

Localising Combat Ethics in Arabic: Narrative Framing, Martial Register, and Cultural Resonance in Assassin's Creed Mirage

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Abstract: This article examines how the Arabic localisation of Assassin's Creed Mirage renders the franchise's three Creed tenets and whether its lexical and rhetorical choices can be interpreted through *furūsiyya* and Islamic virtue ethics (*akhlāq*). Using a focused qualitative design, it aligns the complete English and Arabic formulations of "Stay your blade from the flesh of an innocent," "Hide in plain sight," and "Never compromise the Brotherhood," and analyses semantic content, rhetorical form, interpersonal meaning, ethical evaluation, register, and multimodal function. The findings show semantic continuity across all three tenets. Two contain limited lexical or grammatical modulation, but none adds an unambiguous moral principle or uses unmistakably religious or classical terminology. The Arabic version nevertheless shapes the localised experience through Modern Standard Arabic register, generic reference, rhythm, and its interaction with the game's ninth-century Baghdad setting. *Furūsiyya* and *akhlāq* therefore provide productive interpretive horizons only when supported by marked language, recurrent patterns, historical evidence, and multimodal context. Ordinary contemporary martial vocabulary cannot by itself establish direct historical intertextuality. The article proposes a graded evidential model that distinguishes textual shift, contextual resonance, recurring pattern, production intention, and player reception, offering a more accountable method for culturally informed game-localisation research within translation studies.

Keywords: *akhlāq*, Arabic game localisation, audiovisual translation, combat discourse, cultural mediation, *furūsiyya*

1. Introduction

Video games are composite cultural objects. Their meanings are produced through rules, interfaces, dialogue, voice performance, visual design, music, spatial exploration, and player action. Localisation therefore does more than make words intelligible. It coordinates linguistic transfer with software architecture, narrative continuity, genre convention, platform requirements, and the expectations of a target market. In an action-adventure game, the language of commands and prohibitions is especially consequential because it tells players not only what characters believe, but also how actions such as pursuit, concealment, restraint, and killing are framed within the game world. A directive can operate simultaneously as dialogue, lore, tutorial information, and an ethical rule. Assassin's Creed Mirage is a productive case for examining these questions. The game is set primarily in ninth-century Baghdad and centres on Basim's development within the Hidden Ones. The setting encourages attention to Arabic language, Islamic history, urban culture, and the franchise's recurring concern with disciplined violence. Ubisoft

described *Mirage* as the first game in the series to be published globally with full Arabic localisation (Maguid 2023), giving Arabic-speaking players access to a version more extensive than a text-only localisation. Yet the availability of Arabic and the historical setting do not themselves establish a particular translation strategy. A culturally resonant environment may encourage historically elevated wording, but it may equally encourage straightforward Modern Standard Arabic chosen for broad regional intelligibility. The central problem is not whether the Arabic version is culturally situated—it necessarily is—but how that cultural situatedness should be demonstrated. A command may sound more solemn in Modern Standard Arabic than in contemporary English; a martial term may also occur in premodern technical writing; and a Baghdad setting may invite associations with Arab-Islamic history. None of these observations, however, automatically proves that the localisation imports a coherent medieval martial code or reconstructs the game's moral system. The analytical task is to identify observable source–target differences first and then determine whether linguistic, audiovisual, historical, or ideological explanations best account for them. This issue is especially important in the treatment of the first Creed tenet. The complete English formulation—‘Stay your blade from the flesh of an innocent’—already contains the embodied image of a weapon restrained from innocent flesh. The Arabic rendering *سيفك عن لحم الأبرياء* retains that image while modifying the weapon noun, the imperative, and grammatical number. Analysing the full source unit prevents a shortened English paraphrase such as ‘Spare the innocent’ from creating an artificial contrast in which imagery already present in English appears to have been introduced by Arabic. The example illustrates a broader methodological principle: cultural interpretation must be grounded in complete and authenticated source–target units.

The article consequently treats ethical mediation as a matter of degree. At one end is close semantic transfer, where the same moral rule is voiced in another language. At the other are additions, omissions, or patterned reframings that alter the conditions under which violence is authorised, restricted, or evaluated. Between these poles lie shifts in register, explicitness, metaphor, interpersonal stance, and rhetorical force. These intermediate choices can influence the localised experience without amounting to a replacement of one ethical system by another.

The research gap is both empirical and methodological. Arabic video-game localisation remains comparatively under-researched, particularly at the intersection of audiovisual translation, narrative ethics, and historically situated combat discourse. Existing studies have identified technical, linguistic, and cultural issues in Arabic localisation and have examined market practices and player preferences, but less attention has been paid to the micro-level framing of violence, restraint, authority, and loyalty. At the same time, studies of rewriting, domestication, and narrative framing provide powerful interpretive concepts but offer limited guidance on the evidential threshold required to connect an Arabic lexical choice to a specific historical or ethical tradition. *Assassin's Creed Mirage* provides a valuable case because it combines an Arabic-enabled release, a ninth-century Baghdad setting, and an explicit moral code governing the protagonist's

violence. The study addresses four research questions: (1) How are the three central Creed tenets rendered in the Arabic localisation of Assassin's Creed Mirage? (2) What semantic, rhetorical, interpersonal, and ethical shifts are observable in the source–target pairs? (3) To what extent can the Arabic choices be interpreted through *furūsiyya*, *akhlāq*, domestication, and narrative framing rather than through ordinary Modern Standard Arabic usage or audiovisual constraints? (4) What methodological safeguards are needed for culturally informed analysis of Arabic game localisation?

