

**Critical and Comparative Evaluation of the English Translations  
of the Near-Synonymous Divine Names in the Qurān**

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**Submitted in Accordance with the Requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

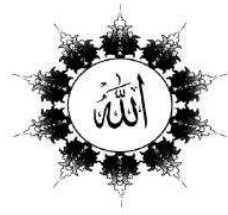
**The University of Leeds  
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March 2015**

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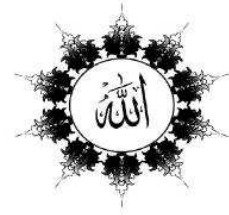
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# أَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَى



الْمُتَّابَةُ فِي الْقُرْآنِ وَالسُّنَّةِ

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ الْحَيُّ الْقَيُّومُ  
لَا تَأْخُذُهُ السُّنُورُ وَهُوَ فِي السَّمَاءِ الْعَلِيِّ  
الْقَدِيمِ الَّذِي لَا يُبَدِّلُ مَا وُضِعَ لَهُ  
الْقُرْآنَ وَالْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَ وَالْعِلْمَ  
وَالْحَقَّ وَالْحَقِيقَ وَالْحَقِيقَةَ  
وَالْحَقِيقَةَ وَالْحَقِيقَةَ وَالْحَقِيقَةَ

• الرحيم

• السلام • المؤمن

• الجبار • المتكبر

• المصور • الأول



• الرحمن

• الملك • القدوس

• المهيمن • العزيز

• الخالق • البارئ

• الآخر • الظاهر • الباطن • السميع • البصير • المولى • النصير

• العفو • القدير • اللطيف • الخبير • الوتر • الجميل • الحيي • الستير

• الكبير • المتعالي • الواحد • القهار • الحق • المبين • القوي • المتين

• الحي • القيوم • العلي • العظيم • الشكور • الحليم • الواسع • العليم

• التواب • الحكيم • الغني • الكريم • الأحد • الصمد • القريب • المجيب

• الغفور • الودود • الولي • الحميد • الحفيظ • المجيد • الفتاح • الشهيد

• المقدم • المؤخر • المليك • المقتدر • المسعر • القابض • الباسط • الرازق

• القاهر • الديان • الشاكر • المنان • القادر • الخلاق • المالك • الرزاق

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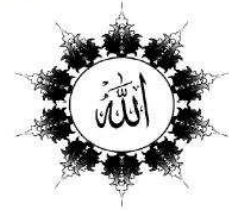
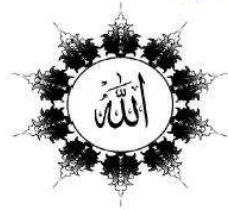
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• البر • الغفار • الرؤوف • الوهاب

• الجواد • السبوح • الوارث

• الرب • الأعلى

• الإله



*Al-Asmā Al-Husnā*

The Beautiful Divine Names in the Qurān and the *Sunnah* of the Noble Prophet (Raḥwanī, 2004)

## Acknowledgement

‘Whoever does not show gratitude to people, would not show gratitude to his Lord’

Prophet Muhammad

All praise and thanks are due, above all, to Allāh, the Almighty, and the Creator of the universe; the heavens, the earths and everything in between. What seems sound in this research should be attributed to the grace of the All-Loving Lord, and what appears flawed should be attributed to my own oversight. *Oh my Lord; lift up my heart, ease my duty, untie my tongue, so that my words are understood* (Q. 20: 25-28).

For their love, patience, prayers and continuous support, I cannot thank my dear parents enough. No matter what I do for them for the rest of my life, I will not be able to match their care, generosity, sincerity and devotion. Thanks must also go to my dear siblings, *Najūd, Aḥmad, Riyādh, ‘Eīmān, Sa‘ad, Zuhair, Sa‘īd* and *Wijdān*, whose prayers have always been felt while being away from homeland.

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## Abstract

Despite the fact that many problematic areas in the English translations of the Qurān have been thoroughly investigated, no substantial work has so far been devoted to critically evaluating the translation of the Divine Names, which pose paramount challenges for all translators. Critical and evaluative studies of Qurān translations seem to avoid investigating and assessing the Divine Names, which are the most sensitive and delicate Qurānic terms. This study critically and comparatively investigates how accurate and consistent are the English renderings of these Divine Names; *al-Asmā al-Ḥusnā*, The Most Beautiful Names (MBNs) which are recurring terms in the Qurānic text. The complexity of meanings and morphological features of these Divine Names is evidently reflected in so many cases of inaccuracy as well as inconsistency in their English translations, particularly in the renderings of the near-synonymous root-sharing Names. Translators of the Qurān have unjustifiably used different corresponding terms for the very same Divine Name when it appears on more than one occasion, and sometimes in similar Qurānic contexts. Most Qurān translators have also inaccurately used the very same English corresponding terms to translate two, if not three, near-synonymous Divine Names, whether they share the same linguistic root or otherwise. For the purpose of this evaluative study, hundreds of occurrences of the root-sharing Divine Names in five well-known English translations, namely Pickthall (1930), A. Y. Ali (1936/1986), Arberry (1955), Hilali-Khan (1985) and Abdel-Haleem (2004), have been collected, analysed and critically and comparatively evaluated. The comparative evaluation of the English renderings of the Divine Names has revealed that all the five translations not only fall short in their attempts to distinguish between the near-synonymous Names, particularly the root-sharing ones, but prove unsuccessful in rendering them accurately and consistently. The study has also revealed that the translation of Arberry shows much better quality, in terms of accuracy and consistency, in rendering the root-sharing Divine Names than other translations do. In addition to critically revealing shortcomings, inaccuracies and inconsistencies of the renderings of the Divine Names, the study suggests the use of translation technology solutions (or computer-assisted tools), such as translation memory and bilingual concordances, to improve the quality and consistency of future Qurān translations in general, and the renderings of the recurring Divine Names in particular.

## **List of Tables**

Table 4.1 Active-Participle Forms of Divine Names.....	156
Table 4.2 Intensified (Hyperbolic) forms of Divine Names.....	157
Table 4.3 Assimilated (Qualificative) Adjectival Divine Names.....	158
Table 4.1 Superlative (Elative) Forms of Divine Names.....	159

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1.1 Place of Criticism in Translation Studies (Holmes's Map).....	13
Figure 2.1 Divine Names and Arabic Calligraphy.....	56
Figure 6.1 Solution for Translation Inconsistency; Use of TM Database.....	278

## Arabic Transliteration System

The system of transliteration adopted in this Arabic/English translation study is the well-known Library of Congress Romanization system (LCRS). Arabic letters in this system are represented by Latin letterings, such that every sound or letter is written in its similar English counterpart with or without diacritical marks. The term ‘transliteration’, which identifies this system, usually refers to replacing texts or words, such as proper names, written in one script (writing system) with letters of another script to make them legible for readers of another language. Transliteration is technically defined as orthographical substitution of characters in a one-to-one reversible representation drawing on language’s regular orthography (Beesley, 1998; Stalls and Knight, 1998). It differs from transcription which denotes an orthography that exemplifies phonology or morpho-phonology of a given language (ibid.).

Arabic has a sophisticated sound system, which differs drastically from that of English and any other Western language, as it contains some consonants with distinct guttural sounds (pharyngeal and uvular fricatives) as well as a chain of velarized consonants (Watson, 2002). There are three short and three long vowels, which can be represented as /a/, /i/, /u/ and /ā/, /ī/, /ū/ respectively. Diphthongs are represented as *aw*, *ay* while a doubled i-vowel is represented as *iyy* (in the middle and end of words as in *aḥadiyyah* and <sup>ʿ</sup>*Aliyy* respectively). Words in Arabic normally begin with a consonant followed by either a short or long vowel, but long vowels are not often followed by more than one consonant. The following table shows the adopted LCRS Arabic Transliteration system for consonants and vowels:

Ar.	أ	ب	ت	ث	ج	ح	خ	د	ذ	ر	ز	س	ش	ص
Tr.	a	b	t	th	j	ḥ	ḵ	d	ḏ	r	z	s	sh	ṣ
ض	ط	ظ	ع	غ	ف	ق	ك	ل	م	ن	هـ	و	ي	ء
ḏh	ṭ	ẓ	ʿ	gh	f	q	k	L	m	n	h	w	y	ʿ



## **List of Abbreviations**

AP Active Participle

MBN Most Beautiful Name

MBNs Most Beautiful Names

SL Source Language

ST Source Text

TL Target Language

TT Target Text

MT Machine Translation

TM Translation Memory

TQA Translation Quality Assessment

CAT Computer-Assisted Translation

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	iv
<b>Abstract</b> .....	v
<b>Transliteration System of the Arabic Alphabet</b> .....	vi
<b>List of Figures</b> .....	vii
<b>List of Tables</b> .....	viii
<b>List of Abbreviations</b> .....	ix
<b>Table of Contents</b> .....	x
<b>Chapter One: General Introduction</b> .....	1
1.1 <b>Introduction</b> .....	1
1.2 <b>Components of the Study</b> .....	2
1.2.1 Aim of the Study.....	2
1.2.2 Motivation.....	2
1.2.3 Research Questions.....	4
1.2.4 Outline of the Thesis.....	5
1.3 <b>Research Methodology and Criteria of Evaluation</b> .....	8
1.3.1 Nature of this Evaluative Study.....	9
1.3.2 Data Collection.....	11
1.3.3 Defining Relevant Translation Notions.....	12
1.3.3.1 Evaluation and Criticism.....	12
1.3.3.2 Accuracy.....	14
1.3.3.3 Consistency.....	16
1.3.4 Criticism of Evaluative Models of Translation.....	17
1.3.5 Critical Evaluation of Translated Work.....	20
1.3.6 <b>Criteria of Evaluation</b> .....	23
1.3.6.1 The Significance Criteria in Translation Evaluation.....	23

1.3.6.2 Evaluation Criteria and Objectivity.....	25
1.3.6.3 The Devised Criteria for the Current Study.....	26
<b>1.4 Research Contributions and Limitations.....</b>	<b>28</b>
1.4.1 Expected Contributions.....	29
1.4.2 Limitations.....	30
<b>1.5 Introducing the Five Selected Translations.....</b>	<b>32</b>
1.5.1 M. M. Pickthall (1930).....	33
1.5.2 A. Y. Ali (1936/1983).....	34
1.5.3 Arthur Arberry (1955).....	36
1.5.4 Hilali and Khan (1993).....	38
1.5.5 M. Abdel-Haleem (2004).....	40
<b>Chapter Two: Introduction to Names, Naming and Qurān Divine Names.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>2.1 Introduction.....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>2.2 Names and Naming.....</b>	<b>43</b>
2.2.1 What is in a Name? .....	44
2.2.2 Social and Religious Significance of Names and Naming.....	46
<b>2.3 The Significance of Names in Arabic Literature and the Qurān.....</b>	<b>48</b>
2.3.1 Names and Naming in Arabic/Islamic Literature.....	48
2.3.2 Significance of Names in the Qurān.....	51
2.3.3 Significance of the Most Beautiful Divine Names.....	54
<b>2.4 The Universality of the Divine Names.....</b>	<b>58</b>
2.4.1 Scriptural Names and Naming.....	59
2.4.2 Universal Scriptural Divine Names.....	61
2.4.3 Semitic Roots.....	64
<b>2.5 The Origins and Status of the Most Beautiful Names in Islam.....</b>	<b>67</b>

2.5.1 How does the Qurān present the Divine Names and Attributes? .....	67
2.5.2 The Prophetic <i>Ḥadīth</i> on the Divine Names.....	71
2.5.3 Enumeration, <i>Iḥṣā'</i> , of the Divine Names.....	72
2.5.3.1 The Traditional List of <i>al-Asmā al-Ḥusnā</i> .....	75
2.5.3.2 The Greatest Name of All Divine Names.....	80
2.5.4 Reasons to Call the Divine Names ' <i>Most Beautiful</i> ' .....	82
<b>2.6 Theological Aspects of the Most Beautiful Divine Names</b> .....	<b>84</b>
2.6.1 The Significance of the Knowledge of the Divine Names.....	85
2.6.2 <i>Tawḥīd</i> and <i>Ilḥād</i> of the Divine Names.....	86
2.6.2.1 <i>Tawḥīd</i> of Divine Names and Attributes.....	87
2.6.2.2 <i>Ilḥād</i> of Divine Names.....	88
2.6.3 The Stance of <i>As-Salaf</i> on the Divine Names.....	90
<b>2.7 Early Works on the Divine Names and Some Controversial Issues</b> .....	<b>92</b>
2.7.1 Early Major Works on the Divine Names.....	92
2.7.2 Controversial issues about the Divine Names and Attributes.....	94
<b>Chapter Three: Qurānic Arabic, Translation Criticism and Divine Names</b> .....	<b>100</b>
<b>3.1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>100</b>
<b>3.2 Arabic and Qurānic Arabic</b> .....	<b>101</b>
3.2.1 Brief History of Arabic.....	101
3.2.2 Qurānic Arabic.....	103
<b>3.3 Qurān Translations and Criticism: Background</b> .....	<b>107</b>
3.3.1 Literary Criticism and Translation in Arabic Literature.....	108
3.3.2 Translation Criticism and Religious Texts.....	109
3.3.3 The Need for and Significance of Qurān Translation.....	112
3.3.4 Equivalence, Non-Equivalence and Qurān Un/Translatability.....	114

3.3.4.1	Equivalence and Non-Equivalence.....	114
3.3.4.2	Qurān Un/Translatability.....	116
3.3.5	Approaches to Qurān Translation.....	119
3.3.6	Critical Review of Early Translations of the Qurān.....	122
3.3.6.1	Early Translations of the Qurān.....	122
3.3.6.2	Early Western (Latin/English) Translations.....	123
3.4	<b>The Translation of the Most Beautiful Names.....</b>	128
3.4.1	Introduction.....	128
3.4.2	Previous Studies on the Translation of the Divine Names.....	131
3.4.3	Strategies Adopted to Translate the Divine Names.....	134
3.4.4	Loss and Compensation in the Translation of the Divine Names.....	138
3.4.4.1	Translation Loss and Compensation.....	138
3.4.4.2	Aspects of Loss in the Translation of the Divine Names.....	140
3.4.4.2.1	Theological Concepts.....	141
3.4.4.2.2	Stylistic Features.....	142
3.4.4.2.3	Textual Cohesion.....	143
	<b>Chapter Four: Linguistic Aspects of the Divine Names.....</b>	145
4.1	<b>Introduction.....</b>	145
4.2	<b>Morphological Structure and Derivation of the Divine Names.....</b>	147
4.2.1	Arabic Morphology.....	147
4.2.2	Derivation and Lexical Roots of the Divine Names.....	150
4.2.2.1	Derivation ‘ <i>Ishtiqāq</i> ’.....	150
4.2.2.2	Root-and-Pattern System.....	152
4.2.2.3	Derivation and Lexical Roots of the Divine Names.....	154
4.2.3	Morphological Patterns/Templates of the Divine Names.....	155

4.2.3.1 Active Participle, <i>Ism al-Fa'īl</i> .....	155
4.2.3.2 Passive Participle, <i>Ism al-Maf'ūl</i> .....	156
4.2.3.3 Intensified (Hyperbolic) Participle, <i>Ṣīghat Mubālaghah</i> .....	157
4.2.3.4 Assimilated (Qualificative) Adjective, <i>Ṣifah Mushabbahah</i> .....	158
4.2.3.5 Superlative (Elativ) Noun, <i>Ism At-Taḏhīl</i> .....	159
<b>4.3 Meaning and Semantic Aspects of the Divine Names</b> .....	<b>160</b>
4.3.1 Meaning; Definition and Types.....	160
4.3.2 Types of Meaning in Relation to the Divine Names.....	163
4.3.2.1 Denotative Meaning.....	164
4.3.2.2 Connotative Meaning.....	165
4.3.2.3 Contextual (Exegetical) Meaning.....	167
4.3.2.4 Emotive (Emotional) Meaning.....	169
4.3.2.5 Morphological Meaning.....	170
4.3.2.6 Thematic Meaning.....	171
4.3.2.7 Collocative Meaning.....	172
4.3.2.7.1 Collocation.....	172
4.3.2.7.2 Collocative Meaning.....	173
4.3.2.7.3 Qurānic Verse-Ending Collocations.....	173
<b>4.3.3 Semantic Relations of the Divine Names</b> .....	<b>176</b>
4.3.3.1 Synonymy and Near-Synonymous Divine Names.....	177
4.3.3.1.1 Definition of Synonymy.....	177
4.3.3.1.2 <i>Tarāduf</i> , Near-Synonymy in the Qurān.....	179
4.3.3.1.3 Near-Synonymous Divine Names in the Qurān.....	180
4.3.3.2 Polysemy and the Polysemous Divine Names.....	183
4.3.3.2.1 Definition of Polysemy.....	183
4.3.3.2.2 Polysemous Divine Names in the Qurān.....	184

