or cultural context. These CSIs may include names, honorifics, place names, historical references, foods, and even grammatical forms. He categorizes translators' strategies into two main types: conservation, which includes options like repetitions, orthographic adaptation, and literal translation, and substitution, which includes cultural adaptation, omission, or autonomous creation (1996, p. 60 – 65).

This approach is especially valuable in studying *manga* translation because CSIs are abundant and central, even though they can become the main subject of the *manga* to the medium's narrative and aesthetic. As *manga* often contains idiomatic expressions, onomatopoeia, honorifics, and references to Japanese history, mythology, and social practices it is clear that these elements contribute to the building of the *manga*'s identity; however, while building it also creates important challenges for the translator to overcome since the translation involves complex decisions that will eventually affect how the target audience receives the text.

Aixela's framework is appropriate for this study on two levels. First, his approach acknowledges the translator's critical role as a bridge between cultures. He is a cultural mediator who must constantly balance loyalty to the source text and acceptability in the target culture. These two factors are complex for the translator to manage simultaneously. Second, it offers a practical and systematic method for identifying and analyzing translation strategies for CSIs, which aligns with the methodological goals of this thesis.

Also, it provides a clear, systematic, and a text – focused method for analyzing elements in a text which are rooted in a specific culture. These elements may not have direct equivalents in the target culture. As *Attack on Titan* is rich in such elements, this

situation poses a challenge in cross – cultural transfer. Aixela’s approach maps them to translation strategies, such as adaptation, or substitution. This process allows translators to navigate the tension between cultural fidelity as much as the reader accessibility.

Even more, this framework is suited to *manga* translation because it accommodates the nature of the medium, which involves visual, textual, and culture cues. This nature means that translators have to consider not only linguistic accuracy but also visual coherence and also reader expectations shaped by the mix of the source and target culture.

To summarize, this chapter sets the basis for the thesis's theoretical foundation by first grounding the discussion in polysystem theory, which offers a view of the dynamics of translated literature within cultural systems. Within these systems, Aixela's theory provides a lens for examining how cultural elements are used in translation. These frameworks will guide the analysis of *Attack on Titan's* English – to – Turkish translation, focusing on how cultural meaning is preserved, transformed, or lost in the process.

However, the problems of translating *manga* do not end here. While trying to protect the text's interculturality and convey the whole meaning according to the context of *manga*, the translator must pay attention to a simple detail: apart from its culture, *manga* is basically a comic. Because of this, the target language must be combined with the images, and the speech balloons must be reduced or widened. For every language a *manga* translated into the number of words should be compatible with the source and the scene of the page. In addition, since the direction of the text is different, vertical and horizontal, it can create extra space in the final product, and as a result, it can affect the aesthetics of the whole text. This situation not only affects the translators or publishers but also causes Japanese to become an aesthetic among the readers. This also helps the culture and language spread among the audience and creates new systems to support the polysystem.

In addition to all of these, Boissou states in “*Manga Goes Global*” that three main factors supported the real boom of *manga*. First, everyone was interested in Japan – related elements, from sushi to karaoke and eventually *manga*. As a result of this tremendous interest, there was much free advertising of Japan, its culture, and anything

related. The other reason was that the generation that had seen the mecha anime on TV in the 70s wanted something more sophisticated but still connected to Japan after they grew up. Lastly, American cartoons and comics have been struggling with the constraints of the Comics Code for almost fifty years. Because of these constraints and censorship, they became emasculated. The audience in the West was tired of comics that did not have any violence, sex, smoking, or any other elements considered taboo at the time and, actually, somehow connected to the real world. *Manga* and anime offered all of these taboos in different genres to the audience, and gradually, it gained the popularity it holds today (1998, p. 8).

Of course, *manga's* popularity did not secure its place in just one night. The entire culture had to leak through the little cracks into the Western world that were created by the constraints the U.S. had, the multiple wars the world went through, the need for something new by society, the ever-changing trends of new generations, technology, social media, and, at the end of the day, the right marketing strategies led to the success of *manga*.

On the other hand, as *manga* gained almost indestructible popularity and reputation, the demand for the translation of *manga* created a massive demand for professional translation and localization. Companies like Viz Media and Kodansha were the first to license *manga* they published for official translations and distribution. Many translators worked on adapting dialogues, cultural references, and the nuances of the original works to make it easier and way more possible for the target audience to understand and internalize the content of the *manga* they have in hand. However, this adaptation process, sometimes localization, presented a significant challenge, which was the cultural differences. This brings us to the interculturality of *manga* within the polysystem theory again. The development of *manga* throughout the centuries allowed it to transform into a global phenomenon from a niche art form, bringing the aforementioned problems.

First, as stated before, the cultural context creates the biggest problem. From the wordplays and honorifics to any other cultural references, the translator must consider their strategy when it comes to *manga*. They must decide whether they should localize such elements or not in order to sustain the authenticity while conserving the story, lore, plot, and anything related to that specific *manga* because a strategy the translator prefers may not be applied to other *manga*.

The other challenge the translator faces is ethics, which holds an important place in genres and translations. Since *manga* covers many themes in multiple genres, it is hard to keep up with current trends and avoid the controversies that sensitive and controversial subjects may cause. This situation is mainly because of *manga*'s history. Since it has a very long history, represented not by decades but by centuries, it is almost impossible for *mangaka* to stay in only one lane, such as mecha or action. Even though it was possible, human nature would not allow such a situation because of the yearning for creativity and innovation. As Mio Bryce and Jason Davis mention in *An Overview of Manga Genres*, *manga* has an enormous capacity to create and recreate graphic narration with traditional styles. It persistently engages with Japanese identity by using it as a medium to retell traditional sources (2010, p. 37). Of course, one of the leading and most popular genres of modern *manga* has been horror and supernatural. The most popular ones are Junji Ito's works, which have their own culture. These works had a massive impact on pop culture. In this kind of *manga*, the invocation of cruel and gruesome elements of sadism and violence is mainly used. For this kind of *manga*, Hideshi Hino and Suehiro Maruo are also considerably the most popular ones. Especially Hino's works like *Hell Baby* (1986), *Panorama of Hell* (1989), he has created universes containing adults, children, deformed babies and even animals transmogrified into bloody, weird and mutilated corpses and other non – human creatures with faces that have an incredible amount of disfigurement. (2010, p. 39). Most of the time, the main point of these *manga* is not just horror or scaring the readers but also creating such a tense environment for readers that the character becomes unforgettable. The atmosphere, the universe of this *manga*, and the characters are so disturbing that readers cannot take their eyes off the story and crave more.

In addition to these genres, maybe the most popular one in the West is science – fiction in general. It is a genre mainly associated with Japanese animation, anime, by the Western audience and has iconographic elements which are the non–human, technological promises of a future outside of this world (2010, p. 44). Though the audience thinks it as a relatively innocent genre, it has a lot of controversial works, too, unlike the belief. To support this point, one of the most apparent examples of racial identity in a science – fiction context is Tatsuya Egawa's *Yapoo*, the *Human Cattle*. It is a disturbing projection of racial self – hatred through colonialist and imperialist fantasies while envisioning the masochistic transmogrification of Japanese society into

biologically engineered furniture and sexual appliances for white people (2010, p. 45). These works also reflect the different points of view among the artists and population, regarding the Japan's history.

The last genre I would like to mention is shojo and josei (homo/hetero) romance and sexuality, which are one of the main focuses when it comes to ethics in general. Although this genre can be considered taboo in many societies, it is also one of the most popular and active in terms of fandoms and screen adaptations, not only in the context of *manga*. These two genres include the different aspects of the psychological, emotional, and sexual angles of partners and individuals and bring these together with the experiences of human relationships and gender identity. The dynamics of a relationship and the pursuit of love in a romantic context are told in both viewpoints of man and woman (2010, p. 46). Although sexuality is involved in these genres, the importance of romantic relationships should not be overlooked. The romantic relationship between the same and/or different sexes is handled in different settings, like offices, high schools, universities, and even historical settings. However, it was no surprise that this genre developed into something even more phenomenal, which is another genre called yaoi. This new genre is a lot more sexual and mainly between two beautiful men. The name is an acronym that reads yama nashi, ochinashi, and imi nashi, which translates as no climax, no point, no meaning. This term is used as an umbrella term for male – male relationships in the West. However, there is a distinct difference between a shonen ai and yaoi. Shonen ai (boy love) involves a romantic relationship with little to no sexual tension or intercourse and sometimes even a kiss cannot be seen throughout the story. On the other hand, yaoi mostly has very shallow stories and relationships between the couples and more than enough sexual tension and intercourse, and this can go as far as rape and sexual torture. However, just like shonen ai, it has different settings and stories.

Shonen ai and yaoi were created almost simultaneously as marginal categories, mostly by women, to diversify the expressions of sexuality in *manga*. On the other hand, the dominant *manga* that male mostly enjoys, male erotica or ero – *manga*, covers a range of spectrum of male – oriented depictions of heterosexual relationship depictions involving large breasts, rape fantasies, bondage, violence and degradation of partners, etc. Of course, both of the genres have some very similar depictions. However, these do not make them less controversial and challenging to translate since

they are all considered taboo and most of the population does not enjoy reading or seeing these types of contents (2010, p. 48).

This type of diversity leads to international developments, such as distribution to international areas including the West, which causes two closest industries to *manga* to try to catch up: manhwa (Korean *manga*) and China. Also, the expansion of *manga* in non-English countries support the *manga* industry even further by, at least, inspiring other artists outside of Japan. These elements eventually lead the market to become an intercultural dimension with reworkings and reinvention of genres (2010, p. 52).

All the genres I have mentioned above raise the problem of translating such branches appropriately because these contents are open to mistranslation and considered big taboos, no matter how modern the world becomes. Hence, the translators must ensure accuracy, in addition to avoiding offensive stereotypes and misrepresentations. Being careful about these elements is even more important in the modern world since, with technology and modernity, people are more prone to seeking and finding flaws in everything. One of the processes of seeking and finding flaws is simply the cancel culture. It can be defined as a very intense way of calling out people. Although it started as an innocent way to protect social media and its users in a way, people started abusing it by using it as a way to shame everyone for the values and opinions they do not believe in. These values and beliefs are not just harmful ones. Because of this, the translator must be way more careful than in previous decades because one little misstep can lead to cancellation of the translator and even the *mangaka*.

Owing to what Even – Zohar stated by saying that languages are polysystems, because of the heterogeneous structure of culture in society, all of these aforementioned elements cause new cultures and contexts to develop time and again, in time, people embrace these new contexts, whether they want or not (1979, p. 293). Although there are multiple elements in a polysystem, it still has hierarchies, which can be defined as dynamic stratification, but of course, there is no such thing as one center. Simply put, the elements in a polysystem move from one periphery to the other within the same polysystem. (1979, p. 294). In this sense, the most unstable element in *manga* culture, inevitably, is the audience because the community's interests, passions, age, etc., are constantly changing without missing a beat. Even though most *manga* fans follow almost all of the processes of creation and even distribution of *manga*, they follow, the

interest and attention span of people are continuously changing even faster than before because of the evolution of technology and the significant decrease in focus time. So, although people are very much interested and invested in the *manga* they love, it is also, most of the time, not very hard for them to leave all of it behind without a doubt and jump to another one. On the other hand, the same technology makes people get bored of things more easily and increases the risk of cancellation. Also, another reason why a translator must be way more careful is not because of cancel culture this time but because the expectations of fandoms are higher than ever, and they are, most of the time, very well aware of the Japanese language and culture.

