

Cultural Problems in the Translation of the Qur'an

Bakri Al Azzam¹, Mohammed Al Ahaydib^{2,3}, Eman Al Huqail⁴

¹Department of English Language and Literature, The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan

²College of Languages and Translation, Al-Imam Mohammed Ibn Saud Islamic University, Riyadh, KSA

³College of Languages and Translation, Department of English Language and Literature, Saudi Arabia

⁴Department of English, Majmaah University, Al Majma'ah, Saudi Arabia

Email address

bakriazzam2013@gmail.com (B. Al Azzam), miahaydib@yahoo.com (M. Al Ahaydib), soulpure11@yahoo.com (E. Al Huqail)

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Abstract: Culture, as a main barrier in translation, creates real challenges for both translators and scholars of linguistics. The main aim of this paper is to investigate this translation problem, with reference to a number of culture-bound expressions in the Qur'an. The examples of the study represent not only expressions resembling the Islamic era, but also the pagan Arabs era, as explicitly highlighted in the Quranic discourse. To have a solid, grounded and authentic discussion, three translations of the Qur'an are selected, reflecting different cultural backgrounds. In order to support the argument with religious viewpoints, a number of Qur'anic exegeses are incorporated to display the cultural and the technical meanings of the examples.

Keywords: Culture, Problem, Translation, Qur'an

1. Introduction

Translation of cultural expressions is problematic, for the fact that the formation of such expressions is highly influenced by culture. It should be pointed out that certain expressions can be similar in different cultures, but are observed and viewed differently by people belonging to those cultures. Simultaneously, there are culture-bound expressions that are exclusive to certain communities and environments and non-existent in others. This complicates translating those expressions as the receptive language lacks equivalents. Therefore, translators should adopt certain translation strategies that can reflect an approximation of those expressions, or provide an acceptable compensation for an inescapable cultural loss. The Qur'anic expressions under discussion are culture-bound and thus create translation challenges as will be shown in the discussion.

Culture and Translation

Culture contributes in forming and shaping distinct communities and social groups; it makes clear variations between different nations, and national groups, as minor cultures may emerge as a result of certain factors. The idea of culture emerged in the late eighteenth century. Early anthropologists defined "Culture" as the symbolic manifestation of the human beings as different from non-human entities. In Europe, "Culture" refers to civilization and the two words constitute the same convention. Specifically,

the German view of culture is that it is the embodiment of human achievement. Industrialization gave rise to what is called, "mass society," in which "culture" refers to urban life. According to British and American social scientists, culture refers to the differences among groups of people.

From the above definitions, one can safely view culture as a cognitive category, a collective category, a concrete category or social category. Material and spiritual elements of certain communities help in forming distinctness of those communities and giving them dissimilar features. Sapir (1949:79) defines culture as "the inherited embodiment of both material and spiritual elements of people". On the basis of this definition, one can argue that culture creates certain idiosyncrasies of social groups. This cultural power makes social communities different in behavior, mentality and way of thinking. For example, due to the fact that some cultures have been remote in history, and have not been in contact with other cultures, their elemental components remained exclusive and introverted. This applies to some Arabic and Islamic expressions that have preserved their cultural values despite the long span of time.

Culture-bound expressions raise various translation problems (cf. Catford 1965:99; Snell-Hornby 1988:41; Al-Azzam 2005:116). Translation is concerned with the replacement of a source language text by a target language one, where each belongs to a peculiar culture. It is crucial initially to obtain enough understanding of the TL culture

before translating a text. Translators should consider the time and place of the text, especially if the text and its context are prone to change. It can thus be safely said that translating a text of a modern field is less challenging than a classical one, simply because the time and place gap of the latter are quite wider. Since language is an integrated part of culture, that expresses it, translators should not deal with it in isolation from culture. In the Qur'anic discourse, the divine text reflects some social activities of Arabs in the pre-Islamic period; the expressions that denote such social acts and events are hard to fully obtain in translation because of their cultural idiosyncrasies.

