

## **Ta'wîl-based Translation of the Anthropomorphic Images of Allah in the Qur'ân**

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### **Abstract**

The current study is set to investigate the problems that face translators in rendering the anthropomorphic images of Allah in the Qur'ân by resorting to Ta'wîl (interpretation). The anthropomorphic images are the physical movements and body organs used to refer to Allah in the Qur'ân and Sunnah. The samples of the study are four images from the Qur'ân. The problem is that there are two opposing trends that differ in dealing with the anthropomorphic images with Ta'wîl. The Salafi (Mainstream) trend affirms the anthropomorphic images without Ta'îl (denying), Takîyyf (qualifying), Tashbîh (likening), Tamθîl (comparing), Ta'wîl (interpretation), or Tajsîm (embodying). However, the Khalafi (Non-Mainstream) contradicts the Salafi. On the other hand, there is a moderate view adopted by Ibn Taimîyyah that allows Ta'wîl in three conditions only. Eight translations are investigated in the study in order to have a broad scope of the problem and hence provide in-depth results. The study is qualitative and begins with a theoretical part followed by the analysis section. The study findings show that the images of the face, the hand, the shin and the eye can be interpreted according to their context

However, the study also finds that the images of “Istwâ” and “Kursî” are not liable to interpretation (Ta’wîl), and hence must be translated in transliteration with explaining the theological reasons behind that in the footnotes. Also, the study concludes that the translator should be aware of the problems of translating anthropomorphism and then decide which trend to follow. Also, the translator should have the flexibility to shift from a translational approach to another according to the context and the meaning of each image.

**Keywords:** Anthropomorphism – Anthropomorphic Images – Translation - the Qur’ân - Ta’wîl - Salafî and Khalafî

## 1.0 Introduction

### 1.1 Introducing the Study

The current study is conducted to discuss the problems of translating the anthropomorphic images of “the hand”, “the shin”, “Istwâ” and “Kursî” of Allah in the Qur’ân and the appropriate strategies that should be adopted to translate them. Translating the anthropomorphic images is one of the thorny problems in the Qur’ân. The anthropomorphic images refer to the human organs that are used to describe Allah in the Qur’ân and Sunnah like when Allah describes Himself as having a hand, a face, a shin, an eye, etc. The anthropomorphic images raise a lot of arguments in Islamic theology as they are not agreed upon with consensus among the different Islamic trends or methodologies. There are two opposing Islamic trends; Salafî and Khalafî. Salafî scholars think that it is a must to affirm the anthropomorphic images of Allah without argument or discussion; namely, they reject Ta’wîl (interpretation), Ta’tîl (denying), Takîyyf (qualifying), Tashbîh (likening), Tamθîl (comparing), or Tajsîm (embodying). However, Khalafî trend believe that they can be interpreted metaphorically since they may have other esoteric meanings. This paper explores the role

of Ta'wîl and the cases in which it can be adopted or avoided in dealing with the translation of anthropomorphism.

### **1.2 Objectives of the Study**

The study attempts to investigate whether Ta'wîl is accepted as a way of rendering the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân or it is better to adopt the Salafi point of view that forbids interpreting them. The study selects four anthropomorphic images from the Qur'ân; "the hand", "the shin", "Istwâ'" and "Kursî" of Allah. Many translations of the Qur'ân do not give due care or concern to the anthropomorphic images so that many problems of Ta'wîl (interpretation) could occur due to the translator's unawareness of the principles of Islamic 'qîda or following a certain inappropriate approach in her/his translation. The core of the study is to attract the attention of the future Qur'ân translators to this problem by setting some rules to deal with it appropriately.

### **1.3 Aims of the Study**

This study aims at investigating the problems of translating the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân which may result in misunderstanding and misinterpretation. Misinterpretations occur when the translator has no background knowledge about the anthropomorphic images or the way to be followed in rendering them. The functional approach is adopted as the main approach in the study to evaluate its feasibility in translating the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân. Thus, the groundwork of this study is to solve this thorny problem as an attempt to attract the attention of the future Qur'ân translators to this linguistic, rhetorical and theological issue.

Another significant aim of the study is to guide the translators' awareness of the most appropriate way to deal with the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'an. Sometimes the translator has no consistent strategy in rendering and dealing with the anthropomorphic images. For example, in the translation of Abdel Haleem, he renders the 'face' image in

different ways in different contexts. Sometimes, he translates the face image literally without explanatory notes as in verse 27, Surat Ar-Rahmân (The All-Merciful Chapter), وَيَبْقَى وَجْهُ رَبِّكَ (ذُو الْجَلَالِ وَالْإِكْرَامِ) which he translates as "all that remains is the Face of your Lord". In other contexts, he resorts to ta'wîl (interpretation) of the image of the face of Allah metonymically, like in verse 9, Mankind Surah, (إِنَّمَا نَطْعِمُكُمْ) (إِنَّمَا نَطْعِمُكُمْ) لِرَبِّهِ لِيُؤْتِيَ لَكُمْ أَجْرًا which he translates as "We feed you for the sake of God alone." In another verses, he translates the verse literally, then he gives interpretation of the image between brackets like in verse 115, Surat Al-Baqarah (The Cow Chapter), (وَلِلَّهِ الْمَشْرِقُ وَالْمَغْرِبُ فَأَيْنَمَا تُوَلُّوا فَثَمَّ وَجْهُ اللَّهِ) which he translates as "The East and the West belong to God: wherever you turn, there is His Face (Or 'His direction'). In other cases, he translates the implied meaning of the image, then he adds between brackets the literal meaning like in Surat Ar-Rûm (The Romans Chapter), verse 38, (ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ) which is translated by Abdel Haleem as "that is best for those whose goal is God's approval: (Literally 'face')."

These previous examples clarify that the problem is not that there are different attitudes or strategies that emerge not only among different translators, but also there is variation in rendering the same image in different contexts in the Qur'an by the same translator. This may assert that the translator's unawareness of the nature of the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'an and the way to deal with them results in distorted translations sometimes. This misrepresentation may distract the readers.

Therefore, one of the main aims of the study is to direct or set some guidelines for the future Qur'an translators about the theological views related to the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'an and the most appropriate ways of dealing and translating them. For instance, embodiment, likening, qualifying, or denying Allah's images in the Qur'an are not acceptable. Even ta'wîl "interpretation" of anthropomorphism

in Islam is forbidden without evidence. All these issues are in deep connection with Islamic theology, and the translator's responsibility lies not only in rendering or transferring language sets or ideas and implied meanings, however the translator has to be loyal and conscious to the target text's nature and sensitivity especially issues related to theology and monotheism.

#### **1.4 Research Problem**

There are many problems that encounter translators in the process of translating the Qur'ân and most of these problems have been discussed before. As regards this issue, few studies, as far as I know, have been conducted on the rendering of the anthropomorphic images into English. The problem is that the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân are often translated literally and sometimes the translator transcends the literal meaning to other multi-layers of meanings. The problem is that the translator has to follow a certain methodology or trend in translating such images. Translating the anthropomorphic images haphazardly results in distorted translations and hence presents distorted meanings or misrepresentations of the ST into the TT. Some scholars tend to interpret the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân by voluntarily giving embedded meanings or images about them. However, another trend refuses interpreting these images and considers this issue unarguable in Islamic 'aqîda. Thus, which trend should be followed in translating the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân and what are the criteria and justifications to follow each trend? This is the problem the study tries to handle and aims to pinpoint precisely in order to offer suitable strategies then.

#### **1.5 Research Questions**

The current research is set to answer the following questions:

1. What problems do translators encounter in translating the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân?

2. Which translation approaches and techniques could be suitable for translating the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân?
3. How would adopting a certain exegetical approach or trend affect the translation of the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân?
4. How far could Ta'wîl (interpretation) be employed as a tool for understanding anthropomorphism in the Qur'ân and hence be adopted in translation?

## **2.0 Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Literature Review**

There are many studies that tackled the issue of the Qur'ân translation in general. However, to the researcher's best knowledge there are few – almost no – studies that tackled the issue of translating the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân. This asserts on the dire need to conduct the current study.

### **2.2 Meaning and Etymology of the Term**

#### **“Anthropomorphism”**

The *Encyclopedia of Religion* (2005:388) points out that the etymology of the word anthropomorphism is derived from the Greek “anthro<sup>̄</sup>pos” (human being) and “morph<sup>̄</sup>e” (form). It also adds that it refers to “people holding anthropomorphic ideas of the divine (ibid). As indicated in *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1978), the term anthropomorphism is defined as “the idea that gods, animals, or objects have human forms or qualities, or the belief that God can appear in a human or animal form.”

### **2.3 Anthropomorphism in Islamic Theology**

In Islamic theology, anthropomorphism is judged from two opposing trends; the Salafî and the Khalafî.