## Chapter Five: Meaning Analysis and Translation Evaluation of the

<b>English Renderings of the Root-Sharing Divine Names</b> .....	186
<b>5.1 Introduction</b> .....	186
<b>5.2 Meaning Analysis and Translation Evaluation</b> .....	188
<b>5.2.1 <i>Allāh</i> and <i>Al-ilāh</i></b> .....	189
5.2.1.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Allāh</i> and <i>Al-Ilāh</i> .....	189
5.2.1.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Allāh</i> and <i>Al-Ilāh</i> .....	193
<b>5.2.2 <i>Raḥmān</i> and <i>Raḥīm</i></b> .....	197
5.2.2.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Raḥmān</i> and <i>Raḥīm</i> .....	197
5.2.2.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Raḥmān</i> and <i>Raḥīm</i> .....	201
<b>5.2.3 <i>Aḥad</i> and <i>Wāḥid</i></b> .....	206
5.2.3.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Aḥad</i> and <i>Wāḥid</i> .....	206
5.2.3.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Aḥad</i> and <i>Wāḥid</i> .....	208
<b>5.2.4 <i>Ghāfir</i>, <i>Ghaḥūr</i> and <i>Ghaḥḥār</i></b> .....	209
5.2.4.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Ghāfir</i> , <i>Ghaḥūr</i> , and <i>Ghaḥḥār</i> .....	209
5.2.4.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Ghāfir</i> , <i>Ghaḥūr</i> , and <i>Ghaḥḥār</i> .....	210
<b>5.2.5 <i>Qādir</i>, <i>Qadīr</i> and <i>Muqtadir</i></b> .....	214
5.2.5.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Qādir</i> , <i>Qadīr</i> , <i>Muqtadir</i> .....	214
5.2.5.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Qādir</i> , <i>Qadīr</i> , <i>Muqtadir</i> .....	217
<b>5.2.6 <i>Mālik</i>, <i>Malik</i>, and <i>Malīk</i></b> .....	220
5.2.6.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Mālik</i> , <i>Malik</i> , and <i>Malīk</i> .....	220
5.2.6.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Mālik</i> , <i>Malik</i> , and <i>Malīk</i> .....	222
<b>5.2.7 <i>Al-A<sup>l</sup>lā</i>, <i>Al-<sup>l</sup>Aliyy</i> and <i>Al-Muta<sup>l</sup>āl</i></b> .....	225
5.2.7.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Al-A<sup>l</sup>lā</i> , <i>al-<sup>l</sup>Aliyy</i> and <i>al-Muta<sup>l</sup>āl</i> .....	225
5.2.7.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Al-A<sup>l</sup>lā</i> , <i>al-<sup>l</sup>Aliyy</i> and <i>al-Muta<sup>l</sup>āl</i> .....	228
<b>5.2.8 <sup>l</sup>Ālim, <sup>l</sup>Alīm and <sup>l</sup>Allām</b> .....	230

5.2.8.1 Meaning Analysis of <sup>ʿ</sup> <i>Ālim</i> , <sup>ʿ</sup> <i>Alīm</i> and <sup>ʿ</sup> <i>Allām</i> .....	230
5.2.8.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <sup>ʿ</sup> <i>Ālim</i> , <sup>ʿ</sup> <i>Alīm</i> and <sup>ʿ</sup> <i>Allām</i> .....	232
5.2.9 <b><i>Karīm</i> and <i>Akram</i></b> .....	237
5.2.9.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Karīm</i> and <i>Akram</i> .....	237
5.2.9.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Karīm</i> and <i>Akram</i> .....	241
5.2.10 <b><i>Ḳāliq</i> and <i>Ḳallāq</i></b> .....	243
5.2.10.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Ḳāliq</i> and <i>Ḳallāq</i> .....	243
5.2.10.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Ḳāliq</i> and <i>Ḳallāq</i> .....	245
5.2.11 <b><i>Shākīr</i> and <i>Shakūr</i></b> .....	248
5.2.11.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Shākīr</i> and <i>Shakūr</i> .....	248
5.2.11.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Shākīr</i> and <i>Shakūr</i> .....	250
5.2.12 <b><i>Ḥāfiḏ</i> and <i>Ḥafīḏ</i></b> .....	252
5.2.12.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Ḥāfiḏ</i> and <i>Ḥafīḏ</i> .....	252
5.2.12.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Ḥāfiḏ</i> and <i>Ḥafīḏ</i> .....	254
5.2.13 <b><i>Mawlā</i> and <i>Waliyy</i></b> .....	258
5.2.13.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Mawlā</i> and <i>Waliyy</i> .....	258
5.2.13.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Mawlā</i> and <i>Waliyy</i> .....	262
5.2.14 <b><i>Qāhir</i> and <i>Qahhār</i></b> .....	266
5.2.14.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Qāhir</i> and <i>Qahhār</i> .....	266
5.2.14.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Qāhir</i> and <i>Qahhār</i> .....	267
5.2.15 <b><i>Kabīr</i> and <i>Mutakabbīr</i></b> .....	269
5.2.15.1 Meaning Analysis of <i>Kabīr</i> and <i>Mutakabbīr</i> .....	269
5.2.15.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <i>Kabīr</i> and <i>Mutakabbīr</i> .....	270



<b>Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations</b> .....	272
6.1 Findings and Implications.....	272
6.2 Recommendations.....	275
6.2.1 Tackling the Problem of Inconsistency in Qurān Translations.....	275
6.2.2 Suggestions for Future Translators of the Qurān.....	279
6.3 Suggestions for Further Research.....	280
<b>Bibliography</b> .....	281

# **A Critical and Comparative Evaluation of the English Translations of the Near-Synonymous Divine Names in the Qurān**

## **Chapter One: General Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

The introductory chapter aims to familiarise the reader with the main components of the current research, which evaluates the English renderings of the Divine Names mentioned in the Qurān. It presents the structure of the research, its methodology and its evaluative criteria. The chapter is divided into five sections, the first of which introduces the overall contents of this introductory chapter (1.1). The second section (1.2) sheds lights on the components of the research including its aims and motivation (1.2.1 and 1.2.2), the research questions (1.2.3) and an outline of the thesis (1.2.4).

The third section presents a methodological framework to facilitate introducing the devised criteria of evaluation for the current study. It is subdivided into six subsections, the first of which sheds light on the nature of this interdisciplinary evaluative study (see 1.3.1). The second subsection gives an idea about the collected data (translation samples/extracts) and the consulted Islamic and linguistic references (see 1.3.2). Hundreds of renderings of the recurring root-sharing Divine Names from the five selected translations of the Qurān have been examined and evaluated in terms of their accuracy and consistency. The third subsection introduces some translation notions that are frequently applied in the current study including criticism and evaluation as well as accuracy and consistency (see 1.3.3). A brief critical account of evaluative models in Translation Studies is provided in the fourth subsection (see 1.3.4). This is followed by an account of criticising translated works (1.3.5). The last part of this section presents the devised criteria in the current study (see 1.3.6).

The fourth section throws light on some of the expected contributions of carrying out this study (see 1.4.1) as well as its boundaries and limitations (see 1.4.2). The fifth and last section of this chapter introduces the five selected English translations of the Qurān to be evaluated in the current study. These well-known translations are those of Pickthall 1930 (see 1.5.1), A. Y. Ali 1936/1983 (see 1.5.2), A. Arberry 1955 (see 1.5.3), Hilali and Khan 1993 (see 1.5.4) and M. Abdel-Haleem 2004 (see 1.5.5).

## **1.2 Components of the Study**

As mentioned above, this section throws a light on the basic components of this research including its aim, motivation, the research questions and a brief outline of the thesis. Other components such as the limitations of the scope of the study are highlighted later in this chapter (see section five, 1.5).

### **1.2.1 Aim of the Study**

This study aims to investigate and evaluate the English renderings of the Most Beautiful Divine Names in the Qurān. More specifically, the researcher intends to analyse the morphological and semantic features of the near-synonymous Divine Names, particularly the recurring root-sharing ones, in order to examine whether they have been rendered accurately and consistently in five well-known English translations of the Qurān.

### **1.2.2 Motivation**

Since having obtained a five-year B.A. in English/Arabic and Arabic/English Translation Studies about a decade ago, the researcher has been interested in investigating Arabic/English literary translations in general and the English translations of the Qurān in particular. Besides, having also completed an MA

(Sheffield, 2008) in applied linguistics during which the researcher developed more insights into text linguistics and contrastive analysis, greater interest started in the challenging area of criticism and literary translations which, like contrastive analysis, comparatively investigate similarities and differences between two or more languages.

Being fascinated by Qurānic Arabic and its exceptionality, the researcher had a great interest in investigating Qurānic terms that proved challenging and posed various obstacles for translators who strive to convey their meanings into other languages such as English, the world's *lingua franca*. Having surveyed recent English translations of the Qurān, the researcher noticed many discrepancies and unsuccessful attempts to render the Divine Names, particularly the recurring near-synonymous ones, which happen to be central in the overall meaning of the contexts in which they occur. Despite the centrality and sensitivity of the Divine Names in the Qurānic text, their English translations have not yet been systematically investigated nor constructively criticised in a substantial academic work. A few dispersed attempts by Qurān translators as well as their critics to identify the subtle meanings of the Divine Names, particularly the root-sharing ones, seem to pay some attention to the translation of a handful of Divine Names (e.g. *Raḥmān*, *Raḥīm* and *Rabb*) and, unfortunately overlook investigating the adequacy of the various renderings of many near-synonymous and root-sharing Names.

Distinguishing between the near-synonymous terms in the Qurānic text is in fact a long-practised field of study, known as *ʿilm Al-furūq*, which has been concerned, for over a millennium, with distinguishing between the semantically-related Qurānic terms (Dūrī, 2005). However, little is found in the literature with regard to distinguishing between the root-sharing Divine Names, which are the focus of the

current study. In his comments on the significance of such a branch of Qurānic studies, Jarallah (2011, p.385) states that:

إن إدراك الفروق القرآنية والعناية بها لا يؤدي إلى الفهم السليم لكتاب الله فحسب، بل إنه يقود إلى الفهم العميق للقرآن والتبحر في تفسيره، لأن استنباط الفروق قائم على النظر في سياق الآيات وربط بعضها ببعض، والتأمل في المعاني اللغوية الدقيقة للكلمات القرآنية، كما أنه قائم على التحليل والنقد، والجمع بين الآيات التي تشتهب على بعض الناس<sup>1</sup>

The realization of the terminological distinctions in the Qurān and taking them into account not only lead to a sound understanding of this Divine Book, but more importantly, to a deep and thoughtful comprehension of it and its multi-layered interpretation, since extracting such distinctions is based on considering contextual and cohesive [textual] factors as well as pondering over the subtle linguistic meanings of Qurānic terms. This is also based on analysis, criticism and the arrangement of all obscure verses that some people might deem intricate.

(My Translation)

### 1.2.3 Research Questions

The current evaluative study of Arabic/English Qurān translation aims at answering the following intriguing questions:

1. How accurate are the translations of the Qurān with regards to rendering the root-sharing Divine Names?
2. Have the translators shown consistency in their choices in rendering the recurring root-sharing Divine Names in the Qurān?
3. Based on the outcome of the above questions (1 and 2), what are the technical solutions that can be adopted to improve both the accuracy and consistency of future translations of the Qurān in general and the renderings of the recurring Divine Names in particular?

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<sup>1</sup> مباحث الفروق في التفسير وعلوم القرآن الكريم (2011) عبدالسلام الجار الله  
Jarallah, A. (2011) *Mabāḥith Al-Furūq fī At-Taḥsīn wa 'Ulūm Al-Qurān Al-Karīm*

#### 1.2.4 Structure of the Thesis

This introductory chapter has been introduced earlier (sec. 1.1). The second chapter introduces the reader to names, naming and the Divine Names. It first presents the social and religious significance of names and naming in all communities in general (sec. 2.2.2) and in the Arab/Muslim community in particular (sec. 2.3.1). Such an introduction is of great importance in order to come to an understanding of the Divine Names and their status not only in the lives of 1.7 billion Muslims, but in the lives of all followers of monotheistic religions who have their own lists of various Divine names, titles, and designations.

The chapter also briefly highlights the occurrences and significance of Names in the Qurān (sec. 2.3.2), particularly the Divine Names (sec. 2.3.3). This chapter also sheds light on the universality of the Divine Names and Titles (sec. 2.4), with special reference to similar scriptural descriptions and designations of God in the Torah, Gospels, and the Quran. It also presents the origins and status of the Divine Names in Islam (sec. 2.5) from Qurānic and Ḥadīth perspectives (subsecs. 2.5.1 and 2.5.2). These include the issues of the enumeration, *al-Iḥṣā'* (subsec. 2.5.3), the traditional list of the ninety-nine Names (subsec. 2.5.3.1), the Greatest Divine Name (subsec. 2.5.3.2), and the reasons to describe the Divine Names as 'Most Beautiful' (subsec. 2.5.4).

The second chapter also introduces some Islamic theological concepts which are related to the Divine Names (sec. 2.6). These include brief discussions, from an Islamic perspective, of the importance of the knowledge of the Divine Names (subsec. 2.6.1), the concepts of *Tawḥīd* and *Ilḥād* in relation to the Divine Names (subsec. 2.6.2), and the stance of *As-Salaf aṣ-Ṣāliḥ*, early pious Muslim scholars, concerning

the belief in the Divine Names (subsec. 2.6.3). The last section of this chapter (sec. 2.7) sheds light on early Muslim works on the Divine Names and Attributes as well as some related controversial issues (subsecs. 2.7.1 and 2.7.2).

The third chapter introduces Arabic and Qurānic Arabic as well as a critical account of early English translations of the Qurān in general and the translation of the Divine Names in particular. To achieve its purpose, the chapter is divided into four main sections. These start with a brief historical account of the Arabic language and the inimitable Qurānic Arabic (sec. 3.2). A brief historical account of literary criticism and Qurān translations in the Arabic literature is also provided (sec. 3.3). This is followed by a brief discussion of need and significance of translating the Qurān (subsec. 3.3.3) as well as some translation concepts, such as equivalence, non-equivalence and un/translatability in relation to the translations of the Qurān (subsec. 3.3.4). Some approaches that have been adopted by Qurān translators are also briefly discussed (subsec. 3.3.5).

The third chapter also presents a critical review of early translations of the Qurān (subsec. 3.3.6). These are divided into early translations in general and the early Western (Latin and English) translations in particular. The last main section of this chapter (sec. 3.4) sheds light on previous works on the translations of the Divine Names mentioned in the Qurān. This includes a brief discussion of some of the adopted strategies to render such sensitive Qurānic terms (subsec. 3.4.3). The concepts of loss and compensation in translation studies are also addressed in relation to translating the Divine Names (subsec. 3.4.4).

The fourth chapter provides a theoretical framework for the linguistic aspects of the Most Beautiful Divine Names. It mainly deals with linguistic matters, particularly morphological and semantic one, in relation to the root-sharing Divine Names mentioned in the Qurān (sec. 4.1 and 4.2). Examining the morphology and subtle meanings of the Divine Names is crucial for the evaluative purpose of this study. The morpho-semantic aspects of the Divine Names are needed for both the analysis of their meanings and the evaluation of their English renderings, both of which will be carried out in the fifth chapter.

The fourth chapter, in fact, links the theoretical linguistic aspects to the applied analysis of meanings and translation assessment of the near-synonymous Divine Names, particularly the root-sharing ones. The chapter also discusses the semantic notion of meaning and its types in relation to the Divine Names as well as two other lexical notions, namely synonymy and polysemy (sec. 4.2). The discussion of synonymy and near-synonymy includes some issues which play an important role in understanding the semantic differences between the root-sharing Divine Names.

The fifth chapter is the core of the thesis. It provides a linguistic (morpho-semantic) and theological (exegetical) analysis of the meanings of the near-synonymous root-sharing Divine Names in the Qurān as well as a comparative evaluation of their English renderings. The analysis of the meanings is occasionally accompanied by excerpts from commentaries by early Qurān exegetes and interpreters as well as materials from Arabic dictionaries (see data collection 1.3.2). The evaluation of the English renderings is based on a devised criteria (see sec. 1.5), with reference to the five selected translations. In order to achieve this and cover all of the root-sharing Divine Names in the Qurān, the Names are divided into fifteen groups of two or three



root-sharing Divine Names. The analysis of the meanings of these Names sometimes includes a few examples of near-synonymous and non-root-sharing compound Divine Names. Analysing the meanings as well as the translations of all the Divine Names in the Qurān would require an encyclopaedic work and is certainly beyond the scope of a single academic study. Thus, the current research is dedicated to examining the meanings of the root-sharing Divine Names as well as evaluating their existing English renderings in five well-known English translations of the Qurān. The root-sharing Divine Names have proved problematic for translators who show a considerable degree of confusion and uncertainty in their attempts to translate them for readers of English.

