

Kurdish Celebrity Translators: The Case of Bakhtiar Ali's Translators in Iran¹

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Abstract

As one of the most eminent contemporary Kurdish novelists, Bakhtiar Ali has earned exceptional visibility in Iran through the widespread translation and circulation of his major works, such as *The Last Pomegranate Tree*, *Ghazalnus and the Gardens of Imagination*, and *City of the White Musicians*. Although these translations have significantly shaped his reception in the Persian literary field, little research has examined how the translators who mediated his fame have themselves become visible public figures. This gap is crucial because translator visibility and branding increasingly influence how peripheral literatures circulate, gain symbolic capital, and reach broader readerships. Against this backdrop, this study scrutinizes Kurdish celebrity translators in Iran through the case of Bakhtiar Ali's three Kurdish-Persian translators: Marivan Halabchayee, Reza Karim Mojaver, and Arash Sanjabi. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital and celebrity studies, it identifies the sociocultural and commercial factors contributing to their fame. By employing a qualitative case study, the analysis includes paratextual examination, media materials, digital ethnography, and critical discourse to trace translators' visibility across publishing, cultural, and online networks. The findings illustrate that celebrity status emerges from paratextual branding, mediated visibility via festivals and media, active digital engagement, and market impact through re-translations and sales.

Keywords: Bakhtiar Ali, Celebrity translators, Iranian literary field, Kurdish Translation Studies, Kurdish translators, Paratextual branding, Symbolic capital

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1. Introduction

The concept of translator (in)visibility and attention to this central figure of translation has long been debated in translation studies. Since Venuti's (1995) critique of the translator's peripheral status, scholarship has examined translator (in)visibility in relation to textual strategies, paratextual interventions, and ideological positioning (Hermans, 1996). More recently, intersections between translation studies and celebrity studies suggest translators can attain a form of mediated visibility similar to cultural celebrity when their identities intersect with marketing strategies, public discourse, and media representation. While celebrity translators have been studied in contexts such as Japan (e.g., Akashi, 2018), little attention has been paid to celebrity translators in Iran, specifically Kurdish translators.

This issue is particularly relevant in Iran, where literary translators have historically played a central sociopolitical role. Haddadian Moghaddam (2014) remarks that translators in Iran often prioritize non-economic motives over social and cultural ones, as translation serves as an instrument of fame (p.120). Unlike the Anglo-American publishing industry, Iranian publishers promote translators to the status of public figures, similar to artists, painters, and poets. This visibility adds commercial value to the works they translate and influences circulation and reception. Translators' names are typically featured on book covers and affect reading preferences and purchases, a trend reinforced in digital literary culture. Instagram pages such as 'book.hunter151' highlight 'The Best Translations' and 'The Best Translators,' while some translators promote their visibility via social media, a phenomenon Fini (2024) terms 'instafamous translators.' These practices demonstrate the symbolic and commercial value of a translator's name, which can attract attention and readership to otherwise obscure foreign authors.

Existing literature on Kurdish translators in Iran has focused on textual analysis and their roles in circulating Kurdish literature (Mozafari, 2018; Miraki &

(Noushmand, 2022). However, the symbolic capital, prestige, and visibility they acquire remain underexplored. Despite advances in theorizing translator visibility, research gaps remain regarding its commercial and cultural dimensions: how translators function as public figures, how publishers capitalize on their symbolic capital, and how visibility shapes reception.

This article addresses this gap by analyzing the mediated and commercial visibility of Kurdish translators of Bakhtiar Ali, a prominent Kurdish novelist. Focusing on three Persian translators, Marivan Halabchayee, Reza Karim Mojaver, and Arash Sanjabi, the study examines how they move beyond linguistic mediation to emerge as influential cultural agents. Their visibility is evident through book covers, media interviews, literary festival participation, and promotional presence on Instagram and Telegram. By employing celebrity studies and Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, the article develops a model for analyzing the commercial facets of translator visibility in Iran.

The study's primary aim is to explore the factors contributing to the fame of these Kurdish translators, demonstrating that recognition is influenced not only by literary merit but also by sociocultural mechanisms such as media exposure, public visibility, reader interaction, and strategic participation in literary networks. Specifically, this study is aimed at answering the following question:

1- What factors contribute to the fame of the Kurdish-Persian translators of Bakhtiar Ali in Iran?

To answer this question, the study employs a qualitative case study of Bakhtiar Ali's translations and translators (2015–2025), incorporating content analysis of paratexts (book covers, prefaces, and publisher websites), media features, and social media activity with reviews and literary commentary. This approach assesses how translators accumulate symbolic capital and become cultural figures whose names serve as powerful commercial and symbolic assets in Iran's literary marketplace.