The article makes three contributions. First, it provides a transparent analysis of a closed and narratively central dataset rather than extrapolating from isolated examples. Second, it develops a graded model that distinguishes textual description, contextual interpretation, recurrent pattern, production intention, and player reception. Third, it connects Arabic game-localisation research with translation studies, ethical gameplay, and Arab-Islamic intellectual history while avoiding the assumption that elevated Arabic is automatically religious, medieval, or uniquely *furūsiyya*-inflected. The resulting account preserves the cultural significance of Arabic localisation while calibrating claims to the evidence available.

2. Literature review and theoretical framework

The literature relevant to this study spans translation as rewriting, narrative framing, domestication and translator agency, audiovisual translation, game localisation, Arabic localisation, ethical gameplay, *furūsiyya*, *akhlāq*, and new-media theory. These fields are not treated as interchangeable. Each answers a different question. Rewriting and framing explain how translations may redistribute emphasis; audiovisual translation explains material constraints; game-localisation research explains the hybrid technical-cultural product; Arabic-localisation research identifies language-specific conventions; *furūsiyya* and *akhlāq* provide historical and philosophical contexts; and game ethics helps clarify why the wording of violence matters. The framework is deliberately layered so that broad theory does not substitute for source-target evidence.

2.1 Translation as rewriting, framing, and renarration

Lefevere's (1992) concept of rewriting challenged the idea that translation is an innocent reproduction of a prior text. Rewriting is conditioned by poetics, ideology, patronage, institutions, and the receiving culture. This perspective is relevant to commercial game localisation, where publishers, platform rules, localisation vendors, voice directors, editors, and quality-assurance teams collectively shape the target product. A translated line is therefore not simply the expression of an individual translator. It is the outcome of a production environment in which consistency, age rating, market positioning, performance, and technical fit may all influence wording. Baker's (2006) narrative account adds a more precise vocabulary for examining how translation can frame people, actions, and events. Naming, labelling, temporal organisation, selective appropriation, and shifts in agency can reposition a narrative even when denotational content appears stable. Zabadi's (2022; 2023) work on the translation and packaging of Syrian narratives

demonstrates how textual and paratextual choices can foreground some public narratives while suppressing others. Although literary conflict narratives differ from games, the underlying methodological lesson transfers: claims about reframing must identify the textual or contextual operation through which evaluation changes. The existence of a morally charged topic is not itself evidence that the translation has morally reframed it. In this study, rewriting is used at two related levels. At the local level, it identifies source–target choices that alter explicitness, metaphor, agency, interpersonal relations, or moral evaluation. At the product level, it describes the reassembly of dialogue, voice, subtitles, interface, and paratexts for an Arabic-speaking market. This distinction prevents the broad claim that every localised game is a rewritten product from being mistaken for evidence that every translated line has undergone ideological reframing.

2.2 Domestication, foreignisation, and cultural mediation

Venuti's (2008) domestication and foreignisation remain influential for discussing how translations manage cultural distance. In a game set in Baghdad, however, the familiar binary becomes complicated. Arabic is simultaneously a target-market language, a language associated with the historical setting, and a global language with substantial regional variation. A formal Arabic phrase can make the game more accessible to a wide Arab audience, support the setting's historical atmosphere, or create distance from contemporary colloquial speech. The same wording may therefore domesticise for one player and heighten historical otherness for another. Cultural mediation is therefore a more precise term for the present analysis than ethical transcreation. It allows for shifts in tone, register, accessibility, and cultural resonance without presupposing a wholesale change in the game's moral framework. The localisation team may select a formal Arabic expression that fits the historical atmosphere, clarify an organisational label, or adjust an imperative for naturalness. Such decisions are culturally meaningful even when the underlying ethical proposition remains stable. Tymoczko's (2007) emphasis on translation as situated ethical and political action is useful because it links agency to concrete choices made under institutional conditions. In game production, however, agency is distributed across developers, localisation managers, translators, adaptors, voice directors, actors, engineers, and quality-assurance teams. The analysis therefore attributes effects to the Arabic target product unless production evidence supports a claim about an individual localiser's intention.

2.3 Audiovisual translation and subtitling constraints

Subtitling research stresses that meaning is distributed across verbal and non-verbal channels. Timing, shot changes, reading speed, line length, segmentation, speaker identification, sound, gesture, and on-screen action all affect translation choices. Díaz Cintas and Remael (2021) show that subtitle translation routinely involves condensation and reformulation, but games complicate the model because dialogue may occur during player-controlled action, subtitles may need to remain visible across unpredictable movement, and voice-over and subtitle assets may be produced through different workflows. A line that appears expanded or shortened

in isolation may simply respond to duration, performance, or interface design. Game dialogue also has multiple functions. It can narrate, instruct, characterise, regulate play, or supply feedback. The same sentence may be heard in a cinematic scene, displayed during a tutorial, or repeated in different gameplay conditions. Analytical units must therefore include scene function and multimodal context. If an Arabic line adds an address term, the addition may clarify who is speaking during visually crowded action. If a command is more explicit, it may compensate for an ambiguous animation or ensure that a gameplay rule is understood. Ethical interpretation is strongest only after such practical explanations have been considered. These constraints establish the order of analysis adopted here. The first question is whether an Arabic difference can be explained by direct equivalence, Arabic grammar, idiomatic expression, dubbing performance, subtitle economy, terminology consistency, or gameplay function. Broader cultural interpretation is considered only after these immediate explanations have been assessed. This order does not reduce localisation to mechanics; it prevents technical and linguistic necessities from being misidentified as ideological transformation.

