

Research Article

## The Ideological Impact on the English Translations of the Qur'an: A Case Study of Muhammad Asad's Translation

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### ABSTRACT

This research attempts to explore the influence of ideology on Muhammad Asad's translation "The Message of the Qur'an". It exposes how the translator remodels the source text to present his viewpoints in the target text. Moreover, the article demonstrates and scrutinizes the relationship between translation and ideology. The research answers the main questions about the ideology and translation so it divides into two parts. The first part focuses on the definition of the ideology and translation of the Qur'an especially Asad's work while the second one highlights the impact of ideology practically through exploring mistranslation, misinterpretation, and misrepresenting the Islamic creed and Islamic sciences. The research uses the comparative method to compare Asad's translation from different perspectives for scrutinizing the influence of ideology on the translated text. Muhammad Asad follows the rational and Mu'tazalite attitudes in his translation so he prefers the intellect, personal knowledge and rejects the imitation of traditions. He supports the allegorical meaning of verses, mentions unintended meaning of the verses to convey his opinions, rejects the mainstream exegesis and interprets the meaning regarding to the probability.

### Introduction

Orientalists dominated English translation of the *Qur'an* from 1649 until 1920s, and through this period Jewish Orientalists and Christian missionaries played an important role in prejudicing the discomfited reader against Islam. Later on, translations by Muslims appeared and the earliest one was by Muhammad Abdul Hakim Khan (1905) and after that, the number of translations by Muslims increased until they dominated in the present age. However, some of these translations require scrutinizing to avoid any ideological impact on the TT. The impact of theological ideology is plain in verses that explain Islam, show the status of Prophet Muhammad, assert the humanity of Jesus, and address family of the prophet, all of these verses expose the sectarian opinions that translators claimed and applied according to their mindsets. Asad spent seventeen years to complete this work and it contains translated text and extensive notes that explain the meaning of the words and opinions of the translator and commentators. Regarding Kidwai the translation is influenced by pseudo-rationalism and Mu'tazalite thought so he rejects miracles and explains away al-Ghayb as something merely allegorical or symbolic; moreover, Asad's tries to present the miracles of the *Qur'an* with an acceptable to western readers (Kidawi, 2007, p. 132). The research seeks to answer the questions as follows: 1) Is there any difference between works of translators with different ideologies? 2) What are the ideological impacts on the English translation of Quran?; 3) What are the role and responsibility of the translator?, and 4) What efforts should be exerted to avoid the negative effects of ideology on the English translation of the Quran?

### Ideology

The notion of ideology is a complex and a controversial one, the first appearance of the term was in 1976 as a direct translation of the new French word “ideologie” by the rationalist philosopher Destutt de Tracy who defined ideology as the science of ideas. Gramsci defined ideology as a conception of the world that is implicitly manifested in art, in law, in economic activity, and in the manifestations of individual and collective life. Teun Van Dijk in *Ideology and Discourse* mentions multidisciplinary definitions of ideology where every definition discusses the term from a different perspective as follows: 1- ideology as “a system of beliefs” and this definition clarifies that ideologies have something to do with system of ideas, and especially with social, political or religious ideas shared by a social group or movement. Teun tries to remove any vague and ambiguous notion of ideas. Thus, he borrows the term “beliefs” from psychology to refer to any thought of any kind. He seeks to present a simplified and general explanation of the definition “Ideologies are the fundamental beliefs of a group and its members” (Teun, 2014, p. 7). The second definition which Teun introduces “a false consciousness or misguided beliefs” (Ibid, 2017, p. 8). It is known that Engles’ interpretations of Marxism that denote ideologies were forms of “*false consciousness*” and “*misguided beliefs*” which were controlled by the ruling class to have a legitimization of dominance and the ability to conceal the real socioeconomic conditions of the workers. Ideology has a negative notion which serves the purpose of the dominant group and was traditionally used in opposition to true knowledge. This negative notion became the central element in the political use of the term during the period of the Cold War. The third definition is “ideology as a general notion” (Ibid, 2014, P9). Teun discusses this definition to study the positivity of ideology as anti-racism. This notion opposes and resistances against domination and social inequality. Some writers such as Karl Mannheim called this positive notion as “utopia”. The negative notion of ideology is not only represented by the dominated groups, but also the extremist religious sects as well. In other words, Teun explores the general theory of ideology as a broader and more flexible application of the notion. He stands against other writers and alleged that the general notion of ideology accepts the criticism that expounds positive and negative aspects of ideology.

The fourth definition which Teun reviews “ideology is the basis of social practices” (Ibid, 2014, P10). According to the social system of ideas that related to groups and movements, ideology is not only a tool to understand the world from a special perspective but also a basis of social practices that belong to particular groups. Thus, pacifist ideology protests against destructive nuclear weapons, ecological ideology seeks to save the environment, different religious ideologies endeavor to convey, spread, confirm and stabilize their allegations. Mooney states that ideology is a way to view and describe the world that comes into existence with the use of any particular language. Pagani also indicated that ideology is a way of thinking and describing the world-order in a more natural way (*Translation and Ideology*, 2014). Abdullah al-Aroui in his book *The Concept of Ideology* divides the Arab writers who interested in ideological studies into three categories as follow: 1) writers who use ideology as a philosophy, 2) authors discuss ideology from the improper perspective and which includes Marxism in every analysis, 3) researchers who use ideology as a tool to analyze without belonging to any philosophy (Al-Aroui, 2012, pp. 161-162). Thus, the research seeks to use ideology neutrally to scrutinize translators’ ideological factor and adhere to the positive criticism in analysis to explore the merits and demerits of the work and the great efforts that were exerted. From a neutral perspective, ideology is a set of ideas, which controls the world. In other words, it is a set of beliefs, values, and ways of thinking and feeling through, which humans perceive, and “by recourse to which they explain what they take to be a reality” (Abrams, 1993, p. 241). Bahaa-eddin Mazid also, in “*CDA and PCDA made simple*” refers to its critical sense and declares that ideology is related to authoritativeness and manipulation, with the international attempt of one party to direct the mind and behavior of another. In the two senses of the word, language is crucial; every instance of language is an “ideologeme” and every language user is an “ideologue” (Mazid, 2014, p.35). The core of ideological mediation in translation focuses on choosing particular texts, translators, motivations, strategies, aims, readership and target languages. Translators also are required to take a position affiliated to other cultures and languages and always remain vigilant according to the nature of their task. The noble *Qur’an* is a religious and sensitive text, and translators should avert any distortion of the sacred text. However, some translators changed the meaning entirely and supported their translations with fake narrations that purport the receiver’s mind. Mona Baker asserts, “Ideology reveals itself in reconceptualization through using paratextual devices as prefaces, footnotes and additional indexes” (Jeremy, 2016, p.138).