As mentioned before, *manga*, as a whole, has created its own culture and elements related to it; the multiple genres and titles of *manga* also created their own cultures and systems, which are sometimes easy to miss. The chosen *manga*, *Attack on Titan* has different storylines and themes since the story's focal point constantly changes. Consequently, this situation presents new and fresh, sometimes fun, challenges for translators related to localization and adaptation since the series has items deeply rooted in Japanese culture, history, and sometimes language. As a translator, one must be aware of the cultural elements and adapt these to the target audience and language if necessary. The process of translation and the actual translation of the *manga* present not only an insight into the global audience but also an insight into the hardships a translator faces when translating the chosen *manga* and other ones.

CHAPTER 2: BACKGROUND

2.1 The History of Manga

Manga has developed through centuries of cultural, artistic, and social influences. According to Kinko Ito (2005), manga has long been more than a form of entertainment; it functions as a reflection of Japanese society, portraying historical, political, and cultural transformations. Its early foundations can be traced back to *emakimono* (narrative picture scrolls) and *ukiyo-e* (woodblock prints). Later, the performative traditions of *Kabuki* theater and the spiritual symbolism of Zen art further shaped its narrative and aesthetic conventions.

By the twentieth century, manga had transformed into a dominant cultural phenomenon in Japan, appealing to readers of all ages and social backgrounds. Today, manga embodies a wide range of genres, from adventure and fantasy to romance, sports, and horror. Beyond its domestic significance, it has become a major global cultural export, shaping popular culture internationally and serving as an important lens through which Japanese culture is interpreted worldwide.

2.2 Attack on Titan – The Original

Attack on Titan (Shingeki no Kyojin), written and illustrated by Hajime Isayama, was serialized in *Bessatsu Shōnen Magazine* between 2009 and 2021. It contains 34 volumes and has become one of the most successful manga series globally, selling over 100 million copies (IGN India, 2021). The narrative centers on Eren Yeager, along with Mikasa Ackerman and Armin Arlert, as they resist the Titans—enormous humanoid creatures that threaten the survival of humanity. The artist, Hajime Isayama (b. 1986), is a contemporary *manga* artist. After he studied *manga* design at Kyushu Designer Gakuin, he submitted the draft of *Attack on Titan* to Kondansha's Magazine Grand Prix in 2006, after it received recognition, it led the *manga*'s serialization. His style is distinguished by its dark, dystopian elements, complex characters and character developments, struggle for freedom, and themes of fear. After the conclusion of *Attack on Titan*, he has expressed interest in working in smaller projects but his influence on contemporary *manga* and global popular culture remains substantial.

What begins as a survival story inside fortified walls evolves into a profound exploration of political power, cycles of violence, and human nature. Themes such as militarization, genocide, freedom, and oppression are central to the storyline. The walls symbolize both security and confinement, while the Titans embody external threats as well as humanity's inner monstrosity. This interplay of symbolism reflects Japanese post-war anxieties, including fear of foreign powers and restricted liberties, while also engaging with universal concerns such as mass violence and existential dread.

Unlike many *manga*, *Attack on Titan* is characterized by its dark tone, moral ambiguity, and tragic inevitabilities. This complexity has contributed to its critical acclaim, while also making it a challenging text for translation and cultural transfer.

2.3 Translation History of *Attack on Titan*

Japanese original (2009–2021): Serialized in *Bessatsu Shōnen Magazine* and later compiled into 34 *tankōbon* (*collected manga volumes*) volumes by Kodansha.

English translation (2012–2021): Published by *Kodansha Comics New York*, translated by multiple translators. This version introduced the series to Western audiences and played a decisive role in establishing its global popularity.

Turkish translation (2015–2022): Published under the title *Titana Saldırı* by *Gerekli Şeyler Yayıncılık* and translated by various translator. Like the Japanese and English versions, it has 34 volumes, representing the first complete Turkish translation of the series.

Both the English and Turkish translations have been instrumental in expanding the manga's global presence. At the same time, they highlight the challenges of transferring culture-specific elements, mythological allusions, and layered symbolism across linguistic and cultural contexts.

CHAPTER 3: INFORMATION ON AND CONTEXTUALISATION OF THE MATERIAL OF THE SUBJECT

The source material, which is Japanese in original, in this thesis will be *manga*, specifically *Attack on Titan*. The background seems to be a war-torn nation at first, and most of the population lives in fear. Although it seems to have heavy European and Norse features and references, the main context is actually based on elements that are deeply rooted in Japanese culture and language. *Attack on Titan* takes its roots mostly from World War II (WWII) and heavily wounded Japan.

To understand the context *Attack on Titan* is built on, horror and terror themes should be looked at separately and one by one. As the Gothic writer Ann Radcliffe puts it, these are two feelings primarily based on their functionality. To her, terror is a feeling of dread, a fear that occurs before an event occurs. The terror has elements that are uncertain and obscure, and its abstractness has not been seen and/or experienced. While horror, she states, is a different kind of fear, the feeling of revulsion and disgust after an event has happened. Horror is terror's materialized version (Haq et al., 2022). Based on this point of view, at the start of *Attack on Titan*'s storyline, ordinary people live in not horror but terror. The fear of the legends and old wives' tales. However, when it comes to the military part of the remaining population, they very well know and also experience absolute terror. Despite the situation, the people are in and the ruthlessness of the universe the plot is in, *mangaka* introduces the readers instantly to the seemingly real enemy and the source of the terror, and the part of this terror transforms into horror immediately. After the majority of ordinary people experience the devastating and terrifying power of the Titans, their innate fear turns into not only horror but also another type of struggle for survival that they have not experienced up until that point.

Another foot *Attack on Titan* stands on while building its universe and plot is the constant references to Japan's own history and Norse mythology. When looking at Norse mythology, parallels and references throughout the whole story can be seen. Before analyzing these references, it is best to summarize the *manga* briefly and take a look at the plot in general.

Attack on Titan takes place in a dystopian kingdom surrounded by giant walls to protect humanity from the monsters called titans. These titans wander outside the

walls without a purpose, and their only aim seems to be to eat people. They do not harm animals or the environment they are in, but once they come across a human, their only aim becomes to consume them. However, eating people is not necessary for titans to survive.

Titans have human – like anatomy, but unlike humans, they are 3 to 60 meters tall. They do not have genitalia. The way to kill them is by cutting their nape in a precise way; they have extraordinary healing skills; some of them are incredibly fast, and most of them are too strong for one person to handle. Although some of the titans act irregularly, they do not seem to have cognitive skills either. On the other hand, as the plot unravels slowly and almost painfully, it is revealed that there are nine notable titans who have specific powers and are managed by humans. These special titans unfold the truth behind the titans and their history one by one as the protagonists, Eren, Mikasa and Armin, try to achieve their desire to discover the world outside the walls until one faithful day.

After a special titan, Armored Titan, attacks the doors, the only place the wall is weak enough to destroy, Eren's mom gets eaten by a titan that invades the city inside the walls. Shortly after this, Eren decides to join the Survey Corps, whose job is to explore outside of the walls and expanse, reclaim the territory from the titans, and research Titans, which is also the most fatal and dangerous branch in the military. After almost every mission, they lose many soldiers to the titans. Of course, after Eren decides to join them, his childhood friends, Mikasa and Armin, do not leave him alone and join the Corps.

Early on in the *manga*, after a second attack by the same titans, Armored and Colossal, it is revealed that Eren is also a titan who, later on in the story, can transform whenever he desires. After he is accepted as a titan and seen as a weapon and tool to reclaim humanity's territory and old glory, and many more battles and plot twists later, they reach the sea, which was Eren's and Armin's desires since they were little.

Even though it was their desire, Eren once again realizes soon enough that there was life outside of the walls apart from the animals and titans, and they all were cattle waiting to be slaughtered. This realization, which can be called even euphoria, leads him to a path that eventually kills him.

Even though this summary is limited and does not cover all of the story, it is enough to point out the references and parallels of the aforementioned points for now. The other points and plot twists will be mentioned as necessary.

The first point, and the foundation stone of the whole story, is the name *Ymir*. The character *Ymir* in *Attack on Titan* was a slave (who will be mentioned as *Ymir Fritz* later on, in order to separate her from another character also named *Ymir*) who did not know love and was abused by her husband, who was the king. She is the progenitor of all titans, from special to ordinary ones. When she was a little girl, she escaped from a group of soldiers and found shelter in a tree hollow, where she encountered a creature that was very similar to a parasite. It is later referenced that this parasite was a symbol of life or was the life itself, and she becomes one with it through her spine. With this, she becomes the first Founder Titan and fights for *King Fritz*, who abuses and uses her for her power. After she dies, her body is eaten by her three daughters, Maria, Rose, and Sina, so that the nine titans are born. After one of the nine titans is inherited, the person's lifespan who inherited the titan is reduced to thirteen years, and the only way for a person to claim the titan is to be a member of the royal family and have Eldian blood since only Eldians can turn into titans.

Through this context, mythology, in its nature, has an intimate relationship between itself, religion, and psychology. Because of that, once its nature is understood, the parallels become evident in almost every context. For example, as Heather O'Donoghue states in *From Asgard to Valhalla*, religion mentions a conflagration, Armageddon. In Norse mythology, there is a winter with no summers, *fimbulvetr*, and *Ragnarök*, the very last battle of gods and the giants (p. 4). As part of the nature of myths, they are told, collected, and tidied up by people for a long time. In this context, Norse mythology is mainly collected by an Icelandic scholar, Snorri Sturluson, who re – told it under the name of *Edda*.

In *Volüspa*, Sibyl's prophecy, there is a response to Odin, a recall of the old times. Sibyll tells the old stories of the world; the first thing she recalls is the giants. Although modern world giants are mainly related to fairy tales or DnD (Dungeons and Dragons, a role-playing game), Norse mythology involves them in a not-so-magical context. According to Sibyl, she was brought up by the giant and says there were nine giantesses in nine realms. Other than this memory, she also remembers the great tree, *Yggdrasill*. This great ash tree is the center of all the realms and the pillar of the

universe. This tree nourishes the world with the dew that falls from it. However, even though this tree holds great power, it is also very vulnerable. In the myths, it is depicted with a serpent gnawing its roots. Meanwhile, a deer grazes on its branches, and a squirrel goes up and down the tree carrying messages.

Simply put, it is in constant agony (O'Donoghue, p. 18). After all this agony, the tree will creak at the end of the world. The parallel between *Attack on Titan* and Norse mythology is apparent so far. *Ymir*, in *Attack on Titan*, finds shelter in a tree; after this, she becomes the center and the source of the horror and the terror of the story. In the Coordinate, where every Eldian and the subjects of *Ymir* are connected, readers see a big, glowing tree numerous times, with seemingly uncountable branches, almost connecting the realms. This tree is the center of Paths, all of the Titans come from here, and as a result, it connects an abstract world to the material world and gives a place for *Ymir* Fritz to create the titans. Eren Kruger, a character in *Attack on Titan*, explains the Coordinate as a place connecting every *Ymir* subject. It is also invisible to the eye. At times, The Coordinate carries, shows, creates memories, and will to act. All of the coordinates lead to one final destination: the big tree and *Ymir* Fritz, the Founding Titan (Isayama, 2016).