The sixth chapter concludes the research and briefly answers its three questions. It reveals the findings as well as the implications of the evaluation process of the renderings of the root-sharing Divine Names. It also includes a few translation recommendations with regard to the linguistic issues of the Divine Names in the Qurān as well as a suggested technical solution to tackle the problem of inconsistency in rendering the recurring Qurānic terms in general and the Divine Names in particular. This brief chapter also sheds light on its limitations and offers some relevant topics for future research.

### **1.3 Methodology, Data Collection and Criteria of Evaluation**

Unlike most sections of this evaluative applied study, this section is rather theoretical as it aims at introducing some key translation notions that shape the methodology as well as the devised criteria of both analysis and evaluation that are essential for such a critical and evaluative study. This section, therefore, is divided into three main sub-

sections, the first of which introduces the concept of evaluation in Translation Studies (TS) as well as translation criticism and quality assessment. This includes a distinction not only between critical evaluation and quality assessment but also between literary criticism and criticism in the field of translation. The second section presents a brief account of some critical models and approaches as well as some critical views of these models. This will pave the way to introducing and simplifying the devised evaluation criteria for the current study in the third section.

### **1.3.1 The Nature of this evaluative Study**

Evaluative studies aim at assessing the value of a particular method or the importance of a specific practice while tackling a problematic issue or phenomenon as well as offering solutions and recommendations on how to modify, solve, or improve that issue (Matthew and Ross 2010, p. 57). In the field of translation criticism, an evaluative research, such as the current study, addresses a problematic area of an existing translation that needs to be reviewed or modified. It also investigates the value or quality of such an existing area (ibid.), and attempts to come up with appropriate criteria according to which the existing translation is critically evaluated.

Methodological approaches to translation criticism, particularly critical evaluation or translation quality assessment (TQA), have only been established on a sound basis, though without agreed-upon standard criteria, in the last few decades (Reiss, 2014). For a long time, translation evaluation has been practised subjectively, usually outside academic circles, and more systematic and methodical approaches have only seen the light recently (Martínez and Hurtado, 2001).

As a critical, comparative and evaluative study, this research considers both qualitative and quantitative methods of research. According to Ritchie and Lewis (2003), ‘the need to use qualitative and quantitative methods is particularly evident in evaluative studies’ (p. 42). It is argued by Ritchie and Lewis that ‘it is not possible to carry out comprehensive evaluation without the use of both methodologies’ (ibid. p. 42). Ritchie and Lewis justify their argument by explaining that ‘at a simple level, this is because some measurement of outcome is usually needed (requiring quantitative methods) accompanied by some investigation of process (requiring qualitative methods)’ (ibid. p. 42; cf. Filstead, 1979)

In order to draw objective conclusions and avoid subjectivity in evaluating the quality of our five selected translations, criteria of assessment have been suggested to suit the purpose of this research. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, it is not the interest of this research to judge all the aspects involved in translating the Most Beautiful Names, but rather, it focuses on assessing their accuracy (precision or degree of correctness) and consistency (maintaining the same translation for each term throughout the text). The levels on which the devised criteria should be maintained are both quantitative and qualitative. They are qualitative in the sense that translators’ accuracy is evaluated based on their ability to identify the morpho-semantic differences between the near-synonymous Divine Names of the ST as reflected in their choices of the most appropriate English equivalents. The criterial levels are also qualitative in the sense that the meanings of the Divine Names in general, and the near-synonymous ones in particular, should be consistently maintained and not in any way inadequate in the target text.

### 1.3.2 Data Collection

Basically, the required data to carry out this evaluative study are hundreds of English renderings of the recurring root-sharing Divine Names from the five selected translations of the Qurān. These have been collected from Pickthall (1930), Ali (1936/1983), Arberry (1955), Hilali-Khan (1993) and the most recent translation of Abdel-Haleem (2004). Fortunately, these translations are widely-available on the World Wide Web<sup>2</sup>, with the exception of Abdel-Haleem's (2004) Oxford translation which is not yet accessible online. The availability of the web-based translations have made it much easier for the researcher in the quest for the recurring occurrences of the Divine Names and reduced the arduousness of manual search. It would have been much more difficult, if not impossible, to manually collect all of the recurring and scattered Qurānic occurrences of the Divine Names, so the researcher had to make use of the available online translations on the World Wide Web, which certainly made this a much less tiresome task.

For the researcher to determine what is considered a Divine Name or otherwise, many Islamic resources, including old and contemporary works of Islamic theology and *Tafsīrs*, have been consulted in order to arrive to a sort of consensus on the agreed-upon list of *al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*, the Most Beautiful Names, particularly the root-sharing Names, as well as their possible meanings in various Qurānic contexts. The consulted exegetical works include that of *Ibn ʿAbbās* (d. 687), *Ṭabarī* (d. 923), *Baghawī* (d.1122), *Zamaḡsharī* (d.1143), *Rāzi* (d. 1209), *Qurṭubī* (d. 1273), *Ibn Kathīr* (d. 1373), and most recent *As-Saʿdī* (d. 1956). Classical Arabic dictionaries and linguistic works which have been consulted include *Lisān Al-ʿArab* by *Ibn*

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<sup>2</sup> See for instance, <http://quran.com/>, <http://www.noblequran.com/translation/>, <http://corpus.quran.com/translation.jsp>, and <http://www.altafsir.com/Languages.asp?LanguageID=2>

*Manzūr* (d. 1311), *Mu<sup>c</sup>jam Maqāyīs al-Lughah* by *Ibn Fāris* (d. 1004), *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīt* by *Fairuzabādī* (d. 1414), *Aṣ-Ṣiḥāḥ* by *Jawharī* (1990), *al-Muḏhir fī <sup>c</sup>ulūm al-Lughah wa Anwā<sup>c</sup>ihā* (lit. the *Luminous Book of linguistics and their Subfields*) by *Suyūṭī* (d. 1505), and *Al-Furūq Al-Lughawiyyah* by *Al-<sup>c</sup>Askarī* (d. 1005). Some of the aforementioned works are characterised by their linguistic approaches as they combine both language and theology in their perspectives such as the *Tafsīrs* of *Zamaḡsharī* and *Rāzi* as well as the classical works of *Ibn Fāris* and *Al-<sup>c</sup>Askarī*.

### **1.3.3 Defining Relevant Translation Notions**

Though this study presents an applied critical evaluation of Qurān translations, some theoretical concepts in translation studies (TS) should be defined to pave the way toward a better understanding of the evaluation process as well as its devised criteria. Many linguists and translation theorists have various definitions for key concepts in TS, but the current study is only interested in clarifying the meanings of some relevant notions including criticism and evaluation as well as accuracy and consistency.

#### **1.3.3.1 Evaluation and Criticism**

In translation Studies (TS), the terms evaluation, criticism and assessment are often used interchangeably in the context of both literary criticism of translations and translation criticism. There have been actually some attempts to distinguish between these terms but the lines between them remain unclear (Riess, 2014). There is, however, a clear distinction between literary criticism of translations and translation criticism. The former, on the one hand, focuses on the literary or textual qualities of the work as it exists in translation, i.e. the translation is judged on its own merits as a

target language text (Neubert and Shreve, 1992). Translation criticism, on the other hand, evaluates, usually comparatively, the text as a translation from a source (original) language (SL) into a target language (TL) (ibid.).

Evaluation in Translation Studies is an applied branch of investigation which goes under the umbrella of translation criticism (Riess, 1970, Newmark, 1987, House, 1987, and Patton, 2002). This means that translation criticism is a much broader applied field of TS, based on Holmes' widely-recognised map (see figure 1.1 below) of Translation Studies, under which are some sub-fields of TS including evaluation of translations, revision of students' translations and reviews of published translations (Munday, 2009). Some translation theorists, however, consider translation criticism as an extended branch of the applied studies of translation, and not an actual area of the discipline (see Toury 1995, p.17).

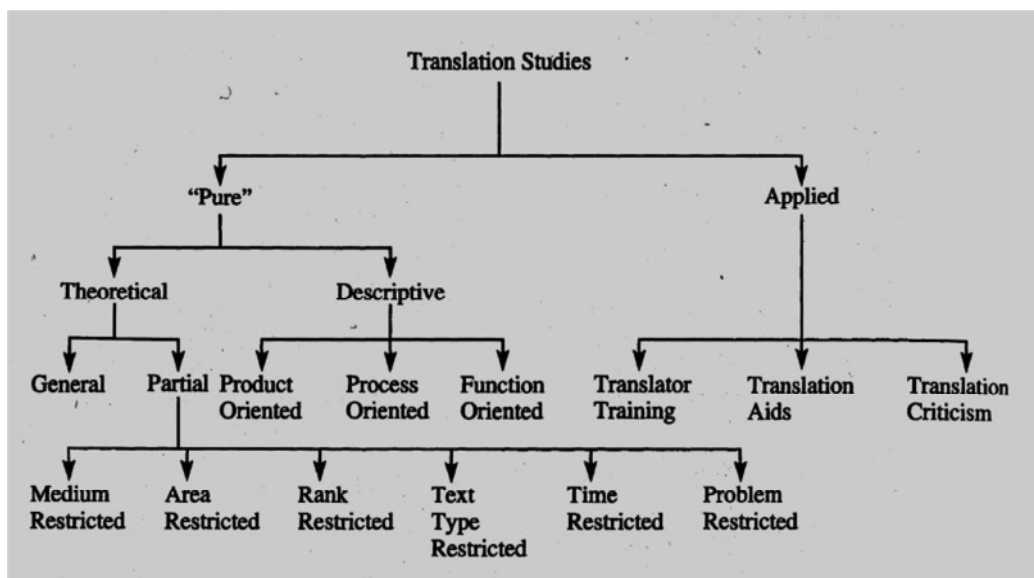


Figure 1.1 Holmes Map of Translation Studies (Toury 1995, p.10)

Gerard McAlester (1999, p.169) defines three terms that are frequently used in the discussion and investigation of literary translations. These are analysis, evaluation and

criticism. For McAlester, translation analysis, on the one hand, represents ‘the explication of the relationship between the target text (TT) and the factors involved in its production, including the source text (ST), but without implying any value judgment’ (cited in Hewson, 2011, p.5).

McAlester (1999:169), on the other hand, defines translation evaluation as ‘placing a value on a translation in terms of grade or pass mark’, but this short definition, according to Hewson (2011), is confined to translation teaching and training, and is an unnecessary limitation of the wider notion of evaluation in translation studies. Translation criticism, which is sometimes used to speak of translation evaluation, is about ‘stating the appropriateness of a translation, which naturally also implies a value judgment, though it need not be quantified or even made explicit’ (McAlester, 1999, p.169).

For Hewson (2011), translation criticism goes beyond McAlester's definition as it involves an interpretative perspective along with explicit value-judgement criteria. Translation criticism, Hewson argues, is an evaluative conscious act that examines ‘degrees of similarity to or divergence from the source text’s perceived interpretative potential’ (p.7), and it also ‘attempts to set out the interpretative potential of a translation seen in the light of an established interpretative framework whose origin lies in the source text’ (ibid, p.6).

### **1.3.3.2 Accuracy**

The concept of translation accuracy has only been recently defined in the relatively new discipline of translation studies, but it is, in fact, as old as the art of translation which has been practised for centuries (Frank, 1990; Ballard, 1992; Brunette, 2000;

Hewson, 2011). In translation studies, the notion of accuracy varies based on the several views of translation itself (House, 2001). Thus, this section will briefly attempt to provide a simple definition of the term as well as its relevance to the current study.

In translation studies in general, accuracy can generally refer to being precise in rendering from one language into another, i.e. making the correct choices of equivalent terms in the TL text to convey the meaning of the SL text (Baker, 1992). This does not mean nor require word-for-word translations; rather, it can be achieved through functional or communicative means to convey the source/original meaning to the target reader (Hatim and Munday, 2004). In a narrower sense, accuracy in translation evaluation refers to the extent to which a translated text matches the original one. In other words, it is about measuring the level at which the literal and contextual meanings of the SL text is precisely preserved in the TL text (Palumbo, 2009).

Evaluating the accuracy of a given translated work (Nord, 1991) is strongly influenced by the type and nature of the original material (the source text). Thus, when it comes to assessing the translations of some sensitive Qurānic terms, as in the current source-oriented study, the nature as well as linguistic features of these Qurānic term are to be essential in the evaluation process. More specifically, for the purpose of evaluating the accuracy of the renderings of the root-sharing Divine Names in the existing English translations of the Qurān, it is of high importance to take into account the morphological and semantic aspects as well as the exegetical interpretations of such sensitive Qurānic terms. In other words, translators' accuracy in rendering such subtle Qurānic terms should not only be evaluated on the basis of their ability to



identify the morpho-semantic features of these terms, but equally important, on their precision in their choices of the most appropriate corresponding terms that convey their meaning into the target language (see the criteria of evaluation for more details, subsec. 1.3.6).

### **1.3.3.3 Consistency**

Consistency of terminology in translation usually refers to lexical cohesion which is a significant feature of literary texts. Both translators and interpreters are always advised, as part of their codes of conduct, to maintain a high level of uniformity in their choices of the TT terms that correspond to the ST terms, particularly in the legal, religious and literary fields which contain sensitive terms such as proper names (Newmark, 1988). In other words, consistency or uniformity of terminology is one of the characteristics of any good translation and, thus, translators are enjoined to make consistent choices of target-language equivalent terms throughout their communicative tasks and translated materials.

In their work on translating Biblical texts, Nida and Taber (1982) draw a distinction between two types of in/consistency, namely contextual and verbal (see pp. 14-20). They explain that contextual consistency can be achieved by rendering an SL polysemous term into appropriate TL corresponding terms each of which adequately fits a specific context (ibid.). On the other hand, verbal consistency can be achieved by rendering monosemous SL term into a single corresponding TL term throughout all TL contexts (ibid). What matters for us in this research, in addition to translating the Divine Names accurately, is maintaining the verbal consistency of the English renderings of the Divine names as they appear in nearly similar contexts, sometimes in verse-ending collocations.

In the context of Qurān translations, there is a great need for more research on the issue of terminological consistency as well as the use of technology to ensure a high level of uniformity in translated versions of the Qurān (as briefly discussed in the concluding chapter, see 6.2.2). It is worth mentioning here that translators of the Qurān are expected to maintain a high level of consistency and uniformity (lexical cohesion) in their choices of the appropriate renderings of many sensitive Qurānic terms in general and the recurring Divine Names in particular. However, Abdel-Haleem (2004/2008) advises, in his preface to his translation of the Qurān, that translators should be cautious regarding when it is commendable to be consistent in rendering frequently-mentioned terms, and when it is better to take the contextual meaning into consideration (p. xxxi). This seems to be in agreement with the aforementioned Nida-Taber differentiation between the two types of consistency (1982). In this study, translators are criticised for not providing justifications for many of the shifts and discrepancies in their renderings of monosemous Qurānic terms in general and the root-sharing Divine Names in particular.

#### **1.3.4 Criticism of Evaluative Models of Translation**

Evaluation of translated texts is one of the most debated areas in the theoretical as well as applied translation studies (Reiss 2014). The prominent role of critical and evaluative models of translation in elevating the standards of quality and efficiency within the discipline of translation cannot be denied (see House, 1981; McAlester, 1999; Reiss 2014). Besides, these models help to develop our understanding of the nature of translation (Newmark, 1988). However, translation evaluation as well as translation quality assessment (TQA) are at times seen as stumbling blocks in the area of applied translations (Bassnett, 1980; Maier, 2001). These blocks stem from the fact

that many evaluative practices in the last few decades lack both practicability and objectivity (ibid.). As a result, none of the aforementioned critical and evaluative methods has been widely used or adopted in translation studies (McAlester, 1999).

Major works in translation evaluation, according to House (2001), include those of Catford (1965), Reiss (1971), Wilss (1974), Koller (1979) and the pioneer researchers of the Leipzig school<sup>3</sup>. In recent decades, various theoretical outlooks have been suggested, most notable of which are the models and criteria of Reiss (1971), House (1977/1981), Koller (1979), Nord (1991) and Chesterman (1997). Due to their specificity, these models cannot be easily adopted, in the current study; to evaluate an Arabic/English translated text, let alone the translation of a sensitive text like the Qurān. However, a thorough description of these evaluative perspectives and critical models as well as their paradigm shifts would greatly exceed the limits of this study. Therefore, a brief critical account of some aspects of their inapplicability and impracticality would suffice to justify devising more appropriate criteria of evaluation to serve the purpose of the current study.

