TRANSLATION OF PROPHETIC HADEETHS: DIVINE CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT: *Unlike the Quran, the translation of Prophet Muhammad's Sunnah (ρ) has not only been given little attention but also falls short of achieving its ultimatum divine message. This paper is an attempt to examine the divine challenges facing the translators of Prophetic hadeeths using contextualised linguistic, cultural and rhetorical elements as parameters in Muhammad Muhsin Khan's summarised translation of Sahih Al-Bukhari (1994) as examples for discussion and analysis. Results of the discussion and analysis of the samples used in this paper have indicated that there is an urgent need for Islamising rather than Christianizing or Jewishizing the translation of Prophetic Hadeeths. So as to achieve the objective of Islamising the translation, a list of suggestions and recommendations have been made for use by professional translators, teachers and students of translation as well as for those who are interested in carrying out further research in this field.*

KEY WORDS: Prophet Muhammad, *Sunnah*, *Hadeeth*, Islamising, Prophetic Texts, Translation, Divine.

INTRODUCTION

Unlike the Quran, there is not one single book representing or containing all the *hadeeths* of the Prophet Muhammad (ρ), "Peace and blessings of Allah be upon him", but rather collections of books, for example, to list the six major and most recognised collections (Binbaz official Arabic website):

1. Sahih Bukari by Imam Albukhari (d. 256 AH, 870 CE), includes 7,275 *hadeeths*.

2. Sahih Muslim by Muslim Alhajjaj (d. 256 AH, 870 CE), includes 9,200 *hadeeths.*

3. Sunan Abu Dawood by Abu Dawood (d. 275 AH, 888 CE), includes 4,800 *hadeeths.*

4. Jami Attirmidhi by Attirmidhi (d. 279 AH, 892 CE), includes 3,956 *hadeeths*.

5. Sunan Annasai by Annasi (d. 303 AH, 916 CE), includes 5,750 *hadeeths*.

6. Sunan ibn Majah by Ibn Majah (d. 273 AH, 887 CE), over 4,000 *hadeeth*.

This diversity in the number of collections and translators tends to make the translated *hadeeths* not only less effective in terms of relevance, appropriateness, impact and appeal but also short of achieving their divine message in terms of experiencing the spirit of the original prophetic text, theological message, or of revelling the grandeur and rhythm of the text.

For these reasons, this paper will only use *Sahih Bukari's* collection of *hadeeths*, which is considered by scholars and non-scholars second to none after the Quran in terms of legislative authority and authenticity. Muhammad M Khan's summarised translation of *Sahih Al-Bukhari*

(1994) will be used for the sample investigation as it is the best option out of the six mentioned above.

Although there have been several studies of the translation of the Arabic –Englsih religious texts in general, (Elewa, 2014, Agliz , 2015, Hassan, 2016 and Dweik, Badr and Abu Shakra, Mariam ,2010), the issue of Islamising the translation of the Prophet's *hadeeths* into English has not yet been raised in terms of examining the 'divine' challenges that translators tend to face in translating Prophetic *hadeeths*. This article will question the worthiness of linguistic, cultural and rhetorical translation being enough when it comes to translating Prophetic *hadeeths* and will argue the case for an Islamised translation of the Prophetic *hadeeths* with a divine touch when possible.

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

According to Nida, (1994:195), religious texts can be classified into: (1) "texts that discuss historical or present-day religious beliefs and practices of a believing community and (2) texts that are crucial in giving rise to believing community". For example, commentaries on the Prophet's *hadeeths* would be in the first category but the *hadeeths* themselves would be placed in the second category which this paper is mainly concerned with the translation of.

Unlike Bible translators who have to choose between Greek or Hebrew texts to use as a basis for translation, translators of Muhammad's (ρ) Prophetic *hadeeths* are faced with only one *Sahih* text which could be from any of the *Sahih Books* mentioned above. This would help them adopt "the interpretive position of the believing community that has accepted the authenticity of the text and has taken seriously the meaning of the text for their own beliefs and practices" (Ibid:199)

In his article, "The Sociolinguistics of Translating Canonical Religious Texts", Eugene Nida (1994:217) calls for 'multiple translations of religious texts...because of the diverse background of readers and the various uses of such texts". This may be regarded as an acceptable approach to general Christian religious texts but not necessarily to Prophetic texts such those of the Prophet Muhammad's *hadeeths* (ρ) whether they are used for 'study, devotion, proclamation, and liturgy' as claimed by him (ibid:217). Prophetic texts, whether they belong to the Old Testament, New Testament or to Islam, should be treated unlike any other religious text type as they tend to be divine and human which obviously give them a different type of rhetoric as well as message from any other religious text-type, for example, like those written by scholars of religious studies.

Ron Holt (2006:13), looks at religious language from a variationist's perspective. He considers that a religious language tends to be "complex and dynamic in terms of function, style, historical context, interrelation with other texts, mode and language vehicle." So the translator of a religious text should not only look at the 'meaningfulness' criterion but also at other criteria such as genre, mode, time and sociolinguistic variables.

Elewa (2014:33) generally tackles the translation of religious texts from a purely linguistic perspective, arguing that translating the phonic, morphological, lexical and syntactic features of a religious text tends to "produce a translation that reflects the real image of religion". Although these features are quite important in translating any religious text, they are not enough, for example, to convey the 'real image' or message of an Islamic Prophetic text.

Moreover, Elewa's main corpora was based on a comparison between the features of Christian religion and those of Islam and used in their contexts accordingly.

In his article on "Translation of Religious Texts", Agliz (2015) argues that the main difficulties and challenges of translating a religious text reside in notions like 'grammatical equivalences, redundancy and paragraphing'. He uses Shalabi's book, *"Islam between Truth and False Allegations"* (1997) as a source for his data and concludes that religious translators should overcome such problems and target their translations towards the English receptors while taking into account their linguistic and cultural expectations.

Hassan, S (2016), who discusses the problem of translation versus transliteration of Islamic religious terms (IRT) into English, recommends 'transliteration' as a way out for all IRT situations in which SL and TL words are 'partially-equivalent or non-equivalent'. This might be true for non-contextualized Islamic proper names like those of the prophets, their companions and sacred places (Halimah, A, 2016) but may be short of achieving the Islamic message implied in a contextualized Islamic term/concept as illustrated below.