### **Ideology of the Translator and the English Translation of the *Qur’an***

Translation is not only a semantic production but it has ideological, aesthetic and political aspects as well. In some cases, the values, beliefs, surrounded environment and ideology of the translator control the translated work especially if he/she has ideological and political agendas. To examine the exegeses which the translator used facilitating the process of exposing the impact on the translated work such as Nassem Dawood who mentioned in the introduction of his translation the main exegeses he read to translate the *Qur’an*. The religious ideology of the translator has special effects on the English translations of the *Qur’an* because respectively most of Muslim and non-Muslim sects had translators who produced a translated *Qur’an* according to their perspectives e.g. Shiites, Qadyanism, and Sufism. Thus, Brigaglia agrees that the religious

ideology of the translator is bound to influence the translation of the *Qur'an*. According to Koskinen, ideological manipulation is a feature of all translation, and warns, "the most dangerous manipulator is not the one who does it openly but the one who claims to be objective" (Marked Word Order, 2013, p. 25). Moreover, Bassnett and Lefevere argue that the development of translation studies shows that translation like all (re)writings is never innocent. The investigation of the extra-textual factors is an urgent tool to expose the ideological impact so Sperber and Wilson maintain, "the context is not limited to the preceding utterances, it includes religious beliefs, general cultural assumptions, etc." (Joseph, 2004, p.217). Richard Bell's translation was influenced by his own view around the *Qur'an* especially he used the historical approach to explain the Qur'anic meanings hence; he rearranged the order of the Ayat (verses). Bell interfered his Orientalist knowledge in translation and divided the Sura (chapter) into passages instead of verse to be more flexible to formulate the historical situation. Nassem Dawood also deleted the numbers of verses and translated the Sura as passages and Sher Ali changed the number of the Ayat (Verses). The ideology of the translator could be scrutinized through the extra-textual factor as exegeses, the meanings of the target texts are matched or not with the source text, the preface of the translation where the purpose of the translation is clear lastly, the footnotes and additional commentaries where translators explain his point of view. Translators choice reflect their ideological positioning in addition to the previous choice by other translator e.g. English translations of Rodwell (1861) and Palmer (1880) were influenced by Sale's choices. In summary, the issue of ideology is an important in translation studies in general and in translation of the *Qur'an* particularly.

### **The Historical Background of Translation of the *Qur'an***

The *Qur'an* is the most influential book in the world and translation of the *Qur'an* becomes the most recent topic in Qur'anic study today. Translation of the *Qur'an* began since the first early days of Islam by Salamn al-Farisi who translated Surat al-Fatihah into Persian language to help the new inverted Muslims. After the Islamic conquest to European countries, the first translation appeared in the twelfth century by the Englishman Robert of Ketton in 1143 and published later in 1543. The oldest known complete translation of the *Qur'an* into a European vernacular was an Italian paraphrase of Ketton's earlier Latin translation, by Andrea Arrivabene in 1547(Saeed, 2008, p. 127). Both of the previous translations were considered the main source for translation in sixteen and seventeen centuries. Alexander Ross published the first English translation in 1649. This translation reflected the Orientalist approach against Islam. Then, George Sale published his English translation in 1734. This translation has been printed more than 120 editions. After that, the first French translation was published by André du Ryer in 1647. The second French translation was published by Claude Savary in 1786. Next, the Germanic translation which was produced by Salomon Schweigger in (1616) another Germanic translation was produced by Friedrich Boysen in 1773. A Dutch translation by unknown translator in 1641. The first Russian translation by Piotr Vasilyevich Postnikov was published 1716. The first Urdu translation was published by Shah Rafi al-Din in 1779. The first Swedish translation was produced by Fredrik Crusenstolpe in 1843. The first Spanish translation was published in 1844 by De Jose Garber de Robles. In 1886, the first Bengali translation was produced by Girish Chandra Sen. In 1915, the first translation in modern Hindi language by Ahmad Shah Masihi. The first printed translation in an African language in 1906. The first Japanese translation by Ken-ichi Sakamoto was published in 1920. The First Swahili translation was published by Godfrey Dale in 1923. The complete Chinese translation was published by Li Tiezheng in 1927.

