

**A Comparative Study of The Translation of the Meanings of The Holy Quran**  
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**Abstract**

This paper entitled 'Translating Cultural Expressions in the Holy Quran. It aimed at identifying translation of these expressions .It require a huge knowledge of two languages in terms of customs and traditions. Such expressions have specific meaning in cultures and language through each people. For purpose of this paper, the researchers used descriptive -analytical method because it is appropriate with the nature of the study. A number of results were reached; some of the important ones were: Translation of religious expression should be provided with a marginal help that explain to the target language reader what the source language cultural and its religious concepts aimed at identifying the strategies used in translation of culture-words in the translations Holy Quran. The researcher recommends that further studies should be conducted by other researchers. Likewise, more concern should be given to investigate translating cultural expressions of the meaning of Holy Quran.

**Keywords: - Cultural Expressions , Problems**

**المستخلص:**

جاءت هذه الدراسة بعنوان ترجمة المصطلحات الثقافية في معاني القرآن الكريم من العربية إلى الإنجليزية وأن ترجمة مثل هذه المصطلحات تتطلب معرفة كبيرة باللغتين من حيث التقاليد والعادات . هدفت هذه الدراسة لمعرفة المنهجية المستخدمة في ترجمة المصطلحات الثقافية في معاني القرآن الكريم . استخدم الباحث المنهج الوصفي التحليلي لملائمته طبيعة الدراسة . هنالك نتائج عدة تم التوصل إليها أهمها أن ترجمة المصطلحات ذات العلاقة بالثقافة بالترجمة الدنية هي التي يجب على المترجم أن يقوم بشرح هذه المصطلحات في شكل هوامش تساعد وتوضح للقارئ غير ناطق العربية العبارات والمفاهيم الدنية للغة المصدر . وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن هنالك فرق بين النظم الثقافية لكل من العربية والإنجليزية.

يوصي الباحث بإجراء دراسات ذات صلة والتركيز علي دراسة مشكلات ترجمة المصطلحات الثقافية في معاني القرآن الكريم.

**الكلمات المفتاحية: مشكلات- المصطلحات -الثقافية**

**Introduction:**

The religious texts are referred to as " expressive texts" . A sacred nature, they referred address the minds together with the hearts of their audience .Religious text may encounter cultural problems. Cultural texts includes Quranic verses , which need credible and reliable sources to render their contextual meaning as closely,

completely as possible. In his attempt to define translation and the role of a translator , Nadi(1964) took into consideration the cultural elements by stating that " the role of a translator to facilitate the transfer of the messages , meaning and cultural elements from one language into another and create an equivalent response to the receiver.



To meet the urgent need of a curious reader to know cultural traditions that exist in Islam .there are culture- bound lexical items which are semantic voids and whose meanings needs to be further explicated in commentaries or footnotes, which they have been left untranslated is provided ; transliteration is justified in Quran translation since "loans words may be necessary when there is great deal of differences between two cultures " .

### **Theoretical framework**

Tallcott Parson ( 1952: 15) argues , first , that culture is transmitted ,it constitutes heritages , or social tradition ; secondly ,that it is learned ,it is not a manifestation , in particular content , of man's genetic constitution ; and that it is shared . culture , that is , is on the other hand a determinant of , say terms of human social interaction .

The notion of culture defined as the study of relationship between elements in a whole ways of life . He adds that the culture is not a practice of ; nor it is simply the descriptive sum of "the mores and folkways" of societies.as it tended to become in certain kinds of anthropology .it is threated through all social practices ,and is the sum of their inter-relationship"

" culture whole is to ethology what a single natural is to linguistics " .in other word, he argues that culture and language should be studied independently . He considers that , on the one hand ,the conception of including a language as a part of the culture is "debatable " and that , on the other hand , treating the methods of analyzing language and culture the same or closely similar is absolutely wrong .

In view of Tylor ,Opler and Hokett who believe language is a part of culture is

shared by Iviring ( 1975:208) who maintains that " language is a part of culture and, therefore, translation from one language to another cannot be done adequate without a knowledge of the two culture as well as the two language structures .