Dweik, Badr and Abu Shakra, Mariam, M (2010) conducted a case study of 35 MA translation students where they investigated strategies adopted by those students in translating specific lexical and semantic collocations in three religious texts, namely the Quran, the *Hadeeth* and the Bible. It was found that the strategy of synonymy was best used for translating lexical collocations and that while 'literal translation was adopted in the translation of semantic collocations in the Quran and the Bible', participants tended to use 'deletion strategy' in translating collocations in the *Hadeeth*. 'Deletion' as a translation strategy would not be an appropriate one to use in translating a prophetic text however, as it could negatively affect the Islamic message implied in the text. This is shown in Challenges nos. 1 and 11 below.

Having made those references and being a practitioner interested mainly in the translation of Prophetic *hadeeths* (see Halimah, 2012), I am inclined to adopt an orthodox divine approach to translating Prophetic *hadeeths*. This approach is mainly based on capturing the meaning of the text with the truth's finest net and ensuring that its golden religious essence is brought to the other language pure. A clear standing structure of a Prophetic *hadeeth* should be found with a divine spirit running through its veins giving a powerful emotional impact that the religious text deserves, highlighting it in the world of translation. A Muslim reader embarks on a unique experience as they journey through the text in its original language. This same experience should be reflected in the translation as much as possible where a careful choice of words, phrases, and sentence structure for theological concepts, principles, norms or even proper names held by the faith plays a key role in truly making a religious translation divine.

The Scope of this Study

Based on the theoretical considerations mentioned above, the main aim of this article is to investigate whether the divine element implied in the Prophetic *hadeeths* is translatable or not. This will be achieved by using examples taken from Muhammad M Khan's summarised translation of *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (1994).

It is hoped that this study will provide useful information for English Speaking Muslims and non-Muslims interested in reading the meanings of the Prophetic *Hadeeths* in English as well as for academic institutions and translators with regards to the following:

1. The need to Islamise the English Language in the process of translating prophetic *hadeeths* so that it would help convey the Islamic divine message more specifically, faithfully, plainly, economically emotively, effectively and above all in a way more demonstrative of the spiritual and mystic effect which the reader should experience in the English version of the translation.

2. Any translation of any Prophetic *hadeeth* should presuppose its importance for the community of faith who hold the canonical treatment of the text as authoritative for faith and practice. (i.e. Arab Muslims in the main)

This study does not, however, aim at comparing source texts with translated texts comprehensively, but rather at investigating the translations of a limited number of contextualised linguistic, cultural and rhetorical elements as parameters to find out how divine they are. This is not considered to be an exhaustive study but rather an endeavour to draw attention to the phenomenon of translating the Prophetic *Hadeeth* without divine canonicity.

The Prophetic *Hadeeth* As Central Text

Halimah (2012:101) defines the *Sunnah* as an integrated message system that "comprises the sayings, doings, practices, explicit or implicit approvals and disapprovals of the Prophet Muhammad (ρ) expressed in the form of *hadeeths*". With regard to the shape of a Hadeeth, it tends to have two parts: *'sanad'* (the human reporter of the *hadeeth*) and *'matn'* (the Prophetic text itself).

From a legislative perspective, these *hadeeths* of the Prophet Muhammad (ρ) come straight after the Holy Quran in Islam which is a clear representation of how high their authority and importance are. In the Quran itself, Allah (☐), "The Exalted", clearly endorses the role of Muhammad (ρ) as His Messenger making it clear in many verses that he was to be obeyed because what he said, did, approved of or disapproved of had divinely been revealed. Therefore, obeying him is just as important as obeying Allah (☐) who says:

﴿ مَّنْ يُطِعِ الرَّسُولَ فَقَدْ أَطَاعَ اللّهَ وَمَن تَوَلَّى فَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ عَلَيْهِمْ حَفِيظاً ﴾ [سورة النساء:80]

> "He who obeys the Messenger, obeys Allah: but if any turns away, we have not sent you to watch over them" (S.4, A.80)

The words of Allah (☐) make clear the importance of the Prophet Muhammad (ρ) in Islam and so it is of no wonder that the Prophet's *Sunnah* (ρ), which has many of his teachings and sayings, is held with great love and respect in the eyes of Muslims. This being said, a certain care must be taken in its translation so as to bring forth the true meaning of the *hadeeths* and do so making sure to reflect the important features that play great roles in making it divine in source and human in practice.

From a linguistic/stylistic perspective, Prophetic *hadeeths* are of a different world to common poetry, prose, drama and other narrative styles for the simple reason of being both human and divine at the same time. It can be argued therefore, that as no genre truly fits the Prophetic rhetoric with its great impact and different literary tone, translating the Prophetic *hadeeth* is a task that must be approached from another angle completely.

The Prophetic *hadeeths* depict great messages and lessons clearly and yet despite them being made up of uncomplicated vocabulary that is understandable, easily known to readers and

placed in simple sentence structures, the true simplicity of the language and entire being of the *hadeeths* seem to be intricate somehow with a divine thread woven through them, making them beautiful. The eloquence and strength in the Prophet's every line speaks volumes and it can be felt by readers that the stylistic features owned by the *hadeeths* bloom with a different spirit to those in common literary texts that are faded in comparison. The Prophet's style is truly a distinctive one which has its own eloquence, diction, intensity. Above all it is divine.

The Translation Of Prophetic *Hadeeths*: Divine Challenges

According to Nida, (1994:215), the translation of religious texts, whether prophetic or non-prophetic tends to be more

> "sociolinguistically complex than any other type of translating because of? the long history involved in such translating, the strong emotional attachment to vocabulary and style, the political implications for deviating from tradition, and the vast differences of culture between the original revelation and its present-day interpretation and use. The task of interlingual communication is both challenging and endless".