2. Review of the Related Literature

This section delineates the principal theoretical and empirical bodies of scholarship that inform the study of translator visibility and celebrity within the Kurdish-Persian literary context. It combines five interrelated domains, translator studies, celebrity studies, the emerging theorization of the celebrity translator, Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, and empirical investigations into translators' public visibility, in order to situate the present inquiry within established sociological and cultural-theoretical debates in translation studies. Together, these bodies of literature offer the tools and perspectives needed to understand the social, cultural, and commercial factors that have made Bakhtiar Ali's translators prominent in Iran.

2.1 Translator Studies and the Sociology of Translation

Interest in translators as more than neutral conveyors has grown with the advent of sociological turn in translation studies, which reconceptualizes translation as socially embedded and highlights translators' roles within networks of power, culture, and ideology (Kalantari, 2014; Berneking, 2016). Scholars like Chesterman (2009) and Wolf (2007) frame this focus as the "sociology of translators" or "sociology of agents." Drawing on Bourdieu's habitus, field, and capital, this perspective emphasizes the agency of translators, publishers, critics, and patrons in shaping translation, aligning with Lefevere's (1992) notion of the translator as rewriter and Venuti's advocacy for visibility. Translators, particularly of peripheral literatures like Kurdish and Persian, become influential figures whose decisions shape cultural representation and intercultural communication. Schögler (2017, p. 402) identifies four major sociological approaches: Bourdieusian, Goffman's dramaturgical, Luhmannian, and Actor-Network Theory-inspired frameworks.

2.2 Celebrity Studies

Celebrity studies examine how fame is produced, circulated, and consumed, emphasizing that celebrity functions as a cultural system shaped by ideology, media industries, and capitalist structures (Rojek, 2001; Turner, 2014). Dyer's works (1979,

1986) introduced the “star image” as a composite construct shaped by visual, verbal, and auditory representation. Marshall (1997) analyzed celebrity as a space where public and private identities intersect, while Gamson (1994) highlighted its emergence at the intersection of cultural meanings and media institutions. Rojek (2001) framed celebrity as both a mode of representation and a constitutive element of modern culture, and Turner (2004/2014) conceptualized it as a commodity and industry. Redmond and Holmes (2007) expanded the field to include globalization, gender, race, and emotional resonance in fame production.

2.3 The Concept of Celebrity Translator

While earlier scholars discussed translator status and visibility (Venuti, 1995; Simeoni, 1998), Hadley and Akashi (2015) introduced the term “celebrity translator” in Japanese literary translation, describing translators with widespread recognition influencing publishing and cultural production. The concept intersects translation studies and celebrity studies, portraying translators as marketable public figures. Scholars like Sela-Sheffy (2006) and Heilbron and Sapiro (2007) emphasize symbolic capital, while Driessens (2013) and Marshall (1997) highlight celebrity as cultural and economic capital shaped by media exposure and branding. Celebrity translators actively perform, self-promote, and engage in literary, political, or cultural discourses. Akashi (2020) demonstrates how Meiji-era translators gained fame via public visibility and paratextual presence. Contemporary translators, such as Anthea Bell and Ann Goldstein, similarly shape the reception of authors and texts, blending authorship, authority, and public presence, showing translation carries symbolic and commercial weight.

2.4 Bourdieu’s Concept of Symbolic Capital

Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital provides the foundation for examining how translators accumulate prestige, legitimacy, and influence across cultural, literary, and digital networks. Bourdieu’s framework connects individual agency to field structures, enabling an analysis of how translators’ recognition is shaped by

publishers, media institutions, and audience reception. Celebrity studies complement this Bourdieusian perspective by explaining the mechanisms through which fame is produced, circulated, and consumed. By integrating these two frameworks, the study captures both the structural and mediated aspects of translator celebrity: symbolic capital offers a measure of cultural legitimacy, while celebrity studies illuminates visibility, branding, and audience engagement. The study evaluates alternative sociological approaches, including Actor-Network Theory (ANT) and Luhmann's systems theory; however, ANT emphasizes distributed agency without adequately addressing hierarchical power relations, while Luhmann focuses on abstract systems of communication rather than individual prestige and market influence. Therefore, integrating Bourdieu and Celebrity Studies provides the most productive and context-sensitive framework for addressing the central research question concerning the factors, mechanisms, and media contributing to the fame of Kurdish translators in Iran.