There are culture –bound Quran lexical items which are semantic void and whose meaning needs to be further explicated in commentaries or footnotes ; there are types of cultures – specific words : pre-Islam and Islamic words and cultural words .that they have been untranslatable and only transliteration is provided ; transliteration is justifiable in the Holy Quran translation since " loan words may be necessary when there is a great deal of difference between the two cultures (Larsan 1984:180).

Culturally equivalent words or concepts are approximate translations where a source language is cultural lexical items translated by a target

The first rendering of the Quran into western language was made by the English scholar Robertus Retenensis in the twelfth century , at the instance of Peter the venerable , Abbot of Cluny ; it was completed in 1143 , and enjoyed a considered circulation in manuscript .exactly four centuries later , this mediaeval latin version was published at Basel .it abounds inaccuracies and misunderstandings , and was inspired by hostile intention; nevertheless it served as the foundation of the earliest translations into modern European idioms. In 1647 Andre du Ryer ,a gentleman of France trading in the levant , published a French translation in Paris ; a Russian version appeared in St .



the French interest in Islam was in 1840 stimulated by France's involvement in North Africa. The Germans followed by Schweigger's translation with rendering by Boysen in 1773, Wahl in 1828 and Ulman in 1840. Meanwhile Maracci had produced in 1689 another Latin translation of the Quran, complete with Arabic text and quotations from various Arabic works exegesis, carefully juxtaposed and sufficiently garbled to portray Islam in the worst possible light. That his aim was to discredit Islam is borne out by the title of his introductory volume, A refutation of Quran. The first English translation by Ross was virtually nothing more than a crib on Du Ryer's French translation of 1847. George Sale's translation, published in 1734, was based on the infamous Maracci version, even down to the linear notes and introductory preamble.

The amount of damage done –wittingly or otherwise –by these non-Muslim translators to the image of Islam has led Muslim writers to take up the challenge and produce workable translations of the Quran in Western language, especially English (Bausani 1957:79), Aberny 1980 1:7, Turner 1997) in 1694, the Quran was published in full for the first time in Arabic at Hamburg under the careful editorship of Abraham Hinckelmann (Aberny 1980). The first translation into English by a Muslim which appeared in this century was that of Muhammad Abdul-Hakim Khan, of Patiala, 1905. Then Mirza Hairat of Delhi published his translation in 1905. There is another Muslim translation of great merit which is by Hafiz Gulam Sarwar in 1930 but it has been published without the Arabic text. Also in 1930, an English Muslim Mr Marmaduke Pickthal, published his translation (Ali 1983).

The first "translation" of the Quran appeared in Persian during the reign of the Abbasids. These were undertaken by Persian converts to Islam and were technically conceived as commentaries and based on word-for-word strategy where structure and syntax of Quranic verses were kept intact and supplemented with extensive commentaries.

There are two types of Quran translation; the first type is semantic translation which also adopts the archaic language and some literal word order such as the translation by Bell (1937), Pichthal (1969), Aberny (1980), Asad Ali (1983). These literal translations that allowed the source language to have "adopted an approach to translation that allowed the source language to have dominance over the target language" (Welsh 1990). The second type is that which provides communicative translation and introduces the Quran in a communicative contemporary English by Akbar (1978), Irving (1985), and Turner (1997).

In the view of Akbar (1978:3), almost all existing English translations of the Quran suffer drawbacks of literal translation. He (ibid) adds that these translations generally follow the archaic English of the Bible, which makes the meaning of the Quran unintelligible, and that they isolate every Quranic structure, number it and show it as an independent whole and thus take away life and dynamic force out of it.

In attempt to translate the Quran, Irving (1979:122) claims that he aims to achieve a translation which can be used and understood easily. This involves creating a whole new vocabulary with attendant semantic difficulties rather using shopworn terms which have their connotations in other fields.



Quran translations are generally characterized by what Nida and Reybun (1981: 71) call "formal overloading" which often results from the overuse of rare and difficult combinations of words. They are characterized by dogged adherence to source language syntax, the use of archaic language, and formal bias, i.e., they are source language-oriented.