Unlike non-prophetic texts, such as those written or spoken by the Prophet's companions, followers of the Prophet's companions, or writings made by ancient or contemporary religious scholars, translating Prophetic *hadeeths* into English seems to pose a higher level of difficulty and challenge for Arabic-speaking translators than translating from English into Arabic. This could be due to their lack of real life exposure to the English language, particularly to the use of its sociocultural discourse and prophetic rhetoric. Furthermore, a lack of opportunities for experiencing such conceptual terms and practical situations in English tends to aggravate the problem.

In his book, *Prophetic Rhetoric*, Wendland, Ernst R (2014), calls for using an oral-rhetorical approach in Scripture translation in general and Biblical prophetic texts in particular. This approach tends to combine the manners of speaking and writing for understanding, interpreting, analysing and translating a prophetic text in terms of form, content, rhetorical and stylistic attributes. This paper will take the issue of translating prophetic texts one-step further where the translator is expected to spiritualize the translation of the *hadeeths,* making it as much as possible both human and divine in terms of linguistic, cultural and rhetorical references as well as spiritual experiences.

To investigate the issue more profoundly, an attempt will be made to discuss it from the following different perspectives. Due to lack of space, a limited number of examples from Muhsin Khan's summarised translation of *Sahih Al-Bukhari* (1994) are given and discussed mainly from linguistic, cultural, rhetorical perspectives, with occasional reference to Islamic theological and spiritual features in the translated texts.

The Translation of the Hadeeth from a Linguistic Perspective

Belonging to two different linguistic systems, Arabic-English translation tends to cause lexical and grammatical problems to translators in general. The translation of Prophetic *hadeeths* seems to make their task even harder as the vocabulary and grammatical structures used in the

hadeeths are mainly full of divine meanings which would obviously make the translation quite challenging.

The following discussion of the lexical and grammatical problems and challenges of translating Prophetic *hadeeths* into English is based on the assumption that '*dynamic equivalence and formal equivalence*', a term coined by (Nida (1975/2001:116), refer not only to the correspondence in *'lexical meanings, grammatical classes and rhetorical devices'* between the source and target languages, but also to 'the extent to which the receptors correctly understand and appreciate the translated text'. In this section, the concept of 'Equivalence' in translation is used as a yardstick to judge the validity and adequacy of translations discussed below from purely lexical and grammatical perspectives only. It is also assumed that "The antiquarian nature of the vocabulary makes the text seem closer to the time when the original texts were first written" Nida (1994: 213). In other words, to achieve a formal or dynamic equivalence at the word or grammatical level, the vocabulary and grammatical structures used should achieve utmost approximation and sameness to the setting and tempo used in the original text.

Challenge (1): The translator's linguistic deficiency in Arabic

A translator's linguistic deficiency in Arabic tends to create serious problems of translation into English, especially in translating Prophetic *hadeeths* where the language tends to be not only classical but also sublime and divine. Let us consider this *hadeeth* no.1494 and see whether the translator was successful in understanding the meaning of the *hadeeth* in Arabic in the first place:

عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الخُدْرِيِّ، قَالَ: كَانَ النَّبِيُّ (ρ) أَشَدَّ حَيَاءً مِنَ العَذْرَاءِ فِي خِدْرِهَا. [حديث: 1494]

> Narrated Abü Sa'Id Al-KhudrI: The Prophet (ρ) was shier than a veiled virgin girl. [H:1494]

Although Muhsin Khan was not a native speaker of Arabic, his Arabic undoubtedly must be good enough to qualify him to translate the *hadeeths* of the Prophet (ρ). However, he seems to have either intentionally or unintentionally avoided translating the Arabic underlined phrase in the example above في خدرها and in addition to this added the word '*veiled*' which does not mean في خدرها but rather "مُتلثّم" (i.e. disguised/masked/covert) which possibly shows a failure in understanding the meaning of في خدرها in Arabic. One more observation is his addition of the word "girl' which does not exist in the Arabic version because the word العذراء in Arabic refers to a female whose virginity is intact and not necessarily a girl/فتاة in the contemporary English/Arabic meaning of the word. This kind of linguistic misunderstanding of the meanings of *the hadeeth*, on the one hand, and addition/deletion or loss in translation, on the other, cannot be afforded in a religious text like that of the Prophetic *hadeeth* due to its sacred and divine status among Muslims. Therefore, a more accurate and satisfying translation of the above *hadeeth* would be as follows:

> Abu Saeed Alkhudri reported that the Prophet (ρ) was shyer than a virgin in her private quarters. [H:1494]

Challenge (2): The translator's religious deficiency in Prophetic *Hadeeths*

Lack of profound religious knowledge of the Prophetic *hadeeths* tends to create serious problems in translation. Although his knowledge of the Prophet's *Hadeeth*s is commendable, Muhsin Khan, for example, fails to capture the theological difference between نبي الله/ Prophet

of Allah and رسول الله / Messenger of Allah in the following *hadeeth* where he translated both expressions using the word 'the *Prophet*' instead of the '*Messenger*':

عَنْ أَنَسٍ قَالَ: خَرَجْتُ مَعَ رَسُولِ اللهِ (ρ) إِلَى خَيْبَرَ أَخْدِمُهُ، فَلَمَّا قَدِمَ النَّبِيُّ(ρ) رَاجِعاً وَبَدا لَهُ أُحُدٌ، قَالَ: "هذَا جَبَلٌ يُحِبُّنَا وَنُحِبُّهُ" . [حديث: 1248]

> Narrated Anas bin Mâlik I went along with <u>the Prophet</u> (ρ) to Khaibar so as to serve him. (Later on) when the <u>Prophet</u> (ρ) returned, he on seeing the Uhud mountain, said, "This is a mountain that loves us and is loved by us." [H:1248].

According to Attahawee, A J (1984:158), the definition of a 'Prophet' and a 'Messenger' is as follows:

> A Prophet is the one who is revealed to him, but he is not commanded to inform and instruct people like Dawood, Solomon, Younis and others. Whereas a messenger is the one who is revealed to him and commanded to inform and instruct people, such as Muhammad (ρ), Jesus, Moses, and others. A Prophet cannot be a messenger but a messenger can be called both a prophet and a messenger.