2. Discussion

Qur'anic Arabic is featured as rhetorical and eloquent because of the stylistic and linguistic manifestations. Translators who are not acquainted enough with this religious discourse are deemed not to fully succeed in relaying the linguistic, stylistic and cultural aspects in the TL. Culturally, the Quran addresses many Arab and Muslim acts, customs, and beliefs that make such communities different. In order to translationally handle the cultural aspect of the Qur'an, nine verse examples are selected, investigated, analyzed and evaluated, on the basis of three translations of the Qur'an and a number of exegeses. Al-Hilali and Khan (1996), Ali (2006) and Pickthall (1953) are the three interpretations on which the discussion is based. For purely organizational purposes, Roman numerals (I, II, III) are respectively used to resemble the three translations above.

Example 1. 24: 31 (الطفل الذين لم يظهروا على عورات النساء)

- I. Al-Hilali and Khan (1996:471) translate the verse as: "small children who have no sense of feminine sex."
- II. Ali (2006:423) translates the verse as: "small children who have no sense of the shame of sex"
- III. Pickthall (1953:255) translates the verse as: "children who know naught of women's nakedness."

It can be safely stated that Islam has preserved and ensured some of the lifestyle features of the Pagan Arabs, especially those that do not contradict with its mission. The Qur'an reflects many cultural aspects of the pre-Islamic Arabs, and as such provides real examples of their lifestyle at that time. In the verse under discussion, Islam calls for maintaining the morals of immature children, especially those related to their psychological development.

The cultural expression in the verse under discussion is "*awrāt ūn-nisā*." It should be pointed out that *awrāt* is concerned with both males and females, regardless of their age. In Islam, there are two classifications for the *awrāt* of females; the first is implicit and requires that the female be self-conscious about it; it is the area from the bosom to the knees; the second type is explicit and includes lady's hair, hands and feet (cf. Al-Razi 2006:343). The cultural expression *awrāt ūn-nisā* (private parts of females) can be seen by a child who cannot recognize the distinctive physical features of females (cf. Ibn Al-Jawzi 1987; and At-Tabari 2001), as well as the child who doesn't have a sexual desire

because of age.

Unlike an ordinary text, the Qur'anic discourse is featured as sensitive; its language is euphemistic, indirect, and catering for people's feelings. In the current example, the cultural expression *awrāt ūn-nisā* is not handled explicitly. Had the text been direct as an ordinary one, and had it been dysphemistic, other lexical expressions could have been used instead of *awrāt ūn-nisā* such as women's private organs. On this basis, the euphemistic reference that is observed in the context avoids explicit reference to *sex*, being taboo religiously, culturally and socially.

As far as the translations are concerned, Al-Hilali & Khan have rendered the cultural expression *awrāt ūn-nisā* as "feminine sex". This translation is not fully accurate, as "feminism" does not reflect *nisā* (women) in the ST. Besides, feminine is more associated with the *feminism movement* which calls for liberalism and women's rights. The translation recalls of the secular movements that emerged in the west; this is extremely different from the intended meaning in the verse. The translation also fails to semantically preserve the euphemistic aspect of the verse, clearly expressed in *awrāt*. This euphemistic feature is common in the Qur'an and can be noticed even when referring to other divine religions such as Christianity. This can be illustrated in Mary's reply to Gabriel (peace be upon him), "*How can I have a son, when no man has touched me?*" (Mariam:20).

Similarly, Ali has rendered *awrāt ūn-nisā* as "shame of sex". In this translation, Ali relatively preserves the euphemistic value of the expression *awrāt ūn-nisā* when he rendered it as "shame". The fact that *shame* reflects politeness can be a reason for Ali's choice. However, he indirectly dysphemized the euphemistic feature of the verse by the inclusion of *sex* in the translation.

The fact that Pickthall is western-oriented has given him enough freedom to explicitly state the intended meaning. The fact that he is not encountered with cultural, and religious restrictions has enabled him to openly render *awrāt ūn-nisā* as "women's nakedness." This translation reminds the reader of women's private organs. As such, it does not preserve the euphemistic implication of the verse, represented in *awrāt ūn-nisā*.