Most Quran translations keep the same source text word order in the case of foregrounded elements which can be prepositional phrases or foregrounded objects as in: (من نطفة خلقه)

[from sperm-drop He hath created to Him Q80:19](Ali)

And in: (والأرض بعد ذلك دحاها)

[And the earth, moreover, hath He extended (to a wide expanse. Q79:30)

ibid:1683)

Where the source language foregrounded prepositional phrase – and the foregrounded direct object have been retained in sentential structure

Muslim scholars identify the Holy Quran as the literal word of Allah revealed to his messenger by means of Gabriel in order to lead people out of the darkness of ignorance and polytheism to the right of guidance and monotheism. Moreover, Muslim scholars believe that the Quran was revealed in Arabic for instructions and challenge, and it was transmitted down to us from generation to generation, and established between the two covers of the Mushaf.

Denffer (1989/;17) identifies the Quran as word of God (Allah), sent down upon the last prophet Mohammed, through the Angel Gabriel, in the precise meaning and precise wording, transmitted to us by numerous persons, both verbally and in writing.

It is inimitable and unique, protected by ALLAH from any corruption in collection of

messages received by prophet Mohammed direct from Allah; which he delivered under divine direction, to those around him and through Book is guidance from Allah for mankind. It contains revelations received by the prophet Mohammed (peace be upon him) from during a period of about 23 years. The Quran was in 632AD and the last one in 632. The Quran consists of 114 chapters of varying length with a total of 6236 verses. The chapters are divided into thirty equal divisions and categorized into kinds according to their revelation, those chapters revealed in Mecca before the immigration of Mohammed to Medina. Meccan chapters are generally short and consist of brief sentences which are full of enthusiasm and poetic usage. They stress the unity and majesty of God and denounce worshipping idols. They promise paradise for the righteous and warn the wrongdoers of the severe punishment of Hellfire. The Medinan chapters are long and the verses are more prosaic, these informative chapters clarify the aspects of Islam such as Zakat (compulsory alms), fasting, hajj (pilgrimage) and other aspects. They also lay down criminal laws and social, economic and state policies. In addition, they give guidance for every aspect of period life (Lings 1991).

The Quran, according to Muslims, is considered the eternal miracle of Islam. It is the complete and best guide for living one's life and seeking God's pleasure. The teachings of the Quran are universal, addressed to all people through the world regardless of their creed and color. They enlighten man's soul, purify his morals, condemn all wrongs, enjoin good deeds and call for the establishment of justice.

The Quran provides the regulations that create proper relation, between man and God , and between man and man .It leads man understand his role in his world , encourage s him to think and ponder , and guide him to the use natural resources . Simply, Muslims scholars stress that the Quran provides all the guidance that humans needs , and without the guidance of the Quran , humanity would still be groping the darkness of ignorance (Kidwai 1987).

- The Quran was revealed gradually according to the needs of the time and events . The Angel Gabriel brought it to Mohammed who memorized it . Afterwards, it was preserved into two ways , either by memorizing or writing . Mohammed used to recite each revelation to his companions who memorized each revelation as soon as it was revealed, and this had the whole Quran memorized at the time of final revelation . in addition , whenever any revelation took place , it was written at once on tablets ,palm branches leaves , or animal skin , this was done primarily by Zaid bin THabit , who was the main scribe out of the45 scribes of the revelation . Muhammed set the order of the chapters under the guidance of the Angel . Gabriel and ordered by his companions to maintain that order . Abu Bakr , the first Caphate of Islam , compiled the Quran , and Othman ,the third caliph , made numerous copies and sent one copies to the capital of each of the seven major states in the region at that time (KID WAI :1987).

#### Methodology of the Study

The researcher adopted descriptive-analytical method because it is appropriate to nature of the concerned

study . It aims to compare and assess phenomena in the light of exegeses and Quranic scholars commentaries of English translated verses of Quranic verses descriptive approach according to Aga et al (1999:73) is used to prove specific hypotheses to facilitate answers for certain questions , concerning current phenomenon and existing events at present . Analytical approach is the use of suitable process for breaking the fundamental elements down into smaller pieces to be solved .