In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, translations into other languages also appeared, including Swedish (1843), Italian (1843), Polish (1849), Hebrew (1857), Russian (1877), Portuguese (1882) and Spanish (1907) (Abdullah Saeed, 2008). The first complete translation by Muslims appeared between 961 and 976 included commentary of al-Tabari "Jami'al-bayan" in Persian language and translated into Turkish language later. The first English translation of the *Qur'an* saw the light was by Mohammad Abdul Hakim Khan in 1905. This translation was followed by another two translations by Muslim translators Abul Fazl (1912) and Mirza Hairat Dihlawi (1916). After that Qidyani Translations were published by Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, Mirza Bashiruddin Mahmud Ahmad, Sher Ali, and Mawlawi Muhammad Ali. The translation of the later has been reprinted, about 23 times and it was considered the official Qadyani translation and commentary of the Quran. Lastly, Arab Muslims joined this field during the late of 1970s such as Muhammad Taqui al-Din al-Hilali who was the cooperator of the translation which was published in 1977, Muhammad Yusuf Zayid's (1980), Mohammad M. Khatib's (1986), Ahmad Zidan and Dina Zidan's (1994), Kassab(1994), M. Abdel-Haleem (2004), Ahmed Zaki (2007), Tarif Khalidi (2008), Muhammad Sharif(2010), and Mustafa Khattab( 2016).

### **Literature Review**

John B. Thompson (1984) attempts to assess some of the outstanding contemporary contributions to the theory of ideology. The author tries to bring out the value of these contributions as well as their limitations, their innovations, as well as their faults. The negative connection of the term "ideology" was preserved by Marx and Engels in their swinging attack on *Die Deutsche Ideology*. If the theory of ideology has been marked since its origins by controversy and dispute, it is only in recent years that this theory has been enriched and elaborated through a reflection on language. The book is composed of essays

that were written between 1979 and 1984. Stephen White (1988) defines in this volume as the official doctrine of Marxism-Leninism to which the soviet leadership, party and state are all formally committed. There has never been much doubt that ideology, defined in this manner is among the most important element of political life in the USSR. The editors try to do three things; firstly, they review some more recent approaches to the study of ideology and soviet politics. Secondly, they examine the change that had placed in the official ideology from Lenin, Stalin and Khrushchev period up to Brezhnev's concept of developed socialism. Thirdly, they present the evaluation and impact of official doctrine in a variety of major policy areas. The book mainly explores the political aspects of ideology and how does it develop to become the official creed for states. Palgrave Macmillan (2004) discusses the term "ideology" widely and how the paradox of subjectivity and ideology had played a great role in the life of Freud, Marx and Engels? The second part discusses how to read ideology e.g. George or Well's 1984 and political ideology. The third part discusses the post-ideological era, and there is a wonderful bibliography (175-181). The author seeks to clarify the relation between literature and ideology and how the readership receives the literary works from different perspectives. Teun Dijk (2004) presents the notion of ideology and the cognitive definition of ideology is given in terms of social cognitions that are shared by members of a group. The social dimension explains what kind of group; relations between groups and institutions are involved in the development and production of ideology. The discourse dimension of ideology explains how ideologies influence our daily texts and talk, how we understand ideological discourse and how discourse is involved in the production of ideology in society. The writer aims to explore the ideology according to the social and cognitive aspects. Thus, he considers a founder of a new school to study the ideology. Camelia Petrescup (2009) illustrates that ideology in the process of translation has become an increasingly important issue in translation studies. After discussing several definitions of ideology as related to language and giving a short analysis of the translation theories dealing with it, the paper focuses on two translations of "Behind the Iron Curtain", and investigates how ideology can affect the "rewriting" of the source text. The study mainly clarifies the impact of ideology on translation and how the translators produce influenced texts according to his mainstream. The writer explores the manifestation of ideology in the process of translation has become an increasingly important issue in translation studies. This particular interest can be accounted for by rather extensive research in the field of what could be described as "Ideologized" language and finally argue about the definition of ideology. El-Hassane Herrage (2012) aims to scrutinize some Qur'anic issues which had translated into English and Spanish. He also focuses on the intervention of ideological factor in this translation talking into account the influence of the ideology of each selected translator on the original text in its target version. Abdunasir Sideeg (2015) scrutinizes six cases that trace the ideologies explicitly or implicitly involved in the context of translating the Quran into English. It attempts to answer questions pertinent to the nature and effects of the trace of ideology on translating the *Qur'an* into English and the way they shape the Qur'anic message. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used for the analysis of data as this approach provides a convenient mode of critical thinking to carry out the present work.

## Methodology

The research uses the comparative method mainly to compare *The Message of the Qur'an* by Asad with mainstream commentaries, doctrine, and Qur'anic sciences. The researcher seeks and discusses the ideological impact on translation and scrutinizes how the translators achieve the purpose of the source text or misrepresent it. What is the followed method? Who is the readership of the translation? It gives a selective and represents the detail of the translation with a comparison. It discusses the Suras (chapters) gradually and examines the translation of the meaning in verses that need to develop.

## Case Study

### 1- Ideological Impact, Misinterpretation and Mistranslation

Asad in verse "the way of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed Thy blessings, not of those who have been condemned [by Thee], nor of those who go astray" (1:7), misrepresents the meaning through inciting az-Zamakhshari's explanation of wrath especially he has a Mu'tazalite thought thus he clarifies the meaning of Allah's wrath that "Allah wants to torture the sinners and drops severe punishment on them" so regarding Mu'tazalite ideology the sinners should be punished any way but according to the mainstream of Muslims creed this matter relates to Allah's will, if he accepts to torture the sinners or forgives to them.

Moreover, Asad rejects all classic commentaries because they refer to the Jews as people who earned Allah's anger and Christians who went astray. So he preferred Muhammad Abduh's comment that "the people described as having incurred "God's condemnation" - that is, having deprived themselves of His grace - are those who have become fully cognizant of God's message and, having understood it, have rejected it; while by "those who go astray" are meant people whom the truth has either not reached at all, or to whom it has come in so garbled and corrupted a form as to make it difficult for them to recognize it as the truth (*Rida*, Vol1, p. 38).