2.5 Empirical Studies

Hadley and Akashi (2015) sparked discussion of celebrity translators, exemplified by Haruki Murakami. Akashi (2018) analyzed Murakami's branding and paratextual visibility, showing how fame affects readers' expectations and publisher strategies. Her thesis, *Contesting Invisibility*, further explored factors in translator fame, including agency, publisher strategy, and audience perceptions. Stock (2022) examined how translator fame influences reception in British theatre, using examples like Ravenhill's *Life of Galileo* and Stephens' *A Doll's House*. Guay (2022) applied celebrity translator concepts to Murakami's translation of *The Catcher in the Rye*, showing how translators balance cultural sensitivities and audience expectations. Akashi (2024) explored Murakami and Shibata's celebrity status in Japanese publishing, revealing how it generates commercial value through paratexts and publisher networks. Shepherd (2024) analyzed Emily Wilson's translations of Homer, showing technical mastery and media attention as central to her recognition. İlmek

(2025) examined Turkish translators of James Joyce, highlighting how media engagement distinguishes highly visible celebrity translators from merely recognized ones.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative, case study approach, informed by Bourdieu's concept of capital and Celebrity Studies, to examine how Kurdish translators of Bakhtiar Ali, Marivan Halabchayee, Reza Karim Mojaver, and Arash Sanjabi, gain cultural visibility and symbolic prestige in Iran. A case study design (Susam-Saraeva, 2009; Yin, 2009) is suited for in-depth exploration of individuals within real-world contexts. The translators were purposively selected for their high visibility across literary and media networks, active digital presence (Instagram, Telegram), close ties with Bakhtiar Ali, and frequent engagement with critics, readers, and publishers.

Data collection incorporates multiple sources: paratextual materials (book covers, prefaces, footnotes, blurbs, publisher catalogs, online bios), media appearances (TV interviews, festival talks, press coverage), digital platforms (Instagram, Telegram, YouTube, Goodreads, including user interactions), and critical discourses (reviews, essays, literary magazines, event commentaries). Paratexts reveal self-presentation and branding; publisher discourse shows institutional framing; media appearances highlight public recognition; digital platforms capture audience interaction; and critical discourse traces symbolic capital circulation. This multi-dimensional framework provides a comprehensive understanding of both internal mechanisms (translation practices, paratexts, branding) and external forces (publisher strategies, media visibility, audience reception) shaping the emergence of translators as celebrity figures in a non-Western literary context.

4. Analysis & Findings

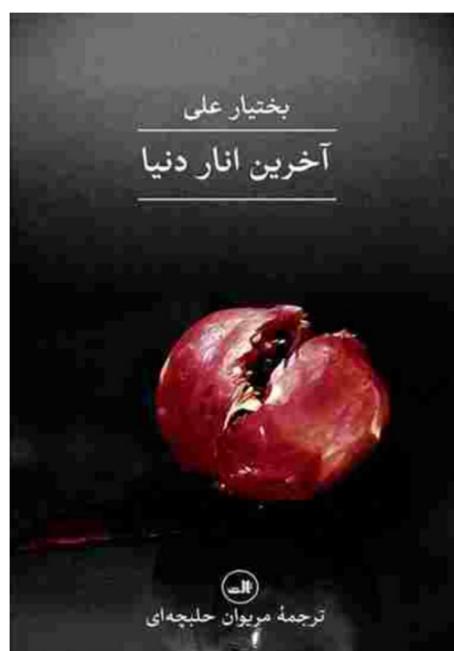
The analysis is structured around four interconnected facets through which Bakhtiar Ali's Kurdish translators, Marivan Halabchayee, Reza Karim Mojaver, and

Arash Sanjabi, gain visibility and prestige in Iran's literary field: (1) paratextual branding, (2) mediated visibility and cultural networking, (3) digital engagement and (4) market impact. This illustrates how translators carefully grow their symbolic status and use it to gain cultural and economic recognition, emerging as celebrated figures in non-Western literature.

4.1 Paratextual Branding and Symbolic Capital

Publishers in Iran actively put emphasis on translators in paratexts to enhance symbolic value. Book covers, blurbs, catalogues, and online promotions often present the translator's name in bold or stylized typography equal to or larger than the author's design choice that following Kress and van Leeuwen's (2020) grammar of visual salience, marks the translator as a co-branded cultural authority. By highlighting translators' prior achievements, such as reprints, awards, or media appearances, paratexts frame them as figures of prestige.

Figure 1. Book Cover of the Persian Translation of *The Last Pomegranate of the World* (*Diwahemîn Henary Dûnya*), translated by Marivan Halabchayee



Publishers like Afraz further reinforce symbolic legitimacy by including facsimiles of Bakhtiar Ali's Kurdish handwriting or authorizations, thereby

consecrating the text while elevating the translator as an authorized mediator. These practices, uncommon in Anglo-American publishing, reflect Iranian norms where translators often function as cultural gatekeepers. Symbolic capital thus accumulates not only through translation itself but through the framing of translators as an indispensable agent of authenticity.