Based on the above interpretation of the concept, the translation of *hadeeth* no. 1248 cannot theologically be acceptable. It also indicates that this kind of inconsistency in the translation of such essential religious terms and concepts tend to undermine the validity and reliability of the translation as a whole. Therefore, I suggest the following alternative translation:

> Anas bin Maalik reported that when he went along with <u>the Messenger of Allah</u> (ρ) to Khaibar so as to serve him. (Later on) when the <u>Prophet</u> (ρ) returned, he on seeing the Uhud mountain, said, "This is a mountain that loves us and we love it." [H:1248].

Challenge (3): Translation at word level I

The following example gives us material through which to look at the significance of the 'lexical meaning of a word' as illustrated below:

عَنْ أَبِي طَلْحَةَ ، عَن النَّبِيّ (ρ): أَنَّهُ كَانَ إِذَا <u>ظَهَرَ</u> عَلَى قَوْمٍ أَقَامَ <u>بِالْعَرْصَةِ</u> <u>ثَلَاثَ لَيَالٍ</u>. (حديث: 1308)

> <u>Narrated</u> Abu Talha: Whenever the Prophet (ρ) <u>conquered</u> some people, he would stay in <u>their town</u> for <u>three nights</u>. [H:1308]

At word level, there are the verb ظَهَرَ على /conquer and the noun العَرصَةِ /town, where the translator fails to use the equivalent verb and noun in English. The semantic denotations and connotations of the verb 'conquer', for example, are different from those of the verb in Arabic ظَهَرَ على because unlike the former the latter refers not only to the victory the Prophet (ρ) would achieve over his enemy but also a divine message he wanted to pass on to them that his army would not stay but only for three nights as guests so as to make sure that peace and security prevail among them. This is why the *hadeeth* mentions 'three nights', the number of nights a person could stay and be considered as a guest. As for the noun العَرصَةِ /town , the author could not catch the special meaning and setting of the *hadeeth* either. He uses in *their town* and the Arabic word does not mean that at all. It means an open *place/square* which soldiers would use to camp for three nights and leave the people in peace. This lack of understanding of the

exact meaning of such words has deprived the *hadeeth* of its not only general semantic meaning but also of its divine message implied in the denotative and connotative meanings of both the verb ظَهَرَ على and the noun العَرصَةِ. Therefore, I would suggest the following version where the adequacy and validity of its translation tends to achieve both human language and the approximate divine message:

> Abu Talha reported that whenever the Prophet (ρ) triumphed over some people, he would stay in the public square of their town for three nights. [H:1308]

Challenge (4): Translation at word level II

Another lexical challenge can be observed in the translation of the Arabic imperative verb كِيلُوا in the following Prophetic *hadeeth* which tends to cover the meanings of two different verbs in English "to weigh up something and to measure something:

> عَنْ الْمِقْدَامِ بْنِ مَعْدِي كَرِبَ عَنْ النَّبِيِّ (ρ) قَالَ : كِيلُوا طَعَامَكُمْ يُبَارَكْ لَكُمْ. (حديث: 1015) .

> Narrated Al-Miqdâm bin Ma'dIkarib: The Prophet (ρ) said, "Measure your foodstuff and you will be blessed". [H:1015]

Muhsin Khan, for example, fails to notice not only the double meaning associated with the verb كِيلُوا but also the fact that there are two different verbs in English which have two different functions *to weigh up* something dry like 'flour, rice' (i.e. weight) and *to measure up* something fluid like *'oil and milk' (i.e. volume)*. Moreover, he has used the verb to *measure* up with 'foodstuff' which could be *weighed up and measured up* in both English and Arabic settings. This double semantic denotation and divine connotation implied in the Arabic word كِيلُوا is just an example of how challenging the translation of a Prophetic word can be. One more misunderstanding on his part is his use of the pronoun **you** instead of **it** as the Arabic passive voice *yubarak alykum* refers to the foodstuff not to *'you' i.e.* the people in question. Therefore, for a challenge like this, a translation couplet, where a combination of two translation procedures, can be used as a means of solving a problem of this nature satisfyingly:

> Almiqdam bin Ma'dikarib reported that the Prophet (ρ) said, "Weigh up or measure your foodstuff and it will be blessed for you". [H:1015]

Challenge (5): Translation of a 'genitive' case

Arabic and English belong to two different language families: Germanic and Semitic. This tends to make their grammars sharply different. Considering the translation of 'genitive' case and 'word order' from Arabic into English, for example, is a case of significance when translating a Prophetic *hadeeth*. Under this challenge, let us consider the translation of following *hadeeth*:

> عَنْ أَبِي سَعِيدٍ الْخُدْرِيِّ قال: " خَرَجَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ(ρ) فِي أَضْحًى أَوْ فِطْرٍ إِلَى الْمُصَلَّى،..[حديث: 210]

> Narrated Abü Sa'Id Al-KhudrI: Once Allah's Messenger (ρ) went out to the Musalla [to offer the S'alát (prayer)] of Eid-al-Adha or Al-Fitr prayer,…[H:210]

The Arabic 'genitive' case rule tends to imply two cases: one case which indicates "persons' like نجم المباراة (i.e. *najm almubara*/the man of the match) and another indicates 'things/materials' سيارة أحمد (i.e. *sayyarat ahmad*/Ahmad's car). In our example above and throughout his translation of Sahih Albukhari, he seems to be unable to appreciate the subtle

difference between these two cases. Muhsin Khan uses the possessive apostrophe case in his translation of (ρ) رسول الله (i.e. Allah's Messenger) instead of the genitive case as in the "The Messenger of Allah" which turns the English translation grammatically inaccurate and religiously inappropriate. A more acceptable and Prophetically divine version of its translation would be as follows:

> Abu Saeed Alkhudri reported that once upon a time, the Messenger of Allah (ρ) went out to an open-spaced prayer area to perform Eid Aladha or Alftfr prayer. (H:210)

Challenge 6: Translation of 'word order'

Another grammatical challenge that the translators of Prophetic *hadeeths* tend to face, can be realized in the translation of '*word order*' from Arabic into English. For instance, Arabic doesn't tend to have a fixed word order which may cause both message incoherence and a theological disorientation:

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عَنْ أَنَس بْنِ مَالِكٍ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ρ): الْبَرَكَةُ فِي نَوَاصِي الْخَيْلِ. [حديث:1235]

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> Narrated Anas bin Mâlik the Prophet said "There is blessing in the forelocks of horses." [H:1235].