2.4 Game localisation as software-mediated cultural experience

O'Hagan and Mangiron (2013) describe game localisation as a hybrid practice involving software, narrative, audiovisual assets, and user experience. Mangiron and O'Hagan's (2006) formulation of 'restricted translation' captures a productive tension: localisers may exercise creativity, but within technical, commercial, terminological, and ludic constraints. Bernal-Merino (2015) similarly situates translation within production pipelines in which text is inseparable from code and game design. This scholarship supports a view of the localised game as a target product rather than a secondary transcript, while also cautioning against treating isolated strings as free literary adaptations. O'Hagan's (2015) discussion of software-mediated cultural experience is particularly relevant to *Mirage*. The player does not encounter Arabic as a detached document. Arabic text and speech are integrated with a digital Baghdad, character animation, combat mechanics, and franchise lore. Cultural meaning emerges through this integration. Localisation can therefore contribute to immersion and cultural positioning even when individual lines are semantically close. Conversely, the historical setting can create an expectation of cultural difference that leads researchers to over-attribute ordinary linguistic choices to deep ideological design. The game's cultural richness is both a legitimate object of analysis and a source of interpretive bias.

2.5 Arabic video-game localisation

Research on Arabic video-game localisation has identified script direction, interface design, variables, terminology, proper names, titles, subtitling practice, censorship, and regional language choice as recurring challenges. Al-Batineh's (2021) descriptive study demonstrates that Arabic localisation cannot be reduced to lexical transfer; technical and cultural issues interact throughout the product. Al-Batineh and Alawneh's (2022) study of localisation levels and gamer preferences further shows that users may evaluate Arabic versions in relation to authenticity,

comprehensibility, and the degree of localisation offered. These studies justify a language-specific focus while also reminding researchers that Modern Standard Arabic is often selected for cross-regional reach. This register choice has analytical consequences. Modern Standard Arabic can sound elevated relative to everyday speech, especially in direct comparison with colloquial English dialogue. Elevation does not automatically indicate classical intertextuality. It may reflect broadcasting and subtitling norms, avoidance of regionally marked dialect, consistency with interface terminology, or a publisher's conception of prestige. Similarly, vocatives and explicit subjects may be grammatically or pragmatically natural in Arabic. A cultural reading must therefore demonstrate that a feature is marked within Arabic localisation practice, not merely different from an English conversational norm. Arabic game-localisation research has paid less attention to ethical framing at the micro-level of commands, prohibitions, and combat rules. That gap makes the present case valuable, but it also means there is no established baseline against which to classify *Mirage's* register. Comparative work across Arabic-localised action games is needed before a feature can be described as specific to this title, to historical games, or to Arabic gaming more generally. The present article therefore avoids universalising from one product and uses Arabic-localisation scholarship primarily to define plausible alternative explanations.

2.6 Furūsiyya and akhlāq as interpretive horizons

Furūsiyya is not a single medieval code equivalent to European chivalry. The historical literature encompasses horsemanship, hippology, veterinary knowledge, archery, lance use, weapons, exercises, strategy, and military instruction. Ayalon's (1961) account of exercises and games and al-Sarraf's (2004) survey of Mamluk furūsiyya literature demonstrate the breadth and technical diversity of the field. Ethical and social ideals may be associated with martial practice, but the corpus cannot be reduced to a simple list of virtues. Nor can contemporary Arabic words for sword, blade, parry, or evasion be treated as distinctive borrowings merely because they also occur in historical texts. Akhlāq is similarly plural. Fakhry's (1994) typology distinguishes scriptural, theological, philosophical, and religious-ethical traditions rather than presenting a single moral psychology. Courage, restraint, justice, and control of anger appear in Islamic ethical thought, but they are also widely distributed human and literary concepts. An akhlāq reading becomes analytically useful when a target text introduces or foregrounds character formation, intention, disciplined emotion, or moral balance in ways not already present in the source. It is much weaker when Arabic simply translates an English injunction to spare an innocent person. The study uses furūsiyya and akhlāq as interpretive horizons, not as automatic codes. A strong historical-cultural claim would require convergence: a clear source-target shift, distinctive terminology or formulation, recurrence across scenes, support from a relevant historical source, and contextual compatibility with character and setting. Production evidence or player reception would strengthen the claim further. Without such convergence, the responsible formulation is that a line may permit a furūsiyya- or akhlāq-informed reading, not that the localisation directly activates or derives from those traditions.