The creation and existence of titans create a considerable confusion among the audience, as it is not exactly obvious who or what is the villain, at least in the beginning. As the story progresses, the line between a villain and the 'hero' becomes more ambiguous. At first, just like it was mentioned before, people live in fear of the titans outside the walls and after the titans get through the walls and massacred thousands of people, the population withdraws into the inner walls. A different type of struggle begins since the inner walls are insufficient for the increasing population regarding food, shelter, water, etc. So, the government sends a part of this population right into the now titan – occupied part to reclaim this area, being aware that they will be dead as soon as they step into the territory, since the people they sent are just civilians. In this part of the story, the titans and maybe the government are seemingly the enemy of the people. After a while, after the protagonists are trained to become a part of the Corps and the revelation of Eren being a titan, a new enemy surfaces: the humans. Especially the ones that are part of the government.

Until this part, the characters fight and kill the titans and the special ones to save the humans and reclaim the territory outside the walls. After this, Eren and his

friends comprehend that to reach the sea and maybe live happily ever after, they have to kill not only titans but also the humans, even the ones they fought with.

Even though it is revealed near the end of the story that Eren realized that he had to commit genocide, it was apparent he had no sympathy for others who live outside of the walls since he felt betrayed and also realized that the true enemies, to him, are them and not the titans.

The conflict between Eren's motives and general ethics raises yet another problem. The culture that Eren and the story created is Japanese culture. As stated, *manga* is hundreds of years old and a direct product of Japanese culture with little to no change. As a result of this, it becomes evident that the very essence of *Attack on Titan* comes from WWII and the defeat of Japan.

The Titan finds itself in the culture it is from and carries itself out by using it. It nurtures and feeds its culture. Embracing this, the chaos and blood bath titans cause, especially at the beginning of the story, comes from the suffering of Japan in WWII. One of the most evident pointers to this is the fact that titans dissipate heat, and also, when they turn into titans, whether they are common or special ones, they cause a big explosion, which is parallel with their size. The bigger the titan, the more the harm they cause. The way this explosion and heat is portrayed both in the anime and *manga* is very similar to an atomic bomb. Considering that Japan suffered not one but two atomic catastrophes, it is evident that this is a direct reference to the use of titans as mediums.

The source of titans in *Attack on Titan* is unknown, and it cannot be comprehended how they existed initially. One of the most beloved characters in *Attack on Titan*, Hange Zoe was incredibly curious about titans and their roots. She would not miss it if she could look into them closer. They reveal that one of the outcomes they reached while researching captured titans and Eren was that the body of the titan was very light considering its size, and also, Eren's titan forms out of nothing (Isayama, ch. 20). So, it is impossible for titans to exist in terms of scientific laws.

However, despite the unknown the main character Eren wants to know what is outside of the walls, which is guarded by the titans in a sense, restricting anyone inside the walls, physically and psychologically. So, curiosity killed the cat, Eren lost his home, his mother was eaten by a titan in front of him, he turned into a titan, his friends

betrayed him, he became a mass murderer and killed more than half of the world's population.

However, even though being a monster or being killed by a monster is effectively a bad thing, the monster also self – justifies nationalism, and additively, the monster or the concept of a monster holds together the society, which can be called the culture. The monster, in a sense, acts as a herdsman. In addition, as it is born of political aspects and justifies the nationalism it acts as an invitation to an action related to military like, colonization or invasions (p. 13). The monarchs in *Attack on Titan* stopped people in Paradis Island from going outside of the walls at all costs. For example, in the *manga*, it is referenced to Armin's parents, one of the protagonists. They supposedly tried to escape by using a hot air balloon and were killed by the soldiers (Isayama, ch. 55).

When looking down at Eren's behaviors and desires at the beginning of the series, it is pretty safe to say what Eren craved was the freedom of the titans, something he never had since he was born, even though he expressed his desire to see the sea and other wonders of the world more commonly.

In the series, when the walls were knocked down, Eren felt great horror, hatred, and even disgust. However, up until that point, it was made evident that Eren wanted to become a member of the Survey Corps and explore the outer world. Even though he did not lose this desire, it has become more of an obligation with other elements, like the basement.

One of the repeated lines throughout *Attack on Titan* is that the people living inside the walls are like caged birds or cattle. This supports the idea that Eren is envious of the freedom of the titans and his actual alter ego. Deep down, Eren's envy is pure hatred towards the titans, which he directs towards the people outside the walls after he reaches the sea. In the chapter where they reach the sea and feel it for the first time, Eren raises the question: If they kill the enemies on the other side of the ocean, will they be finally free? (Isayama, ch. 90)

Even though Eren despises these monsters, he also showed an immense curiosity towards them, which can be understood by his desire to reach the basement of his long – gone house, directed by his father.

It is safe to say that in *Attack on Titan*, the protagonist, and antagonist, Eren Yeager, forces the audience to question the ideas that are considered taboo and ultimately pushes some of them to argue or question these taboos.

On the other hand, Even – Zohar suggests that any human related pattern belongs to a system and is a whole and not different from each other (p. 288). When these patterns are considered as systems, it also becomes possible or easier to explain how various semiotics operate in general. The historical language changes create an obstacle to discovering how it operates. Part of the historical changes lead to synchrony and diachrony, but the identification of the latter with history is untenable (p. 289).

If, for one synchronic line, there are multiple diachronic systems, it also can explain the difficulties in translating historical contexts. Also, this idea makes a semiotic system a heterogeneous, open system. Hence, it is a polysystem (p. 290).

Considering these points, the translation process of *Attack on Titan* shows multiple choices made by the translator to protect or manipulate the translation of certain words, sentences, or historical contexts.

Lastly, I want to mention the mythology *Attack on Titan* took as a basis in detail in addition to the other points I have mentioned. O'Donoghue expresses in *From Asgard to Valhalla* that it has been suggested that myths began as entertaining tales. This suggestion leads many researchers to a unified question: "Are myths sacred?" It also has been suggested that myths are some backgrounds for religions (p. 2). In most of these stories, the world is unusual from the world we live in but also very similar in ways of life, belief systems, etc. It is also safe to deduce that since these myths may be sacred, religious rituals may be created from these stories, or the stories made their way to the rituals. Another way myths do this is that they act as vents of fears such as invasion, wars, deaths, apocalypse, etc., and organize societies, sexual activities, and gender roles (p. 3).

The primary source of Norse mythology is an Icelandic antiquarian and scholar, Snorri Sturluson. Snorri's work, called *The Prose Edda* or *Edda*, synthesizes and retells different materials (p. 5).

The Poetic Edda opens with a text called *Völuspá*, which means Sibyl's prophecy. She remembers being brought up by giants and nine giantesses in nine

realms. She also remembers a great tree, Yggdrasill. This tree is the center of the universe, but she remembers so far back that Yggdrasill itself was only a seed.

So far, the Sibyl's memories are similar to what happened in *Attack on Titan*'s plot. *Ymir* Fritz, the first titan in the story, falls down a tree hole while running from the soldiers and a parasite – like creature becomes one with her. It can be argued that the seed in the myth may be this creature. On the other hand, after "The Coordinate" came into being, in the middle of this realm, there is a tree that is very similar to the depictions of Yggdrasill. From this point of view, "The Coordinate" in *Attack on Titan* represents Yggdrasill itself. Additionally, there are nine Titans that are consciously controlled by humans.

Yggdrasill is a central name in Norse mythology; it is a giant ash tree that connects the universe, and the nine realms.

In *Attack on Titan*, it was revealed that The Coordinate connects all Eldians subconsciously and that Attack Titan can summon Eldians to this realm. O'Donoghue states that Yggdrasill, before Ragnarök, the apocalypse, shows signs of shudders and creaks, almost an image of the universe's end (p. 144). It was seen in the *manga* that The Coordinate has become a passive place after the Rumbling, and there is no further information or explanation about its fate. It is open to interpreting whether it was destroyed, waited for the cycle to repeat, or was directly connected to *Ymir* Fritz and her consciousness.

Another memory of Sibyl is of the giant *Ymir*. In Snorri's Edda, *Ymir* is mentioned before Audumbla, but in fact, he was nourished by Audumbla's milk, so it is hard to place him in the myth. This chronological mix-up could be due to Snorri's sources, which, as mentioned before, were oral and hard to collect.

Ymir lived way before the Earth was created and existed before gods and men. There was only a great void, a ginning gap, and then Sibyl, in her story, introduces the sons of Burr. Sons of Burr create the Earth by lifting it out of the sea. However, where they came from and how they had the power to create Earth and people it with humans is unknown. It is also unknown where *Ymir* came from or how he came into existence. According to Vafrúnismál:

*From Ymir's flesh, the Earth was shaped,
and the mountains from his bones;*

*the sky from the skull of the frost-cold giant
and the sea from his blood. (p. 13)*

These points reveal how both *Ymirs* are parallel. In mythology, *Ymir* is the source of materials that form the Earth. On the other hand, *Ymir* in *Attack on Titan* is the mother of all titans and the birth point of a race.

As stated in the *manga*, *Ymir Fritz* is known as the Founding Titan. She was essentially the slave of the Eldian King, who later abused *Ymir's* titan power to bring abundance to Eldia while killing, torturing, and destroying Marley and other nations. After thirteen years, *Ymir* fell into the tree hole. She stopped an assassination attempt against *King Fritz*. Despite her ability to easily heal from her injuries because of her titan powers, it is implied that she did not want to heal herself.

Following her death, *Ymir* was sent to the Coordinate, where every path collides and combines, where she creates the titans that the readers see throughout the story. By doing so, *Ymir Fritz* obeys the royal family, but actually *King Fritz* himself, since she does not know what mercy and love really are; all she knows is the abuse from the King.

The self – sacrifice *Ymir Fritz* shows throughout her life is somewhat parallel to *Ymir* in the myths. Although he fought with Odin, his body was still used to create Earth.

In addition to these points, another apparent reference to Norse mythology is about *Hange*. From the moment they were introduced, she was curious, enthusiastic, and a bit crazy. The only thing they were focused on was learning more about the world and the titans. Until the point they were killed, which was during the Rumbling, they never lost this part of themselves.

In Norse mythology, as O'Donoghue writes, Sibyl says that she knows Odin came to lose one of his eyes in exchange for wisdom. Later in the poem, Odin is depicted as one-eyed, signaling that he has reached the wisdom he was looking for (p. 32).

Hange, on the other hand, loses an eye in a titan attack, which draws a parallel between Odin's passion for reaching true wisdom and *Hange's* everlasting hunger for knowledge about the Earth and the origin of titans.

In conclusion, this chapter examined the cultural, mythological, and psychological references ingrained in *Attack on Titan's* narration, thus showing how a *manga* serves as a multi-layered cultural product and is a rich reflection of Japanese culture. These aforementioned elements create opportunities and challenges in the translation process. These challenges include culture – specific items such as historical allusions and symbolic metaphors such as the *Ymir's* sacrifice or the parallel between Odin and *Hange* as much as the thematic and psychological depth these offer since the motifs like self – sacrifice, collective guilt, and post – war trauma can be interpreted differently in different cultures and this difference in interpretation makes it a challenge to preserve the original essence without disrupting the intended meaning.

Attack on Titan connects Japanese culture and trauma with Norse mythology and creates a hybrid but satisfying narrative structure that readers can feed on even after the work is completed.