Despite the fact that some of the aforementioned critical models appear to be broad and adaptable, the lack of objective and comprehensive criteria of evaluation remains an unbridged gap in the field (see Fowler, 1981; Rose, 1997; Reiss, 2000; Maier, 2001; Hewson, 2011 and Munday, 2012). The absence of objectives and feasible criteria in most critical and evaluative models has evoked heavy criticism as well as doubts about their practicality and reliability. For instance, McAlester (1999) criticises the aforementioned critical/evaluative models and regards them as inappropriate for applied evaluation (p. 173).

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<sup>3</sup> Leipzig School is a German School of Linguistics and Translatology which contributed remarkably in exploring translation and its peculiarities in the 60s-70s. Its prominent scholars include G. Jager, O. Kade and A. Neubert.

Similarly, Williams (2004) points out nearly a dozen flaws in the existing models of TQA as well as critical evaluation of translation. He argues that most models cannot be easily adopted in a wide range of studies as they have been specifically established for particular textual genres (*ibid.*). This is clearly the case since, for instance, a critical model designed to assess technical German/Spanish translated materials is undoubtedly inapplicable to assessing an existing translation of literary or religious Arabic/English text, such as the Qurān. There is also a lack of evaluation unanimity, Williams explains, since the gravity of errors differs from one model to another (*ibid.*). Some models are based on criteria that look into errors from a reader's perspective and consider trivial errors, ignored by other models, such as minor typos and punctuation slips to be severe (*ibid.*). The lack of uniformity concerning error gravity and tolerance of meaning shifts results in differences over many evaluation issues including translation quality as well as the levels of acceptability, accuracy and faithfulness (*ibid.*; see also Kupsch-Losereit, 1985).

In his criticism of the evaluative models of TQA, Williams (2004) maintains that due to the fact that both error recognition and detection occasionally entail far-reaching human resources, assessing translations is at times implemented using 'sampling', which means examining a few samples of the translated text instead of the entire material (*ibid.*). The outcome of such practices would certainly be unreliable since some grave mistakes can be overlooked when they happen to be in the unexamined samples (*ibid.*). Grading the severity of errors, on the other hand, cannot be applied on all types of textual genres, and this necessitates using various ratings, which do not yet exist, for the severity of the same error when it appears in different texts (*ibid.*).

Further criticism of the critical models of TQA has to do with their limited scope. These models, according to Williams (2004), are not broad enough to take into consideration other influential aspects, though indirectly relevant to the evaluation process *per se*, such as the end-user, translation deadline, sensitivity of the SL text and, more importantly, the competency of both the evaluator/critic and the translator. Besides, a sort of incompatibility often occurs between the evaluators, who have their own motives and objectives, and the needs of the target readers (ibid.). Translation evaluators will carry on developing their own specific critical models, Williams argues, which are only designed to suit a particular evaluation situation in hand, until the aforementioned shortcomings are solved, which is unlikely to happen soon (ibid.).

### **1.3.5 Critical Evaluation of Translated Work**

The critic's mission in the process of translation evaluation, no matter what critical model adopted, is to critically discuss, in an evaluative and comparative commentary, some aspects or problematic issues of an existing translated text (Neubert and Shreve, 1992). When a translated work is critically evaluated in an absence of the source text, the outcome will always be unreliable as it lacks an inseparable component of the evaluation process, i.e. comparing the translation and assessing it against the original text. To clarify this point, (Reiss, 2000, p.2) explains that:

Every translation project is a balancing process achieved by constructing a target text under the constant restraint of a source text. While trying to find the closest equivalents in the target language, the translator [evaluator/critic] must always have one eye on the source text in order to confirm the adequacy of the equivalents.

In his acclaimed book of translation, namely *A Textbook of Translation*, Peter Newmark (1988) devotes an entire chapter (ch. 17) to translation criticism in which he introduces a detailed plan of constructive criticism based on text analysis, comparative evaluation and quality assessment. Newmark (1988) views translation criticism as ‘an essential component in a translation course’ (p.185). He justifies his positive view toward translation criticism by addressing translators and arguing that (ibid. p.185):

Firstly, because it [i.e translation criticism] painlessly improves your competence as a translator; secondly, because it expands your knowledge and understanding of your own and the foreign language, as well as perhaps of the topic; thirdly, because, in presenting you with options, it will help you to sort out your ideas about translation. As an academic discipline, translation criticism ought to be the keystone of any course in comparative literature, or literature in translation, and a component of any professional translation course with the appropriate text-types (e.g., legal, engineering, etc.) as an exercise for criticism and discussion.

In critical and evaluative studies of translation, Neubert and Shreve (1992) point out that there is no intrinsic concern in knowing whether the translator has adopted a specific method to achieve his translation. Rather, the evaluator is concerned with the outcome of translation, and not its procedures (ibid.). However, there are advanced evaluative perspectives that may look into the degree and quality of equivalence between the TL text and the SL one (ibid.).

According to Heylen (1993, pp. 23-24) there are three types of translations to which translation critics should pay attention (cited in Naudé, 2004):

i. Translations that make no attempt to acculturate the original work in that the translator retains as many of the foreign cultural codes as possible. Translations in this category would be source-oriented and most likely to stay on the periphery of the receiving culture.

ii. Translations that negotiate and introduce a cultural compromise by selecting those characteristics common to both source and receiving culture. Here, the translator will effect alterations to the codes of the receiving culture, while at the same time recognising existing changes. Such translations may occupy a canonised position in the receiving culture.

iii. Translations that completely acculturate the original work, with the translator adhering to the codes of the receiving culture. Translations in this category may either occupy a canonised position or stay on the periphery of the receiving culture.

Considering these three types of translations to which critics and evaluators should pay great attention, it is worth mentioning that the five translations of the Qurān which have been selected for the current evaluative study belong to the first two types. For instance, the translation of Al-Hilali and Khan (1993) represents the first type since it is a source-oriented translation that shows little interest in acculturating Qurānic-specific terms which are mostly transliterated and explained in a lengthy exegetical manner. Although this translation is widely used and recommended within Muslim communities, it has been heavily criticised by some non-Muslim readers and academics for excessive use of exegetical explanatory notes (Khaleel, 2005). By contrast, Abdel-Haleem's (2004) translation represents the second type as it is a target-oriented translation written in smooth modern English. It has, therefore, been praised by target readers for its clarity and modernity (ibid.).

### **1.3.6 Criteria of Evaluation**

Criteria in general refer to a set of principles, roles or standards, according to which something may be assessed or measured (Reiss 2014). In the context of translation evaluation, criteria can be defined as a set of parameters against which the overall quality of a given translated text should be evaluated (Nord, 1991; Williams, 2004). This subsection sheds light on the significance of adopting some criteria during the process of evaluating a translated text. This will pave the way to later introduce the set of criterions followed in this evaluative study (see 1.3.6.2).

#### **1.3.6.1 The Significance Criteria in Translation Evaluation**

Evaluating a translated work not only relies on assessing the levels of quality and accuracy, but more importantly, on appropriate criteria that determine error recognition and quantification as well as the levels of severity (Nord, 1991). Accuracy, clarity and naturalness are well-known parameters (of criteria) for an objective evaluation of a given translation (Barnwell 1992; Anderson 1998; Larson 2001). Some translation theorist, however, believe that ‘there is no universal canon according to which texts may be assessed’ (Bassnett, 2002, p.20). Other researchers are in favour of adding more parameters to create more objective evaluation criteria (see Anderson 1998 and Larson 2001).

In an article entitled ‘*Perceived Authenticity*’, Andersen (1998, p.2) suggested an additional criterion for evaluating a good translation, namely ‘perceived authenticity’. Andersen considers ‘perceived authenticity’ as ‘receptor audience’s perception that the text is an authentic and trustworthy version of the original message’ (ibid, p.2). He argues that the receptor audience’s evaluation of a translation is subjective, but if a



translation that is properly done lacks the things the receptor language regards as the mark of authenticity, the translation may not be accepted (ibid, p.2).

Though Larson (2001) agrees with the ‘unacceptability’ notion of the abovementioned argument of Anderson, he opposes what Anderson calls ‘perceived authenticity’. Larson’s alternative name for the fourth additional criterion is ‘acceptability’, since he is more interested in the way receptor audience evaluates the text without necessarily being previously trained to do so (ibid.). Larson justification is that ‘a translation neither can nor should be authentic in the primary sense of that word, because a translation is different from original authorship’ (Larsen 2001:42). Larson goes on to make the following analogy to illustrate his point (ibid, p.43-4):

If accuracy, naturalness, and clarity are like the indispensable three legs of a stool, then acceptability is like the seat on the stool. You want to trust the legs to be solid but the seat should also be comfortable – and maybe even beautiful.

However, Larson’s notion of acceptability seems to be confined to the contentment of the receptor readers who are not qualified, the researcher argues, to judge the quality of a given translation. Due to their subjective feelings and preferences, the recipients of the translated texts often judge a given translation as either poor or excellent without even comparing it with the original source text (Nord, 2001, p.187). Therefore, translation evaluation should not be based on TT recipients’ subjectivity. Rather, it should only be carried out by professionals who would adhere to objective and comparative criteria of evaluation and avoid subjectivity as much as possible.

Some translation scholars, such as Reiss (2000), argue that no matter what criteria are adopted during the assessment of a given translated material, the evaluation process

should involve the source text to comparatively be used by the bilingual assessor. To support such an argument, Reiss (2000, p.2) has the following to say about how translation criticism requires a comparative approach, (i.e. the presense of the source text):

Translation criticism is possible only by a person who is familiar with both the target and source language, and is accordingly in a position to compare the translation directly with its original. In brief, translation criticism requires a comparison of the target and source texts. Setting the translation beside the original and comparing the two together is not enough without existing objective points of reference or guidelines for evaluating a work of translation.

#### **1.3.6.2 Evaluation Criteria and Objectivity**

For translation criticism to meet the level of an objective translation evaluation, according to Reiss (2014), any individual translation should be evaluated by objective and relevant criteria. Objectivity (when referring to objective translation evaluation) ‘means to be verifiable as in contrast to arbitrary and inadequate’ (ibid. p.4). This, according to Reiss (2014), indicates that every evaluation of a given translated material, whether ‘positive’ or ‘negative’, ‘must be defined explicitly and be verified by examples’ (ibid. p.4). Reiss (2014, p.6) maintains that ‘undoubtedly, there can be objective criteria for making a relevant evaluation of a translation, but they have not yet been adequately recognised or systematically established and described’.

In most critical evaluations of translated texts, objectivity is hardly attainable since critics’ decision-making is usually subjective if it is influenced by their own preferences as well as stereotyped judgements (Gerzymisch-Arbogast, 2001). In the context of translation evaluation, ‘subjective’ and ‘objective’ criteria, Reiss (2014,

p.6) argues, have turned out to be so haphazardly disorganised that the distinction between literary criticism and translation criticism has become totally vague. The evaluative outcome will always contain subjective element unless critics or evaluators commit themselves to appropriate criteria, in which they may show lucidity, neutrality and uniformity (Gerzymisch-Arbogast, 2001).

Sticking to appropriate criteria is what the current study is hoping to achieve since its evaluation is based on a lucid and specified criterion (see next section) regardless of any preferences or prejudgements. In other words, the current study's goal of evaluating Qurān translators' accuracy and consistency concerning their renderings of the root-sharing Divine Names is totally based on their performance through accurate and consistent choices of English corresponding terms. Translators' performances and choices obviously reflect their competency in Qurānic Arabic in general and their understanding of the subtle meanings of the Divine Names in particular, regardless of their backgrounds, ideologies or sectarian affiliations.

### **1.3.6.3 The Devised Criteria for the Current Study**

As previously stated, the researcher intends to critically and comparatively evaluate translators' accuracy and consistency in their attempts to render the root-sharing Divine Names in their English translations of the Qurān. However, such an evaluating is not an easy task and requires a comprehensive examination as well as clear criteria. Thus, the criteria devised for this study aim at achieving a general comparative and critical evaluation of the five selected Qurān translators based on their attempts to translate the root-sharing Divine Names. The devised criteria are based on the outcome of the analytical and evaluative process which consists of two stages, both of which are carried out in the fifth chapter. The first stage comprises a morpho-semantic

analysis of the meanings of the root-sharing Divine Names as they appear in the sources text (the Qurān). The second stage presents a comparative and critical evaluation of their existing renderings in the five selected translations. The first stage includes an analysis of both the linguistic (morphological and semantic) as well as the theological (exegetical) meanings of the root-sharing Divine Names as they appear in several occurrences in the Qurānic text. For this purpose, some early exegetical works of *Tafsīr* as well as Classical Arabic dictionaries and linguistic works are consulted (see 1.3.2 for more details).

The morpho-semantic analysis is comparable to what Nida (1971/1975) calls ‘componential analysis’, and to what Hatim and Munday (2004) call ‘contrastive semantic structure analysis’ through which the translator is advised to ‘disambiguate (differentiate between) the various possible senses of the ST term as a step towards identifying the appropriate TL equivalent’ (p. 35). The second stage includes a comparative and critical evaluation of the five selected translators based on how accurate and consistent they are in their renderings of the root-sharing Divine Names. The comparison will take place not only between the translated texts and the original (source) one, but also between the various renderings of the translators themselves.

Based on the aforementioned analytical and evaluative stages, translators’ accuracy, on the one hand, is assessed based on their ability to precisely distinguish between the near-synonymous Divine Names that share the same linguistic root as well as translate them accurately by opting for the most appropriate English term for each Name. In other words, the more able is the translator to differentiate between these root-sharing Names and render them accordingly, the more accurate is his overall translation of the Divine Names. Translators’ consistency, on the other hand, is evaluated based on their

performance to maintain a high level of uniformity (lexical cohesion) in their choices of the appropriate renderings of the recurring root-sharing Divine Names. In other words, the translators are supposed to show, throughout their work, uniformity (consistency) and steadiness in their choices of TL terms to correspond to the SL (Qurānic) Divine Names, but in case of shifts in their choices, they are criticised for not providing justifications for such inconsistencies and discrepancies.

It is worth mentioning that one effective practical procedure, which has for long been used by translators and translation critics in order to analyse and assess both the consistency and accuracy of translated materials, is back translation (see Jacobson, 1954; Brislin, 1970; Larson, 1998). It is a strategy in which the translated text is rendered, again, back to its original language in absence of the original text, so the outcome can be compared against the original text to see how similar or different they are in terms of their naturalness and consistency (Larson, 1998). A better level of consistency and accuracy is achieved when the resulted back-translated version appears identical, in its sense and order of ideas, to the original text (*ibid.*). When the translator or the critic finds much dissimilarity between the two texts, the ST and the back-translated version which are written in the same SL, he/she can conclude that the target translation is erroneous and it has been carried out by an incompetent translator (see Brislin, 1970, p.186).

### **1.5 Research Contributions and Limitations**

This section, on the one hand, states some of the expected contributions of the current evaluative study and sheds light, on the other hand, on some of its boundaries and limitations. It is, thus, divided into two subsections, the first of which offers a brief

description of some of the expected contributions in the field of Qurānic studies in general and the translations of the Qurān in particular. The second subsection briefly sheds light on some limitations of the scope of the current research.

### **1.5.1 Expected Contribution**

In the context of translating the Qurān, many linguistically and culturally problematic aspects have been critically, or comparatively, investigated and assessed in the last few decades. However, there are, still, many challenging areas in the English translations of the Qurān that, unfortunately, have not been sufficiently investigated nor critically evaluated such as the current English renderings of the Divine Names. Thus, this study aspires to fill the gap in this significant and challenging area of English translations of the Qurān as well as open the door for more critical and evaluative Qurānic translation studies.

The current study also introduces a new categorization of the Divine Names of the Qurān, particularly the near-synonymous root-sharing Names. The Divine Names in Muslim literature have never been semantically and morphologically categorised as such in any English study in the academic fields of Qurānic studies and Qurān translation. In other words, the root-sharing Divine Names have never, in any academic work, been systematically categorised nor linguistically distinguished in order to understand their subtle meanings, contextual relevance and stylistic effects. Though the current study mainly focuses on the accuracy and consistency of the English renderings of the root-sharing Divine Names in the Qurān, it also sheds light on relevant problematic areas, such as polysemous Divine Names (see 4.4.3) as well as verse-ending collocations and their stylistic effects (see 4.2.2.4.3), in the translation of the Qurān in general, and the translation of the Divine Names in particular. This

opens the door for further research on such problematic areas of the translation of the Qurān.