Example 2. 58:3 (والذين يظاهرون من نسائهم ثم يعودون لما قالوا)

- I. Al-Hilali and Khan (1996:745) translate the verse as, "And those who make unlawful to them their wives by *Zihār*."
- II. Ali (2006:688) translates the verse as, "If any men among you divorce their wives by *Zihār* (calling them mothers)."
- III. Pickthall (1953:390) translates the verse as, "Those who put away their wives (by saying they are as their mothers)"

Some Arabs of the Pagan era were known as strict in dealing with females. Qur'an was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) when pagan Arabs were traditional and observing certain social acts. The act *zihār* is a case in point and can be defined as husband's regarding his

wife as mother in terms of conjugal rights. This, of course, does not allow her to leave the house or remarry, an act that was disapproved by Islam. The cultural expression *zihār* is derived from *zāhr* “back”. It was used as a swear by men where they tell their wives that they are to them like their mother’s back (cf. Ibn Al-Jawzi 1987:182-183; Al-Tabari 2001:456-457), after which the couple don’t have intercourse. It is based on depriving the wife from observing her normal marital life, going to her parents’ house, and marrying another man. They were not considered as divorced and this clearly reflects the strictness not only of the husband but also of the community that used to approve and comply with this social act.

The fact that *zihār* is fully cultural has made it necessary for translators to follow certain translation procedures. For example, Al-Hilali and Khan have rendered *zihār* paraphrasingly as, “And those who make unlawful to them their wives by *zihār*.” This translation strategy, though has aimed at preserving the semantic dimension of *zihār*, has failed to reproduce the same cultural, social and emotive values of the Arabic *zihār*. The fact that *zihār* was socially approved, and communally practiced has given it social respect and abidement. The translation has failed to preserve the associations and allusions of the cultural term *zihār* in the target language because of the aspects that are pertained to it. Moreover, the unfavorable meanings that can be observed in the western culture when *zihār* is transliterated are incongruent with the feelings of the pre-Islamic Arabs who approved this unfavorable act.

In Ali’s translation, divorce does not relay the exact meaning of the culture bound expression *zihār* for the fact that it does not imply divorce. This is due to the fact that the wife remains under the authority of the husband though she is stripped from all her psychological and personal rights. Not different from the two translations above, Pickthall’s translation lacks many social and cultural implications pertained to the Arabic cultural expression *zihār*. His translation, ‘Those who put away their wives (by saying they are as their mothers),’ does not reflect the fact that certain social acts like *zihār* was experienced by pre-Islamic Arabs. The paraphrasing of *zihār* into English does reflect the purely cultural aspects of *zihār* and thus the rendition does not grasp the social view of Arabs at that time. It is no doubt that Pickthall has reflected the forcefulness of *zihār* and has given it the same semantic power of divorce. Pickthall could have added explanatory details to point out the cultural dimensions of this cultural term such as: the wife cannot leave her husband’s house, cannot observe intercourse with him, and doesn’t enjoy her marital rights such as the dowry.

Example 3: An-Nisa: 3 فانكحو مطاب لكم من النساء مثنى وثلاث ورباع)

- I. Al-Hilali & Khan (1996:106) translate the verse as, “marry (other) women of your choice, two or three, or four”
- II. Ali (2006:85) translates the verse as, “marry women of your choice, two or three or four”
- III. Pickthall (1953:79) translates the verse as, “marry of

the women, who seem good to you, two or three or four.”

Nations normally undergo certain human and nonhuman conditions that might create unwelcome consequences. Wars, plights, natural disasters such as floods and hurricanes, and epidemics may cause social problems where a gender discrepancy can be clear. Especially in wars, a clear loss of men usually takes place resulting in the outnumbering of females. In order to resolve the social problems that may emerge due to the large number of females in the community such as spinsterhood and illegal relations, Islam has legalized having more than a wife within certain terms and conditions.

The Arabic Islamic cultural expression *tā’adud az-zawjāt*, polygamy, is confined to the Islamic culture. This gives it specifications and manifestations that make it hardly attainable when translated into another culture like English. Translating the verse under discussion into English as, ‘marry (other) women of your choice, two or three, or four,’ by Al-Hilali and Khan doesn’t highlight the intended meaning of *tā’adud az-zawjāt* in Islam. Semantically, one can argue that they try to preserve the meaning of multi-wives by supporting the translation with the parenthesized ‘other.’ This clearly indicates that one can get married of new wives during the marriage of previous ones.