Figure. 2. Bakhtiar Ali's formal authorization for Afraz Publisher to translate his works appears on the opening translation page of Mojaver's *The Mansion of the Sad Birds* (*Koşkî Balinde Xemgînekan*), serving as a paratextual marker of authenticity and symbolic legitimization within the 2013 edition (p. 6).

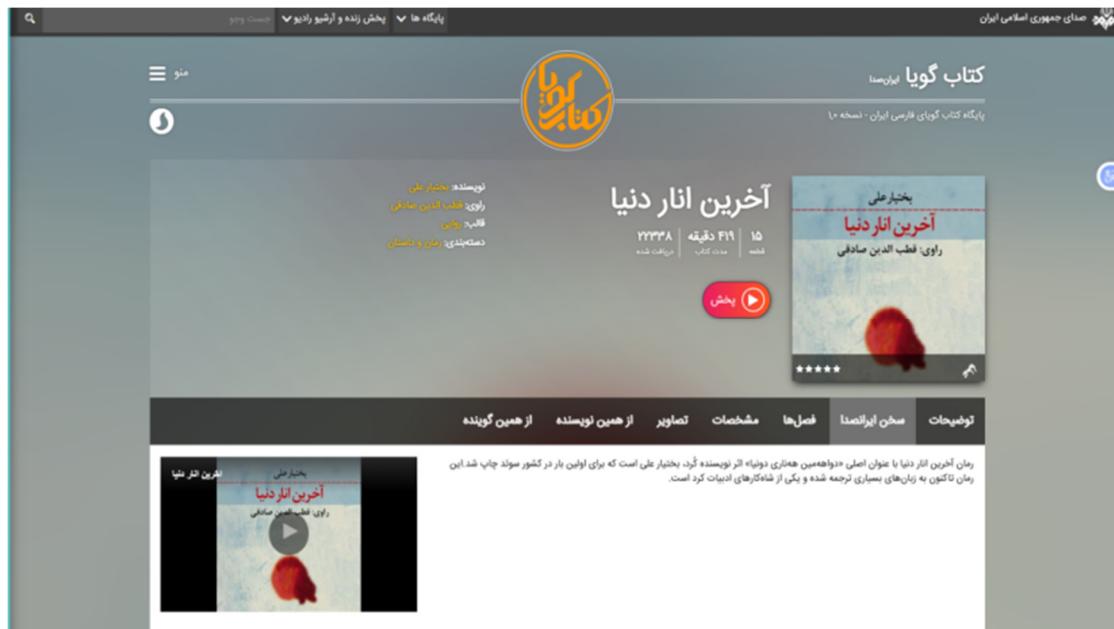
Figure 3. Afraz Publisher included the phrase 'By assigning the publishing rights in Iran' on the cover of the Persian translation of *The Last Pomegranate of the World* (*Diwahemín Henary Dúnya*), translated by Arash Sanjabi



Paratextual visibility also extends beyond print. Audio-book adaptations narrated by renowned Iranian actors routinely highlight the translator's name, embedding it within performance and extending recognition across media platforms. Similarly, theatrical adaptations, such as the stage version of *The Last Pomegranate of the World*, link translators' names with new cultural forms, further broadening their reach and reinforcing their celebrity status. In Bourdieu's (1984) terms, these practices strategically accumulate symbolic capital that both publishers and translators can mobilize for broader cultural legitimacy. By way of example, Ghotbeddin Sadeghi, a prominent Kurdish theater director produced the audiobook of *The Last Pomegranate*

of the World for the Iranian Persian audio book Database, and throughout his reading he consistently references the translator's name.

Figure 4. Iranian Persian Audio Book Database shares the audio nook of Bakhtiar Ali's acclaimed novel *The Last Pomegranate of the World*



Moreover, in the case of Bakhtiar Ali's novel, *The Last Pomegranate of the World*, the paratextual visibility of the translator moves beyond the confines of textual, digital mediation to the spotting of their roles in the adaptation of Bakhtiar Ali's works into other media, including theatre and film, thus signaling a multimodal cultural reach that further adds to the symbolic capital and fame of the translators. That being said, the translators of Bakhtiar Ali are re-introduced in new medium and platforms. For instance, Ebrahim Poshtkohi breathed new life into the translations of Bakhtiar Ali's novels by adapting his novel, *The Last Pomegranate of the World*, for the scene in Hafez Hall. The adaptation piqued the curiosity of the audience about Kurdish literature in general and Bakhtiar Ali and his translations in particular.