Characters like *Ymir* and structures like the Coordinate reinforce the *manga's* symbolic and narrative depts. It also shows that as a genre, *manga* can address almost all universal themes as much as it can address its own. Likewise, these references allow readers from different backgrounds and cultures to connect to Japanese culture and context, which opens the way to intercultural accessibility and different systems to merge into each other.

The translation of *Attack on Titan* also creates a humbling factor in its reception. This chapter affirms the translator's role as a navigator of CSIs, such as honorifics, mythological references, and idiomatic expressions. Applying Aixela's Culture – Specific Items theory shows that translation is not just a linguistic process that can be overlooked when necessary. However, it is a constitutionally cultural process constantly demanding decisions that eventually influence how the target audience interprets and internalizes the material.

In addition to these factors, the role of visuals in a *manga* cannot be ignored when conveying cultural references. These elements, such as clothing, food, and architecture, that are particular to one culture, mostly Japanese culture, are powerful mediators that a translator must consider in the translation process. The translator must understand and internalize these cues that interact with the text in order to strengthen the meaning. Moreover, *manga*, much like modern – day comics constitutes a

specialize translation domain which requires the integration of visual semiotics and textual interpretation. In this medium, the meaning is conveyed not only through the language but also through the interaction between the words and images, making the translator's role both visually and linguistically interpretive.

All in all, *Attack on Titan* is not only a narration of survival, revolution, and resistance but also a comment on cultural identity, collective trauma, and intercultural exchange. Translating such subjects is simply building a cultural bridge across several nations and even centuries.



CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

As before mentioned, *Attack on Titan* originated in Japan and was initially published in Japanese. As a result, unsurprisingly, it contains items that are deeply tied to Japanese culture, including expressions, symbolic metaphors, references to historical and social contexts. On the other hand, the English translation of *Attack on Titan* has been widely praised for the accuracy and faithfulness to the original text in general. The translation maintains the tone and emotion of the source text. This assessment is based on several factors such as; the preservation of the source text's tone and emotional intensity, the retention of key culture – specific items, the consistent use of imagery and metaphor that mirrors the original and the minimal alteration of the narrative structure or the pace of the story. These observations support the conclusion that the English version successfully conveys both narrative and cultural essence of the source material.

When taking a look at the *manga*, it is seen that it is deeply rooted in Japanese culture and history, such as the feudal system, political power struggles, government corruption, and also the societal issues. Although the translation is mostly loyal to the source text, some concepts need some context provided for non – Japanese audiences which will be discussed later in this chapter.



Figure 1: Armin talking about Ymir¹

The translation of *Attack on Titan* includes both domestication and foreignization. Foreignization is needed and decided to be used when the translator encountered culture-specific items like honorifics or terms such as "Titan" and/or "Ymir."

The place is a bit ambiguous at "this" part; however, the translator decided to lean on a slight domestication by emphasizing the place more in the translation by saying "burası."

According to Newmark (1991), the translator and the author, in other words, the text – writer, have very different points of view, leading to different meanings and values. These meanings can differ from numerical values to cultural references, and while translating all these different types of texts, the translator continually evaluates the situation accordingly. The translator may look for symbolism where actual realism was intended; he may see a greater value than the author on connotation and correspondingly less on denotation (p. 8).

¹ Isayama, H. (2012–2021). *Attack on Titan* (Vols. 1–34) (K. A. Appert et al., Trans.). Kodansha Comics. (Original work published 2009–2021)

Isayama, H. (2015–2022). *Titana saldırı* (Vols. 1–34) (Çeşitli çevirmenler, Trans.). Gerekli Şeyler Yayıncılık. (Orijinal eser 2009–2021’de yayımlandı)

The other part I would like to point at is the "free of death" line. Here, too, there is a slight domestication. Of course, it could be translated as "ölümünden azat, ölümünden muaf," but the translator decided to keep this part in Turkish more natural, thus making it easier for the audience to read and comprehend.

Another line that stands out is the part "that girl was *Ymir*, the Founder..." which the translator decided not to explain. Firstly, the name *Ymir* was protected as it is with no explanation needed, since it is a name and also a culture – specific item. As Aixela states, the author does not need to explain the terms they use by attributing the meaning of the notion to a sort of collective intuition. However, even though the author does not need any justification for the terms, words, or references they use, this way of writing also has a downside, which is arbitrariness that can be excessive (p. 57).

Arbitrariness can be described as the absence of any natural connection between a word's meaning and its sound or form. Being a proper name, of course the word *Ymir* does not have an equivalence outside of its culture and context and cannot have a translation, however since it is tied to a specific culture there needs to be an explanation.

On the other hand, even though *Ymir* is an alien word, most of *Attack on Titan's* audience is familiar with the terms and references because being in a fandom means researching everything that feels alien, learning about it, and even generating theories. As a result, in *manga* translations, translators do not have the need to translate most of the CSIs. Because of this, there was no need to explain who *Ymir* was in Norse mythology.

Overall, the meaning is conveyed smoothly in its context. This protects cultural integrity and helps readers follow the story more easily.

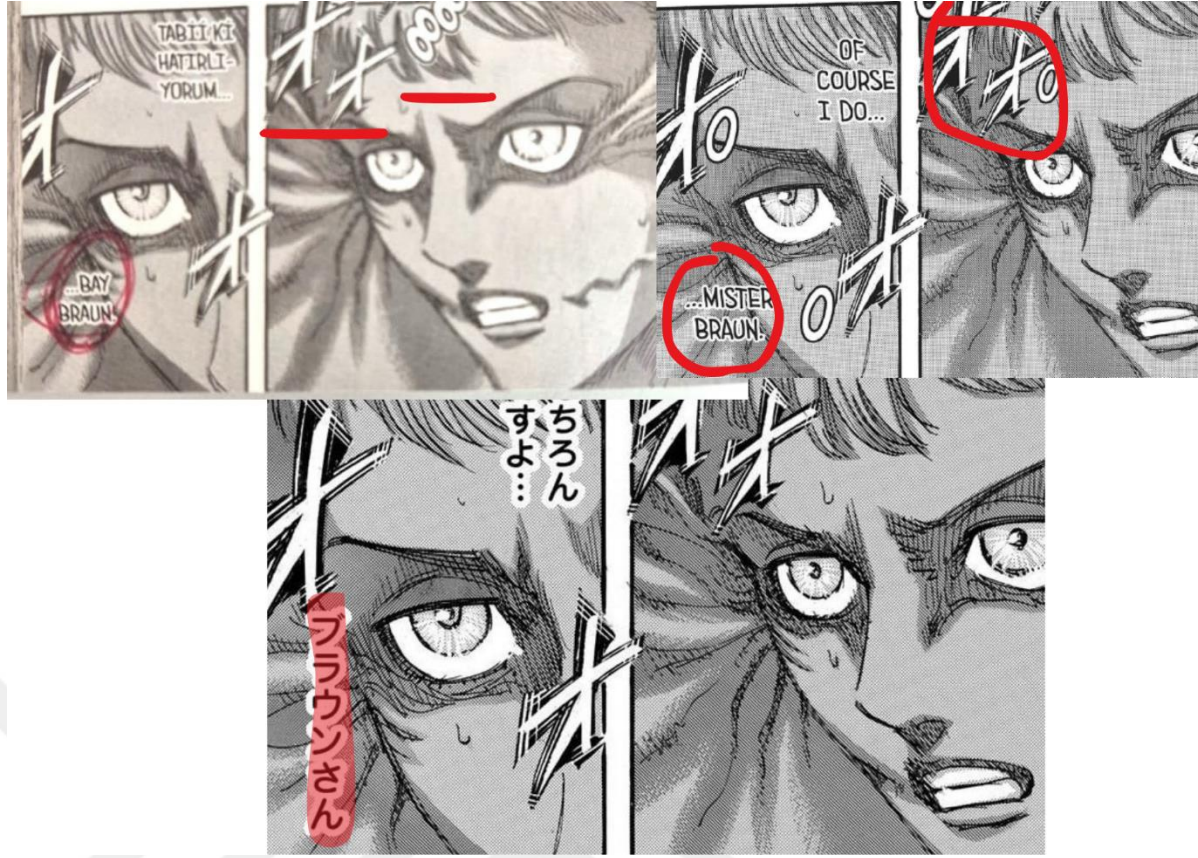


Figure 2: Falco²

As in the previous scene, the translator accurately preserved the meaning. In Japanese, some honorifics are used to talk to older people. Given that Falco is around 15, he is actually using an honorific in the original text which is translated as “Braun – san”. However, in the English translation, it is decided to be translated as "Mister," and in Turkish as “Bay” which is a more natural way to call someone in English and Turkish.

On the other hand, translating "Mister" as "Bay" is using the direct formal equivalent in Turkish. Even though it is a full equivalent, the word "bay" does not feel all-natural in Turkish since it is not used daily. Even though it points to a slight foreignization, it retains the same meaning and emotion throughout the scene. A translation like "Braun Bey" would feel more natural in Turkish. However, it also gives

²Isayama, H. (2009–2021). Shingeki no Kyojin [Attack on Titan] (Vols. 1–34). Kodansha.

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Isayama, H. (2015–2022). Titana saldırı (Vols. 1–34) (Çeşitli çevirmenler, Trans.). Gerekli Şeyler Yayıncılık. (Orijinal eser 2009–2021’de yayımlandı)

a sense of a less formal setting, and the relationship between Mister Braun (Reiner) and Falco was formal and military, even though they were close.

On the other hand, the scene's layout shows loyalty to the original, which is important for page design and conveys emotion. The translation to Turkish fits into the speech balloon, which also maintains the visual balance that is actually essential for *manga* coherence.

The other part I would like to point out is using onomatopoeia in Japanese. In the second part of this scene, Japanese writings can be seen over the character's head. Those are sound effects since Falco, at that exact moment, is a titan and flying.

The onomatopoeia is part of the panel which means translating it suggests retouching the whole panel and it is a costly and time – consuming process (Jüngst, 2014, p.80). Leaving it as it preserves the sound effects aesthetically and phonetically. Also, the reader will be able to form an impression of the sound, too (Jüngst, 2014, p.80).

As mentioned before, *manga* uses many ways to tell its stories, from actual words to sound effects, and the audience is familiar with this system and even looks for this when buying or reading a translation. Since the audience is familiar with these settings, seeing these effects on paper or screen feels more natural and connected to the story. By not translating these effects, the translator respects the aesthetics and reader expectations. Overall, this scene shows faithfulness to the tone, the formality of the part, and the *manga*–specific aesthetics.

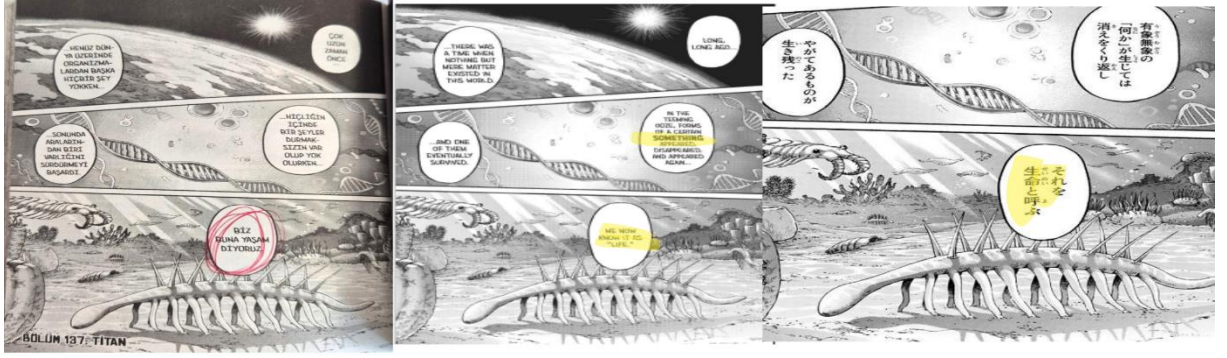


Figure 3: Showing the parasite – like creature³

This part is the opener of the chapter “Titan”. Even though the creature resembling an arthropod, it is the creature we see connecting to *Ymir* and later to Eren. It does not let its host to die, so it is safe to assume it represents life itself. However, with this take on life itself is seen as a parasite eventually.