2.7 New media, embodiment, and cultural plurality

Manovich's (2001) account of new media identifies properties such as modularity, variability, and transcoding, all of which help explain why game dialogue circulates as mutable assets within software rather than as a fixed literary sequence. His framework is valuable for understanding localisation as the reconfiguration of a digital object, but its largely Euro-American genealogy also makes cultural plurality an important corrective. *Mirage* demonstrates that software forms are encountered through regional histories, language ideologies, and expectations of representation that cannot be reduced to a culturally neutral interface. Hayles's (1999) critique of disembodied information provides a complementary perspective. A localised line is not merely verbal information transferred between codes: it is voiced, timed, heard, read, and acted upon by embodied players. Prosody, gesture, camera position, spatial danger, and player agency can shape the force of an ethical command. Manovich and Hayles therefore broaden the framework without functioning as evidence for any specific Arabic lexical interpretation; their contribution is to justify a multimodal and culturally situated method.

2.8 Analytical model and evidential hierarchy

The literature review yields a five-level analytical model. Level 1 describes observable semantic, grammatical, rhetorical, and interpersonal differences. Level 2 interprets those differences in relation to scene, gameplay function, Arabic register, and multimodal delivery. Level 3 establishes whether an operation recurs across a defined dataset. Level 4 uses production evidence—such as localisation briefs, credits, interviews, or style guides—to explain institutional intention. Level 5 examines reception through player data. The present study makes firm claims at Levels 1 and 2, reports pattern frequencies only for the closed three-item corpus, and treats Levels 4 and 5 as directions for future research.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research design and scope

The study uses a focused qualitative case design with a closed focal corpus consisting of the three explicit Creed tenets that organise the Brotherhood's ethical code. Because these three formulations constitute the complete set of canonical tenets rather than a sample selected for dramatic effect, the analysis can report transparent within-set frequencies without implying representativeness across all dialogue in the game. A supplementary lexical inventory of martial terms and mentor-trainee language is used only to contextualise register and formulate hypotheses; it is not treated as a quantified corpus of the entire game. The design is corpus-informed rather than corpus-quantitative. Following principles of corpus-based and translation-driven corpus research (Baker 1995; Zanettin 2012), the units are aligned, displayed in full, and analysed according to an explicit coding scheme, but no inferential statistical claim is made from three items. The purpose is intensive comparison of narratively central ethical formulations. Frequency statements are

therefore limited to the closed set: semantic continuity occurs in three of three tenets; limited lexical or grammatical modulation occurs in two of three; and an unambiguous addition of a new ethical proposition occurs in none.

3.2 Primary materials and localisation status

The primary object is Assassin's Creed Mirage (Ubisoft 2023). Ubisoft's official documentation describes Mirage as the first game in the series to be published globally with full Arabic localisation (Maguid 2023) and lists Arabic among the game's supported language options (Ubisoft n.d.), confirming that the Arabic material belongs to the authorised localisation rather than to an unofficial fan translation. The focal source–target pairs were located in Zanar's (2023) gameplay recording, which presents Arabic-dubbed dialogue with synchronised English subtitles. The Arabic audio was transcribed by the researcher, and the corresponding English subtitle wording and scene context were cross-checked against Shirrako's (2023) English gameplay recording and the established franchise formulations. The Zanar recording therefore provides public, synchronised bilingual audiovisual evidence of the player-facing product, while the Shirrako recording provides an additional source-language check. Neither recording provides Ubisoft-authored aligned script files, the localisation brief, version history, or individual translator decisions. The study distinguishes delivery channels carefully. Arabic localisation is used as the general term for the authorised target product. Arabic dubbing refers to lines heard in the Arabic voice track, while subtitle refers to the English text visibly displayed on screen in the cited bilingual recording. This distinction is methodologically important because dubbing and subtitling are separate audiovisual channels and may be governed by different temporal, spatial, and performative constraints.

3.3 Unit selection and inclusion criteria

The three Creed tenets were selected because they form a closed and narratively central set rather than because they produced the most dramatic differences. Each line states a behavioural or organisational principle: protection of the innocent, concealment, and loyalty to the Brotherhood. They therefore offer a focused test of whether Arabic adds ethical content, redistributes rhetorical force, or preserves the franchise's established moral language. The set also avoids cherry-picking isolated combat commands from a larger undocumented pool. A source–target unit was included when four conditions were met: the English formulation could be established in full; the corresponding Arabic line could be transcribed consistently; the two units performed the same narrative function; and sufficient scene context was available to distinguish a Creed rule from ordinary combat dialogue. Lines with incomplete source wording, uncertain alignment, or insufficient context were excluded from the focal findings. Supplementary terms such as *نصل* (blade), *صدّ* (parry/block), and *مراوغة* (evasion/feint) are discussed as register evidence, not as independent proof of classical intertextuality.

3.4 Coding categories

Each pair was analysed in six categories. Semantic content records whether propositions, participants, objects, and conditions are retained, omitted, or added. Rhetorical form records metaphor, parallelism, abstraction, directness, and formulaicity. Interpersonal meaning records authority, solidarity, address, and degrees of obligation. Ethical evaluation records whether an action is permitted, prohibited, justified, or morally qualified. Register records whether wording is ordinary, formal, archaic, technical, or religiously marked within Arabic. Multimodal function records whether the line operates as lore, instruction, dialogue, or behavioural rule. The categories are descriptive; *furūsiyya*, *akhlāq*, domestication, and rewriting enter only at the subsequent interpretation stage. The coding separates operation from explanation. For example, a shift from singular ‘an innocent’ to plural الأبرياء is first coded as grammatical-number generalisation. It may then be interpreted as a broader maxim, a natural Arabic generic, or a stylistic preference. The code itself does not decide among these explanations. Similarly, translating Brotherhood as الأخوة is first a lexical choice. Whether it abstracts an institution into fraternity depends on context and cannot be inferred solely from the absence of English capitalisation conventions in Arabic script.