Figure 5. Stage adaptation of Bakhtiar Ali's *The Last Pomegranate of the World* based on its Persian translation



4.2 Mediated Visibility and Cultural Networking

Publicity and media appearance of Kurdish translators of Bakhtiar Ali's novel, especially television interviews, literary festival panels, literary discussion, review sessions and press conference and coverage have been decisive in paving the way for the celebrity and public profiles of Bakhtiar Ali's translators. One major hub in which Kurdish translators of Bakhtiar Ali exercise their agency and wield their influence is The Tehran Book Fair. It emerges as a recurring stage for visibility, with all three translators participating in panel discussions and book signings that were subsequently covered by Iranian cultural magazines and online news outlets. Tehran book fair is in congruent with Moeran's (2011) conception of book fairs as "tournaments of values", where economic, cultural and symbolic capitals gather together. Similar to Frankfurt and London book fair in which Moeran (2011) provides an in-depth analysis, The Tehran Book Fair operates not only as a commercial marketplace, but as a competitive hub in which various actors compete for prestige,

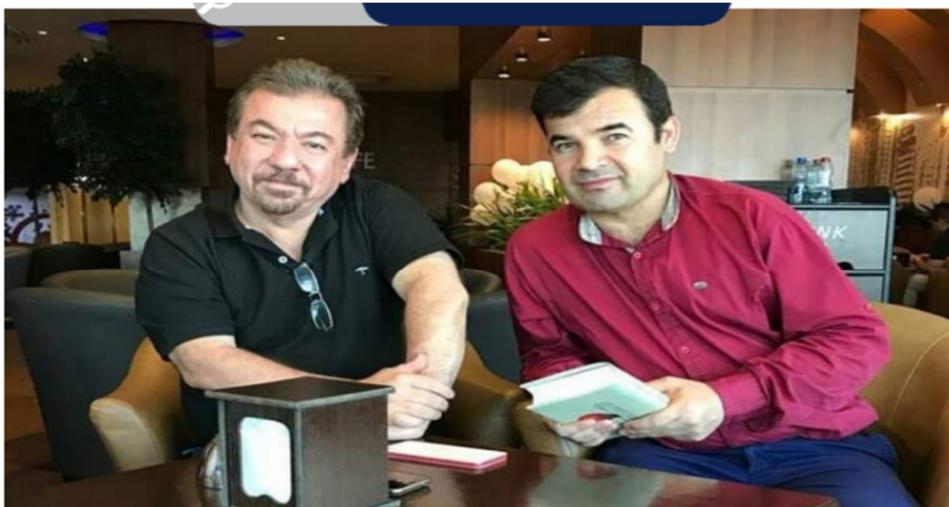
recognition and influence. It is within this publishing environment that The Tehran Fair expedite rights negotiations, professional networking and the accumulation of symbolic capital that can be employed in the following literary and translation projects. Ethnographic perspectives on such events similar to Moeran's detailing of participant practices, reveal how translators' interactions, public engagements, and media visibility at the fair actively construct and circulate their cultural value within Iran's literary field.

These appearances are not merely incidental; they demonstrate what Driessens (2013) calls mediatization of celebrity, the process by which visibility is sustained and amplified through repeated circulation in media channels. For instance, Halabchayee's televised interviews on state and satellite channels are often clipped and reposted on Instagram and Telegram, creating a feedback loop of exposure. Mojaver's participation in roundtable discussions alongside prominent Iranian critics and authors positions him within elite literary networks, further consolidating his status as an authority on Kurdish literature.

Networking with influential actors in the Iranian literary polysystem, publishers, critics, festival organizers, has also been decisive. Publishers' websites often feature joint interviews with the translators and Bakhtiar Ali, reinforcing the image of a collaborative partnership rather than a one-directional author–translator relationship. This co-presence in public discourse enhances the translator's cultural legitimacy and visibility. In cases, the heightened visibility of Bakhtiar Ali's translators is reminiscent of postmodern call for the re-conceptualization of the translator as an author in its own right (Bantinaki, 2019). This prominence of the figure of the translator can be found in the precedence of the Persian translations of Bakhtiar Ali over the original Kurdish version. For example, the fourth session of Bukhara Magazine's Sunday Evening series was devoted to a meeting with Marivan Halabchayee with the attendance of some eminent Iranian critics such as Hanieh

Rajabi, Mohammad Qasemzade, Azim Tahmasebi. More importantly, the meeting was broadcast live through a link shared by Tabnak.

Figure 6. Marivan Halabchayee and Bakhtiar Ali's Meeting



انتشار ترجمه فارسی رمان جدید بختیار علی همزمان با نسخه کردی

ترجمه فارسی رمان «وحشت شکارچیان از سکوت»، جدیدترین اثر بختیار علی، نویسنده سرشناس کرد همزمان با انتشار نسخه کردی آن در ایران منتشر خواهد شد.

به گزارش خبرگزاری کتاب ایران (ابینا)، ترجمه جدیدترین رمان بختیار علی که هنوز به زبان کردی هم منتشر نشده است، از اسفند ماه سال گذشته از سوی مریوان حلیچه‌ای شروع شد و اخیراً به پایان رسیده است.