Firstly, again, the loyalty to page layout can be seen throughout the part. The speech balloons are about the same size and place, which protect the page design and aesthetics. These elements are necessary for a comic’s translation.

Since the creature cannot be put in a box and understood completely, it becomes a disturbing creature that would eventually destroys the humanity.

It was made obvious in this scene that “life” we know appeared and disappeared, created and died, until the point one of them survived. The foundation of life was to stay alive and multiply to guarantee existence. So, the creature, “life”, was focused simply on existing and has done anything in its power and the way “life” was created proves just brought pure chaos.

Under the light of this point, the translation conveys the main point of the text. The English translation has a somewhat philosophical and even an abstract tone that explores the birth of “life”, and it also resembles the start of a myth. Nonetheless, the Turkish translation chooses a more explanatory way and the language used feels more

³ Isayama, H. (2009–2021). *Shingeki no Kyojin* [Attack on Titan] (Vols. 1–34). Kodansha.

Isayama, H. (2012–2021). *Attack on Titan* (Vols. 1–34) (K. A. Appert et al., Trans.). Kodansha Comics. (Original work published 2009–2021)

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scientific, like “organizma” for “mere matter”. This points to some type of domestication to make it easier for the readers to understand, especially the younger ones.

Newmark emphasizes that the translator must have a knowledge on literary and non – literary textual criticism, since in order for him to interpret the text appropriately, he has to estimate the strategies he may use and choose from these and then translate it (p. 5). Newmark also makes a point about translation is a delicate but complex craft that replaces a written message in one language to another one. No matter how hard the translator tries to protect all of the text there will always be a loss of meaning due to the factors such as culture, geography, collective traumas or memories of a nation, ethnicity and, so on. This loss also causes and exactly on the overtranslation and undertranslation, which means respectfully increased detail and increased generalization (p. 7).

Although it cannot be said that this part was overtranslated it, the way it was explained in the Turkish translation loses the intensity of the English translation since it feels more poetic and even ambiguous as much as in its original, too. Both the original, Japanese, and the English translation use the word “something” and these versions use stress this word. However, in Turkish this stress is somehow missed.

On the other hand, because calling the creature the readers see an organism raises a danger for it to be understood as a real living being, where it has been theorized in the fandom that the creature that was seen multiple times could be a parasite, life itself, even the harbinger of the apocalypse itself.

This translation shows how *Attack on Titan* finds a place in different settings in different cultural and literary systems and also how they can follow clarity and minimalism while the Turkish version adapts a more “scientific” way. Although the translation is in the same system, *manga*, the context changes as it is transformed into Turkish. Even – Zohar in his polysystem theory suggests that the idea of systematicity do not need to be identified with homogeneity since a semiotic system is homogeneous, which makes it a polysystem. These systems interact with each other all the time and sometimes they even overlap (p. 290). Taking this into consideration and Aixela’s culture – specific item theory, the translation of an abstract word such as “life” are not bound to any culturally depended context but it is seen as a philosophical

concept, so the strategy was to translate it to make it resonate it more personally. Accordingly, the English translation privileges immediacy by using “life”, more common and understandable word for the audience, and avoids more technical alternatives like “existence”. On the other hand, the Turkish translation prefers a more formal word “yaşam” over “hayat”. By doing so, the translation reads as more scientific in the target language which leads target to understand the concept that was told.

The translation evokes a personal and emotional impact, as much as familiarity in the Turkish translation. The English translation has a lot more loyalty to the tone and on the other hand the Turkish translation approaches a more emotional proximity, showing it as an intercultural mediation. The English translation avoids replacing abstract terms, like “life”, with culturally loaded or emotionally altered alternatives. Besides, unlike the Turkish translation, it does not reframe the context for greater intimacy but keeps a more neutral position.



Figure 4: Jean saving Reiner⁴

⁴ Isayama, H. (2012–2021). Attack on Titan (Vols. 1–34) (K. A. Appert et al., Trans.). Kodansha Comics. (Original work published 2009–2021)

Isayama, H. (2015–2022). Titana saldırı (Vols. 1–34) (Çeşitli çevirmenler, Trans.). Gerekli Şeyler Yayıncılık. (Orijinal eser 2009–2021’de yayımlandı)

Although this scene is mostly overlooked in Vol. 34, it is actually an important one since Jean hated Reiner after he found out that Reiner was one of the titans that destroyed the city walls. In addition to this, Reiner, with Bertholdt and Annie, tried to kidnap Eren multiple times since he had the Attack Titan, who could live time collectively, has no past, present or future and manipulate it as well, and can control the mindless titans.

Because of these reasons, even though it is not surprising that Jean saving Reiner since they are in the middle of a war but him saying these words to him shows forgiveness as well as an ingrained, stubborn pride. Jean and many more have been in the Survey Corps for many years, surviving and watching their comrades die all the time. It is only natural for them to have this type of pride and passion to survive.

On the other hand, the Turkish translation holds a more formal and honorable tone. When the Turkish military culture is taken into consideration the Turkish translation reflects a pride and valor that is in the culture itself.

The strategy used is domestication in order to align the pride, martyrdom, and military bravery in the Turkish culture.

In the English text it is seen that “ought to die trying” proposes a self – sacrificial mission and persistence and loyalty to this duty. However, in the Turkish translation using “şansımızı denemeliyiz” offers a more optimistic and even softer outlook despite the fact that there is a war and an attempt of genocide by Eren. So, the tone is shifted from duty to chance and grim to a softer tone. This reflects the hopeful attempt in the face over tragic incidents that lies in Turkish culture, so it softens the weight for the Turkish readers.

Furthermore, one of the main points in this scene is the translation of “Survey Corps”. Even though the exact dictionary meaning was used for the word survey, it also loses the symbolic meaning the word it carries for the fans. Because most of the fans would read the official translation after they have already finished the scanlations. As a result, the translation holds and conveys the meaning by localizing and keeping it more functional but also it loses the sentimental meaning.

Even though some of the meaning is lost while translating “Survey Corps”, the translation has a different approach to maintain the balance and regain the meaning by adding “askerleri” since military service is seen honorable in Turkish culture.

This can be explained with what Aixela points out. Different cultural features create different factors for translator to consider. These features, as seen in this part of the *manga*, may overlap and translator becomes the mediator, since each linguistic community has its series of habits, value judgments, classification systems, etc. By having these cultures create the factors for the translator that needs to be taken into account at all times (p. 53).

Also, Anthony Pym states that translation is actually a transaction which the cost has to be observed carefully. If the translation of a text costs more than the benefits, there would be no point to translate. It would be nothing more than a waste of sources (p. 456).

According to this point, it is seen that the Turkish translation becomes a mediator that was created by the difference between the culture. Japanese military heroism and Turkish values of national service and perseverance are different from each other even though they may look the same. The adaptation respects and fills the gap between these two very similar but also different cultures by ensuring it resonates within the Turkish military cultural context.

Overall, for this scene, despite the fact that the translation was coherent in content, in the frame of aforementioned points it also reviews the cultural alignment, making it a fit more into the Turkish narrative of endurance, honor, and duty.

Table 1: Survey Corps Dialogue

Survey Corps Dialogue

Element	English	Turkish
Identity Phrase	Survey Corps doesn't know when to give up	Asla pes etmemizle ünlüyüz
Moral Imperative	We ought to die trying	Ölene kadar şansımızı denemeliyiz
Terminology	Survey Corps	Araştırma Birliği Askerleri

The table above shows that elements like “Identity Phrase”, “Moral Imperative”, “Terminology” are instances where cultural, ideological, or institutional references to Aixela’s Culture – Specific Items Theory, which also need to be negotiated in translation. Also, the strategies listed in the table are Aixela’s categories of conservation, retaining the original references) and substitution (adapting or replacing the references) showing *Attack on Titan*’s language is culturally loaded and conveyed differently in Turkish and English.



Figure 5: The Rumbling⁵

The first part I would like to point out is that the “Rumbling” term. The loyal audience of *Attack on Titan* is familiar with the term, since it has been mentioned and explained multiple times, both in *manga* and *anime*. The name comes from the sound that the Colossal Titans generate while they are trampling the earth with everything on

⁵ Isayama, H. (2009–2021). *Shingeki no Kyojin* [Attack on Titan] (Vols. 1–34). Kodansha.

Isayama, H. (2012–2021). *Attack on Titan* (Vols. 1–34) (K. A. Appert et al., Trans.). Kodansha Comics. (Original work published 2009–2021)

Isayama, H. (2015–2022). *Titana saldırı* (Vols. 1–34) (Çeşitli çevirmenler, Trans.). Gerekli Şeyler Yayıncılık. (Orijinal eser 2009–2021’de yayımlandı)

it. In the English version it was kept, foreignized, as it was, using the canon term that fans recognize making it easier to read and comprehend.

However, in the Turkish translation, it was not kept as the same but it was descriptively translated as “yerle bir etme silahı”, the weapon that destroys everything, which explains what the Rumbling does. Aixela states that culture – specific items are usually expressed in a text by means of objects and of systems of classifications and measurement whose use is restricted to the source culture (p. 56). As it can be seen in the Turkish translation, for clarity and accessibility fandom fidelity was sacrificed. The highlighted part in the original is translated as “Rumbling” into English. Hence, the English translation seems to respect the intercultural expectations of familiarity of Anthony Pym, assuming the reader already know what “the Rumbling” is.

Additionally, the Turkish translation takes the domestication approach, translating the meaning of the word and adapting it for the target audience. However, as discussed in the previous chapters, *manga* and anime has created their own semi – autonomous cultural system, in which audiences are already familiar with specific terminology tied to the medium. In this context, adapting “The Rumbling” reflect what Even – Zohar describes as “the multiplicity of intersections and the greater complexity of structuredness involved” (p. 291). The translation operates at the intersection of two overlapping systems which are the global *manga* subculture, where the term is already familiar, and the Turkish linguistic and literary system, which most of the time domestication is prioritized to provide accessibility to readers. In this example, reader comfort in the Turkish system overrides the preservation of loyalty, which is usually typical to the global *manga* system. Hence, the decision to adapt “The Rumbling” references to Even Zohar’s polysystem theory as a heterogenous network in which competing norms interact, even leading to the prioritization of target – culture expectations over fidelity to the source.

The other part of the scene is more conversational and emotionally open while the Turkish translation is more formal, narrative, and slightly more distanced than the English version by using past tense and speculation.

All in all, the Turkish translation tone reflecting a military and/or tragic tone, commonly seen in Turkish literary style while the English version feels more

speculative and consistent with the wartime’s reflection. The cultural adaptation was used to preserve tone for the Turkish target culture.