3.5 Verification and analytical procedure

The analysis proceeded in five stages. First, each English formulation was recorded in full and checked against the franchise wording used in the game. Second, the Arabic unit was transcribed and back-described as literally as possible before any theoretical label was applied. Third, each pair was coded for semantic content, rhetorical form, interpersonal meaning, ethical evaluation, register, and multimodal function. Fourth, the most economical linguistic or technical explanation was assessed, including direct equivalence, Arabic generic number, idiomatic formulation, dubbing performance, and subtitle economy. Fifth, broader readings involving domestication, *furūsiyya*, or *akhlāq* were evaluated only when the observable difference and contextual evidence supported them. Negative-case reasoning was built into the procedure. The analysis did not search only for culturally marked differences; it also examined cases in which the Arabic closely preserved the English ethical proposition. A potential cultural interpretation was weakened when ordinary equivalence, shared source imagery, or a grammatical convention provided a sufficient explanation. This procedure reduces confirmation bias and makes the absence of transformation an analytically meaningful result rather than a failed search for difference.

3.6 Reliability, reflexivity, and limitations

The analysis was conducted by one bilingual researcher; consequently, no inter-coder reliability coefficient is reported. Reliability was pursued through an explicit codebook, repeated source checking, complete display of the focal corpus, literal back-description, negative-case analysis, and consideration of competing linguistic and multimodal explanations. These procedures provide analytic transparency but

are not presented as a substitute for independent coding. A larger follow-up study should include at least one additional bilingual coder and report both agreement and the reasoning behind disagreements. The researcher's familiarity with Arabic rhetorical traditions and interest in *furūsiyya* create both interpretive competence and a risk of over-attribution. Reflexivity was therefore operationalised by separating descriptive coding from cultural explanation and by using graded claim language. 'Demonstrates' is reserved for directly observable textual relations; 'supports' for interpretations backed by multiple indicators; and 'permits' or 'may evoke' for culturally plausible readings that lack production or reception evidence. The principal limitations are the absence of publicly available Ubisoft-authored bilingual script files or aligned official transcripts, despite the availability of a synchronised Arabic-dub/English-subtitle gameplay recording; lack of access to the localisation team; uncertainty about whether the Arabic voice and English subtitle assets were produced from identical source strings; and absence of player-reception data. The three tenets cannot represent the full range of combat dialogue, and the supplementary lexical observations are not used to estimate prevalence. The study can therefore establish how the focal lines are translated and what interpretations they support, but it cannot identify individual intention or demonstrate how Arabic players actually experience the wording.

4. Results

Table 1 presents the complete focal corpus using the categories requested for transparent evaluation: source line, Arabic target line, discourse category and strategy, observable ethical shift, and analytical comment. Table 2 summarises the pattern frequencies within this closed set. The dominant finding is continuity: the Arabic localisation preserves the three ethical propositions while modulating grammatical number, lexical choice, and rhetorical naturalness.

Table 1. Source–target analysis of the complete focal corpus

English source line	Arabic target line	Category and strategy	Observable ethical shift	Analytical comment
Stay your blade from the flesh of an innocent.	صُنْ سيفك عن لحم الأبرياء	Ethical prohibition; close semantic transfer with lexical specification and number generalisation	No new ethical proposition; the protected referent becomes a generic plural	Preserves the source weapon–flesh imagery. May support cultural resonance, but does not prove direct <i>furūsiyya</i> borrowing.
Hide in plain sight.	اختب على مرأى من الجميع	Concealment maxim; idiomatic equivalence with explication	No new ethical proposition; the public field is made explicit through ‘everyone’	The paradox is inherited from English. The wording does not establish a Sufi <i>al-zāhir/al-bāṭin</i> allusion.
Never compromise the Brotherhood.	ولا تساوّم على الأخوة	Organisational loyalty; near-literal lexical transfer	No new ethical proposition; institutional and relational senses remain available	Arabic capitalisation cannot mark a proper name, so context identifies the organisation. The line does not replace it with a specifically Islamic ethic.

Table 2. Pattern frequencies in the closed three-tenet corpus

Analytical pattern	Count	Proportion
Core ethical proposition preserved	3/3	100%
Limited lexical or grammatical modulation	2/3	66.7%
Unambiguous addition of a new ethical proposition	0/3	0%
Distinctively religious or unmistakably classical terminology	0/3	0%

4.1 “Stay your blade from the flesh of an innocent”

The full English formulation already combines embodied vulnerability with moral prohibition: ‘Stay your blade from the flesh of an innocent.’ The Arabic *صُنْ سيفك عن لحم الأبرياء* can be back-described as ‘keep your sword away from the flesh of innocents.’ Both versions place responsibility on the person controlling the weapon and represent restraint through physical separation between weapon and innocent body. The translation therefore preserves, rather than introduces, the core moral imagery. The main shifts are lexical and grammatical. ‘Blade’ becomes *سيف* ‘sword’, a more specific weapon noun, while *صُنْ* conveys keeping, guarding, or preserving from contact. The singular generic ‘an innocent’ becomes the plural generic *الأبرياء* ‘the innocents’. This plural can make the command sound like a maxim applying to a protected class, although Arabic commonly uses plural definites generically. The change slightly broadens reference but does not create an ethical principle absent from English. The line can resonate with traditions that value disciplined weapon use and protection of non-combatants, including some

furūsiyya and akhlāq discourses. That resonance is contextually plausible in a Baghdad-set game, yet the words are not distinctive enough to identify a specific classical source or deliberate historical borrowing. The strongest conclusion is that Arabic retains the Creed's embodied ethics while giving them a formally balanced Modern Standard Arabic expression.