The contribution of the current study is not confined to the critical evaluation of the English renderings of the root-sharing Divine Names as it is also concerned with other theological as well as linguistic (morphological and semantic) issues. For instance, in its second chapter, this study questions and discusses the authenticity of the widely-celebrated Muslim traditional list of the ninety-nine Divine Names, which is a sensitive issue with high significance not only to Muslim readers but to everyone interested in Islamic philosophy and theology.

It is worth mentioning that the current study not only reveals numerous cases of inconsistency in the translations of the Divine Names (see chapter 5), but it also refers to other inconsistent attempts to translate similar, if not identical, Qurānic verses (see the concluding chapter). The fact that the Divine Names are recurring terms in the Qurānic text makes translating them consistently a very difficult task. This is the reason the current study suggests taking advantage of the available linguistic-technical solutions and computer-assisted tools such as translation memories and bilingual concordancers in order to improve both the quality and consistency of the translation of the Qurān in general, and the renderings of the frequently mentioned Divine Names in particular. This could in practice pave the way for statistical as well as linguistic-computational research on the issue of consistency in Qurān translations.

### **1.5.2 Limitations**

The current research is confined to examining the subtle meanings as well as the English renderings of thirty-five root-sharing Divine Names mentioned in the Qurān

by means of analysing the original (source text) terms and comparing them to their renderings in five well-known English translations of the Qurān. The reason behind this restriction is the fact that analysing the meanings of all the frequently-mentioned Divine Names in the Qurān as well as evaluating their English translations would require volumes of comprehensive and collaborative research that is certainly beyond the scope of a single academic study.

Another limitation of this study is its restricted criterion of evaluating translation accuracy. This is due to the fact that translators' accuracy has been examined based on their in/ability to distinguish between the root-sharing Divine Names as reflected in their English renderings. Unfortunately, this measure can only be a useful diagnostic element to assess translation accuracy in specific Arabic/English translation contexts, such as assessing the renderings of root-sharing Arabic terms, and cannot be generalised or applied to evaluate other types of translated texts. Furthermore, the aforementioned measure can also help diagnose the level of translators' competency in Arabic in general, and their knowledge of Arabic morphology in particular, but that does not necessarily point out to other underlying competences.

Based on its criteria of evaluation as well as the abundant number of errors in the five selected translations, it is worth mentioning that the current study is not interested in grading or assigning statistical ratings for translations faults as it is the case in many TQA studies. Rather, it is concerned with objectively evaluating (and constructively criticising) translators' performances in accordance with the devised criteria, as well as revealing their inaccurate and inconsistent choices, which have never been thoroughly disclosed. The process of examining and evaluating the five translations is



not about hunting for erroneous choices, and any criticism of the translators is certainly not meant to undermine their great efforts and endeavours toward completing the enormous task of translating the Quran.

### **1.6 Introducing the Five Selected Translations**

Five English well-known translations of the Qurān have been selected for the comparative and evaluative purpose of the current study. These are those of Pickthall (1930), Ali (1936/1983), Arberry (1955), Hilali-Khan (1993) and the most recent translation of Abdel-Haleem (2004). These translations cover nearly a century of the recent history of Qurān translations into English. The rationale behind choosing them has to do with their popularity in the Muslim World as well as the diversity of translators' backgrounds. Though they are not now necessarily popular, each of these translations enjoyed a good reputation amongst Muslims at different periods of time (as later shown in this section).

Nida (1964, p. 149) categorised translations into four types: (i) a translation which is carried out by a translator who translates from a foreign language into his native language, (ii) a translation which is carried out by a translator who translates from his native language into a foreign language, (iii) a translation which is carried out by a translator who translates from a foreign language into another foreign language, (iv) a translation which is carried out by a completely bilingual translator who translates between his/her two mother tongues. The majority of translators belong to groups a, b and c; and few belong to the fourth group. The aforementioned selected translations of the Qurān represent translations made by two British Arabists, one of whom is a Muslim, namely Pickthall and the other is a Non-Muslim, namely Arberry, and two

native speakers of Arabic (Hilali and Abdel-Haleem). They also represent early 20-century translations (Pickthall, 1930; Ali, 1934; Arberry, 1955), and quite recent translations (Hilali-Khan, 1993 and Abdel-Haleem, 2004). Here are brief introductions to these five translators and their translations:

### **1.6.1 M. M. Pickthall (1930)**

Marmaduke William Pickthall (1875–1936) was a British Muslim novelist who later carried the name Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall after his conversion to Islam (Matar, 1998). He was born in 1875 at a rectory of his Christian family in the historical East Anglian County of Suffolk (ibid.). At about the age of five, Pickthall lost his father and moved with his family to settle in London. At a young age, he showed great interest in learning about other cultures, religions as well as languages especially after his trips to parts of the Middle East which were under the Ottoman control in the late nineteenth century (ibid.). During his frequent and long journeys, Pickthall managed to learn a few languages and he is believed to have mastered Arabic, Turkish, and Urdu (ibid.).

Though he is best known for his landmark English translation of the Qurān, Pickthall had a remarkably successful career not only as an accomplished novelist, well-regarded by D. Lawrence, H. Wells, and E. Forster, but also as a political and religious leader (Arberry, 2013). In 1930, Pickthall introduced his translation of the Qurān under the title; *‘The Meaning of the Glorious Koran; the First English Translation of the Koran by an Englishman Who Is a Muslim’* (ibid. p. 12). Though written in what seems today an archaic Biblical language, Pickthall’s translation deserves a credit for keeping close to the original Arabic (Abdel Haleem, 2004). In other words, Pickthall’s translation is a source-oriented one which maintains both the

form and order of the original though it appears to have been written in an eloquent Biblical English (Kidwai, 1987). This work has the merit of being a first-rated English interpretation of the Qurān of its time (Kidwai, 1987).

Pickthall's position regarding the translatability of the Qurān is quite clear as he asserts that his translation 'can never take the place of the Koran in Arabic, nor is it meant to do so' (1930, p. vii). In his preface, Pickthall (1930, p. vii) states that (also cited in Arberry, 2013, p.13):

The Koran cannot be translated. That is the belief of [Muslim scholars] Sheykhs and the view of the present writer. The Book is here rendered almost literally and every effort has been made to choose befitting language. But the result is not the Glorious Koran, that inimitable symphony, the very sounds of which move men to tears and ecstasy. It is only an attempt to present the meaning of the Koran and peradventure something of the charm in English.

Pickthall's made his purpose of translating the Qurān clear as he criticised previous translations, particularly the ones carried out by the orientalist. He pointed to the fact that some of these translations contain commentaries 'offensive to Muslims, and almost all employ a style of language which Muslims at once recognize as unworthy' (1930, p.vii). Though Pickthall's work was historically important as it enjoyed popularity in the first half of the twentieth century, Khaleel (2005) argues, 'its current demand is limited by its archaic prose and lack of annotation'.

### **1.6.2 A. Y. Ali (1934/1936)**

Abdullah Yusuf Ali was an Indian Muslim modernist and civil servant. He was born in 1872 in Bombay (currently Mumbai) of British India to a well-off business family

(Ansari, 2012). He started learning the Qurān and other religious teachings at a young age and he was able to recite the whole Qurān from memory (ibid.). At an early age, he had a great interest in learning languages other than his Indian mother tongue and soon became proficient at speaking both Arabic and English (ibid.). He was granted a scholarship to study classics and law in British universities in Cambridge, London and Leeds. After he completed his studies, Ali returned to his home country and later became a well-regarded scholar, civil servant and political activist. His social and political contributions were remarkable to the extent that some British newspapers made flattering comments about him (Ansari, 2012). He was, for instance, praised by 'The Times' in 1907 as 'a very talented member of the Indian Civil Service and a representative of the great Mahomedan community' (ibid.)<sup>4</sup>.

Ali is best known by his translation of the Qurān (1934) which he entitled '*The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation and Commentary*'. Ali's translation emerged, as he pointed out, to resist the distorted renditions made by previous translators, particularly orientalist, such as George Sale (1734), J. M. Rodwell (1861) and E. Palmer (1876) (Ali, 1936). Ali believed he could put an end to most of the deficiencies and mistranslations which were deliberately committed by orientalist translators (ibid.). Ali also pointed out that the spread of the English language throughout the British Empire have motivated him to introduce the Qurān to the global community.

Ali also argued that although his predecessor translator, namely Pickthall 1930, was an English Muslim and a well-regarded novelist, his translation suffered from archaism and literalism (ibid.). It also, Ali maintained, lacked necessary explanatory notes to clarify some multi-layered Qurānic terminology (ibid.). In his translation, Ali

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<sup>4</sup> The Times, 24 Jan. 1907.

aimed at rendering the stylistic accord and semantic wealth of Qurānic Arabic with poetic English versification (Khaleel, 2005). From its first appearance in 1934 until recent times, Ali's translation was the most popular English version amongst Muslim readers (ibid.). However, due to its old-fashioned language and the appearance of more recent publications, Ali's translation is losing influence and reputation (ibid.).

### **1.6.3 Arthur Arberry (1955)**

Arthur John Arberry was born on 12th of May 1905 in Fratton of Portsmouth, England. He lived in a conservative and well-educated Christian household from which he developed a strong desire for higher education (Skillitee, 1970). He later joined Portsmouth Grammar School from which he was granted a scholarship at Cambridge Pembroke College in 1924 (ibid.) Having obtained a double first in the Classical Tripos, Arberry was motivated by Dr. Minns (*aka* Sir Ellis) to learn Arabic and Persian, which he successfully undertook in 1929, granting him another double first in the Oriental Studies Tripos (ibid.).

As a British orientalist, he chaired the Classic studies Department at Cairo University, Egypt. In 1944, he returned to London as a chair of the Persian language at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London University. In 1947, he returned to Cambridge as Sir Thomas Adam's Professor of Arabic and as a Fellow of Pembroke College, a position he held till he died in 1969. Prior to his death, Professor Arberry wrote a brief autobiography entitled 'the story of an ordinary man born in an ordinary household', as the last chapter of his Oriental essays (Skillitee, 1970).

Since it was first published in 1955, A. J. Arberry's translation of the Qurān, which came under the title '*The Koran Interpreted*', continues to be a dynamic influence

over the times as it has gone so far through at least twelve editions in the last few decades (Kidawi, 1987). Arberry's translation, according to Halimah (2014, p.124) appears to have emerged in an attempt to upgrade the level of precision in rendering 'the sublime rhetoric of the Arabic Quran'. He believed that Qurān translations of his predecessors had failed to attract more readers in the West because 'they did not do justice to the splendid language of the Qurān, its rhetoric and its astonishing rhythm' (Sadiq, 2010, p.8).

Unlike his predecessors, Arberry paid more attention to the rhetorical features of the Qurān and endeavoured to come up with a translation that could reproduce such splendid features (Sadiq, 2010). However, this seems to have led him to commit undeliberate errors in his attempts to convey the meanings of some Islamic notions (for examples see Halimah, 2014). For Arberry, 'the sounds and the rhythmic effect of the verse are of paramount importance, since they could enable the English reader to enjoy the same emotive and psychological experiences enjoyed by the Arabic reader' (Halimah, 2014, p.124). It is clear that Arberry performed extremely well to reflect the Qurānic cadenced qualities which have, as what he calls, 'dramatic impact and most moving beauty' (Arberry, 1955: xii). This seems to explain Arberry's evident interest in rendering verse-ending collocations of Divine Names in a well-structured and consistent manner (as will be later discussed in the fifth chapter).

It is worth mentioning that though Arberry had acknowledged the uniqueness, majesty, and intelligence of the Qur'an, he was criticised for his doubts regarding its divinity as well as the order of its chapters, which he described as 'random and bizarre' (1983: xi). In one of his books, namely '*The Holy Koran: an Introduction*

*with Selections*', Arberry (2004, p.12) explicitly speaks about the Qur'an as a great human product, but not of a Divine origin. He says (cited in Sadiq, 2010, p.7):

The literatures and fine arts of all the Muslim peoples spring from this fountainhead [the Qur'an]; the majestically flowering river is joined here and there by tributaries running into it from neighbouring civilizations, but it remains to this day the same river as that which welled up thirteen and a half centuries ago in the city land of Arabia... It is among the greatest monuments of mankind

Although it has been more than half a century since it saw the light, Arberry's translation has withstood the test of time as one of the genuine, non-sectarian, smooth, and legible English translations of the Qurān (Khaleel, 2005). It has been praised not only within the academic circles, but equally important, by most Muslim and non-Muslim readers (ibid.). Arberry's translation remains admired in the twenty-first century not only for its faithfulness and readability, but also for its literary excellence.

#### **1.6.4 Hilali and Khan (1985/1994)**

Taqiuddin Al-Hilali and Muhsin Khan co-worked their translation of the Qurān while lecturing in the Islamic University of Madinah. Though they came from Moroccan/Pakistani backgrounds, both translators shared great interest in the language of the Qurān as well as its exegetical tradition (Al-Jabari, 2008). Al-Hilali, on the one hand, was born in 1890 near Sajalmasah in Morocco (ibid.). Following in the steps of his father, he learnt the Qurān and Ḥadīth as well as Arabic studies from an early age and he was able to memorise a great deal of both the Qurān and Ḥadīth by the age of twelve. He later studied and graduated from Qarawiyyth University before travelling to Cairo to pursue his higher education (ibid.). He went on to study in Germany where he gained his doctorate from the University of Berlin (Khaleel 2005). He later

travelled to pursue religious knowledge and livelihood in many countries including India, Iraq, Egypt, and lastly Saudi Arabia where he worked as a professor in the University of Medinah (Al-Jabari, 2008).

Muhsin Khan, on the other hand, is a Pakistani Surgeon of Afghan origin. He was born in 1926 in Qasur, a city in the Punjab Province of Pakistan (Qadhi, 1999). His grandfather left Afghanistan evading wars and tribal conflicts (Al-Jabari, 2008). Khan received good education in his childhood and went on to obtain a degree in Medicine and Surgery from the University of Punjab, Lahore (ibid.). He started his career in the same University Hospital before travelling to Britain where he worked and pursued his medical studies at the University of Wales (ibid.). He was later offered a medical post in Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Health to work in Medinah's University Hospital (Khaleel 2005). He worked there for nearly 15 years during which he met Al-Hilali; his co-translator of many Islamic Books.

Hilali and Khan first introduced their '*Translation of the Meanings of the Noble Qurān*' in 1985. The two translators adopted a traditional source-oriented approach It is identified for being a lengthy exegetical interpretation, in comparison with other Qurān translations, and is written in an effort to capture exegetical comments of mainstream early exegetes and of the Qurān such as *Ibn Kathīr* (d. 1373), *Ṭabarī* (d. 923), and *Qurṭubī* (d. 1273). Their lengthy exegetical comments were heavily criticised for their excessive reliance on transliteration<sup>5</sup>; a strategy that obviously led them to insert redundant and tedious complementary notes between parentheses into the body of the translated text itself, which observably affect the flow and smoothness of their translation.

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<sup>5</sup> Many translatable Arabic terms, such as *fāsiqūn* and *Kāfirūn* (Q. 109:1), are unnecessarily transliterated, usually accompanied by in-brackets explanatory notes of their meanings.



As Qadhi, Y. (1999) points out that the translation is useful and informative, but it is spoiled by repetitive additions that interrupt textual flow. Qadhi goes on to say that readers who are unaware of the Arabic of the Qurān may think the inserted and repetitive lengthy comments to be part of the original text (ibid.). It is worth mentioning that though Al-Hilali and Khan are best known for their translation of the Qurān, they should also be credited for their collaboration to translate other encyclopedic religious texts into English including *Ṣaḥīḥ Al-Bukhārī* and *Al-Lu'lu' wal Marjān* (Al-Jabari, 2008).

#### **1.6.5 M. Abdel-Haleem (2004)**

Abdel-Haleem (henceforth Haleem) is an Egyptian-British scholar who has been working as a Professor of Islamic Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) at the University of London since 2000. He is also the editor of the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*. He had special interest in Arabic-English lexicography and Qurānic studies and published several works in this field. He is recognized for his services to Arabic culture and literature and to inter-faith dialogue (Shah, 2009). He was also co-author of the *English-Arabic Business Dictionary* (1984), and the *Arabic/English Dictionary of Qur'anic Usage* (2005/2008) with Badawi E. (ibid.). Besides other books, Haleem has authored his famous Qurānic treatise which he entitled *Understanding the Qur'an: Themes and Style* (ibid.).

In 2004, Oxford University Press published Haleem's translation of the Qurān into English under the title; *The Qur'an: A New Translation*. In this translation, Haleem provides an informative preface for his readers which includes a brief biography of the life of the Prophet 'Muhammad', a bibliography, a chronological chart, a map, and an eighteen-page index (Rippin, 2004). Haleem's translation has been praised as the

best accredited translation of the Qurān to be introduced to English readers by an Arab translator. However, there were other fair translations by Arab translators prior to Haleem's work such as that of Majid Fakhry; entitled *An Interpretation of the Qur'an, English Translation of the Meanings* (2002), which received an impressive stamp of approval from the highest Islamic establishment in Egypt, namely *Al-Azhar* (Rippin, 2004).