During introducing to the second chapter Asad describes Abraham (Pbuh) as patriarch and *Ka'bah* as a temple because he was influenced by biblical diction. Asad translates *al-Ghayb* as "the existence of that which is beyond human perception" and this is not a proper equivalent because *al-Gayb* regarding Islamic creed includes believing in Allah, messengers, the last day, Hell, and paradise. Furthermore, Allah describes Himself by the most beautiful names and attribute in the *Qur'an* and Prophet Muhammad clarifies additional descriptions in Sunnah. The translator misinterprets the meaning of the verses "And when they are told, "Do not spread corruption on earth," they answer, "We are but improving things!" (2:12) Oh, verily, it is they, they who are spreading corruption - but they perceive it not?" (2:11-12), where he ignores the reason of revelation and narration about the verse to deduct a general meaning for the verses "It would seem that this is an allusion to people who oppose any "intrusion" of religious considerations into the realm of practical affairs, and thus - often unwittingly, thinking that they are "but improving things" - contribute to the moral and social confusion referred to in the subsequent verse" (Asad, 2003, p.16). Ibn-Abass and Mujahid narrated this verse revealed in hypocrites. Mawrdi, al-Tabari, Ibn-Kathir and al-Baghawi affirmed that corruption in the verse means *Kufir* (denying the truth and disbelieving in God) and coming sins. In addition, he depends on the linguistic meaning and ignores the narrations and reasons of revelation to get the accurate meaning of the verse. Regarding al- Tabari, Ibn Kathir, Ibn al-Gawzi, Hassan Khan, al- Alusi, al-Baidawi, and Ibn-Guzi, shayatin here means the head deniers, polytheists and hypocrites.

Asad rejects the meaning of the verse "We said: "Apply this [principle] to some of those [cases of unresolved murder]: in this way God saves lives from death and shows you His will, so that you might [learn to] use your reason" (2:72) and claims the commentators bring a fanciful assertion which associates with commanding sons of Israel to strike the corpse with a piece of the cow. Moreover, he considers "He gives life to the dead" is a figurative expression. He reaffirms on the disregarding "Neither the *Qur'an*, nor any sayings of the Prophet, nor even the Bible offers the slightest warrant for this highly imaginative explanation, which must, therefore, be rejected" ( Asad, 2003, p. 30). His reasons to deny the meaning are 1) the pronoun relates to the masculine gender while in *nafs* (soul) is for feminine gender, 2) the verb strike is usually used in a figurative or metonymic sense, and 3) the proper equivalent instead of the strike is applied.

Regarding the syntactic and morphologic aspects in "فقلنا إضربوه ببعضها" we said strike him with a piece of it"(2:72), so *fa* is a prefixed conjunction, *kul* is first-person plural perfect verb, *naa* is a subject pronoun, verb *idrib* second person masculine plural imperative verb, *al-Waw* is a subject pronoun, *al-haa* is third person masculine singular object pronoun. Al- Baa is a prefixed preposition; *badiha* is a genitive masculine noun and a third person feminine singular possessive pronoun. The subject, verb, and object relate to the Jews, striking the dead person with a piece of the cow. Even there are six opinions about this piece of the cow, there are 39 commentators explain the verse and mention all narration associate with it.

The translator denies the abrogation between the Qur'anic verses but approves it between holy books so he misinterprets the verse "Any message which, We annul or consign to oblivion, We replace with a better or a similar ones" (2:106). Asad claims the verse relates to the supersession of the Biblical dispensation by that of the Qur'an so the Muslim theologians gave an erroneous interpretation of the subject verse.

There are two main focal points associating with the verse: the first point is altering the meaning of the verse to and calming all previous Muslim scholars represented the improper meaning of the verse for 14 centuries. The second one is rejecting the abrogation doctrine as he called which relates Fiqh and its principles and Tafsir its principles; moreover, it has a separated section in the sciences of the *Qur'an*. Thus, the latter shall discuss in detail the after coming section and focuses he on the former. Imam al-Tabari mentions that abrogation means changing the lawful to become unlawful and versa vice and the permissible to become a prohibited and versa vice. Furthermore, it occurs in command and forbidding but there is no abrogation in narrations (Vol: 2, p 472). Imam al- Qurtubi discusses the abrogation comprehensively in fifteen points (Vol:2, Pp.300-307). Ibn al- Qayyim also refutes this misconception in his commentary and compares the doctrine of abrogation between the Islamic nation and previous ones (Vol 1, p. 140), and Makki bin Abi Talib mentions four meanings of the verse (Ibn al- Qayyim, Vol: 1, p 387).

The translator translates *tabut* into a heart in verse ""Behold, it shall be a sign of his [rightful]dominion that you will be granted a heart" (2:248), he rejects the interpretation as an ark or a chest even he rejected the meaning in the Old Testament. Asad believes "The explanations offered by most of the commentators who adopt this meaning are very contradictory" (Asad, 2003, p. 80).

Furthermore, he believed that Imam Baidawi explained the verse according to this meaning but after scrutinizing the *Anwar al-Tanzeel* by Baidawi, we expose that Baidawi explains it as a box. Asad also claims that al-Ragib al-Asfahani clarifies *tabut* as a heart but on the other hand he mentions *tabut* in the verse is an engraved wooden chest but it means in other contexts the

heart. Therefore, Asad misrepresented the meaning and misunderstood the Arabic reference to suggest improper meaning of *tabut* in the verse. The contradiction that faces the translator here, is the ignorance of the principles of *Tafsir* and how the Muslims receive the narrations from the previous nation.

Asad translates *al-Kursi*'s eternal power in "His eternal power over spreads the heavens and the earth" (2:255). He depends on az-Zamakhshary interprets as "His sovereignty" or "His dominion", Muhammad Abduh in Manar "His knowledge" and Razi's opinion "God's majesty and indescribable eternal glory". Regarding the commentaries of the mainstream of Muslims all these opinions are rejected and not accepted because regarding the authentic narration in *Sahih al-Bukhary* "Kursi (which extends over the heavens and earth) is nothing but like a ring that thrown out upon open space of a desert" (Albukhari, 1995, Vol 2, hadith 255). Thus, it very important for the translator to clarify the meaning of al-Arsh and al-Kursi for the readership to avoid any confusion.