Not different from Al-Hilali & Khan’s translation is Ali’s, where he relates the semantic implication of *tā’adud az-zawjāt* in English. The two translations have clearly stated that the maximum number of wives is four and this is clearly seen in the use of the coordinating conjunctions (or). As for Pickthall’s translation, it doesn’t have the same semantic indication of the two translations as (Al-Hilali & Khan, and Ali) because it doesn’t show the optionality of the number of wives through the use of the conjunction (or) between the numbers. His translation may be understood that a Muslim man can have nine wives at the same time, a case that is not true in the original text (cf. Ibn Al-Jawzi 1987:7-8; Al-Razi 2006:337).

Cultural and social meanings pose real and inevitable translation loss. Culturally, *tā’adud az-zawjāt* does not exist in the Western culture and therefore creates some cultural misunderstandings. Target text readers would understand *tā’adud az-zawjāt* negatively and unfavorably, especially among the female community. Of course, they could understand the meaning as abstract, depriving it from its cultural and social boundaries. The fact that Islam has legitimized polygamy is termed and conditioned. Husband can have more than a wife, for example, when his current wife is sterile and he is eager to have sons. Besides, he should also be liable to meet the matrimonial needs of his wives and on an equal basis.

Not only this, polygamy in Islam aims at preserving morals of the community especially when females outnumber males as a result of wars, for example; men in this case can protect the community from moral collapse as this bans the exploitation of women. Socially, the idea of polygamy is accepted in the Muslim community, especially among the religiously dedicated individuals as this abides with an

important rule of Islam. Such a social meaning cannot be understood and accepted likewise in the target culture, where the idea can be taken as an abuse and exploitation of women's physicality.

Example 4: At-Takwir: 8 (وإذا الموءودة سئلت)

- I. Al-Hilali & Khan (1996:818) translate the verse as, "And when the female (infant) buried alive (as the pagan Arabs used to do) is questioned."
- II. Ali (2006:767) translates the verse as, "And when the female (infant), buried alive, is questioned."
- III. Pickthall (1953:431) translates the verse as, "And when the girl-child that was buried alive is asked."

One of the barbaric acts that were practiced by some pre-Islamic Arabs was burying female infants alive. Due to the fact that the pre-Islamic Arab community was tribally based, fights used to erupt from time to time, sometimes over insignificant issues. For example, shortage of water resources and pastures could lead to endless wars between different tribes. For fear of shame that might be attached to a certain tribe when females are taken as captives, some men preferred burying their female infant alive (cf. Ibn Atyah 1991:336). Not only this, other sudden circumstances could lead to the burial of infant females. This socially and culturally approved custom by certain people was denied at the advent of Islam. The Arabic cultural expression *al-wa'd* is derived from the root *wa'd*, to bury alive. The act was mainly exercised on female infants not only by fathers but also by mothers (cf. Ibn-Al-Jawzi 1987:40), and that was for the abovementioned motives (cf. Ibn Atyah 1991:336).

Translating the verse into English would collide with many problems. Socially, the act of infanticide cannot be easily conveyed in the target language and can hardly be accepted by modern day people. Furthermore, the idea has also become unacceptable since the days of the Prophet's lifetime where Islam has stopped it and warned those who committed it to be questioned on the day of Resurrection. Historically, the idea that was once accepted, though by a minority, has lost much of its social implications by this long passage of time. These lost implications, due to time, cannot be reflected similarly not only in the target culture, but also in the culture of post-Islamic Arabs.

As far as the translations are concerned, Al-Hilali & Khan have supported their translation by explanatory details, being aware of the various cultural implications. First, they have added *infant* after *female* to clarify the idea that the female was used to be buried at an early stage of life. They have also tried to illuminate the fact that the act was practiced by the pre-Islam Arabs. However, the translation does not reflect enough cultural and social allusions of this custom. The translation seems to generalize the idea of infanticide when the translators support the rendition by *as the pagan Arabs used to do*. This addition does not reflect the idea that not all pagan Arabs were practicing infanticide. Not different from Al-Hilali & Khan's translation, Ali has attempted to point out that the infanticide was exclusive to female infants. Due to the fact that the target culture does not have a lexicon to meet the various meanings of infanticide in Arabic, the two

translations have explained the meaning of burying as alive, without consideration of text size congruence.

Unlike the two translations above, Pickthall's translation seems to be less informative. The fact that he is not culturally and socially aware of the Arabic cultural expression *wa'd*, has driven him to opt for *the girl-child*. As it seems, this translation does not indicate the exact age group of the female who was involved in the barbaric practice. The target language expression *girl-child* denotes an older than infant child which is not true of the ST. This shortcoming of the translation might be built on studies that have not made *wa'd* clear.