In his review of Haleem's translation, Rippin (2004) praised just about everything including the title. He says:

First off, I praise the title: The Qur'an: A New Translation. There is no silliness of trying to say this 'isn't really' the Qur'an, which is, after all, totally apparent to anyone when the title is in English and it is called a translation.

However, other reviewers of Haleem's translation, such as Shah (2009), believe that it is pointless to come up with such a title with the word 'new', which 'will lose its meaning with the passage of time as the language is likely to change' (p. 3) and newer translations will continue to see the light. Shah (2009) finds it also 'strange' that in the same year when Haleem published his translation, another Qurān rendition by Dr. Cleary was printed under an identical title, namely '*The Qur'an: A New Translation*' (ibid, p.3).

In his criticism of previous translations of the Qurān, Abdel-Haleem (2011) states that he opted for an explanatory translation of the Qurānic meanings since the peculiarities of the English renditions of his predecessors which mostly resulted from 'excessive literalism and adherence to the syntactical and stylistic peculiarities for the [Qurānic] Arabic, [...] which is very concise, idiomatic, figurative and elliptic' (p.67).

## Chapter Two: Introduction to Names, Naming and Qurānic Divine Names

### 2.1 Introduction

As previously stated in the introductory chapter (see 1.2), the second chapter is divided into seven sections, the first of which is a brief introduction to the contents and purpose of each section of the chapter. The second section sheds light on proper names, and naming, as well as the social and religious importance of names in a number of communities (sec. 2.2). The third section provides an account of the significance of names in Arabic literature and in the Qurān as well (see sec. 2.3). This will facilitate the introduction of *al-Asmā al-Ḥusnā*, the Most Beautiful Names (MBNs) or the Divine Names in Islam, and their significance not only to Muslims, but to all people, particularly the followers of the main monotheistic religions, namely Judaism, Christianity and Islam, who respectably hold many Divine names, titles, and designations (see sub-sec. 2.3.3). The fourth section (sec. 2.4) highlights the universality of the Divine Names and Titles, with special reference to similar scriptural names as well as Divine Names and designations in the Torah, the Gospels, and the Qurān.

The fifth section introduces the origin and position of the Most Beautiful Divine Names in Islam. For this purpose, it is divided into four sub-sections, each of which introduces a partial background concerning the Divine Names. It will start with the way the that Qurān presents the Almighty Creator, *Allāh*, Who is the Bearer of the Divine Names, based on the occurrences of the Divine Names in various Qurānic contexts (see 2.5.1), and move on to a discussion of a well-known prophetic *Ḥadīth*, from which the idea of the Ninety-Nine Names emerged (see 2.5.2) which was later rendered into a religious tradition of enumerating, listing and celebrating the Divine

Names (see 2.5.3). The issues of the enumeration, *al-Iḥṣā'*, and the early Muslim attempts to come up with a list of the Divine Names are highlighted in two subsections (see 2.5.3.1 and 2.5.3.2), the first of which discusses the authenticity of the traditional list of the Ninety-Nine Names, while the second presents a brief account on the greatest all-embracing Divine Name, known as *Al-ism al-'Aẓam*. The fourth and last subsection (see 2.5.4) deals with the reasons behind describing the Divine Names as *al-Ḥusnā* (lit. the *Most Beautiful*).

The sixth section sheds light on important theological aspects of the Divine Names. It is divided into three subsections. The first attempts to show the relevance and significance of the knowledge of the Divine Names (see 2.6.1). The second subsection defines the concepts of *Tawḥīd* and *Ilḥād* in relation to the Divine Names and Attributes (see 2.6.2.1 and 2.6.2.2), which are essential theological principles. The third sub-section briefly presents the stance of the *Salaf*, early pious Muslims, concerning the Divine Names and Attributes (see 2.6.3). The seventh and last section of this chapter is a brief historical account of some early major works (see 2.7.1) on the Divine Names as well as some related controversial issues regarding the linguistic and theological concepts of names and naming and the Divine Names (see 2.7.2).

## **2.2 Names and Naming**

Names, including personal or proper names, occur in every given language creating a special group within its terminology. Like other word categories, names follow the phonological, morphological and semantic rules of the language in which they are formed and developed. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a name as a proper noun, word or phrase that constitutes a title or a designation by which a person or

thing is known or identified (Byrne, 2009). Various studies show that names sometimes reflect human wishes, and worries, as well as the preferences and apprehensions of their givers, who are usually the parents or relatives of the named, regarding their cultural and religious values (see Rosenhouse, 2002). This section briefly highlights the value of names and some habits of naming, as well as the social and religious role they play in peoples' lives. This will pave the way for more detailed background concerning the type of names investigated in this research, namely the Divine Names in the Qurān.

### **2.2.1 What is in a Name?**

Naming in our lives is not merely an act of designating a proper name for a newly-born child. Onomastic<sup>6</sup> researchers argue that names not only contribute greatly in establishing a natural sense of identity and personality, but they instinctively occupy great significance in people's lives (see Markman, 1991; Jeshion 2009; Mateos, 2014). It is believed that children start responding to their own names when they are called or spoken to at an early age, which is essential for developing their early-infancy character, behaviour and sense of belonging (Horne and Lowe, 1996). In fact, names have an integral function as they unconsciously help children identify and define themselves not only within their families, but within a wider circle of relatives, visitors and the world around them (ibid.). Therefore, it is not really surprising that most parents pay considerable attention and thought when choosing the appropriate names for their children. This not only shows the relevance and significance of names *per se* but, more importantly, their relevance and place in human lives (ibid.).

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<sup>6</sup> The academic discipline of studying names and naming. It is also the study of the origin, history, and use of proper names. The word is derived from Greek (*onoma*) which means 'name'.

Naming is often defined as a linguistic act or process of labelling individuals or places which reflects cultural, social and sometimes religious values and traditions (Markman, 1991). It is a process whereby culturally-specific meanings are transferred into a linguistic form acceptable by the phonological, morphological and the semantic systems of a given language (Al-Quran & Al-Azzam, 2014). However, names and the act of naming are not simply linguistic signs and practices. It has long been argued that names are abundantly laden with social, cultural and traditional implications, past events, culture-specific similes and allegories (see Reimer 2004; Jeshion 2009). In other words, names in general, and proper names in particular, not only function as common and inflexible devices for direct references but also as intangible linguistic indicators that signal and reinforce the referents' distinctiveness (Jeshion, 2009). In short, names in our lives represent 'an integral part of our thinking and, more vitally, our communication that their use is often unnoticed and their importance unappreciated' (Byrne, 2009. p. 334).

Names and habits of naming are so relevant and significant in human lives that they are studied and investigated by onomastic specialists who penetrate many fields of knowledge including history, theology, psychology, anthropology, lexicology, psycholinguistics, sociology, geography, linguistics/-semantics and translation studies (Rosenhouse, 2002). For instance, social studies of names show that, in most communities, names provide key indicators to understand many social aspects of a given community (Alford, 1988). In other words, understanding the customs of names and naming of any society could make the study of its social and religious aspects a much easier job. Historians, on the other hand, use names as indicators to draw pictures about ancient nations, historic events and extinct civilisations, while linguists

use them as linguistic tools for etymological and sociolinguistic purposes (Rosenhouse, 2002).

### **2.2.2 Social and Religious Significance of Names and Naming**

Despite the fact that parents, in most communities, devote considerable attention and thought to selecting the appropriate proper names for their children, most names given to children customarily echo the social surroundings as well as religious or spiritual beliefs of the parents (Sharma, 1997). In the Arabic culture, for instance, children are sometimes given classical names that are deeply rooted in early Islamic, or even pre-Islamic, history. It also has been a long practice, in Arabic tradition, to occasionally name children after their grandparents, aunts or uncles in order to strengthen family ties and show respect for the elderly (ibid.). Nord (2003) points out that familiarity with a given culture makes it possible for people to identify what proper names could say about the referents, their gender, religion or even their age as some parents name their infants after a famous pop star or a movie character (p. 183).

Some generally-inherited names convey cultural and anthropological aspects of people's ancestries and ethnicities such as clan names and tribal titles (Stone, 1987). Names could also indicate environmental surroundings as well generational identity within a given language community (Nord, 2003, p. 183). In Chinese culture, for instance, there are generational names which help recognise the generation of the bearers as well as the political and intellectual trends of their time (see Blum, 1997 and Mateos, 2014). In some African cultures, on the other hand, names are sometimes used to identify the order in which siblings were born (ibid.).

Despite the fact that all societies use names to serve similar purposes, naming habits are remarkably different from one nation to another. For instance, apart from family names and perhaps generational ones, Chinese naming practices sometimes seem intricately strange as males are given various names at different stages of their lives (ibid.). Another strange habit is found amongst Australian Aboriginal groups who designate two names for every individual; one is to be regularly used, while the other name is concealed from general knowledge and can rarely be pronounced or even whispered (Alford, 1988). This might have been a result of an old myth that if an enemy happens to know someone's name, then that can be magically used to harm the bearer of the 'disclosed' name (ibid. see Mateos, 2014). By contrast, the average person amongst indigenous Indonesians has only one short name while the person of a higher class is likely to have two (Alford, 1988, see Blum, 1997 for Chinese naming habits).

In some communities, including Muslim, Jewish, and Christian communities, many proper names carry a religious significance, as they refer to prominent scriptural characters such as Prophets and other famous religious figures. To the early Jewish community of the Old Testament, for instance, a name was of great significance, such that people would not just select a name based on its pronunciation or uniqueness, but they would select a name that carries actual beliefs or future hopes concerning the newly-born child (Stone, 1987). Names in both ancient Jewish and Christian cultures echoed some characteristics of their bearers and sometimes the environmental conditions around which they were born (see Stone, 1987). In the Bible, according to Fortner (2004), the names given to people, particularly prophets said something about their bearers. For example, the very first name of the father of mankind, *Adam*,



means, in many languages (including Arabic), ‘red earth’, and this points to the fact that God created him from the clay or dust of the earth (ibid.).

### **2.3 The Significance of Names in Arabic/Islamic Literature and the Qurān**

The previous section briefly highlighted the fact that names represent an essential part of our daily communication and that their usage and significance are usually unnoticed or even ignored and unacknowledged. It also briefly highlighted the social and religious importance of names, which is the case in most cultures and languages. The following section particularly deals with the usage and significance of names in both Arabic and Islamic literatures with reference to names and naming in the Qurān as well as the Most Beautiful Divine Names mentioned throughout the Qurānic text.

#### **2.3.1 Names and Naming in Arabic/Islamic Literature**

When it comes to naming practices in the Muslim tradition, one needs to investigate a wide range of historical, social, sociolinguistic and anthropological sources in order to better understand the origins as well as the development of Muslim names and naming habits that are internationally used and practiced all over the Muslim World. However, it is not the interest of the current study to discuss such a long historical tradition of naming, but the researcher will highlight some facts which would help understand how such old practices developed to become an international phenomenon.

To start with, it is fair to say that the traditional and religious significance of choosing suitable and often meaningful names for children in Muslims’ lives goes back to the early days of Islam (Sharma, 1997). The Qurān itself points to naming and names, though this is generally limited to names of Prophets, and their importance as unique

identifying labels in many Qurānic contexts. For example, The Qurān states that Prophet *Zakariyyā* (Zechariah) was told the good news of expecting a boy whose name was *Yaḥyā* (John):

*ya Zakariyyā innā nubash-shiruka bi Ghulām<sup>in</sup> ismuhu Yaḥyā lam naj<sup>c</sup>al lahu min qablu samiyyā*, O Zachariah! Verily, We give you the glad tidings of a son, his name shall be *Yaḥyā* (John). We have assigned that name to none before (him) (adopted from Hilali-Khan's translation, Q. 19:7).

In the above example, the Qurān emphasizes that *Yaḥyā* (John) was a unique divinely-chosen name that had never been assigned to anyone before the child of *Zakariyyā*. Another example is found in the Qurānic account of Jesus (Q. 61:6), who brought the glad tidings of the coming messenger whose name shall be *Aḥmad*, which is a synonymous name of *Muḥammad* as both mean 'the praised one'. Obviously, based on Q. 61:6, the name was considered the most important characteristic to distinguish and identify the coming messenger (Rahman, 2009).

In Islam, generally, the careful and right choice of a good proper name for the child is considered as the first parental duty toward children and it is to be carried out by either one or both parents (Sharma, 1997). In fact, the attentive selection of a proper name is originally a prophetic tradition in Islam. It is reported that the Prophet had ordered some of his companions to change their pre-Islamic pagan names after accepting his message (Ghuṣn, 1996). On some occasions, he advised parents, amongst his companions, not to rush in naming their child without a considerable thought (Sharma, 1997), and ordered to re-name their newly-born children who were given inappropriate names. He sometime took the initiative himself and suggested names for children to which parents were pleased and blessed to accept. According to

the Islamic tradition, there are certain names that parents should not, for several reasons, call their newly-born children. Among these unsuitable names are the Divine Names such *Raḥmān*, *Razzāq*, *Ḳāliq* and *Tawwāb*, with the exception of a few Divine Names which have been applied in the Qurān to anyone or anything other than the Divine Being provided that they are used in their indefinite forms such as *‘Ali*, *Muḥsin*, *Hamād*, and *Karīm*.

Like their counterparts, Arabic dictionaries provide a number of definitions for *al-ism* (the proper name) based on the classification of words and according to what they usually denote or designate. Early books on the Divine Names define *ism* as (see Raḍhwānī, 2005, p.105):

الاسم ما دل على معنى لتمييزه عن غيره، أو اللفظ الدال على المسمى، وهو إما مشتق من السمو وهو العلو، أو من السمة وهي العلامة، ويقال لصاحبه مسمى، فالاسم يظهر به المسمى ويعلو، وللإسم خصائص منها جواز الإسناد إليه، ودخول ال التعريف، والجر، والتنوين، والإضافة.

What this definition states is that Arabic proper name, an *ism*, unlike other Arabic types of words, denotes a meaning by which it can be syntactically and semantically distinguished in a sentence or phrase (Raḍhwānī, 2005). In other words, an *ism* is the utterance that indicates what it labels, i.e. *al-Musammā*, the named object. According to Arabic dictionaries, it is derived either from *sumuw*, highness, or *simah*, a label. It is said that *al-ism*, the proper name, labels and raises the *Musammā*, the person named, and that possibly explains its derivation from both *sumuw* and *simah* (ibid.).

The derivation of the term *ism*, along with its various lexical and semantic forms, was notably one of most debated issues between early Muslim linguistic Schools (Ghuṣn, 1996). The linguistic debates soon extended to include theological issues concerning Divine Names and Attributes and whether they themselves represent the Divine

Holiness and Essence or not, i.e. whether or not they are more than linguistic tools of reference that have no Divine holiness in themselves (Ghazālī, 1995). This consequently resulted in many controversies and greatly contributed to the emergence of sectarian divisions in the early Muslim community (as will be briefly discussed in the last part of this chapter, see section 2.7.2).

The aforementioned early debates and controversies, which started to emerge in the second century of the Islamic civilization, concerning the linguistic and theological origins of names in general, and the Divine Names in particular, actually originated, this research argues, from the inadequate understanding and interpretation of the linguistic/theological significance and meaning given to names and naming in the Qurān. The Qurānic emphasis on names and naming, (which will be briefly discussed later in this section), should be understood from/within the Qurānic text itself especially when it comes to the meaning and interpretations of the Divine Names and Attributes.

### **2.3.2 Significance of Names in the Qurān**

In some classical Arabic literary works, the omission of names does not usually render a sentence or even a text inexplicable (Abdel-Haleem, 1999). This is due to the richness of Arabic sentence structure and its verbal cohesive devices as well as the contextual factors, which provide the message with sufficient signs to make it concise and easily comprehended (ibid). The Qurān uses such linguistic features of Classical Arabic in that it usually ignores names and generalises its statements when referring to an individual or a group of people, a technique that makes Qurānic style vivid and universally valid for all people in all times and places (ibid.). Abdel-Haleem (1999, p.13) explains that:

The Qurān is above all a book of guidance. There is no interest in whether a particular named individual did something: if that thing is good, it is singled out as good; if it is bad, it is condemned and the message is obvious to the reader. Those who are interested in academic treatment can refer to a body of literature around the Qurān called *asbab al-nuzul* (normally printed in the footnotes or marginal notes), which identifies the circumstances of the revelations and refers to names and details of what actually happened.