#### **2.3.1 Salafî Trend and Anthropomorphism**

In his *Al-Mufasssirûn bayna At-Ta'wîl wal'iṯbât fî 'Ayât As-Sifât* (Qur'ân Interpreters between Ta'wîl-oriented Exegetes and the Verification of Allah's Attributes-oriented Exegetes), Al Maḡrawî (2000) gives a comprehensive account about the

different types of Qur'ân interpretations and their attitudes towards the translation of anthropomorphism. Al-Mağrawî distinguishes between two diverse types of Qur'ân exegeses; the Salafî and the Khalafî. Al Mağrawî states the pious Salaf are those who followed and stick to the rulings and teachings of Prophet Muhammad. They have some fixed basic principles about dealing with the anthropomorphic images of Allah. Al Mağrawî (2000:93) points out the principal rules adopted by the Salafî trend in dealing with anthropomorphism. He asserts that all Muslims have to affirm the names and attributes of Allah by having evidence from the Qur'ân or Sunnah as it is an unseen matter which Muslims are commanded not to argue or discuss. He adds that believing in those names and attributes should be according to the orders and rulings set by Allah, the Arabic grammar rules, and following the same way of understanding of the primary Salafî generations (98).

### **2.3.2 Khalafî Trend and Anthropomorphism**

The Khalafî are all those who oppose the Salafî trend even if they lived in the age of Prophet Muhammad (Al Mağrawî 2000:254). They are the people who depend on their minds to understand the anthropomorphic images (347). Also, they deal with the anthropomorphic images metaphorically and allegorically by supposing other layers for the same anthropomorphic image (365). Whenever they deal with an anthropomorphic image and find it opposing their principles, they interpret it by "Taw'îl" according to their views which distort its meaning theologically (401/502). They believe in the possible according to the faculties of their mind only. Additionally, they deny the Prophetic speeches concerning the anthropomorphic images which are narrated by one narrator (khabar al-ahâd) (478).

The Khalafî approach and its followers negate the surface meanings of the anthropomorphic images diverting to non-apparent meanings: other allegorical ones. So, they oppose the Salafî Prophetic teachings and rulings concerning

the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân and Sunnah. The Khalafî trend is the main umbrella that includes other sub-trends like Al Jahmiyyah, Al Mu'tazilah, Ash'aria, Shi'ah, Matrudiyyah, and other sects.

## **2.4 Anthropomorphism and Ta'wîl**

### **2.4.1 Definition of Ta'wîl**

Al-Ġazalî defines Ta'wîl in his *Al Mostasfa* (1322H: 1/387) as “the probability of a specific meaning in a context due to the existence of evidence or co-text that supports a meaning rather than the surface meaning.” This means that any Ta'wîl shifts the meaning from the surface meaning “the true meaning” to the metonymical one.” Ibn Ĥazm (nd:1/48) defines Ta'wîl as “transferring the commonly used surface meaning to another one if there is linguistic evidence”

### **2.4.2 Types of Ta'wîl**

There are two types of Ta'wîl according to the Salafî Mainstream approach: approved and rejected (forbidden). In case of giving other meanings for the term without having evidence from the Qur'ân and Sunnah, this is called “taĥrîf”. Ibn 'uĥthaimîn (57) comments that Ta'wîl is not totally disapproved. Ta'wîl may be approved or accepted in three conditions. There is a moderate opinion between the opponents and proponents of Ta'wîl. Al Julainid in his *Ibn Taimîyyah and his Opinion of Ta'wîl* (1393 H- 176) allows Ta'wîl only in three conditions:

1. When the exegetist is well-versed in language usage and grammar to understand the embedded meaning of the word in different contexts;
2. When the word can be possibly understood according to the language norms;
3. If the interpretation has evidence from the opinions of the Prophet or his companions and accords with Islamic doctrine and jurisprudence.



### **3.0 Methodology of the Study**

#### **3.1 Sampling**

The current study is a qualitative descriptive research that depends on collecting qualitative data and analyzing them from different perspectives. Samples of the study are taken from eight translations of the Qur'ân chronologically arranged as follows; Shakir (1995) *The Qur'an*, Hilâlî and Khân (1996) *The Noble Qur'ân: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*, Saheeh International (1997) *Translation of The Meanings of the Glorious Quran*, Ghâli (2003) *Towards Understanding The Ever-Glorious Qur'ân*, Abdul Haleem (2004) *The Qur'ân: A New Translation*, Hammad's (2006) *The Gracious Quran: A Modern-Phrased International in English*, Asad (2007) *The Message of The Quran: Translated And Explained*, and Shabbir's (2007) *The Qur'ân As it Explains Itself*. The samples of the study are represented by investigating some instances from the anthropomorphic images of "the hand", "the shin", "Istwâ" and "the Throne" of Allah in the Qur'ân. It is important to note that all the consulted interpretations of the Qur'ân are of my translation.

#### **3.2 Procedures Adopted to conduct the Study**

For the purpose of data collection, I followed some procedures. Firstly, I categorized the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân according to the organs of the body and the physical attributes related to Allah following the categorization of Ibn Khuzaimah (1998). I selected the images of "the hand", "the shin", "Istwâ" and "Kursî" of Allah in the Qur'ân to be analyzed in detail through random sampling. Secondly, I looked up the interpretation of each of the selected anthropomorphic images for investigation in the different Qur'ân exegeses to investigate whether each translation delivers the due intended meaning of the anthropomorphic image under study. Thirdly, I compared the eight translations of each anthropomorphic image under study with the verse's diverse exegeses; the Salafî and the Khalafî. Fourthly, I investigated how making use of translation

theories such as the functional approach or the semantic one is so crucial for the translator in order to reach a compatible and accurate translation of the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân. Finally, I attempted to present a suggested translation for each anthropomorphic image if the existing ones do not conform to the due meaning. Additionally, I proposed suggestions for future translators of the Qur'ân about the appropriate methods and strategies to be adopted in translating the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân in general and the images of "the hand", "the shin", "Istwâ'" and "Kursî" of Allah in the Qur'ân in particular

### **3.3 Translating Anthropomorphism: Functional or Semantic**

The translator has to decide from the very beginning the translation approach to be adopted during translating a certain work. In the case of translating the anthropomorphic images, the translator may resort to shifting between the functional and the semantic approaches according to the liability of the image to *Ta'wîl* or not. For example, the image of the *Istwâ'* is not liable to *Ta'wîl* as the howness of the *Istwâ'* is not known. So, reliable Muslim scholars forbid thinking of it and reject discussing it as aforementioned. Therefore, it would be better to translate the image of *Istwâ'* literally without giving any other layers of meanings. On the other hand, the image of the eye in "تجري بأعيننا" in *Surat Al-Qamar* (the Moon Ch. v.14) accepts *Ta'wîl* since it meets the three conditions aforementioned. Thus, it can be translated functionally as "Under Our supervision / Guidance / Protection". This study tries to outline the benchmarks that may guide the translator to the most appropriate translation approach to be followed for each anthropomorphic image.

#### **3.3.1 Skopostheorie and Anthropomorphism**

Vermeer (1989) presented skopostheorie in translation which is adopted as the main theory for analyzing the AIs in the current thesis. Skopostheorie is based on three principal

components: "skopos", "coherence", and "culture". The basic notion upon which the Skopos Theory is built is that the purpose, function or intention of a translation is the key determinant of the chosen translation approach.

### **3.3.2 Etymology and Definition of the Term "Skopos"**

Skopos Theory focuses on "aspects of the translation process as interactional dynamics and pragmatic purpose" as stated by Hatim (2001). Enani (2003) adds that "Skopostheorie" is a German term that came into English by the end of nineties. The Greek word Skopos means "aim" or "purpose". It is the technical term for the purpose of translation and of the action of translating as stated by Munday (2001: 78-79).

### **3.3.3 Outline of Skopos Theory**

Skopos Theory is based on some principles or components; aim or purpose, coherence and culture. Within the frame of Skopos Theory, there are other terms that are crystallized in the following pages like equivalence, target readership and fidelity principle. In order to have a comprehensive picture of Skopos Theory, all these elements are pointed out.

#### **3.3.3.1 The Element of Skopos (Aim)**

As for the first component of Skopos Theory, Nord (1997: 27) states that Skopos theory is based on a main principle as follows "The prime principle determining any translation process is the purpose (Skopos) of the overall translational action. This fits in with intentionality being part of the very definition of any action."

The central element of Skopos theory is the Skopos (aim, purpose, goal) as the purpose or function of the translation in the target culture, as specified by the client (in a translation brief) or the envisaged user-expectations; translation is hence prospective rather than retrospective. The Skopos can apply to both the process and the product of translation and a distinction is made between the translation Skopos (the translator's intended purpose) and the translated

Skopos (the function of the translation as seen in the receiving culture). Additionally, intratextual coherence means that a message can be understood when the reader (or user) can make sense of it both in itself and in relation to her/his given situation (Al-Kinany, 2010: 53). However, intertextual coherence (or fidelity to the source text) is achieved when the function of source and target texts remains the same.