The table shows that the terms that are recognized by the fans like “the Rumbling” are reconstructed in Turkish in order to match the cultural tone and provide more comfort to the reader.

Table 2: The Rumbling

Feature	English	Turkish
Key Term	The Rumbling	Yerle bir etme silahı
Tone	Reflective, indirect	Formal, explanatory
Cultural Approach	Assumes canon familiarity	Emphasizes clarity, context

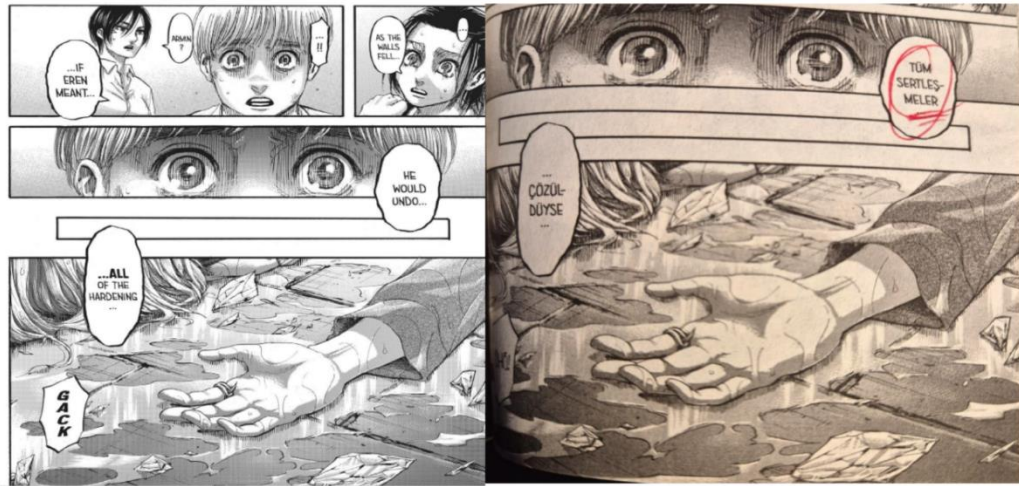


Figure 6: Armin talking about Annie.⁶

⁶ Isayama, H. (2012–2021). Attack on Titan (Vols. 1–34) (K. A. Appert et al., Trans.). Kodansha Comics. (Original work published 2009–2021)

Isayama, H. (2015–2022). Titana saldırı (Vols. 1–34) (Çeşitli çevirmenler, Trans.). Gerekli Şeyler Yayıncılık. (Orijinal eser 2009–2021’de yayımlandı)

This panel shows lexical equivalence that was chosen in the Turkish translation. “Hardening” is a specific, canon and plot – related term used in *Attack on Titan* throughout the series that refers to a power only some titans have which is a crystal – like defense technique. The Turkish translation uses the literal dictionary equivalence of this word.

It can be considered as the correct translation but on the other hand, lacks the descriptive and emotional gravity. Even though it is accurate, the Turkish translation misses the drama of the moment and also avoids the metaphor that can be seen in the English translation, which actually resonates with the images shown in the panel.

As a result, fidelity was prioritized over the emotional impact and lexical accuracy was conserved.

In the other part of the panel, structure of the sentences is a bit shifted. In the English translation conditional future action was used, “He would undo...”, however in the Turkish translation, a passive and past perfect structure was chosen, “Çözüldüyse...”, which shifts the focus from Eren’s own choice to an event that already has occurred. This choice may mean and point subject dislocation, which could cause confusion and reduce the clarity on Eren’s responsibility and duty.

This panel illustrates Even – Zohar’s polysystem theory as it shows how the Turkish translation of a *manga* adapts to the aforementioned norms of the target’s system. In the English translation, the phrase “...all of the hardening” mirrors the Japanese original’s vagueness, protecting suspense and allowing the revelation to unfold step by step. On the other hand, the Turkish translation “Tüm sertleşmeler ... çözüldüyse” conveys the meaning with a functional clarity, stating what has happened and leaving little interpretive ambiguity. These reflects the interaction between the overlapping systems, which are *manga* subculture and the Turkish system, respectively retains source – oriented pacing and prioritizing immediate reader comprehension. The choice shows Even – Zohar’s theory that polysystems are heterogeneous and intersecting, with the norms of the target system shaping the final translation.

On the other hand, “hardening” can be considered as a term that belongs to *Attack on Titan*. The lexically accurate, in other words literal, translation is more conservative and it avoids the loss in meaning but also it lacks the suspense in the narrative.

The real problem arises when this is considered from the point of interculturality. Turkish readers who are familiar with the *Attack on Titan* universe would not have a hard time understanding what is “sertleşmeler” but the risk of missing the actual and even deeper meaning for the new readers is high. Along these lines, although the translation stays within the intercultural frame, it lacks the bridging act for the gap for the outsiders.

The panel, overall, shows how literal translation choices can affect and even dilute the narrative, emotional resonance and dramatic pacing, even when they are technically correct. Translators working in this type of intercultural fandom system can lean towards loyalty but this strategy may come at the cost of clarity for wider audiences.

Table 3: Hardening

Element	English	Turkish	Notes
Key Term	Hardening	Sertleşmeler	Accurate but dry
Agency	He would undo	Çözülüyse	Passivizes Eren
Tone	Conditional, suspenseful	Past, passive	Less urgency
Cultural Accessibility	High for fans	Assumes fan familiarity	Risk of alienation

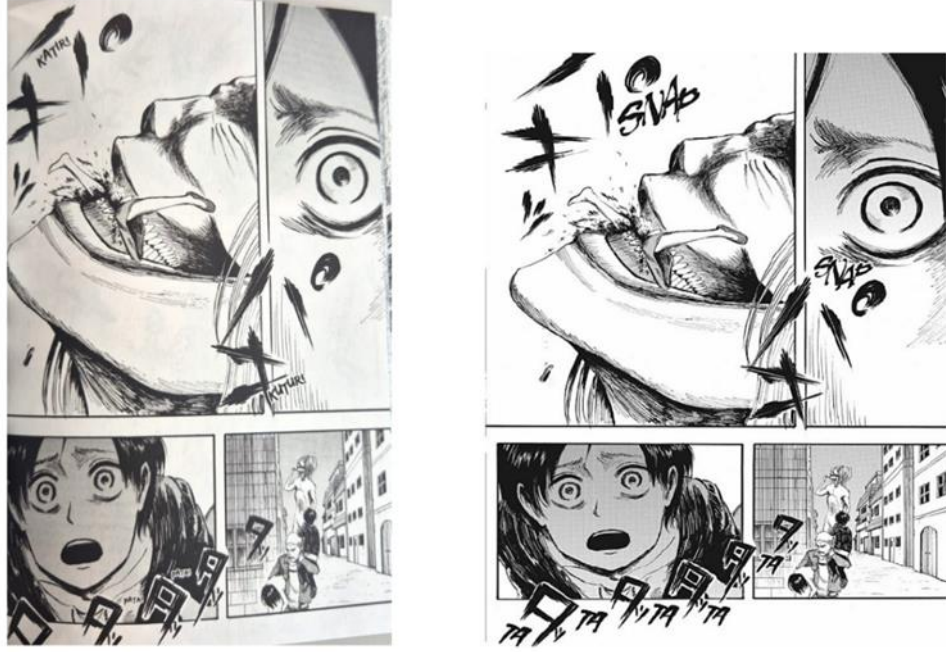


Figure 7: Eren's mother devoured by a titan⁷

This panel shows that, just like mentioned in previous chapters, that *manga*, as a genre, does not rely on just words to tell the story but it also uses visual moments and onomatopoeia as much as words. In this panel, both of these are used and represent the tragedy, horror, and pain. The panel uses a sound effect (SFX), which is argued in *manga* translation studies.

In English the word “snap” is a standard SFX used for biting, cracking, or biting which can be understood easily and is familiar with audiences all over the world. On the other hand, “katır” is the sound representation of something cracking or snapping in Turkish, however it is not standardized at all in Turkish comics.

⁷ Isayama, H. (2012–2021). *Attack on Titan* (Vols. 1–34) (K. A. Appert et al., Trans.). Kodansha Comics. (Original work published 2009–2021)

Isayama, H. (2015–2022). *Titana saldırı* (Vols. 1–34) (Çeşitli çevirmenler, Trans.). Gerekli Şeyler Yayıncılık. (Orijinal eser 2009–2021’de yayımlandı)

The English translation maintains the natural comic language it normally uses while the Turkish translation chooses a domesticated word, adapting it to the expectations of the Turkish audience, even though it may feel unnatural in the context.

In both translations SFX is integrated with the visual narrative, but the English SFX is in line with the aesthetic more than the Turkish translation since “katır” feels slightly disconnected and unnatural in a comic.

Even though “katır” attempts an intercultural bridge, as Pym suggests, it has also the risk of alienate the audiences who are not familiar with the comic culture and the norms surrounding SFX. “Snap”, on the other hand, is a term that the global audience is already exposed and familiar with from Western comics.

As Even – Zohar’s polysystem suggests that the semiotic systems are heterogenic it can be considered that in Turkey, *manga* translations, especially *Attack on Titan*, leans more onto the domestication to increase readability for some part of the audiences. However, some SFX may seem inconsistent can distract the reader from the story.

Table 4: Sound Effects

Feature	English (“SNAP”)	Turkish (“KATIR”)	Strategy	Effect
Onomatopoeia	Literal, standard	Domestic, adapted	Literal vs. Substitution	Clarity vs. Familiarity
Cultural Approach	Foreignized	Domesticated	Global vs. Local	Efficient vs. Awkward
Visual Integration	Seamless	Slightly intrusive	Aesthetic alignment	Weaker in Turkish
Reader Expectation	Matches comic norms	Less conventional	Familiar to fans	May confuse general readers

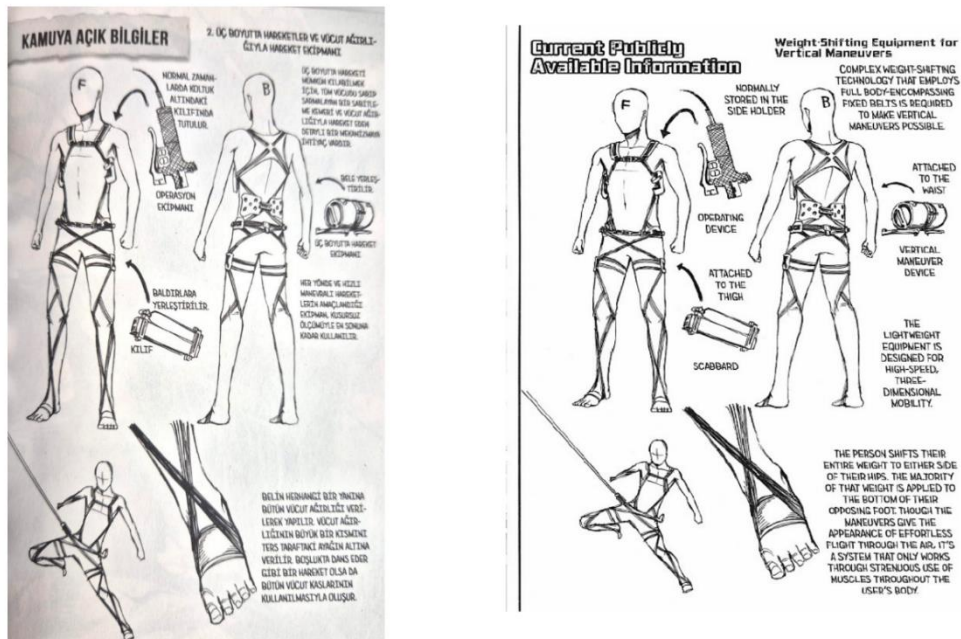


Figure 8: Information on the equipment⁸

The figure presents an instructional diagram for the 3D maneuver gear which was core element throughout the series.