Figure 7. The poster of a meeting with the author and translators

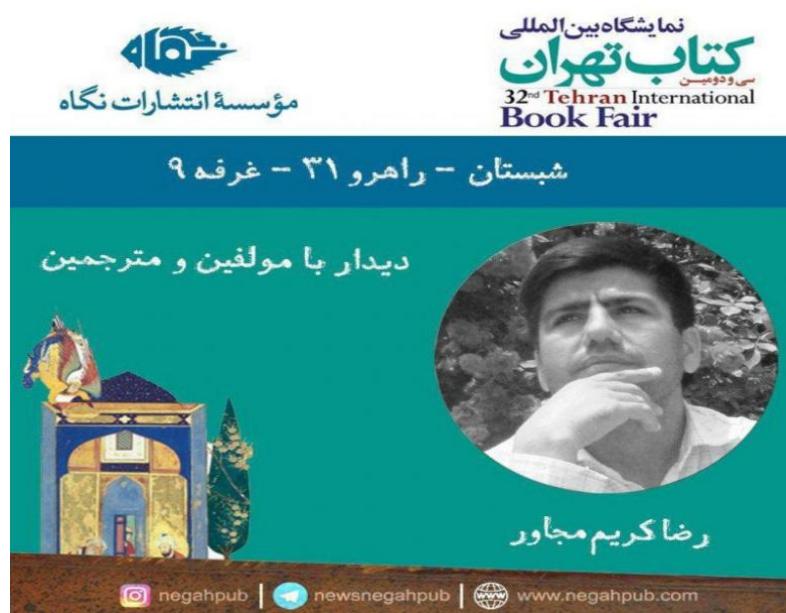


Figure 8. A meeting with Marivan Halabchayee, arranged by Sales publisher in The Tehran Book Fair



Figure 9. A review session and book signing event for the book *The City of White Musicians*, by Kurdish author Bakhtiar Ali, in the presence of the book's translator Marivan Halabchayee and a group of writers: Mohammad Reza Aslani, Mohammad Ghasemzadeh, and Hossein Zandi, at Sarvo Sanandaj Bookstore.



4.3 Digital Platforms and Audience Engagement

The translators' active use of digital platforms, especially Instagram and Telegram, has transformed their roles from behind-the-scenes mediators to accessible literary personalities. Content ranges from excerpts of translations in progress to personal reflections on Kurdish culture, photographs from literary events, and reposted fan reviews. This form of digital ethnography reveals the cultivation of what Ommundsen (2007) calls a literary brand persona, blending professional expertise with curated glimpses of personal taste and values.

Instagram accounts such as Afraz regularly feature the translators in categories like "Best Translators" and "Best Translations," reinforcing the perception of these individuals as cultural tastemakers. Audience interaction, via comments, reposts, and direct messaging, serves not only as real-time reception data but also as a means of sustaining symbolic capital through what Marshall (1997) terms performative intimacy: the deliberate creation of closeness between public figures and their followers. It is most clearly seen in Sanjabi's close affinity with his audience and readers through Instagram.

Within the framework of celebrity translator theory, Sanjabi exemplifies a translator whose visibility extends far beyond textual production into the realm of public performance and cultural capital. A notable example is the celebration of the 13th reprint of *The Last Pomegranate of the World*, Bakhtiar Ali's acclaimed novel translated by Sanjabi and published by Afraz, which was publicly endorsed on Instagram by the prominent Iranian musician @baradmusic. Such celebrity endorsement aligns with Marshall's (1997) argument that celebrity is constituted through mediated performance across multiple platforms and becomes inseparable from patterns of cultural consumption.

Sanjabi's prominence is co-constructed through multiple channels. As an established theater director and playwright, he recontextualizes Bakhtiar Ali's works

into other media, films, theatrical productions, and adaptations, thereby extending the paratextual life of the translation and reinforcing his profile as both mediator and creator. His wife, Elaheh Ghasem Zadeh, further amplifies the reach of Ali's literature through her Persian translation of *The City of White Musicians*, creating a familial network of translatorial agency that enhances their collective symbolic capital.

Digital paratexts play a decisive role in sustaining Sanjabi's celebrity status. On minimalist Instagram pages such as @minimalha, which boasts over one million followers, excerpts and quotations from Bakhtiar Ali's novels are frequently posted, often tagging Sanjabi and crediting him alongside the author. This repeated citation constitutes what Hermans (1996) terms "symbolic authorship," wherein the translator's name accrues cultural authority and becomes an integral part of the text's public identity. Even in decontextualized fragments, the translator's visibility is maintained, demonstrating the increasingly performative nature of translation in the digital age (Rojek, 2001; Turner, 2004).