Vermeer (1989: 20) comments that a text is "produced for a given purpose" and it is supposed to "serve this purpose". Nord (1997: 29) adds that the skopos rule "reads as follows: translate/interpret/speak/write in a way that enables your text/translation to function in the situation in which it is used and the people who want to use it and precisely in the way they want it to function" (qtd in Ali, 2015: 79)

In Skopos theory, there is an intensive focus on the idea that the target text is determined by the purpose intended for it in the target context effect (Nord, 1997: 74). The most outstanding factor that decides which translation strategy is most appropriate is the "audience design". So, this theory is purpose-oriented and that is the essence of the functional approach. In other words, Ali (2015: 85-86) adds that:

Literally, it means 'purpose', i.e. the aim of a translation should be to observe the purpose of the ST and convey it to the TT in an intelligible way, respecting the TL norms. Nord highlights the same notion indicating that skopostheorie emphasizes that "the prime principle determining any translation process is the purpose (skopos) of the overall translation action.

Ali, also, comments that:

Translators should pay great attention to the skopos of the ST when deciding how to communicate it to the TR in a way that preserves the semantic and cultural equivalents, as well as the style and content of the ST. Skopostheorie maximizes the importance of the TT over the ST. (ibid: 86)

Tawfik (2003: 61) comments that “the translator should bear in mind the Skopos of the source text and how to communicate such a Skopos to the target reader trying to find in the target language semantic and cultural equivalents that preserve as much as possible both the form and content of the original”. Tawfik adds that the theory is so flexible that it may admit any translation methodology so long as there is a Skopos. The key indicator of the success of the process of translation in this case is the TR or the recipient/receiver to whom the ST is delivered.

### **3.3.3.2 The Element of Coherence**

Coherence is the second component of the Skopos theory. Munday (2001: 79) points out the element of coherence as “the TT must be interpretable as coherent with the TT receiver’s situation”. He adds that “the TT must be translated in such a way that it is coherent for the TT receivers, given their circumstances and knowledge”. Thus, coherence of discourse is achieved by comprehension and knowledge about the subject matter translated. Reiss and Vermeer (1984: 113) point out that coherence has two types: intertextual and Intratextual. Intratextual coherence means the “integrity of the target text per se, with the “coherence rule” stipulating that “the message produced by the translator must be interpretable in a way that is coherent with the target recipient's situation”. This means that the translation should be coherent with or acceptable in the receiver’s situation, that it should conform to the conventions established in the target culture for the text type in question (Nord, 1997: 108). Therefore, translators have to convey a TT that communicates and copes with the TR’s background, i.e. culturally, linguistically, and ideologically. Nord opines that “the receiver should be able to understand it; it should make sense in the communicative situation and culture in which it is received” (qtd in Taghian, 2013:89, as cited in Nord, 1997:32).

On the other hand, the intertextual coherence (or fidelity) simply refers to “the match which is presumed to obtain between the target text and the source text” (Hatim, 2001: 76). Nord, also, argues that this rule states that translators should maintain fidelity (faithfulness) to the ST and not ignore or convey a TT that is ultimately separate from the skopos of the ST as intended by the original author. It is worth mentioning here that the skopos rule overpowers the coherence rule; that is coherence is “subordinate to the skopos rule” (Nord, 1997: 33).

Hatim (2001: 75-76) explains the notion of intertextual coherence as “a direct consequence of the translator's ability to comprehend the source text and to engage with the Skopos it is intended to have in the target language”. Therefore, Intertextual coherence is accomplished when there is “consistency between the intentionality of the source text producer, the way this is interpreted, and the way it is re-expressed in the target language”. Tawfik (2003: 65) adds that the translator should “show fidelity or faithfulness to the source text ... not ignoring it or producing a target text that is maximally removed from the Skopos of the source text as intended by the original author”. Hatim (2001: 76) states that “to the target reader who normally does not know the source text, what matters most is that the message received fulfills certain basic requirements”. Nord (1997: 32) comments that “the receiver should be able to understand it [target text]; it should make sense in the communicative situation and culture in which it is received”.

### **3.3.3.3 The Element of Culture**

Culture is the third key component of Skopos theory. Nord (1997: 33) defines culture with reference to Heinz Göhring's (1978) definition of culture as follows:

Culture is whatever one has to know, master or feel in order to judge whether or not a particular form of behaviour shown by members of a community in their various roles conforms to

general expectations, and in order to behave in this community in accordance with general expectations unless one is prepared to bear the consequences of accepted behaviour.

Yet, Culture is a broad concept. It is defined as a general concept by Tawfik (2003: 65) as “It includes everything: daily activities, behaviour modes, experiences, mental models of thinking, which are needed by an individual to act as one of the community members, i.e., to be pragmatically accepted”. That is because “what is normal and acceptable in one culture may be rejected or a taboo in another”. On the other hand, Vermeer concentrates in his definition of culture on norms and conventions as the basic features of a culture. Culture is “the entire setting of norms and conventions” which are required for an individual to be a member of his society acting like everybody else or even to choose to be different (Nord, 1997: 33).

The individual who needs to communicate successfully in a given culture, s/he should conform to the norms and conventions of the community. That is the reason why “transcultural action or communication across culture barriers has to take account of cultural differences with regard to behaviour, evaluation and communicative situations” (ibid). Nord calls cultural features as “culturemes” (34). He points out that a cultureme is “a social phenomenon of a culture X that is regarded as relevant by the members of this culture and, when compared with a corresponding social phenomenon in a culture Y, is found to be specific to culture X”. This stresses the concept of culture-specific features between different cultures. A culture-specific feature exists in a particular form/function in one of the compared cultures only (ibid). These culture-bound features represent one type of the major difficulties continuously facing translators and increasing their responsibilities.

Taghian (2013: 92) adds that:

skopos cannot completely resolve the problem of communicative translation, but that the functional approach that the translator makes provides a freedom to choose any translation strategy as long as s/he preserves both the central message of the ST and its rhetorical effectiveness. This functional approach should be connected with purposeful elements, in the translation task, to attain accuracy and clarity in the TT and to produce the intended impact on the TR.

### **3.3.4 Target Readership**

Target readership means that the translator aims to produce a translation that upholds a certain Skopos. This requires the translator to create to the target readership a translation that delivers the same Skopos of the ST. Tawfik (2002: 61) comments that the success of such a process depends on the translator's awareness, knowledge of his target audience and "the linguistic and cultural peculiarities" of the target language (61). Al-kinany (2010: 50) quoted Vermeer's (1987: 29) comment that "equal knowledge of the ST cultural background and uniqueness is inevitable for a successful purposeful translation. This necessary dual ambivalence, linguistic and cultural, is pivotal to produce a text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addressees in target circumstances". This means that the translator needs to have equal knowledge and command of both SL and TL cultures, rules and peculiarities to successfully and appropriately deliver the closest approximate meaning to the target reader. In so doing, the translator bears the responsibility to deliver the same connotation and flavor on the TR like that the ST has on the SR.

This requires from the translator to play different roles other than delivering a text from a language to another. According to Ian Mason (1994: 23), a translator "has the



double duty of perceiving the meaning potential of particular choices within the cultural and linguistic community of the source text and relaying the same potential, by suitable linguistic means, to a target readership".

### **3.3.5 Fidelity Principle**

Nord (1997: 27) points out the fidelity principle keeping in mind the specificity of translation in time, culture and commissioning context. Fidelity principle means that the translator focuses on the target reader's expectations and requirements; however s/he should be faithful to the ST. The translator has to be aware not to produce a translation that is different from or does not deliver the (ST) esoteric meaning.

### **3.3.6 Translation Loss**

Loss in translation occurs in some cases like when the translator has no efficient background knowledge about both the source and target culture-specific terms and situations. In the case of translating the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'an, there are some elements that should be scrutinized carefully before delving into translating them. Firstly, exploring the exegeses and their different types and ideologies directs the translator to adopting a certain type or approach of translation and avoiding other approaches or types of exegeses. For example, the translator may consult the commentary of At-Tabarî in some cases (which is purely Salafî and avoids ta'wîl of anthropomorphism) and in some other times resorts to the commentary of Al-Zamakhsharî (which belongs to Al Muctazilah and its style depends on ta'wîl and interpreting the howness of anthropomorphism). This distraction is caused due to the unawareness of the translator of the ideological attitude of each exegesis of the Qur'an.

Thus, text type may be one of the reasons of loss in translation as stated by Al-kinany (2010: 37):

losing the smallest semantic value may  
distract the reader's attention from the

intended textual and contextual message. Thereupon, if loss is sometimes inevitable in some texts, as in the literary sections of the Noble Qur'an, the least amount of semantic loss in law is not acceptable though complete transfer of meaning is a hard task.