4.2 “Hide in plain sight”

The English tenet ‘Hide in plain sight’ is a compact paradox central to the franchise's ideology of concealment within public visibility. The Arabic *اختب على* *أمرأى من الجميع* closely reproduces that relation: ‘hide within/in the sight of everyone.’ The target is more syntactically explicit because it names ‘everyone’, but the conceptual opposition between concealment and visibility is inherited from the source. The line therefore illustrates idiomatic transfer rather than ethical expansion. The wording does not contain the technical vocabulary of Sufi discussions of al-ẓāhir and al-bāṭin, nor does the scene provide an explicit religious cue that would require such a reading. The line may invite philosophical associations for individual readers, but those associations belong to reception rather than to a demonstrable translation operation. Treating the paradox as a direct Sufi allusion would exceed the evidence. This case illustrates the importance of textual specificity. Conceptual parallels are not equivalent to intertextual links. A stronger claim would require recurrent distinctive terminology, thematic development across several scenes, or production testimony. Within the focal corpus, the line is best classified as semantic continuity with a small increase in explicitness.

4.3 ‘Never compromise the Brotherhood’

The third tenet, ‘Never compromise the Brotherhood’, is rendered as *ولا تسام على الأخوة*. The negative directive and the core relation are retained: *تسام* corresponds to bargain, negotiate, or compromise, while *الأخوة* can denote brotherhood, fraternity, or the bond among brothers. In context, the noun also identifies the organisation. Arabic does not reproduce the English capitalisation that distinguishes a proper organisational label from a common noun, so contextual identification carries more of the burden. The Arabic wording preserves the semantic duality already present in ‘Brotherhood’: an institutional collective and an interpersonal bond. It does not replace an organisation with a specifically Islamic principle of solidarity. Nevertheless, the lexical form can make the relational meaning more audible, particularly when voiced in formal Arabic. The result is a near-literal transfer with productive ambiguity rather than a change in the underlying ethical rule. The line therefore contributes to cultural mediation through naming and register, not through doctrinal substitution. A reception study could examine whether Arabic players hear *الأخوة* primarily as a proper name, a moral relationship, or both. The textual evidence alone supports the coexistence of those meanings but cannot determine their relative salience for audiences.

4.4 Martial terminology and furūsiyya resonance

The supplementary lexical inventory includes terms such as نصل (blade), سيف (sword), صدّ (parry/block), and مراوغة (evasion or feint). These words are compatible with martial discourse and can contribute to the historical atmosphere of the game. They are also intelligible contemporary Arabic terms used in sports, military description, literature, and gaming. Their occurrence in premodern sources does not make every modern use an allusion to furūsiyya. Historical resonance becomes more persuasive when several conditions converge: the item is unusual in contemporary game Arabic; it occurs in a recurrent cluster; a specific classical source uses it in a comparable technical or ethical sense; and the scene reinforces that association. None of the individual terms in the supplementary inventory meets this threshold by itself. They are better described as components of a formal martial register that may support, but does not prove, a furūsiyya-inflected reading. This distinction also guards against essentialising Arabic. Formal vocabulary is not automatically religious or medieval, and localisers may select a term because it is concise, precise, familiar to players, or suitable for synchronisation. Cultural resonance can emerge from the interaction of ordinary wording with setting, voice performance, and visual design without requiring direct textual descent from a classical manual.

4.5 Authority, mentorship, and ethical psychology

Mentor–trainee discourse and emotional self-control are theoretically important because Arabic can make hierarchy explicit through vocatives, kinship terms, honorifics, and modality. However, such features must be demonstrated through aligned pairs. A formal command or respectful address may reflect characterisation, dubbing convention, historical register, or a culturally specific pedagogical relation; the analyst should not assume a master–disciple model merely from elevated tone.

The same principle applies to anger, courage, and restraint. Akhlāq provides a rich vocabulary for discussing disciplined emotion, but an Arabic admonition to control anger constitutes ethical intensification only when the complete English source lacks an equivalent evaluation. When both versions regulate the same emotion or action, the relevant finding is continuity with possible register modulation. The framework is most productive when it generates testable comparisons rather than predetermining their outcome.

4.6 Summary of findings

Across the closed focal corpus, semantic continuity occurs in all three tenets (100%). Limited lexical or grammatical modulation occurs in two of three items (66.7%): the weapon and number choices in the first tenet and the explicit public reference in the second. None of the three items (0%) adds an unambiguous ethical proposition absent from English, and none uses distinctively religious or unmistakably classical terminology. These frequencies describe the complete set of Creed tenets only; they are not estimates for the game's full dialogue. The results support a calibrated account of Arabic localisation. The target version carries

forward the franchise's existing ethics of restraint, concealment, and loyalty while shaping their delivery through Modern Standard Arabic lexis and syntax. *Furūsiyya* and *akhlāq* remain relevant as possible horizons of cultural reception and as frameworks for examining marked recurrent shifts elsewhere in the game, but the focal evidence does not support a claim of systematic replacement of the source moral code.