Example 5: At-Taubah: 60 (انما الصدقات للفقراء والمساكين والعاملين عليها والمؤلفة قلوبهم)

- I. Al-Hilali & Khan (1996:245) translate the verse as, "those who have been inclined (towards Islam)."
- II. Ali (2006:221) translates the verse as, "those whose hearts have been (recently) reconciled to (truth)"
- III. Pickthall (1953:150) translates the verse as, "those whose hearts are to be reconciled"

It should be mentioned that Islam has created an unprecedented economic system, where tax was prescribed and imposed upon the rich, and those who were capable, to be distributed fairly among certain social groups. The group *al-Mū'alafā qulūbohum* is classified as one that should be paid a portion of the property collected according to the Islamic regulations. Due to the fact that Islam was in its first era, it was highly significant and urgent for the non-Muslims to embrace Islam.

It can be argued that *al-Mū'alafā qulūbohum* refers to new Muslim converts, non-Muslims living among the community, and those who hold clear hostility against the new religion (cf. Ibn Al-Jawzi 1987:457).

The cultural expression *al-Mū'alafā qulūbohum* can cause translation problems in the target language and culture. To illustrate, Al-Hilali & Khan have paraphrasingly rendered this cultural expression because the TL does not have similar equivalents. In the same manner, Ali has attempted to preserve the semantic implications of *al-Mū'alafā qulūbohum* in the TL without explaining the various allusions. Of course, the two translations have not succeeded to reproduce the cultural and social values of the expression under discussion, and the same applies to Pickthall's translation that does not reflect the social life of Arabs at the rise of Islam.

In order for the translators to overcome the cultural and social challenges, enough explanatory details and footnotes should be provided, a translation strategy that has been recommended by many translation scholars (cf. Newmark 1988:102). Therefore, details such as reference to social groups who were paid, the reasons behind the payment and the role of that in creating economic stability should be provided (cf. Ibn Al-Jawzi 1987:457). It can simultaneously be added that though certain additions of details may clarify the cultural and social meanings, they would at the same time result in other textual problems related to textual size, conciseness and preciseness. This confirms that translation loss is inevitable in all situations, regardless of the translation

strategies and procedures.

Example 6: An-Nisa: 92 (فمن قتل مؤمنا خطأ فتحرير رقبة مؤمنة ودية مسلمة الى اهله)

- I. Al-Hilali & Khan (1996:125) translate the verse as, “compensation (blood-money_ *dīya*) must be paid to his family”
- II. Ali (2006:102) translates the verse as, “pay compensation to the deceased’s family”
- III. Pickthall (1953:88) translates the verse as, “pay the blood-money to the family of the slain”

The fact that the Arab community is traditionally and tribally based has made broad relations among its individuals. This relation has made strong connections between tribes kinsmen, and all members should bear the consequences of any event even if committed unfairly. Despite the fact that Islam has banned this deeply-rooted act, it continues even after the rise of Islam, and this shows the adherence of Arabs to their traditions. In battles and warlike circumstances between people belonging even to the same tribes, killings used to take place. Islam has set certain laws to curb this behavior by imposing certain penalties such as freeing a slave and money compensation known as *dīya*. The *dīya* compensation should be paid to the family of the murdered and should be financially estimated depending on the situation and without defining who should pay it (cf. Ibn Al-Jawzi 1987:163-164; Al-Tabari 2001: 321-334; Al-Razi 2006:111).

Due to the fact that *dīya* is purely cultural, it creates clear translation challenges. At the social level, TL readers would not comprehend the social situations in which this blood compensation is paid. This can be due to the fact that TL people live under states of law, where the court decides the compensation and the manner of payment. As far as translations are concerned, it can be stated that the three translations have managed to convey a large portion of meaning. Unlike Ali’s and Pickthall’s translations, Al-Hilali & Khan have cotexted their translation with explanatory details *blood money* and transliteration of *dīya*. Although the three translations have to a great extent preserved the semantics of the cultural expression, they have not compensated the cultural and the social loss of the Arabic *dīya*. For example, TL readers would not understand that, an avenger could take place even from any relative of the killer, an act that is socially and legally unacceptable in the western culture. This social behavior and cultural inheritance resulting from actions and reactions cannot be understood likewise by TL readers.