Another reason for loss in translation is the translator's strategy or the approach adopted in rendering a text. Sometimes, the translator sticks to following or adopting a certain school/approach of translation in rendering all types of texts which causes distortion of meaning or ambiguity. For example, Ghâli mentions in the introduction of his translation of the Qur'an that he follows the semantic approach which is not suitable in rendering most of the verses of the Qur'an especially the anthropomorphic images. He renders *istwâ'* like in "الرحمن علي العرش استوي" as "The All-Merciful has upon the Throne leveled Himself (How He has done so is beyond human understanding)." Adopting the semantic approach in this case is acceptable. However, in translating other anthropomorphic images like the image of the "face" in Surat Ar-Rahmân (The All-Merciful Chapter), verse (78), "وَاصْبِرْ" *وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ* whose meaning would be distorted if rendered literally since the meaning of the face here means "God's approval or satisfaction". What directs such kinds of images is the authentic and reliable commentaries of the Qur'an.

Accordingly, the translator's methodology may be one reason for semantic loss. Faithfulness to the source text may make the translator focus heavily on morphemes, words or phrases and sentences. This lexical approach may compel the translator sometimes to overlook the purpose of translation. That is, literal translators "tend to concentrate on lexical accuracy rather than convey the communicative value of the original work" (El-Sheikh, 1990: 2). El-Sheikh (1990) points

out that "the greater the literary value of a given work, the more is apt to be lost in the translation process" (ibid.). The translation loss may be caused by the very act of translating two different cultures. The bigger the distance between the translated cultures in norms, conventions, behaviour modes and thinking patterns, the greater the loss is likely to be (Nord, 1997: 33-4).

Additionally, translation loss may emerge due to culture differences and the unawareness of the culture-specific terms in the SL and their equivalents in the TL. El-Tayeb (1985) comments that untranslatability is considered either "linguistic" due to the unavailability of lexical and syntactical substitutes in the target language or "cultural" due to the absence in the target-language culture of a relevant situational feature for the source language text. This necessitates reviewing the problem of equivalence and the ways of dealing with it.

All the aforementioned elements should be put in mind during the process of translation in order to reach a compatible translation.

#### **4.0 Samples for Analysis**

In the following part, some instances of the anthropomorphic images of "the hand", "the shin", "Istwâ" and "Kursî" of Allah are analyzed.

##### **4.1 The Image of the "Hand" of Allah**

The anthropomorphic image of the hand of Allah exists in eight positions throughout the whole text of the Qur'an. The hand is mentioned more than 100 times in the Qur'an, Sunnah and the speeches of the companions of the prophet and their followers (Al Azûri 1431:331). Generally speaking, it is known that if the hands are mentioned to mean the duality (two hands), they mean the physical had known to us (ibid:333). I attempt to investigate three anthropomorphic images of the hand of Allah in the following lines.

a- The first example is in Surat Yâsîn (Yâsîn Chapter),  
verse (71):

﴿أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا خَلَقْنَا لَهُمْ مِمَّا عَمِلَتْ أَيْدِينَا أَنْعَامًا﴾  
(سورة يس 71)

### Transliteration

(‘alam yarua ’ana khalaqna lahum mimâ ‘amilat ’aidîna  
,an‘amâ)

### Shakir

“Do they not see that We have created cattle for them, out  
of what Our hands have wrought,”

### Hilâlî and Khân

“Do they not see that We have created for them of what  
Our Hands created the cattle.”

### Saheeh International

“Do they not see that We have created for them from what  
Our hands have made, grazing livestock.”

### Ghâli

“And have they not seen that We created for them, of what  
Our Hands did, cattle (An'am includes cattle, camels, sheep  
and goats)”

### Abdel Haleem

“Can they not see how, among the things made by Our  
hands, We have created livestock they control”

### Asad

“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”

### Shabbir

“Have they never envisioned how We have created for  
them of Our handiwork, the domestic animals”

## Hammad

“Have they not considered that out of all that We have made with Our Mighty Hands We have created cattle for them.”

### Investigating the Exegeses of the Verse

The image of the hand of Allah in this verse is exegetically controversial. In the interpretation of the anthropomorphic image of the hand of Allah in his *Sharḥ al-ʿqida al-wasitīyyah*, Ibn ʿuṭaimīn (1434H:196) comments that the hand of Allah in (مِمَّا عَمِلَتْ أَيْدِينَا أَنْعَامًا) does not really mean the hand of Allah. He adds that it refers metonymically to "Allah Himself" or the "Self of Allah". This opinion is considered the most reliable commentary on the hand of Allah since Ibn ʿuṭaimīn is regarded as one of the strictest Salafī (Mainstream) modern scholars. So, this view is considered strict as well. However, it is rather logical and moderate.

This is affirmed by Ibn Saʿd (2005:615) supporting his opinion saying that the hand -linguistically- may mean the "self" of someone like in verse (30), Surat Ash-Shūra (Counsel Chapter), (وَمَا أَصَابَكُمْ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فَبِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِيكُمْ) "Not a single affliction strikes you human beings but that is for what your own hands have earned" (Hammad's translation). This means that what man gains or earns not necessarily by his/her hand. Yet, man can acquire or gain things (sins for example) from the doings of his hand, mind (atheism for example), tongue, leg, eyes, etc. thus, the hand here does not mean the real physical hand, it means "what man does by himself"

### Evaluating the Translations

It is clear that all the above investigated translations render the word "Our Hands" literally without adding or mentioning any other layers of meanings. However, the exegeses and the views of the Muslim scholars mentioned earlier about this image in particular affirm that the "hands" here refer to Allah Himself". Only Asad attempts to add some explanatory notes in the footnotes saying "which We alone have or could have

created" (Zamakhshari and Razi). The above metaphorical expression is based on the concept of "handiwork" in its widest sense, abstract as well as concrete."

This illustration by Asad gives the esoteric meaning of hand image in simple and economic method. It is also clear that he resorts to Ash'arî commentaries of the Qur'ân like Az-Zamakhsharî and Ar-Râzî which are not accepted in most of their opinions about anthropomorphism. However, their interpretation of this image is acceptable as it accords with the three conditions of approved Ta'wîl. Thus, the translation of Asad may be acceptable and appropriately comprehended by the TR (target reader) since the TR is an active participant in the act of translation.

However, Saheeh International puts a footnote that explains its method in dealing with the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân in verse (2:19) and refers to this illustrative footnote to be applied on any anthropomorphic image in the Qur'ân. Saheeh International's footnote seems to follow the Salafî (Mainstream) norms of dealing with the anthropomorphic images saying that:

Allah states in the Qur'ân that He has certain attributes such as hearing, sight, hands, face, mercy, anger, coming, encompassing, being above the Throne, etc. Yet, He has disassociated Himself from the limitations of human attributes or human imagination. Correct Islamic belief requires faith in the existence of these attributes as Allah has described them without applying to them any allegorical meanings or attempting to explain how a certain quality could be (while this is known only to Allah) and without comparing them to creation or denying that He would have such a quality. His attributes are befitting to

Him alone, and "There is nothing like unto Him." (42:11)"

This opinion is not totally approved in this context as the hand here may be a metaphorical expression that means "Allah Himself". However, it is agreed with consensus that there is nothing like Allah and His qualities fit Him only and also that it is not acceptable to qualify the anthropomorphic images of Allah to anything else. This view leaves the target reader confused and unable to get the esoteric meaning of the hand image in this context.

A more functional translation is required for this image. If the elements of skopos theory are applied by the translators here, it results in presenting an appropriate translation. It is important to give due concern and faithfulness to the ST and put the target reader in mind as well. This is difficult in this verse in particular since it needs long elaborations in footnotes or in-text notes. However, a fluent translator could aptly present all these details for the target reader with distracting the reader or creating a text that would seem alien in comparison to the ST (source text). The footnotes presented by Asad and Saheeh international can be combined to direct and guide the target reader to the implicit meaning here. In the footnotes, it can be stated that we all affirm that Allah has a hand and that it is banned to qualify its size, color, etc. Yet it is also important to mention that the hand can be used metaphorically to have other esoteric meanings if it accords with conditions of appropriate ta'wîl; the "hand" may mean "the self" in Arabic lexicons as mentioned before, there is evidence in the Qur'ân and Sunnah that it may mean "the self" in some certain contexts, and it had been used normally among the early Arabs to mean "the self". So, an appropriate translation for this image may be suggested in the upcoming lines.

## Proposed Translation

“Do they not see that We have created for them of what Our Hands created the cattle.” (Footnote: Although we admit that Allah has Hands, yet in this context it does not really mean the Hands of Allah, it means Allah Himself)

**b- The second anthropomorphic image of the hand of Allah in Surat Al Fatḥh (Triumph Chapter), Verse (10):**

(سورة الفتح 10)

(يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ)

### Transliteration

(yadu-lahi fawqa ‘aidîhim)

### Shakir

“The hand of Allah is above their hands.”

### Hilâlî and Khân

“The Hand of Allah is over their hands.”

### Saheeh International

“The hand of Allah is over their hands.”

### Ghâli

“The Hand of Allah is above their hands.”

### Abdel Haleem

“God’s hand is placed on theirs.”

### Asad

“The hand of God is over their hands.”

### Shabbir

“God’s hand is over their hands.”

### Hammad

“God’s Hands is over their hands.”