One more observation is the translation of عن أنس بن مالك/*the narrator* where the translator changed the word order by using a wrong fronting in his translation throughout the book where he puts, for example, the verb before the subject *Narrated Anas bin Malik*. By doing this, he did not only violate the English Subject+Verb linguistic system but also changed the emphasis of the reporting. In Arabic, the reporter *Anas bin Malik*, is more important than the action of reporting. Furthermore, he used the verb *narrate* which is not the right word because Anas bin Malik is not narrating something of his own making but rather reporting what the Messenger (ρ) exactly did. A more grammatically and Prophetically acceptable version of its translation would be as follows:

> Anas bin Mâlik reported that the Messenger of Allah (ρ) said : "There is blessing in the forelocks of horses." [H:1235].

The Translation of the Hadeeth from a Cultural Perspective

Language, culture and translation are so interrelated and essential in understanding "the source text and in representing the meaning in a target language-culture", especially in religious texts (Nida, 2001, Page i). In other words, there is hardly any religious text without some kind of cultural focus in it or being culture-specific. Therefore, as Newmark (1988:94) puts it "when there is a cultural focus, there is a translation problem due to the cultural 'gap' or 'distance' between the SL and TL". Based on these assumptions, Newmark's (ibid) classification of the cultural categories such as those mainly covering "religion, ecology, material and leisure," will be used to investigate whether or not Khan's translation of *Sahih Bukhari* has successfully managed to transfer the human cultural features and the divine implications of the hadeeths into English:

Challenge (7): The translation of the concept of 'الصلاة /assalaat/performing prayer'

Perhaps the most difficult and challenging problems in translation are posed by culture-specific terms and concepts, especially by those of religious nature. Furthermore, the problems become more aggravated when it comes to the translation of Prophet Muhammad's *hadeeths* , the Messenger of Allah (ρ), because of them being characterised as a human product with a divine touch. Let's now look at the following *hadeeth* and see how Muhsin Khan has tackled the cultural dimensions of the concept of 'praying' in the text:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ (ρ) قَالِ: إِذَا نَعَسَ أَحَدُكُمْ وهو يُصَلِّي، فَلْيَرْقُدْ حَتَّى يَذْهَبَ عَنْهُ النَّوْمُ، فَإِنَّ أَحَدَكُمْ إِذَا صَلَّى وَهُوَ نَاعِسٌ، لا يَدْرِي لَعَلَّهُ يَسْتَغْفِرُ، فَيَسُبُّ نَفْسَهُ، [حديث:161]

> Narrated 'Aisha that Allah's Messenger (ρ) said, "If anyone of you feels drowsy while <u>offering </u>Salát (prayer) he should go to bed (sleep) till his slumber is over, because in <u>praying</u> while drowsy one does not know whether one is asking for forgiveness or for a bad thing for oneself." [H:161]

Muhsin Khan, once again fails to understand and appropriately translate the concept of الصلاة into English throughout the book by using the underlined verb 'offer' with the Arabic noun transliterated as 'Salat' and between two brackets (prayer). It is common knowledge that in a western culture, Christians tend to use it verbally "offer prayers" whereas in a Muslim culture Muslims tend to physically "perform prayers" not "offer prayers". In religious terms, the difference is crucial and decisive. The former indicates verbal prayers the latter indicates both verbal recitation of Quranic verse and performing physical movements of the body represented in *"standing, kneeling and then prostrating"*. This rendition of the concept of 'Salat/Prayer' tends to limit what is meant by the Arabic word, deprive the *hadeeth* of its authentic religious meaning and violate the principles and conditions of performing one's five times prayers. Moreover, it gives the reader the wrong message about the principle of''إقامة الصلاة/Performance of Prayer" in Islam. The above example shows how serious a mistake in translating a Prophetic *hadeeth* may be. It is not only a matter of translatability but rather of rendering a concept. Therefore, I suggest the following alternative translation where accuracy, clarity and religiosity of the *hadeeth* are achieved:

> Aisha reported that the Messenger of Allah (ρ) said, "If anyone of you feels drowsy while <u>performing prayer</u>, he should go to bed (sleep) till his slumber is over, because <u>performing prayers</u> while being drowsy one does not know whether one is asking for forgiveness or for a bad thing for oneself." [H:161]

Challenge 8: The translation of the Concept of الحوض/Alhaud of the Prophet (ρ)

Most Arabic cultural terms, which do not have corresponding cultural counterparts in English, are transcribed into English Alphabets exactly as pronounced as in the following example and many others *hadeeths* as in 2132, 2133, 2134, 2135 and 2136:

أُسَيْدِ بْنِ حُضَيْرٍ عَنْهُ أَنَّ رَجُلًا مِنْ الْأَنْصَارِ قَالَ يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ أَلَا تَسْتَعْمِلُنِي كَمَا اسْتَعْمَلْتَ فُلَانًا، قَالَ: سَتَلْقَوْنَ بَعْدِي أُثْرَةً فَاصْبِرُوا حَتَّى تَلْقَوْنِي عَلَى الْحَوْضِ. [حديث : 1562]

> Narrated Usaid bin Hudair A man from the Ansar (supporters)said : O Allah's Messenger! Will you appoint me as you have appointed so-and-so?" The prophet (ρ) said: "After me you will see others given preference to you; so be patient till you meet me at <u>Al-Haud (the tank i.e. Alkauther)</u>". [H1562]