The translator claims the death of Jesus in verse "'O Jesus! Verily, I shall cause thee to die, and shall exalt thee to Me, and cleanse thee of [the presence of] those who are bent on denying the truth" (3:55), Asad translates verb *mutawaffi* into die while commentators mention other meaning e.g. *mutawaffi* here means to sleep and there a narration reported by al-Hassan that "prophet Muhammad informed the Jews that Jesus did not die and he shall come back before the day of the resurrection" (Al-Tabari, 1999, Vol 6, p. 603). *Mutawaffi* also means take or bring. Al-farra and al-Zajaj refer to the foreground and background in the verse and explain the meaning as die and the meaning of the verse becomes "O' Jesus I shall elevate and protect you then cause you to die". Asad does not refer to this point or clarify it. Moreover, the verb *Mutahhir* regarding ibn al-Gawzi in *Zad al-Maseer* has two meanings to save and protect (al-Gawzi, 2002, Vol 1, p.438) but Asad uses cleanse.

## 2- The Ideological Impact on the Verses of Islamic Creed

This section scrutinizes the theological ideology of Asad and its impact on verses that relate to Islamic creed. Here we going to compare his translation and notes with Muslims Main stream especially Allah Glory be to him clarifies his attributes in Qur'an and Sunnah. Thus, the attributes of Allah should translate regarding their meaning in the Qur'an and Sunnah. The basic rule for attributes which relate to Allah is "There is nothing like Him and He is All Hear, All Seer" (42:11) so Translator should avoid Ta'teel (denying the meaning), Tahreef (altering the meaning) Tashbeeh (likening Allah with others), Tamtheel (resemblance), Takyeef (specifying the exact nature and reality), and Tajsim "embodying". We focus here on three main categories: the attributes of Allah, Prophetology, and the unseen.

Regarding the belief of mainstream Muslims that Allah has *Kursi* that is smaller than the *Throne*, Al-Kursi is mentioned only one time in the Qur'anic verse "His Kursi extendeth over heavens and earth" (2:255). There are some narrations of Sunnah. Some scholars believe the Kursi and Throne are the same but narration in *Sahih al-Bukhary* clarifies the difference between them "*Kursi* (which extends over the heavens and earth) is nothing but like a ring that thrown out upon open space of a desert" (Al-Bukhary, 1995, Vol 2: hadith 255). Moreover, Ibn Abass narrated, "al-Kursi is the footstool of Allah" (*Ibn abi-Shaibah*, 60). So, Muslims should believe that there is a *Kursi* and approves it for God. On the contrary, Muhammad Asad translates into "His eternal power overspreads the heavens and the earth" (2:55). In his notes (248) mentions that az-Zamakhshary interpret this as "His "His sovereignty" or "His dominion", while others like Muhammad Abduh take it to mean "His knowledge". Furthermore, Razi inclines to the view that this word denotes God's majesty and indescribable eternal glory but all these opinions contradict with the reported narrations and authentic interpretations of commentators.

Asad translates *Wajha* that is an attribute of Allah in verses: "but forever will abide thy sustainer's self" (55:29), "There is no deity save Him. Everything is bound to perish, save His (eternal) self" ( 28:88), "whatever you may give out in usury so that it might increase through [other] people's possessions will bring [you] no increase in the sight of God (30:39), "We feed you for the sake of God alone" ( 76:9), "and who are patient in adversity out of a longing for their Sustainer's countenance" ( 13:22), (but only out of a longing for the countenance of his Sustainer" ( 92:17), and contain thyself in patience by the side of all who at morn and at evening invoke their Sustainer, seeking His countenance"(18:28). Asad translates *wajhah* into sustainer's self, (eternal) self, the sight of God, Sustainer' countenance, and the sake of God. He misrepresents the meaning in the first two verses because they approve that Allah (Glory be to Him) has *wajhah*. While in the third verse, he translates according to ibn Kathir's opinion. *Wajhah* in the last four verses means Allah's approval, reward, and satisfaction but he translates into a Countenance.

Hands of God are mentioned clearly in seven verses. Regarding the mentioned rule before the metaphorical meaning is not

accepted in translating these verses. Asad translates these verses as follows: 1) "What has kept thee from prostrating thyself before that [being] which I have created with My hands? ( 38: 75);2) "Are they, then, not aware that it is for them that We have created, among all the things which Our hands have wrought, the domestic animals" ( 36:71);3) "The hand of God is over their hands" ( 48:10); 4) "And the Jews say, "God's hand is shackled!" It is their own hands that are shackled; and rejected [by God] are they because of this their assertion. Nay, but wide are His hands stretched out: He dispenses [bounty] as He wills"( 5:65), and 5) And no true understanding of God have they [who worship aught beside Him], in as much as the whole of the earth will be as a [mere] handful to Him on Resurrection Day (39:67).

Asad claims in the first verse this is a metaphorical phrase that refers to the stress lies on the God-willed superiority of man's intellect. While in the second verse, he reaffirms the metaphorical expression base on the concept of "handiwork" in its widest sense, abstract as well as Concrete. In the third verse, he points it out as a metaphor for His being a witness to their pledge. In the fourth verse, he points out the phrase "one's hand is shackled" is a metaphorical expression denoting niggardliness, just as its opposite - "his hand is stretched out wide" - signifies generosity (Zamakhshari). For the last verse, Asad assumes that hand refers to God's absolute power and dominion.