### Investigating the Exegeses of the Verse

There are divergent interpretations for this image. Firstly, At-Tabarî comments that Allah's power is over theirs in supporting the prophet in his war against his enemies.

However, Az-Zamakhsharî, Ash-Shawkânî and Al-Baidawî argue that this is a metaphor that means that the covenant with the prophet is really with Allah. This opinion is supported by verse (80) in Surat An-Nisa’ (Women Chapter), "Whoever obeys the prophet has thus obeyed Allah." He also,



asserts that Allah cannot have human-like organs as a matter of *tanzîh* (elevating Allah). He means that the covenant between the supporters and the prophet is metaphorically with Allah since the prophet is the Messenger of Allah.

Also, *Tafsîr Al-Jalâlayn* points out the same image as "the Hand of God is metaphorically above their hands, [the hands] with which they pledged allegiance to the Prophet, in other words, God, exalted be He, has observed their pledge of allegiance and will requite them in accordance with [their adherence to] it."

Ibn Kaθîr and *As-Siyûfî* spotlights the hand of Allah stating that it means Allah is present with them, hears their talks, sees their place and knows their inner feelings and thus He would requite and reward them for their support for the prophet.

### **Evaluating the Translations**

All of the eight translators agree in translating this image as "the Hand". However, only Saheeh International and Abdel Haleem give additional informative explanation in the footnote to deliver to the reader the underlying meaning from their point of view. Saheeh International explains this image in the footnote which shows that he sticks to the Salafî norms of dealing with the anthropomorphic images and this stated in the evaluation of the first example.

Abdel Haleem, also, comments in the footnote that "Loyalty was pledged by everybody placing their right hands on top of the Prophet's." This shows that he adopts certain types of exegeses that give allegorical meanings to the image.

They both attempt to support their translation. Although they render the same image similarly, they follow different doctrines of Islamic *‘qîda*. However, it may be appropriate to make use of the opinions of the reliable exegeses listed beforehand to make the translation more informative and elaborative but stick to the norms of the Salaf at the same time. This can be achieved by rendering the "hand of Allah" literally

with giving its various explanations in the footnotes or within-the text-notes. So, it is better to combine the translation of Abdel Haleem and Saheeh International. Both of them are right but the issue should be elaborated to make the reader acquainted with the term and its appropriate meanings.

In this context, it is suggested here to render the image of the "hand" literally with adding the four explanations in the footnotes and it is not preferable to add them as within-the text-notes in order not to distract the target reader who is given a good portion of concern in skopos theory. So, a functional translation suggested for this term in this context is given in the coming section.

### **Proposed Translation**

Actually, the translation of Saheeh International may be more appropriate and exegetical since it adds footnotes that point out the problematic points concerning anthropomorphism (in general) and the hand of Allah in particular. So, the proposed translation for this verse may be as follows:

"The Hand of Allah (the support of Allah) is over their hands (over their support to the Prophet against his enemies)."

**c- The third anthropomorphic image of the hand of Allah is in Surat Al Mâ'idah (The Table Chapter), verse (64):**

(وَقَالَتِ الْيَهُودُ يَدُ اللَّهِ مَغْلُولَةٌ غُلَّتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَلُعِنُوا بِمَا قَالُوا بَلْ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ يُنْفِقُ كَيْفَ يَشَاءُ) (سورة المائدة 64)

### **Transliteration**

(wa-qalat il-yahûdu yadu-lahi maġlûlah ġulat 'aidîhim wa lu'inû bima qalû bal yadahu mabsûtatani yunfiqu kaifa yashâ')

### **Shakir**

"And the Jews say: The hand of Allah is tied up! Their hands shall be shackled and they shall be cursed for what they say. Nay, both His hands are spread out, He expends as He pleases"

### **Hilâlî and Khân**

"The Jews Say: "Allah's Hand is tied up (i.e. He does not give and spend of His Bounty)." Be their hands tied up and be

they accursed for what they uttered. Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched. He spends (of His Bounty) as He wills”

### **Saheeh International**

“And the Jews say, "The hand of Allah is chained." Chained are their hands, and cursed are they for what they say. Rather, both His hands are extended; He spends however He wills.”

### **Ghâli**

“And the Jews have said, "The Hand of Allah is shackled." Shackled are their hands, and they are cursed for what they have said. No indeed (but) both His Hands are out spread, He expends how He decides.”

### **Abdel Haleem**

“The Jews have said, ‘God is tight-fisted,’ but it is they who are tight-fisted, and they are rejected for what they have said. Truly, God’s hands are open wide: He gives as He pleases.”

### **Asad**

“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.”

### **Shabbir**

“The Jews say, "God's hand is tied down." It is their hands that are tied down and they are condemned for saying so. Nay, His hands are widely outstretched, and He showers His bounties according to His laws.”

### **Hammad**

“And the Jews have said: The Hand of God is chained! Chained be their hands! And cursed are they for what they have said! Rather, both His mighty Hands are stretched out wide. He dispenses His ever-flowing blessings as He so wills.”

### **Investigating the Exegeses of the Verse**

Ibn ‘âshûr, Al-Alûsî, At-Tabarî, and Tanţâwî point out the Hand image here as "one of the Jews called Shas Ibn Qaiyyas said: O, Muhammed; Your Lord is miser and cannot spend.

Therefore, Allah has sent this verse to include all the Jews since they did not condemn his ill-saying". He adds the Jews said that "Allah's Hands are tied up" which means that Allah (Glorified be He) is stingy and stops his grace from reaching as the one whose hands are tied and is unable to bestow any good or give any favors. Tantâwî adds that the "Hand" is not the real hand as Allah is elevated over any creature. He thinks that the fisting and stretching of the hand is metaphorical and means stinginess. He adds that this is because the hand is the medium by which most of the work is done particularly in paying and spending money. Thus, the hand is used here to refer to generosity and stinginess. In other words, the generous are called open-handed and the stingy are called tight-handed. Tantawî supports this opinion by the opinion of Az-Zamakhsharî which says that "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".

However, Ar-Râzî argues that these two phrases have a wider meaning, namely, "lack of power" and "unlimited power", respectively. It would appear that the Jews of Medina, seeing the poverty of the Muslims, derided the latter's conviction that they were struggling in God's cause and that the Qur'an was divinely revealed. Thus, the "saying" of the Jews mentioned in this verse, "God's hand is shackled", as well as the parallel one in (3:181), "God is poor while we are rich", is an elliptical description of their attitude towards Islam and the Muslims - an attitude of disbelief and sarcasm which could be thus paraphrased: "If it were true that you Muslims are doing God's will, He would have bestowed upon you power and riches; but your poverty and your weakness contradict your claim - or else this claim of yours amounts, in effect, to saying that God cannot help you." This outstanding example of the elliptic mode of expression (i'jâz) so often employed in the Qur'an has, however, a meaning that goes far beyond the

historical circumstances to which it refers: it illustrates an attitude of mind which mistakenly identifies worldly riches or power with one's being, spiritually, "on the right way". In the next sentence the Qur'an takes issue with this attitude and declares, in an equally elliptical manner, that all who see in material success an alleged evidence of God's approval are blind to spiritual truths and, therefore, morally powerless and utterly self-condemned in the sight of God.

Ash-Sha<sup>ʿ</sup>rāwī explains the expression of the Jews "Allah's Hand is shackled" as "paralyzed" or "unable to move" and this was before Islam came when they used to grow in their fields and they didn't have a good harvest so Finhas (one of the Jews) uttered this ill-saying. Another viewpoint says that the Jews uttered this when the Muslims in first days after migrating to Medina lived some days without food, so the Jews said "Allah's Hand is shackled". Ash-Sha<sup>ʿ</sup>rāwī gives another interpretation that the Jews alleged that "Allah's Hand is shackled" from punishing them in the Hereafter. He continues showing the different meanings of the word "hand" in Arabic, namely, the physical hand, blessing, owner, favor, etc. In this context, Ash-Sha<sup>ʿ</sup>rāwī asserts that Allah has a hand but warned people not to liken it to our human hand as no one can do this since there is no evidence for it in the Qur'an or Sunnah. However, he says that Ta'wīl is possible for this image. He thinks that the anthropomorphic images can be handled in two ways; either to accept them as they are without argument or interpretation or to interpret them according to the context. So, the phrase "His Hands are out-stretched" in this context can be interpreted as "His grace and blessing". This means that Allah is not stingy because Allah deprives people in order to give what is more valuable to them. A man can misuse Allah's blessing in doing wrong and hence may go away from the way of paradise. Therefore, when Allah deprives someone, He surely knows the best for creatures.

So, it is not allowed to refer to the "Hand of Allah" as the human-like since Allah cannot be thought of as consisting of parts and organs. Also, it is not allowed to refer to the hand here as "power", "ownership", "favor/blessing" or "relation" since it then may refer to the relation between Adam and his enemy "Iblîs". Finally, Al-Qurtubî thinks that the phrase "His Hands out-stretched" { بِنِ يَدَاهُ مَبْسُوطَتَانِ } means "Allah's blessing is abundant".