5. Discussion

5.1 Ethical mediation without wholesale ethical transformation

The findings show that ethical content can be mediated without being fundamentally rewritten. The three Arabic tenets do not introduce a new code; they voice an existing code through another linguistic and cultural repertoire. This distinction matters because ethical transcreation implies a creative intervention that changes the moral frame available to the target audience, whereas mediation includes choices of register, generic reference, rhetorical balance, and naming that shape reception while preserving the proposition. Arabic is therefore neither a transparent conduit nor evidence of automatic moral reconstruction. The formal imperative *صُنْ*, the generic plural *الأبرياء*, and the relational possibilities of *الأخوة* can affect tone and emphasis. Their effect is cumulative and contextual rather than doctrinal. The Baghdad setting, Arabic voice acting, and historical *mise-en-scène* may make the Creed feel culturally proximate even when the lines are close translations.

5.2 Complete source units and the scale of translation shifts

The first tenet demonstrates how the scale of a translation shift depends on the integrity of the source unit. Comparing *صُنْ سيفك عن لحم الأبرياء* with the paraphrase 'Spare the innocent' would make Arabic appear to add the sword and flesh imagery. Comparing it with the complete 'Stay your blade from the flesh of an innocent' instead reveals close transfer with lexical and number modulation. The methodological lesson extends beyond this game: paraphrases and polished back-translations can erase precisely the feature being analysed. A defensible strategy assignment therefore requires full quotations, stable alignment, and descriptive back-translation. A small error at this stage can cascade from textual coding to theoretical conclusion, turning equivalence into expansion or natural register into ideological reframing. Source authentication is not a clerical preliminary; it is part of interpretation.

5.3 *Furūsiyya* and *akhlāq* as contextual frameworks

Furūsiyya and *akhlāq* remain central to the article, but their role is interpretive rather than deterministic. They direct attention to disciplined force, courage, intention, authority, restraint, and the moral formation of the warrior. They also help explain why a Baghdad-set game may activate cultural memory for Arabic-speaking players. Their explanatory value depends, however, on evidence that the target text foregrounds these concepts beyond what is already present in the source.

A rigorous furūsiyya analysis would compare the game's terminology with specialised historical glossaries, contemporary Arabic action games, and non-game martial discourse, identifying unusual clusters rather than isolated common nouns. A rigorous akhlāq analysis would locate additions or patterned shifts involving intention, emotional balance, virtue, or justified force. The three Creed tenets provide a baseline of continuity against which such innovations can be measured. This approach also avoids cultural essentialism. Arab-Islamic ethical traditions are internally diverse and historically situated, while Modern Standard Arabic remains a living contemporary register available for secular, technical, and entertainment contexts. Cultural resonance emerges relationally among words, scenes, genres, histories, and audiences; it should not be reduced to an automatic property of Arabic vocabulary.

5.4 Rewriting, agency, and distributed authorship

The findings refine the application of rewriting and framing theory. The Arabic edition is a rewritten product because it is reassembled for another linguistic market, yet not every line is ideologically reframed. Close translation can participate in a culturally distinct product, while a small shift may become ideologically significant only if it recurs systematically and interacts with voice direction, narrative selection, or gameplay cues. The concept of distributed authorship is useful here. The Arabic version is shaped by developers, localisation managers, translators, adaptors, voice actors, directors, engineers, testers, and platform standards. Without production data, a scholar cannot attribute a wording choice to one agent or reconstruct motivation. Claims should therefore refer to the target product—‘the Arabic version renders’—rather than attributing intention to an unidentified individual translator. Interviews, credits, style guides, and version histories would allow future work to connect textual patterns with institutional agency. Zabadi's (2022; 2023) framing research further reminds us that translation is embedded in circulation and packaging. In games, store descriptions, language menus, trailers, marketing claims, and interface choices can frame Arabic availability and authenticity. A full account of Mirage's Arabic mediation could therefore move beyond dialogue to paratexts and promotion. The present article limits itself to the Creed tenets, but it identifies this wider route for research rather than making the dialogue carry the entire burden of cultural authorship.

5.5 Multimodality and alternative explanations

The evidence hierarchy gives alternative explanations a formal role. An Arabic line may differ because of grammar, lip movement, subtitle duration, voice performance, characterisation, terminology consistency, or the need to communicate during action. None of these explanations is culturally empty, but they operate differently from ideological reframing. A responsible analysis does not select the most culturally dramatic explanation before testing the more immediate ones. This principle is especially important in historical games. The visual environment, music, costumes, architecture, and Arabic voice acting can create a strong sense of cultural localisation even when individual lines are close

translations. Researchers may then project the multimodal atmosphere onto the wording. The projection is understandable, but the channels must be separated analytically before they are recombined. A phrase can feel historically resonant because of the scene in which it is heard, not because its lexicon is archaic.