Example 7: At-Tawbah: 29 (من الذين اوتوا الكتاب حتى يعطوا الجزية)

- I. Al-Hilali & Khan (1996:248) translate the verse as, “until they pay the *Jizyāh*”
- II. Ali (2006:215) translates the verse as, “until they pay the *Jizyāh*”
- III. Pickthall (1953:148) translates the verse as, “until they pay the tribute readily”

In order to create a strong Islamic community based on the respect of the other, Islam has prescribed a certain payment

on non-Muslims living under the realm of Muslims. As non-Muslims were exempted from defending the Muslims territories and were not obliged to fully abide with the Islamic duties, this recompense was to be paid for protection and security. Besides, Muslims were to secure the interests and business of those people, considering them as civilians having their own rights in the choice of religion and the practice of their daily life activities. To show tolerance, and consideration of others' conditions, Islam has excluded certain groups from this payment such as females, children, elderly people, priests and the sick (cf. Ibn Al-Jawzi 1987:420; Al-Tabari 2001:406; Al-Razi 2006:34-35).

The fact that this type of payment was performed at a certain era of the Islamic caliphate gives it cultural implications. It was practiced to support the newly established Islamic state where Muslims were in great need of financial support. Therefore, it is heavily related to a certain period of time and age of the Islamic state. Being a cultural-bound expression creates challenges for translators, and this has led Al-Hilali & Khan and Ali to transliterate it in the TL. Though the two translations have attempted to convey the meaning of *jizyāh* via this strategy, they have failed to reflect the semantics of the expression as TL readers would not grasp the meaning.

Unlike these two translations, Pickthall has rendered *jizyāh* as ‘tribute,’ which reflects some semantics of the culture-bound expression in the TL. Therefore, one can state that the culturally loaded expression *jizyāh* is not easy to relay into English for the following reasons: first, the translations have not made plain the intimate relationship between Muslims and non-Muslims living in the Muslim state; second, the translations have not shown the tolerance and consideration of Islam as a divine religion, and Muslims as followers of such a religion, when dealing with non-Muslims; third, none of the translations has shown that this type of payment is seasonal and thus similar to a payment imposed upon the Muslims, *zākāt* which is paid seasonally. This shows that all people living in the Muslim community are the same and Islam does not distinguish between Muslims and non-Muslims at the payment level. These connotative meanings and implications of the culture-bound expression *jizyāh* cannot be easily transmitted into English without footnoting and paraphrasing.

Example 8: Quraish: 2 (ايلافهم رحلة الشتاء والصيف)

- I. Al-Hilali & Khan (1996:851) translate the verse as, “We cause the (Quraish) caravans to set forth safe in winter (to the south) and in summer (to the north without any fear).”
- II. Ali (2006:554) translates the verse as, “Their covenants (covering) journeys by winter and summer.”
- III. Pickthall (1953:451) translates the verse as, “For their taming (We cause) the caravans to set forth in winter and summer”

Trading of Arabs goes back to the pre-Islamic history where merchants of Quraish used to make their business. They made use of seasons, benefitting from the goods and climatic variations. Therefore, caravans used to take routes to

Yemen in winter because of the moderate climate and the abundance of goods. Conversely, Syria was the destination of those caravans in summer where the climate is temperate and the cultivation products are abundant. The fact that trading among the tribe of Quraish is deeply rooted in history is resembled in the verse *lī ilāf Quraish ilāfihim* which clearly indicates that the tribe was accustomed to this summer-winter journey (cf. Ibn Atyyah 1991:576; Al-Qurtubi 2003:204; Ash-Shawkani 1994:629-630).

Linguistic, cultural, social and political problems emerge in translating *rehlāta shūtā'ī wā saif* into English. The fact that *rehlāta shūtā'ī wā saif* is collocational derives from its historical dimension; this illustrates the idea that Arabs at that time were experienced in trading between the two directions, south and north. This collocational aspect cannot be likewise understood by TL readers who may not be acknowledged with the tradition of the Arab caravan journey.