Ibn al-Qayyim mentioned a narration about Abdullah Ibn Umar that Allah created three things by his own hand; Adam, paradise, and Torah. Imam Assamarqandy clarifies that with hands not like our Hands. Al-Thalabiy affirms it means here attribute of Allah nor the power or the majesty even al-Su'aybi narrates in al-Dur al-Manthour that Allah creates Adam by His own Hands. For Asad, there is a contradiction between his translation and notes especially in the latter he sticks to the opinions of azZamakhshary and al-Razi.

Eyes are mentioned in some verses and the translator transform the meaning as follows: 1) it floated under Our eyes (54:14); 2) "but build, under Our eyes" (11:36); 3) "that thou might be formed under Mine eye" (20:39), and 4) "for thou art well within Our sight" (52:48). The translator explains the meaning of eye in all verses as "under Our protection" even the mainstream of Muslims believe the word for word translation is the proper one, so Ibn Uthaimmeen in commentary clarifies it meaning as "and we floated it over water and saw it by our eyes; moreover, baa here for *musahaba* which means by so the meaning is by Our eyes". Imam al-Tabari also confirms that the meaning in the second verse is by our eyes.

Asad uses Ta'weel (interpreting the meaning into another meaning) which contradicts his translation. Even the four verses approve and affirm that Allah has eyes which suitable for Him alone and does not resemble human ones. Furthermore, he uses our sight in the last verse.

Ahmed in his study supports this opinion "The approach of *ahlu Sunnah wal jama'ah* affirms the fact that Allah has eyes without delving into any embedded interpretations or imagining its color, size, or length. They, also, think that people must not think of Allah 's eyes form or shape as if they are like our eyes which consist of nerves and cells. However, the Khalafī trends tend to interpret and imagine them without having evidence for that. They sometimes interpret the eye of Allah as a metaphor of protection and care of Allah not as seeing or watching (Ahmed,2017, p.116). Asad translates the verse that relates to this attribute "on the Day when man's very being shall be borne to the bone, and when they [who now deny the truth] shall be called upon to prostrate themselves [before God] (68:42).

He misrepresents the meaning of the attributes and suggested improper equivalents and ignores the rules of translating the attributes of Allah but regarding Hilali and Khan who affirm the qualities of Allah e.g. face, shine, eye, hand, etc.... that were mentioned in the *Qur'an* and Sunnah are real qualities and Muslim should understand without altering the meaning, giving resemblance or similarity to any of the creatures, and completely ignoring or denying them. These Qualities befit or suit only for Allah Alone, and He does not resemble any of (His) creatures. In addition, the rule here is "There is nothing like Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All- Seer" (V. 42:11) (105).

Even Shins of Allah mentioned only one time, but some narrations of Hadith in *Sahih al-Bukhary and Muslim*, which clarify the meaning and approve this attribute for Allah. Ibnal-Tayyimiyyah and Ibn al-Qayyim refute the allegation of the deniers who claim that shin means horror, and affirm the pronoun in the verse means the return to Allah and no one has the right of prostration except Allah. Al-Sadi and Ibn-Uthaimmeen also affirm the meaning of the verse refers to Allah's Shins.

Asad assumes the correct understanding of the metaphysical subject e.g. God's attributes, the resurrection of the dead, the Day of Judgment, paradise, hell, and angels through paying due attention to the nature and function of allegory so the figurative manner closes the terms which are difficult to understand because of their complexity; moreover, they cannot be adequately expressed in direct concepts.

Thus, Asad denies the miracles of the prophets and represents them as metaphorical expressions. The translator denies the

miracle of Jesus' speaking in cradle and refers to it as a metaphorical allusion to the prophetic wisdom that was to inspire Jesus from a very early age. He also believes the raising of the dead is a metaphorical description of his giving new life to people who were spiritually dead. Healing of the blind and the leper have similar significances: namely, an inner regeneration of people who were spiritually diseased and blind to the truth.

Asad suggests multiple meanings of *Jinn*, he describes them as a spiritual force when he talks about their nature. He claims that *Qur'an* describes them as elemental forces of nature including human nature but they are concealed from our senses e.g. "they join the *Jinn* as partners in worship with Allah" (6:100). Moreover, shayatan is "a metonym for a person's preoccupation with what is loosely described as "occult powers", whether real or illusory, as well as for the resulting practices as such, like sorcery, necromancy, astrology, soothsaying. *Jinn* also may mean beings not visible by themselves but, rather, "hitherto unseen beings" as in verse (72:1). Lastly, Asad defines *jinn* as legends deeply embedded in the consciousness of Arabs.

### 3- The Ideological Impact and the Qur'anic Sciences

Asad points out that *Qur'an* etymologically is derived from the verb *qar'aa* that means to recite or to read and it as a noun means recitation thus, the translation of verses "Ours it is to gather it, and to recite it. So when We have recited it [through Gabriel], then follow its recitation" (75:17-18), but this is not the only linguistic opinion, Imam al-Shafiee believes the *Qur'an* is a proper noun which does not derive from any root so read the word without Hamza (ghair mahmouz) to *Qur'aan*, not *Qur'an*. The third linguistic meaning regarding Abu Hassan al-Ashari, that *Qur'an* is derived from *qarana* that means to associate, to combine or to join because the verses and suras are combined together. The fourth opinion for Yahya ibn Ziyad ad-Daylamee who mentions that the *Qur'an* comes from the *qaraa'in* which means to resemble, to be similar to (Al-Qadhi, 2008, 24-25). The translator does not explore all these linguistic meanings but focuses on the first one only to support his idea.