However, in the example above, Muhsin Khan fails again in rendering the concept of '*Alhaud*' in terms of its general meaning and its religious connotations. His transcription of the word الْحَوْض on its own as '*Al-Haud*' is neither clear nor enlightening. His in-between –brackets-extra information makes it even more confusing because the meaning of *Alhaud* in English is not *'tank'* neither is it *Alkauther,* which is the name of a great river in paradise given to the Prophet (ρ) by Allah while the situation of *Alhaud* is on the Land of Resurrection . To make the translation accurate and clear and keep the religious and spiritual prophetic connotations associated with it, a deculturalizing procedure can be used. In other words, to turn the cultural term 'Alhaud' neutralized in the target language, a descriptive equivalent consisting of a couplet, triplet, quartile or even five modifiers could be used as in the following illustration: *the Kauther-River-fed-vast-reservoir-like Huad*. The following translation would seem to be more accurate and appropriate as it conveys not only the truthful meaning of the *hadeeth* but also its Prophetic spiritual features and allows the reader to imagine and visualize a more accurate and divine image of the Huad than the above mentioned translation may have allowed:

> Osaid bin Hudair reported that a man from the Ansars (supporters) said: O Messenger of Allah! Will you appoint me as you have appointed so-and-so?"
> The prophet (ρ) said: "After me you will see others given preference to you; so be patient till you meet me at *the Kauther-River-fed-vast-reservoir-like Huad* ". [H1562]

Challenge 9 : The Translation of the attributes of the Prophet (ρ)

Translating attributes of the Prophet Muhammad (ρ) poses a challenge of a different nature to inexperienced and religiously unknowledgeable translators. This extra challenge lies mainly in their disability to appreciate the subtle difference between not only in choosing the right equivalent word or expression but also appreciating that the person being described is a "Prophet' whose status in all religions tends to be sublime, sacred and holy. The following example is a case in evidence:

عَنْ أَنَسٍ قَالَ: «مَا مَسِسْتُ حَرِيرًا وَلاَ دِيبَاجًا أَلْيَنَ مِنْ كَفِّ النَّبِيِّ (ρ)، وَلاَ شَمِمْتُ رِيحًا قَطُّ أَوْ عَرْفًا قَطُّ أَطْيَبَ مِنْ رِيحٍ أَوْ عَرْفِ النَّبِيِّ (ρ)» [حديث:1493]

> Narrated Anas : I have never touched silk and DIbâj (i.e. thick silk) softer than the palm of the Prophet (ρ) nor have I smelt a perfume nicer than the sweat of the Prophet. [H:1493]

Whether intentionally or unintentionally, Muhsin Khan seems to have undertranslated the *hadeeth* by shortening the second half of the *hadeeth* underlined above by deleting the 'or' structure in the speech. This is a serious violation of the sacredness of the *hadeeth* whether it is semantic, structural, religious or prophetic. He has also made the wrong choice of the word ' sweat' for the Arabic "ريح أَوْ عَرْف". Not only has he used one word for two different meaningful words, but also used the word '*sweat'* for a Prophet instead of the more appropriate word '*perspiration*'. This kind of reluctance and irresponsibility in the translation of a Prophetic text tends to not only violate the religiosity of the *hadeeth* but also deprives it of its effective communicative purpose as well as its Prophetic divine touch. An approximate translation of this *hadeeth* would be as follows:

Anas reported: "I have touched neither silk nor a Deebaj thick silk softer than the palm of the Prophet (ρ) nor have I <u>smelt a scent or perspiration nicer than the scent or perspiration</u> of the Prophet (ρ) . [H:1493]

Challenge (10): The translation of the concept of 'لهو/lahu/entertainment'

Entertainment is a social culture-specific activity which tends to pose problems in translation depending on how close or far the SL and TL Cultures are from each other (Newmark, P 1988). Muhsin Khan mistakenly translates the word لهو/*lahu* into 'amusement' rather than 'entertainment' overlooking the subtle shades of differences between the denotations and connotations of the Arabic word لهو /*lahu* as well as the English two words *amusement/entertainment* as in the following example:

عَنْ عَائِشَةَ: أَنَّهَا زَفَّتِ امْرَأَةً إِلَى رَجُلٍ مِنَ الْأَنْصَارِ فَقَالَ نَبِيُّ اللهِ (ρ): "يَا عَائِشَةَ، مَا كَانَ مَعَكُمْ لَهْوٌ فَإِنَّ الْأَنْصَارَ يُعْجِبُهُمْ اللَّهْوُ". [حديث:1853]

Narrated 'Aisha that she prepared a lady for a man from the Ansar as his bride and the Prophet (ρ) said," O 'Aisha! Haven't you got any amusement (during the marriage ceremony) as the Ansár like amusement?" [H:1853]

According to the online Alwaseet Arabic/Arabic Dictionary, the word لهو/*lahu/entertainment* in Arabic tends to be more comprehensive than the word تسلية /*tasleeyah/amusement* in terms of semantic references, formality and frequency of use by speakers of Arabic. Likewise, in the online Oxford Living dictionary, the former refers to "an *event, performance, or activity designed to entertain others.*", whereas the latter refers to "the *statement or experience of finding something funny*". What is meant by the *hadeeth* is the 'weeding party' held for celebrating the marriage of one of the Prophet's companions. A more appropriate translation would be as follows:

Aishah reported that when she prepared a woman to be wedded to a man from Ansars (supporters), the Prophet of Allah (ρ) asked: O Aisha, was there any *entertainment* at the wedding party? Ansari people enjoy *entertainment*". [H:1853]

The Translation of the Hadeeth from a Rhetorical Perspective

The term 'rhetoric' or 'rhetorical' is used in this paper to mean "the art of composing as well as delivering a speech'. (Halimah, A, 2017: 144). It is thought that unlike scientific or technical textual rhetoric, religious texts in general and prophetic *hadeeths* in particular tend to use a rhetoric that is based on a literary structural organisation of the text where 'parallelism, repetition, short and long sentences, simple and complex style, expressivity, context and audience', for example, are used to enhance the Prophet's theological-ethical impact of his message and as well as its overall aesthetic-emotional appeal. (Ghazala, H, 2008, Wendland, E., 2014)

To communicate Prophetic *hadeeths*, which were originally spoken in order to be heard by a listening audience around 1400 years ago, and were certainly passed on orally for a number of generations before they were written down, makes the translation of the Prophetic rhetoric expressed in his divine *hadeeths* not only difficult but rather complicated and very challenging. Due to lack of space, only a few examples that are related to the rhetorical features of the *hadeeths* such as parallelism, repetition and short sentences will be discussed.