Ibn Abî Zamanîn, Al-Qasimî, Al-Matrudî, At-Tabarânî, Ibn Jozî Al-Kalbî, Al-Samîn Al-Halabî, Al-th<sup>c</sup>labî, Muqatil Ibn Sulaimân, Abî As-S<sup>c</sup>ûd, As-Siûtî, Al-Biqâ<sup>c</sup>î, Aθ<sup>c</sup>labî, Ash-Shawkânî, Tafsîr Al-Jalâlayn, Al-Baidawî and Ibn Kaθîr interpret it as "Allah has the bounty and grace and He is the creator of everything". They comment that the Jews said "Allah's Hands are chained" which means "stingy", and Allah replied to them saying "Nay, His hands are widely outstretched" which means "His blessings and favors are abundant and His givings are limitless".

### **Evaluating the Translations**

This verse includes two anthropomorphic images. Although the four translators have spared no effort to reproduce the ST adequately Shakir, Ghâli, Abdel Haleem and Shabbir render the first image "The Jews Say: "Allah's Hand is tied up" in this context literally without adding any esoteric meaning. However, Hilâlî and Khân, Saheeh International and Asad render it literally but give additional explanation for it in the footnote or in within-the-text-notes to deliver the implied allegorical meaning. Hilâlî and Khân add between brackets "i.e. He does not give and spend of His Bounty" which shows the esoteric meaning. Moreover, Saheeh International mentions the following phrase in the footnote "Implying inability to give or stinginess" which is also elaborative.

Additionally, Asad supports his translation with a lengthy explanation of the image in the footnote. He says that it is a metaphorical expression denoting niggardliness, just as its

opposite - "his hand is stretched out wide" - signifies generosity. He depends on the opinion of Az-Zamakhsharî. He also adds that:

However, these two phrases have a wider meaning as well, namely, "lack of power" and "unlimited power", respectively (Razi). It would appear that the Jews of Medina, seeing the poverty of the Muslims, derided the latter's conviction that they were struggling in God's cause and that the Qur'an was divinely revealed. Thus, the "saying" of the Jews mentioned in this verse, "God's hand is shackled", as well as the parallel one in 3:181, "God is poor while we are rich", is an elliptical description of their attitude towards Islam and the Muslims - an attitude of disbelief and sarcasm which could be thus paraphrased: "If it were true that you Muslims are doing God's will, He would have bestowed upon you power and riches; but your poverty and your weakness contradict your claim - or else this claim of yours amounts, in effect, to saying that God cannot help you."

Similarly, the second anthropomorphic image in the verse is also rendered like the first one. Shakir, Ghâli, Abdel Haleem and Shabbir render it literally. Shakir translates it as "His hands are spread out". Hilâlî and Khân and Shabbir render it as "His Hands are widely outstretched". They do not give any illustrations for this image though Hilâlî and Khân explain the implied meaning of the first image in the same verse. Also, Saheeh International translates it literally as "His hands are extended" and Ghâli follows the same strategy translating it as "His Hands are out spread". Abdel Haleem also renders it literally as "God's hands are open wide". On the other hand, Asad gives the literal translation "His hands stretched out" to stick to the ST and adds in the footnotes the

implied meaning adopting the commentary of Az-Zamakhsharî "signifies generosity" and the commentary of Ar-Râzî "unlimited power".

Thus, the translations of Hilâlî and Khân, Saheeh International and Asad are functional and reader-friendly. They attempt to deliver the implicit Qur'ânic meaning with preserving loyalty to the semantic meaning of the ST. Although they give illustrations for the anthropomorphic images in this verse, they stick to the Salafî doctrine which rejects likening, interpretation (ta'wîl), resembling, denying or qualifying.

Hence, a functional translation for this image should bear in mind the sensitivity of the image itself as it is related to the description of Allah which is considered unseen matters and the TR on the other hand for which the whole process of translation is conducted. The TR needs to get the esoteric meaning without too much philosophical exegetical commentaries. Besides, the translator has to preserve faithfulness to the ST. Thus, a suggested rendering for the anthropomorphic images of the hand in this verse is presented in the following section.

### **Proposed Translation**

“The Jews Say: “Allah’s Hand is tied up (i.e. they assume that He does not give and spend of His Bounty).” Be their hands tied up and be they accursed for what they uttered. Nay, both His Hands are widely outstretched (meaning that Allah is generous and spends as He wills). He spends (of His Bounty) as He wills”

**d- The fourth anthropomorphic image of the hand of Allah includes in Surat Yâsîn (Yâsîn Chapter), verse (83):**

(سورة يس 83) (فَسُبْحَانَ الَّذِي بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ)

### **Transliteration**

(fa-subhāna alađî bi-yadihi malakûtu kuli shai')



**Shakir**

“Therefore glory be to Him in Whose hand is the kingdom of all things”

**Hilâlî and Khân**

“So glorified be He and exalted above all that they associate with Him, and in Whose Hands is the dominion of all things.”

**Saheeh International**

“So exalted is He in whose hand is the realm of all things,”

**Ghâli**

“So All Extolment be to Him in Whose Hand is the Dominion of everything,”

**Abdel Haleem**

“So glory be to Him in whose Hand lies control over all things.”

**Asad**

“Limitless, then, in His glory is He in whose hand rests the mighty dominion over all things.”

**Shabbir**

“Glorified is He in Whose Hand rests the Mighty Dominion over all things.”

**Hammad**

“Then highly exalted is the One in whose mighty Hand is all dominion over all things.”

**Precondition Header**

The hand in the previous verse is interpreted as "reign", "rule" and "power" (ملكه وتصرفه) according to the interpretations of Az-Zamakhsharî and Al Bakrî. This interpretation meets the conditions of approved ta'wîl and hence can be an acceptable meaning.

The hand image in this verse does not mean the real hand since the hand in language has many metonymical meanings like in verse 41, Surat Ar-Rûm (The Romans Chapter), (ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ) "Corruption prevails in the land and the sea because of all the evil that the

hands of humanity have earned" (Hammad's Translation). The hand in this verse does not mean the real hand known to all human beings, it means that people gain bad deeds through their organs and beliefs. So, these deeds are not necessarily gained by the hand, bad deeds may be done by the mouth, the leg, the mind, etc. Yet, the hand is mentioned here since most of everyday actions are done and handled by the hand. Thus, the hand image here is metonymical.

That is why, the hand of Allah in these three verses means Allah's reign, power, control and might, and not the real hand. However, the attitude of this thesis adopts the view that affirms that Allah has "two hands".

### **Evaluating the Translations**

All the translators render the verse under investigation literally as "hand". Depending on the before mentioned exegeses, the hand of Allah in these contexts have other esoteric meanings like (Allah's "control", "reign", "power" or "might").

Functionally, the hand of Allah in this verse should be rendered communicatively as the TR is expected to inquire about the meaning of the hands here because of the rhetorical image inherent in the ST. Thus, translators would presuppose that the TR would not understand the implicit meaning of the image and hence semantic or word-for-word rendering of the hand image in these contexts need further explanations (exegetical translation) to deliver the image to the TR in a way that explains the appropriate method of dealing with such a kind of images and at the same time with delivering the esoteric meaning of "control" or "power" according to the context of the verses here. Thus, the translation should be target-culture oriented maintaining the TT norms. Namely, the translation of the hand in this context should be handled semantically to observe faithfulness to the ST and at the same time it should be functional and informative to suit the nature of the target text norms and the target reader's situation.

However, none of the translators above mentioned could achieve this. They merely transferred the literal meaning of the term “hand” without any illustrations. Accordingly, it may be better to give a more communicative translation for the image in the following section.

### **Proposed Translation**

“So glorified be He in Whose Hands(meaning: under Allah's control, reign and power) is the dominion of all things.”

### **4.2 The Image of the “Shin” of Allah**

There is only one shin image of Allah in the Qur’an in Surat Al Qalam(The Pen Chapter), Verse (42).

(سورة القلم 42)

(يَوْمَ يُكْشَفُ عَنْ سَاقٍ)

### **Transliteration**

(yauma yukshafu ‘an sâq)

### **Shakir**

“On the day when there shall be a severe affliction”

### **Hilâlî and Khân**

“(Remember) the Day when the shin shall be laid bare (i.e. the Day of Resurrection).”

### **Saheeh International**

“The Day the shin will be uncovered”

### **Ghâli**

“On the Day when the shank will be bared”

### **Abdel Haleem**

“On the Day when matters become dire”

### **Asad**

“On the Day when man's very being shall be bared to the bone”

### **Shabbir**

“On the Day when they are confronted with the stark reality”

### **Hammad**

“On a most difficult Day Hereafter, when they are resurrected, and an imitable shin is laid bare.”