In the Qurānic narrative, however, the terms *ism*, name, and *asmā'*, names are mentioned in ways that draw attention to their significance, though the Qurān does not show interest in naming individuals in most of its narrative, with the exception of the names of the Prophets and Angels (Abdel-Haleem, 1999). For instance, in the story of Adam, who was taught all the names (*al-asmā' kullahā*) of all creatures (see Q. 2:31), the Qurān states that 'and He [*Allāh*] taught Adam all the **names** (of everything or every creature), then He showed them [all creatures] to the angels and said, 'tell Me the **names** of these if you are truthful', to which the angels responded; 'Glory be to You, we know not save what You have taught us, surely You are the All-Knowing, the All-Wise' (Q. 2:32). Then Adam was instructed to utter the names of all beings, a situation which shows how the Divine Knowledge of the unseen surpasses all the knowledge of the creatures (Rahman, 2009), including the elevated Angels (Q. 2:33).

In many occasions and references to *Allāh*, the Name (*Ism*) of the Almighty is emphasized and used as a Representative of *Allāh* Himself; (adopted from Ali's Translation, 1983, references highlighted in bold); 'then celebrate with praises the **Name** of your Lord, the Supreme' (Q. 56:74, 56:96 and 69:52), 'Glorify (praise, celebrate) the **Name** of your Lord, the Most High' (Q. 87:1), 'the Lord of the heavens and earth, and all of that is between them; so worship Him, and be constant and

patient in His worship: do you know anyone who is worthy of the same **Name** as He?’ (Q. 19:65) and ‘Blessed be the **name** of your Lord, full of Majesty, Bounty and Honour’ (Q. 55:87). Many other Qurānic instances explicitly command believers to exalt, praise, commemorate and glorify the Name/Names of the Almighty Lord (see Q.73:8, 76:25 and 96:1).

Though the Qurān places a high significance regarding names in general and the Divine Names in particular, it sometimes degrades the act of naming when it has to do with the act of *Shirk*, associating partners of worship with *Allāh*. The Qurān condemns such an act which, according to (Q. 12:40), has no basis in truth or authority as in the case of naming false gods by assigning them names which are, sometimes, derived from Divine Names (Rahman, 2009). For instance, the Qurān trivialises idolization of false gods on many occasions in its narrative and refers to pre-Islamic idols, that were worshipped by polytheist Arabs, as no more than ‘mere or empty names’ (ibid.). The *ayah*, (Q. 7:71), states; ‘*Atujādilūnanī fī asmā<sup>in</sup> sammaytumūhā* ‘*antum wa’ābā’ukum*, ‘Do you dispute with me concerning ‘mere’ **names**, you have **named** them, you and your forefathers’ (ibid.). The fact that the ‘mere’ names were given to false deities does not mean that there were no real idolatry objects (ibid.). Rather, it indicates that the pagans were using mere names, invented with no ‘substance of truth or justification’ for the purpose of communicating with their false idolatry objects (ibid. p. 52).

It is worth mentioning that ‘names are rarely significant in themselves; it is the referent that bestows their importance on them’ (Byrne, 2009, p. 340). This is true in the Qurānic use of some of the Divine Names which lose their Divinity, Holiness as well as their Divine Beauty when they appear in non-divine contexts in which they

refer to creation, and not the Creator. The Divine Names establish a sort of barrier between the Perfect Creator and the relative, limited and imperfect creature (Alomary, 2011). The Heavenly Names of the Essence including *ar-Rahmān*, *al-Ḥaqq*, *al-Malik*, *al-Bāri'*, *al-Muṣawwir* are solely, in their meaning, Divine, and should be utterly and exclusively applied in reference to the Almighty Creator alone (ibid.). In his commentary on the Divine Names, *al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*, mentioned in Q. 7:180, *Rāzī* (1995, p. 309) states that:

الأسماء ألفاظ دالة على المعاني فهي إنما تحسن بحسن معانيها ومفهوماتها، ولا معنى للحسن في  
حق الله تعالى إلا ذكر صفات الكمال ونعوت الجلال

*Rāzī* regards descriptive names as utterances that indicate meaning (ibid.). He argues that such names acquire beauty from the senses and concepts they refer to. So the beauty of the Divine Names, *Rāzī* maintains, is only in their indications of the Attributes of Divine Perfection and the Epithets of Divine Glory (ibid, p. 309). This is true and evident in the various senses of some Divine Names in the Quraan. The word *Karīm*, for instance, has much more significance in several respects when used as an epithet of the Almighty *Allāh* (Q. 82:6) than the significance it bears in other various Qurānic contexts in which it occurs to describe, for example, a revelation (Q. 56:77, 27:29), a Messenger (Q. 44:17, 69:40), the Divine Throne (Q. 69:40), a sustenance or provision (Q. 8:4, 8:74), a reward (Q. 33:44, 36:11, 57:18) or even an enemy of God's Messenger in an ironic sense (Q. 44:49).

### 2.3.3 Significance of the Most Beautiful Divine Names

Names of the Almighty God, *Allāh*, as well as all the designations and epithets that describe His Divine Attributes are key terms in the narrative of the Qurān (*Ibn Taymiyyah*, 1986). At the very beginning of the Qurān's revelation (see Q. 96:1),

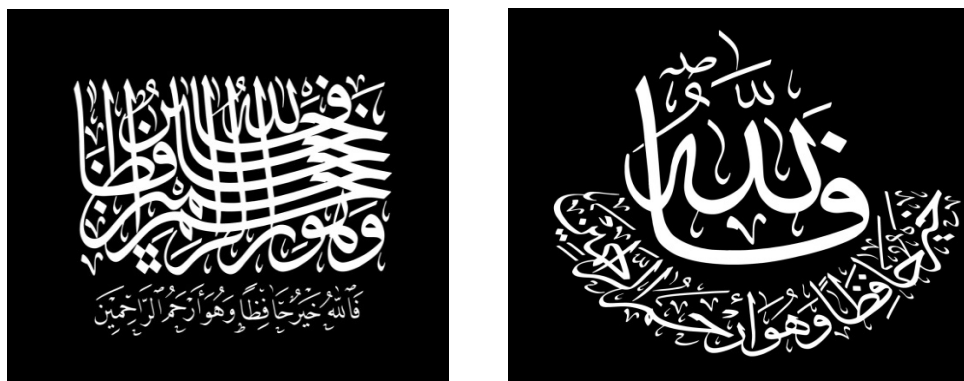
Prophet *Muḥammad*, who is the carrier and mediator of the revealed message, was ordered to recite or read in/by the **Name** of his *Rabb* (Lord, Master and Cherisher), the Lord who created everything (Rahman, 2009). This verse, which states: '*Iqra' bismi Rabbik-al laḏī ḳalaq*', 'recite; in the **Name** of your **Lord** who created' (Q. 96:1), introduces *Allāh*, His very Name and His Lordship to a man who had always believed in the existence and such a lordship, *rububiyyah*, of his Creator (ibid.).

As mentioned in the introductory section, *Al-Asmā al-Ḥusnā* basically means the Divine Names of Allāh in Islam. The expression usually refers to a special group of ninety-nine Most Beautiful Names. The reason for calling these Divine Names 'Most Beautiful', is the fact that they have been described as such, i.e. *Ḥusnā* (lit. most beautiful) in at least four occasions in the Qurān. For instance, Q. 7:180 reads; *wa Lillāh<sup>il</sup> 'Asmā' al-Ḥusnā fa-ud'ūhū bihā*, 'the most Beautiful Names belong to *Allāh*: so call upon Him by them' (see Rahman, 2009).

*Al-'Asmā' al-Ḥusnā* have preoccupied minds of Muslims since the dawn of Islam, but did not penetrate their religious daily life and spiritual practices until the second century of Islam (Ghuṣn, 1996). This is due to the fact that the traditional list of the ninety-nine Divine Names was not widely distributed until it had been narrated by Imam *Tirmiḏī* (824-892), though he himself doubted its authenticity, in his *Ḥadīth* collection, *Sunan Al'āfāq* (ibid.). The popularity of the traditional ninety-nine-Name list in that period of time is evidently reflected in many Islamic manuscripts and old works of Arabic calligraphy, which can be found today in many Muslim countries as well as some international museums (ibid.).



Modern multifaceted manifestations of the Divine Names in Muslim lives continue to prove that these Names remain, and will always be, a fountainhead of spirituality in Islam. This is obviously echoed in many contemporary Islamic arts of adornment and calligraphy<sup>7</sup> (see Figure 2.1, below). They are also echoed in many Sufi rituals all over the world. In almost every corner of the Muslim world today, from the Arabian Peninsula and North Africa to East Asian countries like Malaysia and Indonesia, *al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā* are portrayed in fine-looking manuscripts and breath-taking masterpieces of art. Grand Mosques in most Muslim countries, for instance, are beautifully and calligraphically decorated using *al-'Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*.



(Figure 2.1, Divine Names and Arabic Calligraphy)

Two works of Arabic Calligraphy of the same Qurānic Ayah, which speaks of two Divine Names.

**Translation:** Allah is the Best Guardian, and He is the Most Merciful of the Merciful (Q.12:64).

In his commentary on the short Qurānic chapters, *Ibn al-Qayyim* considers the *Fātiḥah* (ch.1), the ‘Opening’ *Surah*, as the bearer of the most central Divine Names (*Ibn Kathīr*, 1983), a fact that makes it the greatest *Surah*, *Umm Al-Kitāb* (lit. the mother of the Book), in the whole Qurān. Starting with the *Basmalah* (Q. 1:1), which is a short opening statement for all but one of the 114 Qurānic chapters, the *Fātiḥah*

<sup>7</sup> See for example Tombouctou Manuscripts Project (2009), University of Cape Town. Islamic Art with spiritual inspiration is available at: <http://www.arthafez.com/gallery.html>  
Free materials are available at: <http://freeislamiccalligraphy.com/portfolio-category/divine-names/>

first introduces three Divine Names in such a short four-word sentence, which reads; *Bismillāh Ar-Raḥmān Ar-Raḥīm*. The *Basmalah* took its name from the first two words *Bismillāh*, which literally means ‘in/by the Name of *Allāh*’, which is the Proper Arabic Name of God. According to Ali (2006), the *basmalah* is a formula of infinite Divine Grace, and this explains its recurring use at the start of all deeds by every devout Muslim who submits his/her will to the Divine Will while yearning for the Divine Mercy (Ali, 2006, p.7).

Followed by two epithetical Divine Names, *Ar-Raḥmān Ar-Raḥīm*, *Allāh* is introduced (Q. 1:1) as the All-Merciful Lord (*Ar-Raḥmān*) and the Ever-Merciful (*Ar-Raḥīm*). The second *ayah* (Q. 1:2) reads; *al-ḥamdu lillāhi Rabb-il ʿālamīn*, which also bears two Divine Names, the first of which is *al-Ḥamīd* (the Praiseworthy, implied from *al-ḥamdu lillāhi*, ‘all praise is due to *Allāh*’), and the second is the Lord of the Worlds (*Rabb-il ʿālamīn*). The third *ayah* (Q. 1:3) reassures the hearer/reader that the Almighty, and Praiseworthy Lord of the Worlds, is *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm*, a Merciful Lord, who is ever Merciful (*Ibn Kathīr*, 1983). The rest of the *ayahs* in the *Fatiḥah* list many Divine Names, explicitly and implicitly, such as *Maliki yawm-id Dīn*, (Q. 1:4) Owner of the Day of Recompense, *al-Maʿbūd*, the Worshipped Lord, *al-Mustaʿān*, the Besought for help and *al-Hādī*, the One who Guides, etc. (ibid.).

The full story behind the origins and status of the Divine Names in Islam is far beyond the scope of this research, which mainly investigates and evaluates their translations into English, but it is still of great importance to shed light on the basic facts concerning the Divine Names, not only in Islam but in other religions and traditions as well, particularly Christianity and Judaism. Therefore, the discussion regarding the origin and significance of the al-‘Asma al-Husna in Islam will be

preceded by a brief account on the universal nature of the Divine Names, which is a fertile and important field of research for the common interest of our world today.

#### **2.4 The Universality of the Divine Names**

Throughout history, Divine names, titles and attributes have been traditionally established for religious and spiritual practices. It can be argued, according to Byrne (2009), that ‘the use of Divine Names is fundamentally an extension of how we use names in general, both in a literary context and in communicating an idea of the divine from human to human’ (p. 340). These Holy Names, Titles and Attributes, whether they are man-made or Divinely-inspired, have been a source of debates, though limited, amongst theologians of all traditions in general, and those of Abrahamic religions, namely Islam, Christianity and Judaism, in particular (Bentley, 1999). These debates resulted from different religious views on the importance of knowing these Holy Attributes and Names as well as their reflections on one’s belief.

Studies on the Divine Names and Titles not only serve as a valuable way of communicating but, more importantly, they contribute to mutual understanding and interfaith dialogue (Bentley, 1999). The other main goal of highlighting the universality of the Divine Names and aspects of similarities in Holy Scriptures is to gain a clearer conceptualisation and knowledge of the Divine Author of these significant revelations. The aforementioned three major religions have a lot in common when it comes to the scriptural Divine Names, Titles and Descriptions of the Almighty God (ibid.). This has to do with the fact that these Scriptures share the same origin, i.e. Divine source. In other words, what explains the universal scriptural similarities of the Divine Names and Attributes is the fact that Almighty God

presented and described Himself in these Scriptures which He revealed to humanity (ibid.). Divine Attributes such as sovereignty, wisdom, love, infinitude, faithfulness, mercy, justice, etc. are all found in the aforementioned traditions, though such qualities are often understood differently. The following section briefly discusses some scriptural similarities of the Divine descriptions in the aforementioned three traditions as well as some of their cognate Arabic/Hebrew Semitic roots.

#### **2.4.1 Scriptural Names and Naming**

Some studies on the names and naming in the Torah and the Bible show the fact that these scriptures tend to present stories and the names of individuals involved in a detailed manner (Abdel-Haleem, 1999). The Qurān, by contrast, is broad and concise. To illustrate this point, one can compare the common story of Adam who, according to the Qurān, Q. 2:31, was taught by his Creator, *Allāh*, the names of all the beings with no specific references; while in the Biblical account of the same story, one finds that animal kingdom and all mortals were presented before Adam and he himself named them by their names (ibid, p.131). Adam's wife, Eve, is also not mentioned by name in the Qurān and is only referred to as Adam's spouse, or 'wife' on a few occasions such as in Q. 2:35 'you (Adam) and your wife' (ibid.).

The Holy Qurān frequently mentions, though it does not state their number, the names, titles and stories of the noble prophets<sup>8</sup> who are presented as great characters and ultimate human role models (Abdel-Haleem, 1999). However, the Qurān tends to

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<sup>8</sup> They are Adam, *Nuh* (Noah), *Hud*, *Salih* (Methusaleh), *Ibrahim* (Abraham), *Lut* (Lot), *Isma'īl* (Ishmael), *Alyasa'* (Elisha), *Thul-Kifl* (Ezekiel), *Ilyas* (Elias), *Yunus* (Jonah), *Idris* (Enoch), *Ishaq* (Isaac), *Ya'qub* (Jacob), *Yusuf* (Joseph), *Shu'ayb*, *Musa* (Moses), *Harun* (Aaron), *Dawud* (David), *Sulayman* (Solomon), *Ayyub* (Job), *Zakariya'* (Zacharias), *Yahya* (John), *Isma'il*, *'Isa* (Jesus) and *Muḥammad*, Peace and blessings be upon them all (Abdel-Haleem, 1999).

deliver its messages without much reference to personal names (ibid.). The Prophet Muḥammad, for example, is mentioned by name on just four instances, and the Qurān does not begin with, nor include, his biography (ibid). Another example is the name of the his closest companion and father-in-law Abu Bakr who is referred to on at least two occasions as ‘his companion’, i.e. the Prophet’s companion, omitting his name from the Qurānic narrative (see Abdel-Haleem, 1999, pp.113).

Likewise, in the story of the Prophet Yusuf, Joseph (*Surah* 12), the Qurānic narrative deems it insignificant to state that Joseph was traded to Potiphar (ibid.) What was deemed significant, according to Abdel-Haleem (1999), is that by the Clemency of *Allāh* who is ‘Subtle in disposing His will’, Joseph, after being persecuted, had reached a safe shelter at the hands of a noble man and his family who took care of him, ‘that it was this very household that later led to another ordeal in prison, and that this, in turn, led to his meeting and being elevated by the king or pharaoh’ (Abdel-Haleem, 1999, pp.155-56). Abdel-Haleem (1999) points out that though the Bible does not mention the name of the pharaoh either, it nevertheless states the proper names of almost everyone involved (pp.155-56).