Challenge (11): The translation of 'parallelism'

Parallelism is a stylistic device in which two or more structures are identical to one another. It is mainly used to emphasize meaning and strike a balance between two or more messages (Ghazala, H, 2008). In addition to oral-aural functions achieved by the use of the parallelism in the prophetic *hadeeths*, for example, it is also used to convey messages of morality, and emphasize ideas in a more compelling, rhythmic and memorable manner.

In his translation of the Prophetic *hadeeths*, Muhsin Khan seems to overlook the significance of parallelism in the Prophet's speech, in terms of its form, content and communicative effect on the reader. Let us consider this *hadeeth*:

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَة، عَنْ النَّبِيّ (ρ) قَالَ: "آيَةُ الْمُنَافِقِ ثَلَاثٌ: إِذَا حَدَّثَ كَذَبَ، وَإِذَا وَعَدَ أَخْلَفَ، وَإِذَا اؤْتُمِنَ خَانَ". (حديث:31)

Narrated AbU Huraira: The Prophet (ρ) said, "The signs of a hypocrite are three:

1. Whenever he speaks, he tells a lie.

2. Whenever he promises, he always breaks it (his promise).

3. If you trust him, he proves to be dishonest. (If you keep something as a trust with him, he will not return it.)" [H:31]

In terms of form, he constructed the sentences in the form of a list which in turn makes the parallelism faulty, bulky, unbalanced and lengthy. Each Arabic parallel structure, for example, consists of three words only whereas the English translation ranges from six words to nine words (not including the 13 bracketed extra words of interpretation).

In terms of meaning, he also fails to notice the subtle shades of difference between 'whenever' and 'if'. The Arabic says 'إِذا' which literally means 'if' not 'whenever'. Moreover, he uses 'whenever' twice and 'if' once. This variation in translation is unnecessary and confusing. Furthermore, he mistakenly misunderstood the meaning of 'اؤْتُمِنَ' by translating it as an intransitive verb *'trust'* whereas it means *'entrusted with'*.

In terms of prophetic rhetoric, Muhsin Khan's above translation is far from being Prophetic as it lacks parallelism not only in the shape of the structure used and the significance of meaning of each sentence but also in its oral-aural rhythmic sounds and communicative impact on both the listener and reader. In addition, as a result it has made the *hadeeth* void of its spirituality or/and sublime divinity. A more approximate and acceptable translation would be as follows:

> Abu Hurayrah reported that the Prophet (ρ) said: "The signs of a hypocrite are three: *if he speaks, he lies; if he makes a promise, he breaks it; and if he is entrusted with something, he acts disloyally*" [H:31].

Notice that the italicized sentences above are well-balanced, not only in structure but also in meaning. They also sound appealing and make them stand out in both the listener's and reader's mind.

Challenge 12: The translation of 'repetition'

Contrary to what is generally assumed, 'repetition' as a rhetorical feature of a spoken or written text could have very important functions that affect the message remarkably. With regard to the purpose and function of 'repetition' used in the Prophetic *hadeeths*, Muhsin Khan seems to be unable to appreciate and grasp the reason why the Prophet (ρ) used 'repetition' a lot in his speech. Let us consider this *hadeeth:*

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ (ρ) قَالَ : الْعَجْمَاءُ جُبَارٌ . وَالْبِئْرُ جُبَارٌ . وَالْمَعْدِنُ جُبَارٌ. وَفِي الرِّكَازِ الْخُمْسُ. [حديث: 763]

> Narrated (AbU Huraira) Allah's Messenger (ρ) said, "There is no compensation for one killed or wounded by an animal or by falling in a well, or because of working in mines; but Khunus is compulsory on Rikáz (buried treasure or wealth). [H:763]

In the Arabic version, the word جُبَارٌ is repeated three times whereas its translation '*compensation*' is mentioned only once. Notice that the former being repeated shows that the Prophet's emphasis on the meaning is the same for all the three items. He also makes sure that the listener would not misunderstand their individual meanings, and points out that the ruling of this case is the same whereas in the last sentence, the meaning ruling is different. It also makes it sound appealing and stand out in the listener and reader's mind. Therefore, we can see that in his translation, he did not only violate its rhetorical function but also its Prophetic touch implied in the Prophet's 'repetition' that could be seen as showing 'concern' for his people. It again seems to be void of any sublime touch or divine spiritual feelings. The translation below is more approximate and acceptable:

> Abu Hurayrah reported that the Messenger of Allah (ρ) said: "There is no compensation for one killed or wounded by an animal. There is no compensation for death by falling in a well. Nor is there compensation for death through working in mines; but paying Khumus/fifth is compulsory on Rikáz (buried treasure or wealth) found. [H:763]

Challenge (13): The translation of 'short sentences'

Unlike the normal medium length of sentences, short sentences tend to be of a marked style that has a different function and implication in terms of form, content and relation to meaning. Whether in English or in Arabic, the style of short sentence is used as it "accelerates events and arouses suspense" (Ghazala, H, 2008:242).

With regard to the style of short sentences in the Prophet's *hadeeths*, it is considered one of their main characteristics. In other words, his *hadeeths* are notably characterized with clarity of expression, accuracy of information, succinctness, precision, simplicity and ease of understandability. In addition to all these characteristics amalgamated in one *hadeeth,* for example, *the use of brevity by deletion as in* يُلْقَىٰ /youlqa/thrown*, personification of Hell-fire as in* هَلْ مِنْ مَزِيدٍ */hall min mazeed/ are there any more to come/ and the repetition of the word* قَطِ *in* قَطِ/qatt qatt/enough! enough! tends to make translating the *hadeeth* below a very tall order.

Muhsin Khan regrettably renders a 13–word long Prophetic *hadeeth* into a 35-word-long English translated text in the following example:

عَنْ أَنَسٍ عن النَّبِيِّ (ρ) قالَ :"يُلْقَىَ فِي النَّارِ وَتَقُولُ: هَلْ مِنْ مَزِيدٍ؟! حَتَّىَ يَضَعَ قَدَمَهُ، فَتَقُولُ: قَطِ قَطِ ".