Technically, Asad defines the *Qur'an* as "the Word of God, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad through the medium of a human language" but this is an incomplete definition because it does not cover different aspects of the *Qur'an* while Imam al-Zarqanee defines it "the Arabic speech of Allah which revealed to Muhammad in wording and meaning, and preserved in Mushafs and has reached by groups of trustworthy narrators, human beings and Jinnare challenged to produce text similar to it (Al-Zarqanee, Vol.1, 21). The difference is completely plain between Asad's and Azarqanee's definitions, while the latter exposes the source, language, form, chain of transmission, and its inimitability (Ijaz), the former focuses only on the first two issues.

Asad discusses the issue of abrogation in the *Qur'an* in note (87) which associates with a verse (2:106) and mentions the abrogation is between holy books not as the Muslim theologians and commentators assume between the Qur'anic verses. Moreover, he claims there are not authentic hadiths that support the other opinion and affirms "the doctrine of abrogation" has no basis whatever in historical fact, and must be rejected and it may lie in the inability of some of the early commentators to reconcile one Qur'anic passage with another.

Regarding the sciences of the *Qur'an*, abrogation is defined as *Naskh* so to abrogate and abrogated linguistically means to abolish, remove, replace, supersede, copy and transcribe. Technically, it means "to repeal a legal order through a legal argument" (Usmani, 2000, p.167). Jews rejected abrogation because this means that God changes His views (It is important to notice that Asad was Jewish before embracing Islam and he may be influenced by this claim) but they fabricate *Buda* that means realizing the divine mistakes and withdrawing them. Mu'tazalite, Shia, and Abu Muslim al-Asfahani (the first one to deny the validity of abrogation in Islam) also claim there is not any abrogation in the *Qur'an*. Imam al-Shafiee was the first one who used the term abrogation in his *Risalah* and before him, scholars used *Takhsees*. Many Muslim scholars paid attention earlier to the importance of the abrogated verses and authored about it e.g. Qataadah as-Sadosee, Ibn Shihab al-Zuhari, Ahmed ibn Hanbal, Abu Dawood, Attermidhi, Abu Aybaid al-Qasim, Makee ibn abi Talib, Ibn Hazm, Ibn al-Jawzi, al-Suituym, Mustafa Zayed, and Ashanqeete.

The categories of Abrogation are as follows: 1) Qur'anic verse abrogates another e.g. "And those who are taken in death among you and leave wives behind - for their wives is a bequest: maintenance for one year without turning [them] out" (2:240), "And those who are taken in death among you and leave wives behind - they, [the wives, shall] wait four months and ten [days]" (2:234) and the latter abrogates the former so the period of the widowed women becomes 130 days instead of a single year; 2) a Qur'anic verse abrogates a prophetic hadith e.g. "We have certainly seen the turning of your face, [O Muhammad], toward the heaven, and We will surely turn you to a qiblah with which you will be pleased. So, turn your face



toward al-Masjid al-Haram" (2:144) whereas the prophet and companions pay to Jerusalem for 16 months Allah commands him to change the direction of Kabah into Makkah; 3) Hadith abrogates another.

The *Qur'an* has many subjects and the translator should have a good background to transfer the proper meaning of the verse without any distortion. The main subjects of the *Qur'an* e.g. Islamic rules, the unseen world and the last day, worshiping, the tales of the previous nations, different aspects of faith, Jihad, and battles of the prophet, the believers, disbelievers and their reward, the universe, and stories. There are about 32 stories in the *Qur'an* but here we are going to focus on some of them to explore how the translators misrepresent these stories.

Firstly, Asad claims that the *Night Journey* which is mentioned in the beginning of the chapter (17) contains two stages of mystic experience: the first is going from Makkah to Jerusalem and the second is the ascending to the heavens. Furthermore, he assumes the prophet Muhammad did not leave any clear-cut explanation of this experience so Muslim commentators and thinkers believe the journey had physical and spiritual sides but the translator considers the journey was a spiritual experience and rejected all interpretations that combine between body and soul. Asad presumes that Aisha (May Allah blessed with her), Al-Hassan al-Basri, Imam al-Tabari, Ibn-Kathir, and az-Zamakhshari support his opinion. He also adds the pronoun in the verse refers to the human quality of the Prophet nothing more so the allegorical descriptions found in the authentic traditions confirm the spirituality of the journey. Lastly, Asad reaffirms is no persuasive reason to believe in a "bodily" *Night Journey* and Ascension.

To refute Asad's allegation, we should scrutinize his evidence so the narration which he mentions about Aishah is a fabricated and a rejected one regarding the principles of Hadith (We mention earlier that Asad has a shortage in this branch of knowledge) Ibn Hisham who narrated this narration in *al-Sira al-Nabawiyah*. Shiekh Alawi al-Sakaf mentions this is a weak hadith because of the broken-chain of the transmission (*Al-Zilal*, p. 229). Al-Albany also indicates to the weakness on the narration in his explanation of *Tahawiyah* (p.246). Moreover, Rashid Ridah points out in *al-Manar magazine* the rejection of the narration and this opinion because the narrator is unknown (94/14). Otherwise, Ibn Abd al-Barin *al-Ajwabah al-Mustawabah* affirms that there is not any authentic narration about Aishah refer to the spirituality of the journey (Pp. 134-135).

Secondly, after scrutinizing the commentary of al-Tabari, we find him narrates the weak and sound narrations that confirm that prophet Muhammad went to Jerusalem, then he ascends to heaven by body and soul, he denies the opinion which supports the spiritual night journey and affirms denying the authentic narrations is considered a falsehood. Ibn Kathir also cites sound narrations from *al-Bukhary and Muslim* and does not refer to the spiritual night journey.

Asad alleges the men of the cave story is an allegory or a parable to clarify Allah's power to bring the people in the day of resurrection and refer to the piety that induces men to abandon a wicked or frivolous world but most of the commentators depend on the people of the scripture in this story. The translator also in the chapter (85) assumes the people of the ditch's story is a parable.