Culturally, the traders were aware of the climatic differences of the destination and that helped them in defining the time of journey. Not less important than the cultural value of *rehlāta shūtā'ī wā saif* is the social implication of Arabs at that time, who used to go one and all to the same direction in the business season. This in itself shows the intimacy of the pre-Islam Arabs residing in Makkah.

What had encouraged trading between those main directions is the secure borders of the Arab land at that time. In other words, there was a clear political stability despite the different religious belongings of people at that time. Investigating the three translations considered for the verse under discussion, it can be stated that the three translations have not reflected the various linguistic, cultural, social and political implications of *rehlāta shūtā'ī wā saif*. To simplify, Al-Hilali and Khan's translation has not made explicit the fact that *rehlāta shūtā'ī wā saif* is collocationally based and formed. Similar to the former translation are Ali's and Pickthall's renditions that have not made clear the linguistic implication of the collocation *rehlāta shūtā'ī wā saif*. In addition, readers of the three translations would not be equipped enough with the cultural, social and political allusions of *rehlāta shūtā'ī wā saif* in addition to the historical depth of that caravan that stands for trade exchange between Makkah, as the abode of commerce in *Hijāz* and Syria and Yemen, as territories outside the Arab peninsula.

Example 9: At-Tawbah: 100 والسابقون الاولون من المهاجرين والانصار)

- I. Al-Hilali & Khan (1996:262) translate the verse as, "the Mūhājirīn (those who migrated from Makkah to Madinah) and the Ansār (the citizens of Al-Madinah who helped and gave aid to the Mūhājirīn)"
- II. Ali (2006:228) translates the verse as, "the first of those who forsook (their homes) and of those who gave them aid"
- III. Pickthall (1953:154) translates the verse as, "the first to lead the way, of the Mūhājirīn and the Ansār"

The Muslims migration from Makkah to Madinah is considered as a milestone in the establishment of the newly

born Islamic state. It has come as a result of the oppression practiced by the opponents of Islam, some of whom were of blood relationships with Prophet Muhammed (peace be upon him). It should be pointed out here that the land of Makkah was so dear to the Prophet who said addressing it, "You are the dearest of Allah's land to me and had your people not driven me out of you, I would have not migrated." The destination was to Medina were the new converts to Islam were ready to do all they can for the protection of the migrants. The migration event is a remarkable point in Islam, a fact that has made it an Islamic Calendar. This Islamic cultural event, *migration*, gives a typical example of intimacy and good relations between people. The people of Medina have shared their new Muslim brothers property, money, farms, and homes. This unprecedented example of brotherhood has been taken as an example over history on intimacy, mercy, humanity and dedication. Consequently, collocational occurrences of *al-Mūhājirīn wal Ansār* can be observed in different verses of the Quran. (cf. Ash-Shawkani 1995:447; Al-Qurtubi 2003:235-236)

Translating the cultural collocation *al-Mūhājirīn wal Ansār* would result in different linguistic and cultural challenges. The collocation noticed in this cultural expression cannot be comprehended likewise by TL audience who do not have enough historical background about those two groups of Muslims. Though Al-Hilali & Khan have paraphrasingly rendered *al-Mūhājirīn wal Ansār* ("the Mūhājirīn (those who migrated from Makkah to Madinah) and the Ansār (the citizens of Al-Madinah who helped and gave aid to the Mūhājirīn)", their translation does not relay the allusions pertained to the collocation. Pickthall provided transliteration, and added footnotes to explain the two groups. As for Ali, he has literally rendered *al-Mūhājirīn wal Ansār* into English, an attempt that does not reflect the various implications of this Islamic event. Other connotative meanings such as the annual Muslims celebrations of the event, the salvation of the new Muslims at that time, the rise of Islam as a last divine religion cannot be grasped by the mere rendition of *al-Mūhājirīn wal Ansār* into English as (immigrants and helpers), for example.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be said that culture-bound expressions in the Qur'an can pose translation difficulties. What made some expressions difficult to convey is their historical, cultural, social, and regional grounds. The translations have shown that target language culture does not easily accommodate such expressions because of the various differences. Moreover, and for the sake of portraying as much cultural values as possible in the TL, Qur'anic exegeses that handled semantic implications of the expressions and technical allusions should be investigated and consulted. Thus it is hoped that more translation studies should be conducted in this field to narrow down such clear cultural gaps.

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