[حديث:1780]

> Narrated Anas :The Prophet (ρ) said, "The people will be thrown into the (Hell)
> Fire and it will say: 'Are there any more (to come)?' till Allah will put His Foot
> over it and it will say, 'Qat! Qat! (Enough! Enough)' [H:1780]

This longwinded translation of the *hadeeth* above makes it lose its Prophetic linguistic uniqueness and its communicative effect. This could understandably be due not only to his inability to do otherwise but also to the fact that the use of *brevity by deletion*/ passive in Arabic makes it impossible for the translator to do otherwise because the agent is not clear and certain: the agent implied in the passive verb يُلْقَىَ/youlqa/thrown could be that the Angels of Torture throw people alone or people and jin together. Contrary to *brevity,* the use of *repetition of the word* "قَطِ قَطِ."/qatt qatt/enough! enough! could have been deleted, but the translator successfully kept it as 'repetition' in the Prophet's *hadeeths* tends to have its own function and used for specific purposes (see Challenge 12 above.) A shorter, clearer, more accurate, simpler, and Prophetic-like translation would be as follows:

> Anas reported that the Prophet (ρ) said: "People and Jinn will be thrown into
> Hell-Fire and it will say: 'Are there any more?' till Allah places His Foot on it
> and it says: 'Enough! Enough' [H:1780]

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the above brief discussion of the samples, we can conclude that Prophetic *hadeeths,* as both human and divine texts, tend to cause not only very serious problems at linguistic and cultural levels but also extraordinary challenges at rhetorical and stylistic levels for translators in terms of the understanding, interpreting and translating of certain language and culture-specific terms. This difficulty is due to the linguistic sophistication of the Arabic language used in the *hadeeths* as well as the theological, sociocultural, psychological, spiritual and divine dimensions of the Prophetic expression.

Against the parameters of translating the Prophetic *hadeeths*, the above translator, Muhsin Khan, seems to have failed in rendering the denotations and connotations of the Prophetic *hadeeth* at three levels: linguistic, cultural and rhetorical. The sacredness and holiness of the Prophetic *hadeeths* was also disregarded which has, along with other failures, made his translation faulty in terms of bringing forward the accuracy of the meaning, clarity and naturalness of the expression, the communicative purpose and above all the stylistic features of the Arabic *hadeeth* which characterises it as unique in form, content and effect on both the listener and reader into English.

In addition to the solution and alternative translation suggested at the end of each challenge, as well as for the convenience of the reader, the author of this paper opted to provide the reader with a list of the following recommendations:

1. Unlike a translator of any other genre or text-type, the translator of Prophet Muhammad's(ρ) *Hadeeths* should have the following additional characteristics and should be able to meet the requirements which would make them qualified in terms of religious knowledge, translational skills and cognitive abilities. They should

a) be holding sound theological beliefs and be trustworthy and God-fearing Muslim/s? in executing their religious duties and responsibilities.

b) have profound and extensive knowledge of Islam in general and Prophetic *hadeeths* in particular.

c) have an excellent contrastive knowledge of source and target languages, cultures and rhetorics.

d) be able to transfer into English the linguistic, cultural, rhetorical and religious associations and connotations of the Prophetic *hadeeths* giving as literal and faithful a translation of the form, content and meanings of the *hadeeths* as possible. (i.e. achieving maximum equivalence in their translation).

e) use an Islamising approach (i.e. a foreignising approach to their translation) when potential problems and challenges are encountered. (see Venuti, L, 1999 and Halimah, A, 2015 for more details on this particular approach).

f) be able to provide a translation that is not only semantically accurate, communicatively effective and natural but also stylistically appropriate and rhetorically prophetic and divine. (i.e. achieve a translation that is both human and divine at once.)

2. Teachers of translation, like those of any other discipline, should meet certain requirements for teaching religious translation in general and Prophetic translation in particular. They should

a) be holding an MA and/or PhD. Degree in Translation Studies or Translation and Linguistics with preferably some practical experience.

b) be exceptionally conversant with translation from Arabic into English as it requires better language and translational skills and experience than those involved in translating from English into Arabic, it being the target language for an Arabic Speaking teacher.

c) be able to identify potential linguistic, cultural and rhetorical problems and difficulties in the translation of a Prophetic *hadeeth* and suggest solutions for such problems and difficulties.

d) be conversant with the theoretical dichotomy of Foreignising and domesticating approaches to translation suggested by Venuti (1995) and be able to practically apply them to his teaching of religious translation in general and translation of Prophetic *Hadeeths* in particular.

e) have broad knowledge of Prophetic *Hadeeths* in terms of understanding, interpreting and appreciating their religious, spiritual and divine denotations as well as association and connotations to Muslims.

3. Students of translation studies, like those of any other discipline, should strive to do the following:

a) develop an understanding that religious translation helps to spread not only knowledge but also peace, love and harmony between people of different nations.

b) acquire sound knowledge of translation theories, types of problems and difficulties and varieties of methods, approaches and strategies used to solve such problems.

c) develop translational skills that are based on sound knowledge of both SL and TL, religions, cultures and value systems.

d) apply theoretical knowledge to practical issues in terms of being able to identify a translational problem, difficulty or challenge, select a method, an approach or a strategy and then use it for solving such a translational problem, difficulty or challenge.

e) use translation as a general aid or as a skill to acquire a foreign language or to improve their language communication skills.

Last but not least, Muhammad Muhsin Khan's summarised translation of Sahih Al-Bukhari (1994) should be revisited, revised and corrected by a God-fearing committee of Arab and non-Arab Muslim bilingual scholars who hold sound theological beliefs, the publisher and the editors to make the translated text not only satisfactory but also void of any aspect that would cause misunderstanding, misconception or distortion of any of the principal theological concepts of the original text at linguistic, cultural and rhetorical levels and thus maintains the prophetic Islamic message of the original as approximate as possible to the Source Language version.

As for those who are interested in carrying out further research in this field, they could investigate the translation problems of phonological aspects in the Prophetic *Hadeeths* and could also apply a Christianising approach to investigating the translation problems of the English biblical prophetic texts into other languages.

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