#### Question of the study

The study will adopt the following questions for collecting the data relevant to the current study

-To what extend do cultural aspects have impact on translation of Quran?

-To what extend do transliteration and footnote process help in conveying the meaning ?

#### Hypotheses

-Translating the Holy Quran needs observing the cross-cultural aspect as well as linguistic aspect in translating .

-Transliteration and footnote help in providing further explanation of cultural expressions.

#### Aim of the Study

A major concern of the paper is to identify translating the cultural expressions in the Holy Quran . The study aims at evaluating English translations . The study is hoped to provide theoretical framework that helps in decoding phenomenon

#### Discussion and Analysis

(وندخلهم ظلا ظليل)

{ We shall admit them to shades ,cool and ever deepening.Q 4:57Ali}

{We shall make them enter plenteous shade .Q4:57 Picthall}

{And we shall admit them to shades wide and ever deepening (paradise) Q 4:57 Khan}

The word (shade) has different cultural presuppositions from an ecological point of view .for an Arab living in a hot country ,the shade signifies tranquility and coolness as opposed to sun's heat .thus , 'shade' is a treat or delight of paradise .the shade's ecological concept ,however ,may not appeal to a target language reader from a cold country where sunbathing is a treat .to resolve the expected misconception among target language readers ,a footnote will be required .

Ali provides a footnote explaining the ecological word "shade" : the Garden is contrasted with the Fire ; the shade in a Garden grow deeper and cooler as you proceed into interior .

(فحكم الجاهلية يبيغون ومن احسن من الله حكما لقوم يوقنون )

{ Is it judgment of the time (pagan) ignorance that they are seeking ? who better than for judgment to people to who have certainty (in their belief ) Q5:50 Picthall}

{Do they then seek after a judgment of ( the days of) ignorance ? But who , for a people whose faiths is assured , can give better judgment than Allah .Q5:50 Ali}

{ Do they then seek the judgment that Allah for a people who have firm faith Q 5: 50 Khan}

The meaning of the cultural word ( pagan) ignorance ) is supported by a footnote by Ali and Muslim is meant here not merely the time before the advent of the prophet Muhammad but in general , a state of affairs characterized by a lack moral perception and submission of all personal and communal concerns to the criterion of "expediency " a lone ; that is , exclusively

to the consideration as to whether a particular aim or action is useful or damaging (in the short-term ,practical sense of this words)to the interests of the person concerned or of the community to which he belongs .Inasmuch as this " law of expediency " is fundamentally opposed to the concepts of morality preached by every higher religion ,it described in Quran as law of pagan ignorance ". Cultural words are not semantic voids , a footnote will remain a necessity for the target text .  
(والنخل باسقات لها طلع نضيد)

And lofty date palms ranged cluster Q50: 11Picthall

And tall ( and stately palm-trees , with shoots of fruit-stalks , piled one over another Q50: 11Ali

And tall date-palms, with ranged cluster Q50:11 Khan

Cultural expressions that indicates to plant or trees also need an explanatory footnote to make the target text more informative and intelligible for the target language reader who is not familiar with such cultural words

No Quran translation has provided a footnote explaining what and ranged cluster ) and ( lofty dates ) are or what they resemble(

(ياايها الذين آمنوا كتب عليكم الصيام كما كتب علي الذين من قبلكم لعلكم تقون ,أياما معدودات....)

{O ye who believe ! fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you , that ye may (learn) self-restraint . fasting for affixed number of days...} Q 2:185 ALI)

O you who believe ! observing As-Saim (fasting) is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you that you may become Al-muttaqun( the pious. {Observing Saum (fasts) for a fixed number of days( Khan Q2: 183}

O ye who believe ! fasting is prescribed for you , even as it was prescribed for those you , that ye may award off evil . fast a certain number of days( Picthall Q2: 183)

Culturally, the term (fasting ) is clarified by footnote fasting is the twenty-nine – thirty days of Ramadan , the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar , consists of total abstention from food ,drink and sexual intercourse from dawn until sunset .Ali and Khan used footnote to clarify translation.