Figure 10. The publication of Bakhtiar Ali's quote along with the name of the translator and publisher by @minimalha page in Instagram



The construction of Sanjabi's celebrity also benefits from inter-celebrity dynamics. Well-known Iranian actors and artists regularly quote, promote, and publicly endorse his translations, blurring the boundaries between translator and performer. As Ommundsen (2010) and Akashi (2017) note, translators in peripheral contexts can achieve celebrity status when they occupy hybrid roles, authors, cultural brokers, and public figures, whose work circulates across intersecting media and cultural networks.

In Iran's literary culture, quoting well-known authors on social media is a widespread phenomenon; however, in many instances involving Bakhtiar Ali's works, the translator's name is given equal, if not greater, prominence than the author's. This reflects the depth of Sanjabi's symbolic capital and the strength of his public persona. His presence in over 200 documented review and critique sessions, in cafés, libraries, schools, and cultural venues, alongside literary critics further reinforces his visibility, suggesting that his celebrity status is sustained through both digital and face-to-face forms of cultural mediation. Follower counts further signal marketability. Sanjabi's Instagram account, for example, surpassed 25,000 followers in 2025, a figure that publishers referenced in promotional material to highlight his popularity. Digital engagement is thus not a peripheral activity but a measurable asset that influences publishers' marketing strategies.

Figures 11 & 12. Two comments by two Iranian singers about Sanjabi's translation of *The Last Pomegranate of the World*.



4.4 Market Impact and Retranslation Dynamics

The conversion of symbolic into economic capital is evident in sales performance, reprint announcements, and market positioning. Publishers explicitly link the commercial success of Bakhtiar Ali's novels to translators' prestige, employing celebrity branding strategies that echo Marie Kowalczyk's (2011) concept of the celebrity brand as a commercial catalyst.

Retranslation has become a key mechanism for increasing both symbolic and economic capital. *The Last Pomegranate of the World*, for instance, exists in multiple Persian translations, yet the edition backed by a translator with stronger institutional recognition, e.g. Sanjabi, dominates sales and discourse. Table 1 shows that retranslations often follow closely on the heels of initial versions, with more visible translators quickly eclipsing earlier ones. This dynamic illustrates Bourdieu's principle of symbolic competition: translators' reputations and publishers' institutional weight determine market dominance as much as textual quality.

Table 1. The Re-translation of Bakhtiar Ali's Novels in Iran

Source Title (Kurdish)	Translator	Retranslator	Title of the Translation (Persian)	Year of Translation	Year of Re-translation
جهمشید خانی مامم که با همیشه لهگه‌ خویدا دمیرد	Reza Karim Mojaver	Marivan Halabcaye	عمویم جمشید خان: مردی که باد همواره او را با خود می‌برد	۲۰۱۲	۲۰۱۶
شاری موسیقاره سپیمه‌کان	Reza Karim Mojaver	Marivan Halabcaye	شهر موسیقیدانهای سفید	۲۰۱۰	۲۰۱۵
هموره‌کانی دانیال	Mehri Barhon	Marivan Halabcaye	ابرهاي دانيال	۲۰۱۶	۲۰۱۶
دواهه‌مین همناری دنیا	Marivan Halabcaye	Arash Sanjabi	آخرین انار دنیا	۲۰۰۴	۲۰۰۹

Re-translation also reflects glocalization strategies, where Kurdish narratives are continually reframed to suit shifting Persian readerships and global literary trends. By repackaging texts with new paratexts and translator branding, publishers sustain the novels' visibility and profitability. In this sense, re-translation is not merely a textual phenomenon but a commercial strategy that sustains the circulation of both symbolic and economic capital.

Altogether, findings demonstrate that the fame of Bakhtiar Ali's translators in Iran is not incidental but the product of systematic strategies across paratexts, media, digital platforms, and market dynamics. Translators' names function as brands, their public presence is amplified through cultural networking, and their symbolic capital is sustained through interactive digital engagement and re-translations.

This multifaceted process disrupts the traditional paradigm of translator invisibility. Instead, translators emerge as cultural agents whose visibility is deliberately cultivated and capitalized upon by publishers, media, and audiences. In Iran's literary marketplace, where Kurdish narratives circulate within complex socio-political and cultural frameworks, translators become co-branded celebrities whose symbolic capital translates directly into commercial success. Their prominence exemplifies a broader global trend in which translators, especially in inter-periphery contexts, are re-positioned as public intellectuals, cultural brokers, and marketable personalities at the intersection of literature, media, and commerce.