The English translation uses a more institutional phrasing like “Current Publicly Available Information” to give the feeling of military while the Turkish translation uses an almost – literal equivalence, “Kamuya Açık Bilgiler”, also maintains the same formal tone. It is seen that formal equivalence is used as a strategy to protect the tone and the way of registering the information. This also falls straight with the polysystem – aligned adaptation where the translator respects the genre’s need while translating.

Since it is a technical text, the Turkish translation translates the phrases like “weight – shifting equipment” with technical accuracy, even though it looks longer and feels less natural than the English translation, “vücut ağırlığıyla hareket ekipmanı”. It is safe to say that for readability, technical specificity is sacrificed at

⁸ Isayama, H. (2012–2021). *Attack on Titan* (Vols. 1–34) (K. A. Appert et al., Trans.). Kodansha Comics. (Original work published 2009–2021)

İsayama, H. (2015–2022). *Titana saldırı* (Vols. 1–34) (Çeşitli çevirmenler, Trans.). Gerekli Şeyler Yayıncılık. (Orijinal eser 2009–2021’de yayımlandı)

some point, this point also aligns with Aixela's adaptation in order to fit local cognitive frames.

The terms like “scabbard” and “operating device” were translated as “kılıf” and “operasyon ekipmanı” respectfully. These terms are standard technical translation; thus, the translation is transparent. However, words like “operasyon” feels too militarized in Turkish when it comes to *manga* translation, which, again, distract casual readers or outsiders with this type of jargon.

- *English:* “The person shifts their entire weight to either side of their hips...”
- *Turkish:* “Belin herhangi bir yanına bütün vücut ağırlığı verilir...”

The Turkish translation finds a medium to mimic the English translation with a more passive structure, which feels like a lecture note unlike the English, which reads as a manual.

Since it is a more technical panel than the rest of the *manga* there is no need for intercultural adaptation. It is loyal to the technical terms and the comfort of the reader is on the second, which would propose no problems for the readers who are familiar with the *manga*.

On the other hand, terms like “vertical maneuver device” are genre – specific CSIs. The Turkish translation relies on the direct transfer, with a few explanations in order to convey the meaning a bit more but also these explanations risk a loss of clarity for the new readers who are, most of the time, are unfamiliar with the genre itself.

Additionally, the choice of formal translation that mirrors the English translation's formality also positions this specific *manga* as a “serious” one in Turkey, since the culture of *manga* and anime is still new.

Overall, the panel is a clear example of technical translation in *manga*. The Turkish translation prioritizes the loyalty and lexically equivalent, however while staying loyal it often loses specificity.

Table 5: 3D Maneuver Gear

Feature	English	Turkish	Result
Title	Current Publicly Available Information	Kamuya Açık Bilgiler	Accurate & formal
Subtitle	Weight-Shifting Equipment...	Üç Boyutlu Hareketler...	Broader, less specific
Component Labels	Operating Device, Scabbard	Operasyon Ekipmanı, Kılıf	Slight tone mismatch
Description Style	Active, instructive	Passive, descriptive	Less engaging
Cultural Accessibility	High for fans	Moderate	Technical but dry



Figure 9: The walls destroyed⁹

⁹ Isayama, H. (2012–2021). Attack on Titan (Vols. 1–34) (K. A. Appert et al., Trans.). Kodansha Comics. (Original work published 2009–2021)

Isayama, H. (2015–2022). Titana saldırı (Vols. 1–34) (Çeşitli çevirmenler, Trans.). Gerekli Şeyler Yayıncılık. (Orijinal eser 2009–2021’de yayımlandı)

This panel is the opener of the *manga* that conveys all the emotions of Eren and why he chose to attempt a genocide at the end of the story. He thought that they were caged like birds and lived like cattle.

The cultural insight of polysystem theory by Aixela shows that the term “birdcage” can be understood through multiple contexts and cultures, since it is an internalized symbol of helplessness, which also resonates with Japanese post – WWII trauma mentioned in the previous chapters.

It is seen that the strategy adopted in translating at this part of the panel is word – for – word, in other words it was translated literally. In addition to this, using the format “being held captive” focuses on a continuous imprisonment, enhancing the emotional heaviness of the panel.

The translation successfully bridges the cultural metaphor with a preserved emotional tone.

“Onlar tarafından kontrol edilmenin verdiği korkuyu” → “the terror of being dominated by them”

The Colossal Titan and Armored Titan defies everything the characters have known up until some point and does not fit into the knowledge people behind the walls had.

Also, using the word “terror” over “fear” intensifies the suspense of the situation, since terror is explained as a feeling of dread. People behind the walls do not know how titans operate, live, or kill, which creates the environment for true terror. Also using capitals while writing “THEM”, intensifies the drama of the scene, falls straight with *manga*’s storytelling norms.

The effect of the panel comes also from the dominant structure of the aesthetic of *manga* within multiple cultural and literary systems.

As previously discussed, Anthony Pym’s concept of culture relates to the situation that the meaning of a *manga* is not only textual but also visual. The panel combines faces that are filled with fear, architectural clues, and the smoke the titan caused while transforming. This type of smoke is seen and talked throughout the *manga*, which symbolizes the war trauma, even Hiroshima – like visuals since while titans, especially the Colossal, emits extreme heat and smoke and causes an explosion.

Also, the way facial expressions frames layers of shame and fear because human race lacks the strength, knowledge, and bravery to take out the titans. In addition, the panel also reflects the polysystemic interaction of Japanese and Western cultures, such as the reference to atomic bombings and the structures around the characters.

This part shows an example of a balanced intercultural adaptation by being faithful to the depth seen in the English translation, but also it stays accessible and understandable and it resonates with the Western readers, too.

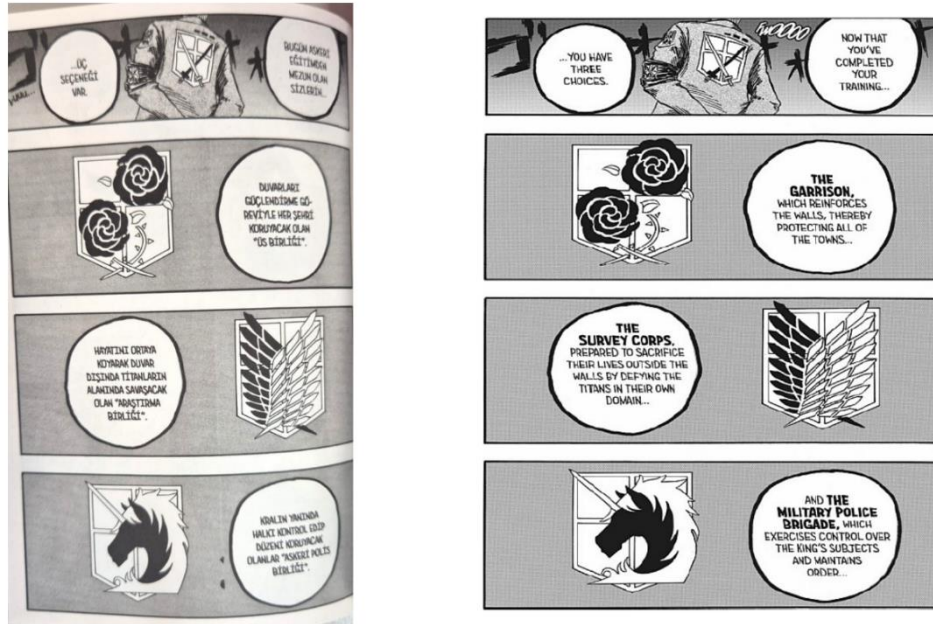


Criterion	Result
Cultural Element Retention	✓ Metaphors like “birdcage” and “THEM” preserved
Emotional and Narrative Tone	✓ Amplified to match manga’s graphic/emotional aesthetic
Intercultural Sensitivity	✓ Aligns with reader expectations, both Japanese and Western
Theoretical Fit (Thesis context)	✓ Matches Aixela (CSI), Zohar (polysystem), and Pym

Figure 10: Military branches behind the walls¹⁰

This panel introduces the military branches behind the walls that have different roles and ideologies.

- 1) Garrison Regiment (Üs Birliği)
- 2) Survey Corps (Araştırma Birliği)
- 3) Military Police Brigade (Askeri Polis Birliği)



¹⁰ Isayama, H. (2012–2021). Attack on Titan (Vols. 1–34) (K. A. Appert et al., Trans.). Kodansha Comics. (Original work published 2009–2021)
Isayama, H. (2015–2022). Titana saldırı (Vols. 1–34) (Çeşitli çevirmenler, Trans.). Gerekli Şeyler Yayıncılık. (Orijinal eser 2009–2021’de yayımlandı)

The part given is not only about the military branches that is seen throughout the *manga* but it also reflects the hierarchy, ideology, and even sacrifice.

“Duvarları güçlendirme göreviyle her şehri koruyacak olan ‘Üs Birliği’.”
→ **“The Garrison, which reinforces the walls, thereby protecting all of the towns...”**

The Turkish translation refers Garrison Regiment as “Üs Birliği”, which basically means base unit, where the English translation uses the formal name. Calling the Garrison Regiment base unit is, in a way, translating the meaning and the context of the unit. It explains the place of the regiment before the *manga* does. On the other hand, “Garrison” is the canonical name in the universe of *Attack on Titan*.

Table 5: Military branches

“Hayatını ortaya koyarak duvar dışında titanların alanında savaşacak olan ‘Araştırma Birliği’.” → **“The Survey Corps, prepared to sacrifice their lives**

Element	Turkish Version	English Version	Strategy	Effectiveness
Formality	High/formal	Moderate	Modulation	High
Terminology	Literal names	Localized names (canon)	Substitution	High
Emotion	Implicit in verbs	Explicit (“sacrifice”, “defying”)	Amplification	High
Power Relations	Emphasized (e.g. “King’s side”)	Slightly softened	Reduction/Omission	Moderate
Cultural Position	Source-oriented	Target-audience oriented	Domestication + selective Foreignization	Balanced

outside the walls by defying the titans in their own domain...”

Although this part has a slight semantic shift the English and Turkish translation still have the same intent. Also, this panel positions *Attack on Titan*’s lore as heroic self – sacrifice. By preserving the word “domain”, the translation also protecting the fantastic concept and not rationalizing it. By modulating the words like this increases the drama and regulates *manga*’s mythic tone.

“*Kralın yanında halkı kontrol edip düzeni koruyacak olan ‘Askerî Polis Birliği’.*” → “*And the Military Police Brigade, which exercises control over the King’s subjects and maintains order...*”

“with the King” part is probably omitted and changed into “Kralın yanında” most probably for flow of the narration. This type of restructuring may lose some nuances about physical closeness to royal power. Because of this the symbolic clarity is slightly reduced, however the closeness to monarchy reflects the elite status, which can be underplayed while in the process of restructuring.