Minkoff pointed out that an image that make perfect sense in one culture can be wrong , obscure or meaningless . What can a translator do with texts that are common knowledge in the original culture but are alien to the audience of translation the Quranic cultural example for a case like

(واقيموا الصلاة واتوا الزكاة)

{ Established worship , and pay the poor-due} Q2 Picthall

The word Zakat – poor –due ) is explained by picthall in abrief footnote – Alzakat (poor-due ) , tax at fixed rate in proportion to the worth of property , collected from the well-to-do and distributed among the poor Muslims.

Another example of cultural avoid is word ( Alsidqaat- the offering ) many of Quran's translators admit that there is no English equivalent for it but they provide a periphrastic translation and a footnote explicating the source text emotive expression.

(سيقول السفهاء من الناس ما ولاهم عن قبلتهم التي كانوا عليها قل لله المشرق والمغرب يهدي من يشاء إلى صراط مستقيم)

The fools among the people will say: " what hath turned them from the Qibla to which they were used Q2:142 Ali

The foolish among people will say : what hath turned them from the Qibila which they formerly observed ! say : unto Allah belong the East and West .He guideth whom He will unto a straight path ) Q2 196picthal

The fools among the people ( the pagans, hypocrite ,and jews) will say , " what has turned them(Muslims) from their Qibila ( prayer direction (towards Jerusalem )) to which they used to face prayer." Say , ( O Muhammed ) " to Allah belong both ,east and the west . He guides whom He wills to the straight path.

The cultural expression (gibilah) is transliterated by three translator s, but Ali provides footnote in translation . Translators thought the need for a footnote to explain this cultural void .the word Qibila is explained by Ali as the direction to which Muslim turn in prayer . for such prayer, order and common direction are important ,so all congregation may face one way and offer their supplications and prayer to one God .

(إنما حرم عليكم الميت والدم ولحم الخنزير والدم وما أهل به لغير الله فمن اضطر غير باغ ولا عاد فلا إثم عليه إن الله غفور رحيم )

{He hath forbidden you only carrion , and blood , and swine flesh , and that when hath been immolated to( the name of)any other than Allah . But he who is driven by necessity , neither craving nor transgressing , it is no sin for him lo!Allah is forgiving , merciful } Q2:173Picthall

{He hath only forbidden you dead meat , and blood ,and the flesh of swine ,and that on which any other name hath been invoked besides that of Allah .

But if one is forced by necessity ,without willful disobedience ,nor transgressing due limits ,then is he guiltless , for Allah is oft-forgiving most merciful.Q2:173Ali}

{He has forbidden you only the Maitah ( dead animal) ,and that which is slaughtered as a sacrifice others , then is( or has been slaughtered for idols, on which Allah name has not been mentioned while slaughtering ) . But if one is force by necessity with willful disobedience nor transgress due limits , then things no sin him, truly , Allah is oft-forgiving , most merciful.Q2:173}

What affects the English speaking audience in this discourse is two forbidden things in Islam : eating the flesh of swine and eating the meat on the which the name of Allah is not mentioned ; for this cause , it is in the best interest of the target language reader to supply an informative footnote clarifying the target text . other thing is forbidden in the source text , like eating the meat of a dead animal or drinking blood may not practised by the target text reader . Ali puts two separate footnote s for this structure : dead meat i.e. carrion , is the animal that dies of itself ; anything that dies of itself and is not expressly killed for food with (takbeer ( duly pronounced on it . but there are exceptions , e.g fish and locusts are lawful , though they have not been made especially (halal ) with ( takbeer) . even fish or locusts as carrion would be ruled out . the objection to swine's flesh whether they live on offal are fed on clean food remains . cultural concept should be provided with footnote in order to make the source more acceptable .

### Conclusions and Suggestions

This paper discussed cultural expressions problems in translating Holy Quran into English and translation procedures. Therefore, the translations have shown that the target language culture does not easily accommodate such expressions because of various differences . Using footnote and transliteration help in explaining the untranslatability of cultural voids with an extended commentary into target language translation

finally , the researcher hoped that more translations should be conducted in this field to narrow down such clear cultural translation.

further researches are required to be conducted in translation of Holy Quran to highlight different problematic area.

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