5. Discussion

The findings display that the fame of Marivan Halabchayee, Reza Karim Mojaver, and Arash Sanjabi stems not from translation quality alone but from the interplay of symbolic capital, media visibility, and cultural networking. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1993) concept of symbolic capital and celebrity studies (Ommundsen, 2007; Driessens, 2013; Akashi, 2020), these translators function as both cultural mediators and branded public figures within the Iranian literary field. Their

recognition emerges from a multi-layered process where cultural authority, media strategies, and market logics intersect. Venuti's (1995) critique of translator invisibility, often confined to textual presence, is extended here: visibility manifests materially and symbolically beyond the translated text, on book covers, media, and digital platforms. Translators' names in Iran sometimes rival or surpass authors' names, exemplifying Damrosch's (2003) "re-centering" of literary authority, with translators acting as co-producers of cultural value. Sela-Sheffy's (2006) argument that translators construct elite professional identities is intensified through celebrity logics. Following Driessens (2013), celebrity emerges as symbolic capital generated by media representation. Frequent appearances at television programs, book fairs, and literary festivals transform professional prestige into public recognition. Digital platforms further consolidate celebrity status. By cultivating performative intimacy on Instagram and Telegram (Marshall, 1997), these translators directly engage audiences, fostering loyalty and brand recognition, echoing Akashi's (2020) findings in Japan. Online self-branding and audience cultivation blur the line between professional authority and public persona, making digital visibility a strategic asset. The Iranian publishing field facilitates the translator-as-celebrity phenomenon. Unlike Anglo-American markets, Iranian publishers actively highlight translators' names, employing co-branding strategies in interviews, catalogues, and promotional materials, enhancing sales, readership engagement, and media attention. These practices reposition Kurdish literature within the Persian mainstream while elevating translators as central cultural actors. Market-oriented strategies, including re-translations and strategic promotion, further transform translators into symbolic and commercial assets. These dynamics have implications for Translation Studies, expanding the notion of translator agency beyond textual decision-making to encompass media performance, branding, and audience management. In inter-periphery literary systems, translator visibility is not incidental but structurally embedded in cultural production. For Celebrity Studies, Kurdish translators illustrate

how celebrity can arise outside entertainment domains, combining professional expertise with audience engagement across multiple platforms.

As identified in this study, the fame of Marivan Halabchayee, Reza Karim Mojaver and Arash Sanjabi arises from multiple interconnected factors rather than translation quality alone, including the following factors respectively:

1) Paratextual branding: publishers prominently display translators' names on book covers, blurbs, prefaces, and online catalogs, often giving them equal or greater prominence than the author, which enhances their symbolic capital. Recognition of previous achievements, awards, reprints, and authorizations further consolidates prestige. 2) Mediated visibility and cultural networking: public appearances at literary festivals, book fairs (e.g., Tehran Book Fair), media interviews, roundtable discussions, and review sessions elevate translators' visibility. Networking with critics, publishers, and influential literary figures positions them as authoritative cultural mediators. 3) Digital engagement: active presence on social media platforms, particularly Instagram and Telegram, allows translators to cultivate a literary persona, interact with audiences, and sustain symbolic capital through performative intimacy and repeated mediated exposure. 4) Market impact: translators' fame is reinforced through commercial dynamics, including re-translations, sales, and publisher strategies that link commercial success to translators' prestige. High visibility in institutional networks often ensures market dominance.

6. Conclusion

This study examined Kurdish celebrity translators in Iran by focusing on Bakhtiar Ali's three Kurdish-Persian translators: Marivan Halabchayee, Reza Karim Mojaver, and Arash Sanjabi. Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital and insights from celebrity studies, it identified the sociocultural and commercial factors that contribute to their fame. As for the research question: *What factors contribute to the fame of these translators?* the study found that their celebrity status results from a

combination of symbolic capital, media visibility, cultural networking, paratextual branding, public appearances, digital engagement, and market strategies. Fame is thus shaped not solely by translation quality but by these interconnected sociocultural and commercial mechanisms. The findings indicate that visibility is sustained through strategic publisher practices, appearances at literary festivals and book fairs, media interviews, social media engagement (particularly Instagram and Telegram), and re-translations that consolidate both symbolic and economic capital. Digital platforms and public performances heighten their presence, positioning them as co-creators and cultural brokers rather than mere mediators of text. The Iranian context, with its emphasis on publisher promotion and digital amplification, demonstrates that translator visibility is a structural feature of literary production. This case challenges conventional notions of translator invisibility, showing that translators can operate as public figures whose names carry symbolic and commercial value. By integrating insights from translation studies and celebrity studies, the research highlights the significance of symbolic capital, branding, and mediated presence in understanding evolving translator roles, while extending the concept of celebrity into literary and cultural translation in non-Western contexts. This study has the potential to inspire further research within translation studies as a whole, particularly within the emerging field of Kurdish Translation Studies (KTS).

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