The symbolic layering of the military, and even the monarchy, corresponds to Japan’s wartime structures and also the way its bureaucracy worked. In addition, the pattern of Survey Corps’ self – sacrifice captures the post – WWII national trauma Japan went through.

The Military Police represents authority, restriction, and also the elitism the audience can come across throughout the *manga*, which raises problem later on the story, and absolute loyalty to hierarchy, which draws parallels to imperial Japan.

Although, the English translation offers a smoother language in order to maintain clarity, slightly reduces the density of the king and control. Whereas, the Turkish translation stays closer to the narration’s power balance, maintaining the ideological roles of each branch.

The panel shows a target – culture – oriented translation strategy in the English translation, prioritizing readability and globally familiar terminology, *The Garrison*, *The Survey Corps*, *The Military Police Brigade*. In Even – Zohar’s theory, it reflects the influence of English – speaking literary systems on the global *manga* system, where accessible military terminology is normalized. On the other hand, considering Aixela’s framework, the branch names are institutional culture – specific items conveyed through substitution and adaptation, making sure comprehension while reframing certain socio – political nuances.

Both of the translations show how symbolic, mythic, and also narrative systems interact across languages and different cultural systems point to the natural polysystem of *manga*. All these points shows that the translation of *manga* is an act of bridging the gaps between different cultures and systems by navigating them, which means these

are not only transferred from one language to another but they are actively restructured within a new literary and cultural framework.



Figure 11: Eren, Mikasa, Eren's mother and a titan¹¹

The final panel I would like to point out shows three close – up faces that are stricken with realization, shock, horror, and grief. Also, it consists of a full – body of a titan, facing a destroyed city. The panel has no dialogue and only involves sound effects and facial expressions.

Even though *manga* has been a literary genre, it also relies on the visuals to tell the story, since graphic story – telling may evoke more emotions than a regular dialogue.

¹¹ Isayama, H. (2009–2021). Shingeki no Kyojin [Attack on Titan] (Vols. 1–34). Kodansha.

Isayama, H. (2012–2021). Attack on Titan (Vols. 1–34) (K. A. Appert et al., Trans.). Kodansha Comics. (Original work published 2009–2021)

Isayama, H. (2015–2022). Titana saldırı (Vols. 1–34) (Çeşitli çevirmenler, Trans.). Gerekli Şeyler Yayıncılık. (Orijinal eser 2009–2021’de yayımlandı)

According to Even – Zohar, as stated before, any literary medium operates within a polysystem necessarily, since they have to exist in a network contains many cultural codes.

The panel consists non – verbal narration, which conveys the story through only imagery. Also, the positioning of the titan plays a critical role in this scene, since that particular titan was sent there by Eren and this situation was explained later in the story. In addition, the position of the titan shows themes of alienation, moral consequences, and power. These visuals do not exist as visuals but they are essential parts of the plot and also are tools to create meaning in the polysystem of the *manga*.

Although the panel does not have any text on it, what is understood and conveyed rely heavily on the cultural conditioning of the readers. A reader from the West might see a giant and a destroyed city as an apocalyptic narration and even science – fiction, where a Japanese reader who is familiar with such settings would connect this as sacrifice, national guilt, or collective trauma of post – war times.

Furthermore, the interculturality of a universal theme is shown at the panel which horror of a mass destruction. The titan can be considered the monster as a savior as much as it is a monster, since it causes the terror everyone has but also, at last, people are able to see the monster’s true face.

According to Anthony Pym, translation has a transaction cost that has to be accounted for. If the cost exceeds the purpose, there would be no use to continue the work (p. 456). Correspondent to this even without a literal translation, the visuals “translate” the themes like existential despair, destruction, WWII.

The panel shows examples to a non – verbal and visually coded cultural factors. Since the process of translation is not about translating the words but also bridging the gaps between the cultures as much as showing respect to aesthetics and cultural empathy.

CONCLUSION AND REMARKS

The cultural differences in *Attack on Titan* also challenge translators. The translators' biggest and main challenge while translating the *manga* is to maintain its intent and context since it has sensitive and possibly offensive subjects.

This thesis explores the multifaceted translation process of *manga*, focusing on *Attack on Titan* as the primary study to uncover how the cultural, linguistic, symbolic, visual, and mythological factors are delivered across languages, cultures, and contexts. Benefitting from the theoretical frameworks of Even-Zohar's *Polysystem theory*, Aixela's *Culture - Specific Items*, and Anthony Pym's *Interculturality*, the study showed that *manga* is so much more than a form of entertainment but a complex and layered cultural mediator that brings together the collective trauma and memory, and identity, sometimes national and sometimes personal, of its own source culture.

Through extensive historical research and contextualization of Japan, it was found that *manga*, specifically *Attack on Titan*, operates within a complex and hybrid system. It blends post-war Japanese trauma, WWII, atomic bombings, and seven-year U.S. occupation with Western mythologies, especially Norse. By doing so, it shapes a dystopian universe that can resonate globally with the audience and is culturally specific.

This thesis has aimed to provide an extensive investigation into the translation of *manga* in the context of culture, especially *Attack on Titan*, and how deeply embedded culture-specific elements can be conveyed through translating it from English to Turkish. It has been explored not only the linguistic challenges of the whole process but also the *manga's* sociocultural, historical, semiotic, and mythological aspects that envelop the global circulation of *manga* as a literary phenomenon and a cultural one.

Manga is an inherently polysystemic and intercultural narrative art form that is deeply rooted in Japan's history and identity. It also interacts with external influences, showing that it is an active living system.

The thesis first contextualized *manga* historically, following the evolution of it from a traditional *emakimono* and Zen art, through *kabuki* theater, *ukiyo – e* prints and finally the most modern version of it, a Western – influenced graphic narration. The historical foundation showed that *manga* is not isolated from evolving and other

genres. However, it develops with traditional Japanese storytelling at the intersection of Japan's post-WWII reconstruction and Western narrative forms.

The research on *Attack on Titan* was proved to be suitable for a study in cultural translation since the series provides examples of a hybrid narrative system that merges postwar Japanese trauma, such as atomic bombings, militarism, and defeat, with Norse mythology, political allegory in a dystopian context and also philosophical reflections of cultural identity, nationalism, and proximity to power. All of the narration is rich in culture-specific items, ranging from onomatopoeia and honorifics to visual metaphors and cultural and mythological references. These pose critical challenges for translators to take into consideration to maintain fidelity while ensuring the readability, comprehensibility, and emotional impact for target audiences.

The study's theoretical foundation rested on three key frameworks that were also discussed in previous chapters:

Itamar Even-Zohar's Polysystem Theory: Polysystem theory sees literature as part of a dynamic and heterogeneous system of multiple patterns that interact between and across borders.

Javier Franco Aixela's theory of Culture – Specific Items: This theory emphasizes and explains the translator's vital role in bridging cultural markers with strategies like adaptation, omission, conservation, etc.

Anthony Pym's Theory of Interculturality: It reevaluates translation as a space of negotiation, transaction, and exchange between overlapping cultures.

Throughout the thesis, these theoretical perspectives were applied to a detailed comparative analysis of English and Turkish translations of *Attack on Titan*. Selected panels were analyzed to evaluate how CSIs, like "Garrison," "Survey Corps," "Rumbling," or references to *Ymir* and the Coordinate, or the Paths. These CSIs were either preserved, adapted, or transformed. The results revealed that the translators use a mixed foreignization and domestication strategy, which retain source-specific concepts for authenticity and aesthetic loyalty and adapts content for cultural relevance and accessibility.

The narration of *Attack on Titan* reinforces these theories. The series shows a layered and symbolic universe where walls, memory, and monsters act as metaphors for historical and collective trauma, guilt, and national identity. The repeated

references to *Ymir* and Yggdrasill and the Titans as the embodiment of fear shows that these creatures are the projections of cultural anxieties. The protagonist and antagonist Eren Yeager's almost immediate shift from hero to villain captures the deconstruction of the monster trope and serves as a mediator for ethical questions about ideological extremism, genocide, and war.

In addition, it was also seen that elements like layout, aesthetics, facial expressions, visual contexts, and sound effects are inseparable from and vital for the narrative. The thesis also emphasized how the translators must navigate the constraints provided by the layout, such as speech balloons, panel size, right-to-left reading orientation, and visual clues that may carry culturally coded meanings. Even the act of romanization of onomatopoeia or leaving them untranslated mirrors a compromise between the reception of the text and authenticity.

Manga has become an international medium through scanlations, fan communities, anime adaptations, cosplay cultures, and social media. With these, *manga* has created its own global culture. In this thesis context, the translator's role expands beyond linguistic loyalty to become a bridge between the cultures, who negotiates meanings, protects artistic integrity, and places emotional and ideological echoes across multiple cultures.

Furthermore, this study addressed the ethical challenges in translating some genres that include controversial themes, such as gender dynamics, violence, nationalism, sexuality, rape, etc. Translators must preserve the meaning as per their job description but also be ethically accountable and sensitive, especially considering the cancel culture, increased awareness, and potential cultural offense.

The cultural translation of *Attack on Titan* was examined throughout the thesis with a focus on its English and Turkish translations. The research was guided by two primary questions: the elements that contributed to the *manga*'s popularity in different cultural contexts and the methods applied in its translation from a cultural perspective.

Regarding the first question, the findings show that *Attack on Titan*'s popularity stems from its hybrid narrative structure, where Japanese cultural and historical elements mix with Norse mythology and universal themes such as survival, genocide, oppression, violence.

The allegorical use of the “walls” as a symbol of confinement, the Titans act as both external threats and also as the reflection of human monstrosity. The recurring cycles of power and resistance created a narrative that resonates across different societies.

These symbolic elements allowed the series to move beyond its Japanese origin and position itself as a global cultural phenomenon.

The second question focused on the translation strategies employed in transferring *Attack on Titan* to a new cultural system. The comparative analysis showed that both domestication and foreignization were used strategically.

Domestication was used when clarity and accessibility in the meaning were prioritized, while foreignization was maintained for culture – specific items, both Japanese and mythological and also the elements that were special to *manga*, and symbolic elements. This showed that translation operates as a form of cultural mediation, requiring translators to balance loyalty to the source text with acceptability in the target culture.

The study further highlighted how translators navigate cultural distance and reader expectations by preserving certain cultural markers while adapting others.

In answering both questions, this thesis has shown that the global impact of *Attack on Titan* arises not only from its narrative richness but also from the translation strategies that shaped the reception in different literary systems.

The study contributes to Translation Studies by emphasizing the necessity of culture – specific approaches in understanding manga translation.

It also stresses the importance of seeing translation not as a purely linguistic activity but also as a dynamic process and intercultural negotiation that facilitates the circulation of popular culture across the borders of language.

In light of these findings, the thesis argues that *manga* translation is an interdisciplinary and intercultural practice. It requires philosophical sensitivity, historical knowledge, linguistic ability, cultural fluency, and a passion for staying updated as much as possible. The success of *Attack on Titan* not only in Turkish but also in other cultures shows that it resonates not because it has a gripping plot but

because it has universal themes that can be understood and felt by people all over the globe, like fear, freedom, and the search for identity.

In conclusion, this study proves that translation, in the context of *manga*, is not a passive and derivative process but a creative and interpretive act where the translator builds bridges between the gaps of different cultures and contexts, mythologies, and identities. Genres like *manga* keep growing and interconnected as the world connects through technology. At the same time, the translator's role becomes even more vital since the translator becomes a bridge of cultural empathy and transformation.



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