5.6 Contribution to Arabic game-localisation research

The study extends Arabic game-localisation scholarship in three ways. First, it shifts attention from error catalogues and general preference studies to the micro-analysis of ethical and organisational language. Second, it offers a procedure for handling cultural interpretation without flattening Arabic into either a neutral code or a religious essence. Third, it foregrounds data provenance: whether a line is voice-over, subtitle, interface text, transcription, or official script is part of the finding, not a clerical detail. The three tenets provide a baseline for further Arabic game-localisation research. Their close transfer shows that cultural localisation need not entail dramatic moralisation. Other scenes can be compared against this baseline: an Arabic line that adds a condition on killing, introduces religiously marked vocabulary, intensifies emotional discipline, or changes a mentor's authority would be more persuasive when set against central rules that are translated closely.

5.7 Ethical gameplay and player interpretation

Sicart's (2013) work on ethical gameplay helps explain why the issue matters even when the textual shifts are small. Games distribute moral experience across rules, choices, consequences, and interpretation. The Creed tenets frame the player-character's violence as limited by innocence, secrecy, and organisational loyalty. Arabic players encounter these rules through a localised voice and lexicon, but the present data do not show that the rules themselves have changed. The ethical architecture of the franchise is substantially carried over. Player reception remains the missing link. A formal Arabic command may sound solemn, archaic, natural, or artificial depending on the player's region, age, gaming experience, and familiarity with historical discourse. Some players may hear *furūsiyya* resonance; others may hear standard dubbing language. Interviews, focus groups, or controlled comparison of English and Arabic scenes could establish whether lexical choices change perceived authority, cultural authenticity, or the legitimacy of violence. Without such data, claims about player moral experience should remain prospective.

5.8 Implications for localisation practice and research design

For practitioners, the study suggests documenting decisions around violence, religion, historical register, non-combatants, and organisational terminology. A localisation style guide could indicate when elevated Arabic is intended to support historical atmosphere and when plain Modern Standard Arabic is preferred. Context-rich tools, scene video, and speaker metadata can reduce the 'blind localisation' problem described in game-localisation research. Quality assurance should check not only linguistic accuracy but whether ethical restrictions have been

unintentionally added, weakened, or removed. For researchers, a robust follow-up study should obtain official or legally accessible script data, assign stable segment identifiers, record timestamps and delivery channels, and distinguish subtitle from dubbing. The complete coding scheme should be published with copyright-compliant metadata. At least one independent bilingual coder should analyse a defined subset, with disagreements reported qualitatively and, where appropriate, quantitatively. Frequency claims should use a clear denominator, and cultural interpretations should include counter-examples. Production interviews and player-reception research would then connect textual pattern with intention and effect. These procedures do not eliminate interpretation; they make it accountable. Culturally informed humanities research is strongest when imaginative hypotheses are paired with complete data, alternative explanations, and explicit limits. The present case therefore demonstrates how Arabic localisation can be analysed as meaningful cultural mediation without requiring every formal or historically compatible expression to carry a predetermined ethical genealogy.

6. Conclusion

This article examined how the Arabic localisation of Assassin's Creed Mirage renders the franchise's central combat ethics and whether the resulting language supports interpretation through *furūsiyya* and *akhlāq*. Across the complete set of three Creed tenets, the dominant pattern is semantic continuity. The Arabic lines preserve the moral obligations to protect innocents, conceal the Brotherhood's presence, and remain loyal to the organisation, while introducing limited lexical, grammatical, and rhetorical modulation. The findings do not make localisation culturally neutral. Modern Standard Arabic register, voice performance, generic reference, and lexical ambiguity contribute to the way the Creed is encountered in a game set in ninth-century Baghdad. They can make the ethical code feel historically and culturally proximate. Yet the focal lines do not establish systematic moral reconstruction, direct borrowing from classical martial manuals, transformation of the Assassin into a *fāris*, or a measurable effect on player ethics.

The study's original contribution is a graded analytical model that links the strength of a claim to the kind of evidence available. Source–target description supports claims about wording; scene and multimodal context support interpretation; recurrence supports pattern; production records support intention; and audience research supports reception. Applied to Mirage, this model preserves the interpretive value of *furūsiyya*, *akhlāq*, rewriting, and cultural mediation while preventing ordinary linguistic choices from being overread. The practical implication is that future work should combine official or timestamped script data, stable segment identifiers, transparent frequencies, independent bilingual coding, and player or practitioner evidence. Such research may identify genuine ethical intensification in other scenes. The present analysis establishes a coherent baseline: Arabic localisation carries the Creed's ethical architecture across languages while shaping its register and cultural resonance within the target game experience.

7. Declarations

AI use acknowledgement. Generative AI tools were used for language refinement, structural editing, and assistance in identifying bibliographic details requiring verification. The author independently selected the data, checked the source–target examples, evaluated all interpretations, verified the retained references, and takes full responsibility for the final argument. No AI system generated empirical data, frequency counts, inter-coder statistics, or claims about Ubisoft’s production process.

Competing interests. The author declares no competing interests.

Data availability. The complete focal corpus and coding outcomes are reproduced in Tables 1 and 2. The article does not redistribute proprietary game scripts. The analysed lines can be located in the authorised game and in the public Arabic-dub/English-subtitle gameplay recording described in the methodology, with the English gameplay recording used for additional source-language verification. Additional transcription notes may be made available by the author for scholarly verification where copyright permits.

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