### Investigating the Exegeses of the Verse

Quran exegetes have different views about the interpretation of the anthropomorphic image of the shin in the Qur'ân. An-Nasafi, Al-Baidawî, Al-Bağawî, Ibn Abî Hâtim, Ibn 'abbâs, Ibn Birjân, Ibn Al-Khatîb, Abû Bakr Al-Jaza'irî, Ibn Abî Zamanîn, Al-mukhtaşar fî at-tafsîr, As-Sâbûnî, Al-Tafsîr al-waşît, Ibn Kaθîr, Al-Bakrî, Al-θ'âlibî, Al-Sakhawî, Al-θ'alabî, Al-Khatîb, As-Samarqandî, Al-Zamakhsharî, At-Tabarî, Al-izz Ibn Abdussalâm, Al-Zuhailî, Ibn Hamûsh, Al-'dawî, Wagdî, Muqatil Ibn Sulaimân, 'ish'a Abd ur-Rahmân, At-Taiyybî, Ibn Qutaybah, Ibn Atîa, Qutb, Al-Wahidî, Al-Hawarî, Al-Naisâbûrî, Hawmad and Tafsîr Al-Jalâlayn comment that the shin in this verse denotes the severity, horror, upside downs, affliction and seriousness of the predicament during the reckoning and the requital on the Day of Resurrection.

Ibn Jozi, Al-Kalbî and Al-Tafsîr al-muiasar comment that "the shin" in this verse means that the Allah uncovers His shin which has no like and which is not like that of the human beings. When Allah uncovers His shin, all the creatures prostrate before Him humbly except for the hypocrites. This is pointed out in Sahîh Al Bukhârî in hadîθ no. 4919 saying that "and so Allah will then uncover His Shin whereupon every believer will prostrate before Him and there will remain those who used to prostrate before Him just for showing off and for gaining good reputation. These people will try to prostrate but their backs will be rigid like one piece of a wood (and they will not be able to prostrate).

Another opinion that is strongly supported by many scholars says that the shin is a metaphorical image used by the early Arabs in wars. When the war reaches the climax they say *kashafati 'l-harbu 'an sâqayn*, 'the war has bared its shank', to mean that it has intensified. It is as an expression of affliction, hardship, and burden that occurs when the battle reaches the peak. This view is supported by Ibn Al-Jawzî, Abd Al-Bârî,

Al-Tafsîr al-wasîf, Al-khazin, Abî As-S'ûd add another interpretation saying that the shin image in this verse may mean that the reality and the core of the meaning of life and creation is uncovered and that people witness the horrors of the Day of Resurrection.

Al-S'dî points the image out saying that the shin refers to the shin of Allah". He does not give any other layers of meaning and thus follows the strict Salafî method in dealing with the anthropomorphic images that does not allow any Ta'tîl (denying), Takîyyf (qualifying), Tashbîh (likening), Tamθîl (comparing), or Tajsîm (embodying).

Ibn'uthaimîn (1434:196) mentions two Salafî views about the meaning of the shin in this verse which are "severe affliction" or "the shin of Allah itself". He, then, asserts that saying that this is the shin of Allah does not mean that it is like the human shin which is known and common to us as human beings. Yet, it is beyond human imagination and thinking and cannot be comparable to any of Allah's creation.

### **Evaluating the Translations**

The given translations vary in rendering the shin image in the verse under study. Some of the translators translate it as "shin" like Hilâlî and Khân, Hammad and Saheeh International. Also, Ghâli translates it as "shank" which gives the same meaning of the shin. This method follows the semantic method that transfers the literal meaning of the word.

On the other hand, Shakir renders it as "affliction". Abdel Haleem follows the same style and gives the same meaning of "affliction" which is "when matters become dire". They try to give the intended meaning of the image without mentioning the word "shin" entirely. By doing so, they follow the functional approach of translation.

The translation of Asad is totally different. He renders it as "when man's very being shall be bared to the bone". The

same meaning is delivered by Shabbir "On the Day when they are confronted with the stark reality."

He mentions in the footnotes that he follows the interpretation of Abu As-S'ûd. He then points out his view in the footnotes saying that:

Lit., "when the shin [-bone] shall be bared": i.e., when man's innermost thoughts, feelings and motivations will be laid bare. The implication is that their erstwhile claim that whatever is "expedient" is morally justifiable (...), shall be revealed in all its nakedness - namely, as something indefensible and spiritually destructive.

Thus, he attempts to give the implicit meaning of the image in addition to sticking to the literal meaning in footnotes. He tries to follow the Salafî method in addition to resorting to Ta'wîl. It is evident that translator vary in rendering this image. Hilâlî and Khân, Hammad, Saheeh International and Ghâli render it semantically. They consider it an unseen matter that must not be interpreted or discussed which is a clear adoption of the Salafî method. However, Asad, Shabbir, Shakir and Abdel Haleem give functional translations that attempt to deliver the esoteric meaning of the shin communicatively. Each of them resorts to a certain type of exegesis that follows a certain school or trend in dealing with anthropomorphism.

Those who attempt to give the implicit meaning in their translations are correct to a great extent since they give the implicit meaning and add additional exegetical and explanatory notes in footnotes. This method gives due concern to the target reader and the norms of the target text norms. Only one note to be mentioned is that they have to give the semantic meaning of the word within the text of the Qur'ân and then add the other explanatory notes in the footnotes. However, all of them do the opposite; they give the

implicit meaning within the verse as if it is the original text which does not preserve faithfulness to the source text. In short, for the translation of the shin image to functionally correct and communicatively appropriate, it is better to render it semantically or literally as “shin” or “stark” then add the explanatory in the footnotes. This preserves the ST norms and word choice aptly and at in the same way delivers to the TR the esoteric meaning in a simple and short way. This requires suggesting a more functional translation as follows.

### **Proposed Translation**

“the Day when the shin shall be laid bare (meaning in the Day of Resurrection when matters become dire and Allah uncovers His shin as a sign of great affliction).”

### **4.3 The Image of Istwâ’ and the Throne**

The image of Istwâ’ appears nine times and the throne of Allah appears in five contexts in the Qur’ân. All of the images of Istwâ’ have the same meaning and thus one verse is analyzed and generalized to all Istwâ’ verses in the Qur’ân, and the same applies to the image of the throne. Verse (5) in Surat Taha (Taha Chapter) is investigated as an example of the image of Istwâ’ and the throne in the Qur’ân:

(سورة طه 5)

(الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَىٰ)

### **Transliteration**

(ar-raḥamânu<sup>c</sup>ala al<sup>c</sup>arshi istawâ)

### **Shakir**

“The Beneficent God is firm in power”

### **Hilâlî and Khân**

“Rose over(istawâ) the (Mighty) throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty)”

### **Saheeh International**

“Above the Throne established”

### **Ghâli**

“Upon the Throne leveled Himself (How He has done so is beyond human understanding)”

### **Abdel Haleem**

“Established on the Throne”

### **Asad**

“Established on the throne of His almightiness?”

### **Shabbir**

“[He maintains Supreme Control over all that He has created]”

### **Hammad**

“The All-Merciful, Who has settled Himself over the Throne, befittingly”

### **Investigating the Exegeses of the Verse**

Salafî interpretations of the Qur’ân unanimously agreed with consensus that it means that Allah is established on His throne in a way that cannot be imagined or argued by anyway. However, the Khalafî exegeses have another view. They interpret and allegorize the image of the throne in different ways; power and overall ruling of Allah over the universe, control mercifully the throne in a way that nothing is out of His knowledge, seizing the creatures’ selves, actions, secrets, and sayings even before the one thinks of them, established on the throne of your heart to make you give Him some time to spend with Him. Another Khalafî trend deny the image entirely saying that it is not suitable to describe Allah as sitting on the throne as it is a humanlike body image.

### **Evaluating the Translations**

Abdel Haleem, Ghâli, and Hilâlî and Khân seem to have adopted the conservative Salafî method of interpretation. Abdel Haleem and Saheeh International translate the anthropomorphic image as “established on the Throne.” They, both, did not interfere to give any other underlying meanings in footnotes or with-in-the text notes. Ghâli adds additional bracketed comments to show the Salafî interpretation in his



translation by adding “(How He has done so is beyond human understanding).” Hilâlî and Khân’s translation follows the same way of Ghâli’s which is affirming the anthropomorphic image of Istwâ’ and avoided giving an equivalent to the term “Istwâ’” as they consider it untranslatable and has no equivalent in English. Thus, they transliterate it and give an interpretive translation in order to avoid Ta’wîl. Asad renders Istwâ’ as “established on the throne of His almightiness”. He then adds voluntarily the word “His almightiness” to give the reader the connotation that Istwâ’ has an underlying meaning of power and almightiness. Shabbir adds the underlying meaning between brackets as saying “[He maintains Supreme Control over all that He has created]. Shakir’s translation is an illustrative one. He did not mention the word throne or the anthropomorphic image of Istwâ’. He followed the original Khalafî exegeses method saying “The Beneficent Allah is firm in power.”