For disjointed letters, the translator claims there is not any recorded hadith narrated (Asad does not classify Sunnah into three categories: *Qawliyyah*, *Fiiliyyah*, and *Taqririyyah*) about the prophet and his companions about these letters but Ibn al-Gawzi in *Zad al-Maseer* mentions narration about Abu-Bakr al-Siddique, Ali ibn abi-Talib, Ibn-Abass, and Atiyah ibn al-Harith al-Hamdani all of them clarify the reality of these letters (14-15). Moreover, he considers all opinions about this issue are highly arbitrary and real usefulness. He believes there is an agreement between the four right-guided Caliphs (May Allah blessed with them) that these letters are unclear "*Mutashabah*", on the other hand, there is any narration about Umar and Uthman about this point and Ali reported if the people realized the meaning they shall get the greatest name of God. Al-Tabari mentions more than 12 meanings and supports everyone with evidence but he chooses these letters are names of the *Qur'an*. Ibn al-Gawzi indicates six opinions about commentators and al-Mardi adds another two meanings to become eight opinions of all commentators about the Muqatta'a letters.

Asad considers the *Mutashabihat* verse as allegorical, symbolic and they are expressed figuratively so they have metaphorical meanings and indirect ones. This claim encourages Asad to believe the unseen world is an allegorical one because it goes beyond our perception and prefers az-Zamakhshari's opinion that the subject point is realized by the parabolic illustration which contradicts with the believing in the *al-Ghayb* (the unseen world).

The translator exaggerates in his rejection the narrations about the people of the scriptures. Regarding the science of

*Tafsir* and its principles, it is urgent to know the narrators who reported these nations and their classification, the methodology of the commentator who mentions these narrations in his work ( acceptance and rejection), what are the rules which scholars set for these narrations?, and how could Muslim deal with these narrations? Therefore, if Asad had scrutinized these points, he might have avoided misrepresenting the meaning of the Qur'anic text but he imitates Muhammad Abduh's opinions in *al-Manar*.

## Results

Muhammad Asad follows the rational school of Muhammad Abduh and adheres to his opinions in explaining the meaning of the verses from cover to cover. This school prefers the intellect, personal knowledge and focuses on deduction and rejecting the imitation of traditions. Hussien Abdul-Raof in *Theological Approaches to the Qur'anic Exegesis* (2012), mentions political and theological cleavages that have emerged as a result of these approaches which interpret the Qur'an. Thus, Qur'anic exegesis has acquired a politico-religious overtone favoring esoteric shades of meaning of Qur'anic expressions or passages and adopting hadiths which are dubbed 'forged' or 'weak' by mainstream exegetes (p.29). In other words, the commentary is considered a mirror of the dominated political and theological circumstances. Works of Rational school have some features e.g. 1) supporting the allegorical meaning of verses ( as Asad did in his notes on the verse ), 2) mentioning the unintended meaning of the Qur'anic verse to convey the message, 3) rejecting the mainstream exegesis, 4) clarifying the meaning according to the probability.

The main figures of this school in the present age are, Jamal al-Afghani, Muhammed Abduh (Who Asad influenced with his writings e.g. *Risalat al-Tawheed*), Rashid Ridah, and Mustafa al-Maraghi. This school claims interpreting the *Qur'an* to scrutinize its main aims only so Rashid Ridah and Mustafa al-Maraghi blame the previous interpreters because they missed the required aims of interpreting the Qur'an. Asad based on *tafsir al-Manar*, *al-Kashaf* and *Mafatih al-Ghayib* as primary sources for him, so al-Razi, az-Zamakhsharim, M. Abduh and Rashid Ridah have a great impact on him.

Muhammad Asad applied the basic rules of this school through denying the reality of Qur'anic stories, rejecting referring to Jews and Christians in the first chapter, refusing the sound narration in *Sahih Bukhari and Muslim*, misrepresenting the abrogation, distortion the meaning of unseen concepts, subtracting the traditional commentaries, indicating to the spirituality of the Night Journey, misunderstanding the legal issue of delineating in Islam and misinterpreting the miracles of the prophets.

## Conclusion

The study exposes the ideological impact on Asad's work *the Message of the Qur'an* to avoid any misinterpretation, mistranslation and misconception of about the Qur'anic text. Asad exerts great efforts in translating the *Qur'an* into English to close its meaning for the contemporary readership. This great work has extensive notes that simplify the meanings and facilitate understanding the source text. The translator mentions the accurate meaning of words e.g. (2:6). He refers to the primary Arabic dictionaries in many notes. In many cases, he compares between the Qur'anic text and the old scripture to affirm on the authenticity of the Qur'an. Asad focuses on the etymological analysis to use the proper equivalent. The translator based on a huge number of references in language, tafsir, al-Hadith, Qur'anic sciences and history.

On the other side, Asad misinterprets some verse and suggest unintended meaning of the verse e.g. (2:12). He did not isolate between his knowledge and what the source text requires. The ideological impact of the rational school is plain particularly in verses relate to the other worlds, attributes of God, Miracles of Jesus and other prophets, the reality of the messengers, Night Journey, the people of the Cave, the creature, Jinn, and Angels. The translator ignores the reason of the revelation so he misrepresents the meaning of some verses; moreover, he has a confusion because of unawareness the principles of *Tafsir* and *Hadith* that lead him to stick to the ideology of rational school. Asad prefers the linguistic interpretation of verse so he rejects the narrations and opinions of classic commentators. He denies main issues in Qur'anic sciences e.g. abrogation and Judaeo-Christian anecdotes (*al-isra'iliyyat*). Future research could focus on the evaluating of the translated sacred texts especially the Qur'anic one through suggestion proper models to scrutinize the translation of the Qur'an comprehensively and accurately.

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