From the analysis of the previous translations, there appears to be two divergent trends of translation of the anthropomorphic image of Istwâ’. The first trend of the Salaf is adopted clearly by Abdel Haleem, Ghâli, and Hilâlî and Khân and Saheeh International. The other opposing trend is the Khalafî method and it is adopted clearly by Asad, Shabbir, and Shakir. Also, the image of Istwâ’ is proved not to accept being interpreted as the act of Istwâ’ cannot be imagined or discussed according to the views of the early reliable Muslim scholars.

### **Proposed Translation**

“Rose over (istawâ) the throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty and beyond human understanding)”

This suggested translation is a combination of the translation of Hilâlî and Khân and Ghâli. A pressing question to be asked now: does each of the adopted translations in the current study follow the appropriate methodology in dealing

with the anthropomorphic images? This question is answered with profound investigation in the coming part.

## **5.0 Findings and Conclusion**

### **5.1 The Study Findings**

The research findings can be displayed as follows:

- 1- In this study, it has been assumed that there are two contradicting trends in dealing with the anthropomorphic images; Salafî and Khalafî. The problem that encounters the translator is her/his unawareness of the importance of the issue in Islamic doctrine. They may follow the Khalafî approach in some verses and follow the Salafî in other situations without being aware that s/he is doing so. That is why, the translator has to study the features and basics of each approach and then decide what approach to adopt and when to shift between the different approaches.
- 2- Some translators do not have the needed knowledge about the appropriate method of dealing with the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân. That is to say, the translator sometimes deals with the anthropomorphic images by adopting the Salafî approach and in other contexts the same translator deals with them by adopting the Khalafî one unpurposefully. For example, Abdel Haleem sometimes follows the Salafî method in translating anthropomorphism like in "floated under Our watchful eye". In other verses, he adopted the Khalafî approach like in "seeking His approval", "Established on the Throne", and "Seeking His approval".
- 3- The majority of Muslim scholars are called ahlu Sunnah wal jama'ah. They think that the anthropomorphic images of Allah must be affirmed without any kind of Tactîl (denying), Takîyyf (qualifying), Tashbîh (likening), Tamθîl (comparing), or Tajsîm (embodying). They must be handled and dealt with as

they are mentioned in the Qur'ân and Sunnah. Also, they reject ta'wîl "interpretation" of the anthropomorphic images.

- 4- These different and divergent ideologies may affect the translator's rendering of the anthropomorphic images. Thus, the translator has to specify from the very beginning the approach s/he is going to adopt in his translation and mention this attitude for the reader in the introduction of the translation.
- 5- Ta'wîl can be accepted if it accords with language, jurisprudence, and context. It is not totally rejected. So, the translator may transliterate the anthropomorphic images of "Istwâ'" and "Kursî'" without interpretation and shift to adopt the functional approach when translating images like "the Face", "the Hand", "the Shin" and "the Eye" of Allah as long as the three stipulations of Ta'wîl are met.
- 6- Following Ta'wîl method does not mean that we negate that Allah has a face or an eye, etc. Nevertheless, it is important to note that we affirm the fact that Allah has an eye, a face, a hand, etc. But the image may have different meanings in different contexts as long as it accords with language rules, jurisprudence, and context.
- 7- The aforementioned ideologies are all mirrored and crystallized in the different exegeses of the Qur'ân. So, translators have to be aware of the ideology imposed in each exegesis and avoid following or adopting deviated cults and interpretations.

## **5.2 Conclusion**

At the end of this research, suggested recommendations are represented to help translators avoid mistakes in translating the anthropomorphic images in the Qur'ân. These recommendations can be considered guidelines or rules for future translations of the Qur'ân that summarize the drift of the current study as follows:

- 1- Ta'wîl (interpretation) is not totally rejected or forbidden in dealing with the Qur'ân as some conservative scholars assume. It may be allowed or supported on three conditions; when it is impossible to understand the surface meaning of the context; when the interpreted term is accepted in language and lexicons; when the interpretation has evidence from the opinions of the Prophet or his companions and jurisprudence.
- 2- However, the anthropomorphic images of the face and the eye of Allah can be interpreted and their esoteric meanings can be clarified after consulting reliable and authorized exegeses.
- 3- Concerning the anthropomorphic image of the Hand of Allah, it can be interpreted esoterically depending on the context. In Surat Sâd (Sâd Chapter), Verse (75) it does not mean the Hand of Allah, it means that Allah gave honor to Adam by supervising his creation by Himself. In Surat Yâsîn (Yâsîn Chapter), verse (71), the Hand of Allah means "Allah Himself". However, this implied meaning is preferable to be inserted in brackets or in footnotes. In addition, it may mean "support and blessing of Allah" as in Surat Al Fath (Triumph Chapter), Verse (10). In another context, it may mean "stinginess" and "generosity" like in Surat Al Mâ'idah (The Table Chapter), verse (64). Other three verses refer to the Hand of Allah as Allah's "control", "reign", "power" or "might" like in Surat Yâsîn (Yâsîn Chapter), verse (83), Surat Al 'imrân (The Family of 'imrân), verse (26), and Surat Al Hadîd (Iron Chapter), verse (29).
- 4- Regarding the anthropomorphic image of the Shin of Allah, it can be rendered literally "the Day when the shin shall be laid bare" and then its esoteric meaning can be given in the footnotes which is "in the Day of Resurrection when matters become dire and Allah uncovers His shin as a sign of great affliction".

- 5- The image of Istwâ' of Allah cannot be interpreted or discussed unanimously. The most appropriate and accepted interpretation for the term Istwâ' is "rose over". Yet, the quality (howness) of rising must not be imagined or discussed since it has no evidence from the Qur'an or Sunnah that suggests other meanings. Also, the opinion that interprets Istwâ' as "istawlâ" (seized/captured) is not approved by Mainstream Muslim scholars on the one hand, and has no evidence in lexicons or in the Qur'an or Sunnah on the other hand. The translator may mention that it is not allowed in Islamic doctrine to discuss this image and explain the reason in the footnotes or in within-the text-notes to be reader-friendly.
- 6- Rendering the image by giving their esoteric meanings requires giving the literal meaning between brackets as within-the text-notes or vice versa namely, to give the literal meaning and then add the esoteric meaning between brackets or in footnotes to keep faithfulness to the original text.

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## Symbols Used in the Phonemic Transcription of Arabic

### A. Consonant

Symbol		Description	Examples
/ʔ/	ء	Voiceless glottal stop	/ʔatat/ "she came"
/b/	ب	Voiced bilabial stop	/bostân/ "garden"
/t/	ت	Voiceless alveolar stop	/kitaab/ "book"
/θ/	ث	Voiceless dental fricative	/naθr/ "prose"
/j/	ج	Voiced palatal affricate	/burj/ "tower"
/ħ/	ح	Voiceless pharyngeal	/ħarb/ "war"
/kh/	خ	fricative	/khawf/ "fear"
/d/	د	Voiceless velar fricative	/diin/ "religion"
/ð/	ذ	Voiced alveolar stop	/ðahab/ "gold"
/r/	ر	Voiced dental fricative	/qird/ "monkey"
/z/	ز	Voiced alveolar trill	/zâra/ "he visited"
/s/	س	Voiced alveolar fricative	/rasm/ "drawing"
/sh/	ش	Voiceless alveolar fricative	/šahr/ "month"
/ṣ/	ص	Voiceless palato-alveolar	/ṣawm/ "fasting"
/ḍ/	ض	fricative	/maraḍ/ "sickness"
/ṭ/	ط	Voiceless alveolar emphatic	/maṭar/ "rain"
/ð̣/	ظ	fricative	/ð̣ahr/ "back"
/ʕ/	ع	Voiced emphatic stop	/ʕaq/ "mind"
/ġ/	غ	Voiceless alveolar emphatic	/ġawθ/ "help or aid"
/f/	ف	stop	/saqf/ "ceiling"
/q/	ق	Voiced dental emphatic	/qalaq/ "anxiety"
/k/	ك	fricative	/kahf/ "cave"
/l/	ل	Voiced pharyngeal fricative	/qalb/ "heart"
/m/	م	Voiced uvular fricative	/min/ "from"
/n/	ن	Voiceless labio-dental	/nawm/ "sleep"
/h/	ه	fricative	/fahm/
/w/	و	Voiceless uvular stop	"understanding"
/y/	ی	Voiceless velar stop	/lahw/ "play"
		Voiced alveolar lateral	/yad/ "hand"
		Voiced bilabial nasal	
		Voiced alveolar nasal	
		Voiceless glottal fricative	
		Voiced bilabial semi-vowel	

		Voiced palatal semi-vowel	
<b>B. Vowels</b>			
/i/	◌ِ	High front unrounded vowel	/qist/ “justice”
/î/		High front unrounded long vowel	/karîh/ “hateful”
/a/	◌َ	Low central unrounded short vowel	/sadd/ “dam”
/â/		Low central unrounded short vowel	/qitâr/ “train”
/u/	◌ُ	High back round short vowel	/xubz/ “bread”
/û/		High back round long vowel	/nûr/ “light”