The Divine Names and epithets are central in the Qurānic text, particularly the frequently-mentioned Proper Name of God, namely *Allāh*, which is mentioned over 2700 times (Dukes, 2010). However, when it comes to non-divine names, it is clear that apart from prophets’ and Angels’ names, the Qurān, as stated above, is not keen on mentioning the names of individuals, with a few exceptions (Abdel-Haleem, 1999). For instance, the only female character mentioned by name in the Qurān is Mary, mother of Jesus (peace and blessings be upon them) whose miraculous birth caused him to be labelled ‘son of Mary’, a recurring title for Jesus in the Qurānic

narrative (ibid.). There are also another two male-name exceptions, namely Zayd (Q. 33:37), a freed-slave who was adopted by the Prophet and the only companion to be mentioned, for legislative reasons, by name in the Qurān (ibid.). The other exception is *Abu Lahab*, a nickname meaning ‘*Lahab*’s Father’, Q. 111:1, who was mentioned by name for reasons of threat and condemnation (ibid.).

#### **2.4.2 Universal Scriptural Divine Names**

‘Praise the LORD, call upon his name, declare his doings among the people, make mention that his name is exalted’ (Isaiah 12:4)<sup>9</sup>.

The followers of the aforementioned three major world religions, namely Islam, Christianity and Judaism, have a lot of similarities in various aspects of their beliefs, particularly those of the Creator and Originator of this universe. Despite the fact that these beliefs with regard to God vary in their concepts and relation to one’s faith, it is nevertheless of high importance to investigate the similarities between religions, especially when it comes to the Names and Descriptions of the Almighty.

An agreed-upon explanation for the phenomenal similarities of Divine descriptions between scriptures of the aforementioned world major religions is the fact that these scriptures share the same source and origin. In other words, the fact that God presented and described Himself in these revealed Holy Scriptures could easily explain the existence of similar scriptural depictions and descriptions of the Divine Author (see 2.4.2). The Divine Attributes such as Sovereignty, Wisdom, Love, Infinitude, Faithfulness, Mercy and Justice are all found in the Torah (Old Testament), Gospels (New Testament) and the Holy Qurān. God’s Names which

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<sup>9</sup> [www.scripture4all.org/](http://www.scripture4all.org/)

describe these Divine Attributes are sometimes called Titles, as is the case in the *Torah*.

In their '*Islam and Christianity*', Kataregga and Shenk (1980) emphasise that Christians and Muslims pray to the same Divine Being. The followers of both traditions 'give witness that there is one true and only God, Who is the righteous and transcendent Creator of all things in heaven and earth' (ibid, p. 8). Kataregga and Shenk (1980, p.8) go on to say:

Christians accept with thankfulness all the ninety-nine names of God, which Muslims repeat in worship and praise to God. Even the name Allah is affirmed by Christians as one of the names of God. The Prophet Abraham knew God as *El* or *Elohim*, which is a Hebrew form of the Arabic '*Allah*'. It is no wonder that the Quran affirms that those closest to the Muslims are the Christians [see Q. 5:82]. The profound Muslim appreciation of the sovereignty and transcendence of God is a witness which Christians need to hear.

In his book '*The Ninety-Nine Beautiful Names for God for All the People of the Book*', Bentley (1999) points out that many of God's ninety-nine Holy Names, which are mentioned in the Qurān, have their origins in the Old Testament. Some of these names, according to Bentley, are also referred to in the New Testament and are represented in some of John's Gospel's great 'I AMs' (p. xiv). Thus, the study of these Divine Names, and certainly their translations into other languages, is not only an effective way of communication between Muslims, Christians and Jewish people but also a great help to mutual understanding (ibid.).

The Qurān clearly calls for such a mutual understanding and inter-faith dialogue as it orders the Prophet, the carrier of the last Divine message; *Muḥammad* (pbuh), to

invite all the followers of other scriptures to unite their worship and devotion for *Allāh*, the One and Only God (Q. 3:64):

*Qul ya ahl-al kitābi ta'ālū 'ila kalimat<sup>in</sup> sawā<sup>in</sup> baynana wa baynakum 'alla na'buda 'illa Allāha walā nushrika bihi shay<sup>an</sup> walā yattakīda ba'dhunā ba'dh<sup>an</sup> 'arbāb<sup>an</sup> min dūn Illāh fa-in tawallū faqulū ishhadū bi-annā Muslimūn.*

Say: O People of the Scripture [i.e. Christians and Jews]! Let us arrive at a Just Word [common ground] between us: that we [all] shall worship none but *Allāh* [alone], and that we shall not associate any deity beside Him, and that none of us shall adopt other lords beside *Allāh*. And if they turn their backs, then say: bear witness that we are Muslims [those who submit to the Will of their Lord] (Q. 3:64).

(Hilali-Khan's Translation, modified by the researcher)

It is worth mentioning that God's Proper Name, *Allāh*, itself is an Arabic term referring to the same Divine Being whom the Jews and Christians recognize as God and it is used to refer to God by all Arabs whether they are Muslims, Christians or Jews (Bentley, 1999). In fact, the same term was used by Arabs to refer to the Creator of the heavens and the earth even before the rise of Islam (Brown, 2006). Therefore, modern Arabic translations of the Bible, which are carefully written by Christian priests and preachers, render the word *God* as it appears in the English Bible by using the Arabic corresponding Divine Name *Allāh* (see Saritoprak, 2006).

It is noticeable from many Qurānic contexts, such as Q. 39:38; 'if you ask them who has created the heavens and the earth, they will [certainly] say *Allāh*' (more examples are found at Q. 29:61, 29:63, 31:25 and 43:9), that pre-Islamic Arabs were familiar with the Divine Name '*Allāh*'. They acknowledged, *Allāh*, though they were polytheists, or henotheists, to be the only Proper Name for the Supreme Being in



heaven (Saritoprak, 2006). More evidence for this assertion can be found in pre-Islamic inscriptions as well as Arab names such as the name of Prophet *Muhammad*'s father, *Abdullāh* (lit. the servant of *Allāh*), who died during Prophet's childhood (ibid.).

### 2.4.3 Semitic Roots

It is known that Arabic and Hebrew, along with other Semitic languages, share tri-consonantal proto-Semitic roots from which all words are derived or formed, usually by adding vowels to these trilateral roots (Ryding, 2005). For instance, both Arabic and Hebrew share the root *r-ḥ-m*, which basically means, though pronounced slightly differently, the same thing 'womb' in both languages (Bentley, 1999). Many words are derived from this root in Arabic and Hebrew, which all mean or relate to mercy (רחמים in Hebrew, and رحمة in Arabic). God's Divine Names of mercy in Arabic *Ar-Raḥmān* and *Ar-Raḥīm*, which are frequently mentioned in the Qurān, are derived from *r-ḥ-m*. Similarly, the Hebrew word *raḥūm* (Merciful), which is also derived from the same root, is a Divine Title (Exodus 33:19, 2 Kings 13:23) in the Old Testament (Lang, 2002).

Another Semitic root shared by Arabic and Hebrew is *m-l-k*, which has many denotations including owning something, possessing a property and being a ruler or a king. From this root, Divine Names in both Arabic and Hebrew are derived to describe Divine Sovereignty, Ownership and Kingdom as found in the Qurān and the Torah. *Allāh*'s Names *Malik*, *Malīk* and *Mālikul-Mulk* which are found in the Qurān share the same origin of the Title of God *Melech ha-M'lachim* (sometimes appearing as *Melech Malchei Ha-M'lachim*), all of which basically mean 'The King', and in some contexts, *King of all kings* and the *Owner of the Kingdom*. The same term is

found in the New Testament, where it occurs six times in reference to God (see 1 Timothy 6:15), but the same term is also attributed to Jesus Christ in two occasions in the book of Revelation (see 17:14 and 19:16).

It might be also known that the Hebrew word *Shlum* (also written *shalūm*, *sholom*, etc), which means ‘peace’ and is used for greetings, shares the same proto-Semitic root *s-l-m* with the Arabic word *Salām*, which has the exact same meaning and is used for similar purposes. However, what might be widely unknown is the fact that both the Hebrew *Shlūm* and the Arabic *Salām* (def. *As-Salam*) are used as epithets of the Almighty God meaning the Perfect, Pure and Well-Being in both the Qurān (59:23) and the Torah (Old Testament, Isaiah 9:6) respectively.

Another epithet or Title of God in the Old Testament is *qdush*, (Num16:7) (Deut.26:19) (Ps.71:22) (Is.40:25; 43:3; 48:17), which means holy or pure (Lang, 2002). It apparently shares the same root and meaning of the Qurānic Divine Name *al-Quddūs* ‘often rendered as the Holy’ (see Q. 59:23 and Q. 62:1). The Hebrew title *qdush*, which is also rendered as the ‘Holy’ in English, appears in different forms or morphological patterns in the Old Testament such as *mqdsh*, as expressed in Leviticus 20:8 (*ani ieue ‘Yahweh’ mqdsh·km*), which has been translated into English as ‘I [am] the LORD which sanctifies you’ (Lang, 2002).

There are also the words *Elohim* and *Aleim* (Ex.3:5), which are used interchangeably to refer to the One-knowing God (Lang, 2002). The term *Elohim*<sup>10</sup> is the most widely occurring term for God in the Hebrew text (Noss, 2007). Commenting on the first

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<sup>10</sup> Elohim is referred to in Genesis 1:1, 2, 27, 28, 31; 9:6; Exodus 20:2; Numbers 27:16; Deuteronomy 23:5; Joshua 24:19; 1 Samuel 6:20; Psalm 7:9-11, 42:9, 47:7-9; 50:6, 77:13-14, 99:9; Ecclesiastes 12:13; Isaiah 37:16, 40:28, 41:13, 45:21, 46:9, 49:5, 52:10; Jeremiah 3:23, 32:27 ([www.scripture4all.org](http://www.scripture4all.org)).

revelation of God found in Genesis (1:1), Fortner (2004) points out that the name of God ‘Elohim’, means ‘to worship’ (p. 2). This is the name of God, Fortner goes on, ‘He is the Worshipped One [...] He is the only object of true worship, praise, adoration and trust’ (ibid, p. 2). Some researchers, however, have also pointed out that the Hebrew word *Elohim* indicates the plurality of God’s Names *Elāh* and *Eloh*, which are, as previously explained, Hebrew forms of the Arabic Proper Name of God, *Allāh* (see Kataregga and Shenk, 1980).

The Hebrew Title of God ‘*Oliun*’ (sometimes written *Elyon*, *‘illiyyun*), which means the Most High or the Supreme One (also rendered as the Sovereign Ruler), can be found (Lang, 2002) in the Old Testament (see Gen.14:18; Num 24:16; Ps.18:13). This Divine Title is apparently used in the Qurān as a Divine Name or epithet, *al-‘Aliyy* (see Qurān’s verse-ending *innahu ‘Aliyy<sup>um</sup> Ḥakīm*, indeed He is All-High, All-Wise Q. 42:51) which also means the Most High and Sublime God (see also Q. 2:255; 42:4). The biblical word *Elyon*<sup>11</sup> (*‘illiyyun*) also seems to appear in the Qurān (Q. 83:19, And what shall teach you what is *‘llyūn*?) referring to an exalted and elevated abode, which *Allāh* allocates for the believers, in the Seventh Heaven (Ibn Kathīr, 1997).

There is also a possibility that *El Brith*, which is an epithet of the God of the Covenant in the Old Testaments (Judges 9:46), is likely an equivalent term for the Qurānic word *al-Barr*, derived from *al-birr* (lit. dutifulness, faithfulness), one of the Most Beautiful Names of *Allāh* which means the Faithful who fulfils His promises (see Q 52:28). In order to prove such a possibility, further linguistic and historical investigation is needed. This is, regrettably, beyond the scope of the current study,

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<sup>11</sup> El Elyon is referred to in Genesis 14:18-20; Numbers 24:16; Deuteronomy 32:8; Psalm 9:2, 21:7, 47:2, 50:14, 56:2, 57:2, 87:5, 91:9, 83:18, Isaiah 14:14; Daniel 4:17, 24-25 (scripture4all.org).

which is limited to evaluating the accuracy and consistency of the renderings of the Divine Names in well-known English translations of the Qurān.

## **2.5 The Origins and Status of the Divine Names in Islam**

This section introduces the story behind the Most Beautiful Divine Names. It starts with the ways through which the Qurān introduces the Almighty Lord, His Names and His Lofty Attributes (sec. 2.5.1). Then, it sheds light on the Prophetic *Ḥadīth* concerning the Divine Names and the promised reward for enumerating (reckoning) and understanding them (sec. 2.5.2). The concept of *Iḥṣā'*, enumeration, is discussed in relation to the Prophetic *Ḥadīth* on Divine Names (sec. 2.5.3). This deals with issues regarding the enumeration and listing of the Divine Names including a brief historical account of the traditional Ninety-Nine-Name list and the greatest all-embracing Divine Name. The fourth and last part (see 2.5.4) deals with the reasons behind describing the Divine Names as such, i.e. 'the Most Beautiful' Names.

### **2.5.1 How does the Qurān present the Divine Names and Attributes?**

One may possibly rephrase the question on the way the Qurān presents the Divine Names as; how does the Qurān's Author (or Revelator), Allāh, make Himself known in His last revelation to mankind? The answer to such an intriguing question cannot be easily found and understood in the Qurānic text. Therefore, a thorough study of the Qurānic descriptions of God as well as their theological and linguistic interpretations is needed in order to come up with the right answer to such questions. In other words, the Qurān repeatedly introduces Allāh in various contexts and a reader needs to conceptualise and interiorise such contexts into an overall image, without which there

would an intrusive and irrational concept that would make the Qurānic concept of Allāh unjustly problematic (Rahman, 2009).

Qurān exegetes as well as scholars of <sup>c</sup>*Aqīdah*, such as *Abu Ḥanīfah* (d. 772), *Ibn Ḥanbal* (d. 855), *Ghazālī* (d. 1111) and *Ibn Taymiyyah* (d. 1328), have argued that it is only Him, the Qurān's Author, who has the faultless Divine Competence to define the real nature and essence of His Exalted Self (*Ibn <sup>c</sup>Uthaymīn*, 1987). In his '*Major Themes of the Qurān*', Rahman (2009) explains that 'the immediate impression from a cursory reading of the Qurān is that of the infinite majesty of God and His equally infinite mercy' (p.1). In fact, the whole Qurānic text revolves around its Divine Source, His Perfection, Uniqueness and Worthiness of acknowledgement and devotion (ibid.) Thus, *Allāh* is not merely a Qurānic topic or theme but the centre of the text's attention (see Madigan, 2006; Rahman, 2009).

The Qurān presents *Allāh* as *Rabb-ul-<sup>c</sup>ālāmīn*, the Lord of the Worlds (see Q.1:2), the Lord of the East and the West (Q. 55:17), the Lord the heavens and the earth (Q18:14). He is *as-Samī<sup>c</sup>*, the All-Hearing (Q. 2:127) and *al-Baṣīr*, the 'All-Seeing' (Q 17:1). The Qurān also introduces *Allāh* as *al-Kāliq*, 'the Creator' of everything (see Q. 6:102, 13:16, 39:62, and 40:62), Who creates whatever He wills (see Q. 3:47, 5:17, 24:45, 28:68, 30:54, and 42:49) and who originated the Universe (see Q. 6:1), *al-Wāḥid al-Qaḥḥār*, 'the exceptionally One' and irresistibly 'Omnipotent' (see Q. 12:39, 13:16, 14:48, 38:65, 39:4). Among the often repeated Names of Allah are *al-Aḥad*, the One and Only, *al-Ḥayy* 'the Living One', *al-Qayyūm* 'the Subsisting', *al-Ḥaqq* 'the Real Truth', *al-<sup>c</sup>Azīm* 'the All-Exalted', *al-Ḥakīm* 'the All-Wise' and *al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz* 'the Omnipotent' (see Madigan, 2006; Rahman, 2009).

The believers are invited to embrace the meanings of the Divine Names in their lives and call upon their Lord and glorify Him using these Most Beautiful Descriptions of Mercy, Compassion, Clemency as well as Omnipotence and Omniscience. The Divine Names, therefore, have always been a major source of spiritual meditation and contemplation. Though these descriptions sounds familiar to mankind, the Qurān (see Rahman, 2009) emphasises the notion that [*laysa ka mithlihi shay'*], 'None is comparable to Him' (Q.112: 4), and thus, believers are warned not to make comparisons or similitudes concerning the nature of the Divine Names and Attributes. In his comments on the Divine Loftest Similitude, *al-mathal al-'a'lā* (Q. 30:27), Ali (1936, p.275) states that:

Allah's glory and Allah's attributes are above any names we can give them. Human language is not adequate to express them. We can only form some idea of them at our present stage by means of Similitudes and Parables. But even so, the highest we can think of falls short of the true Reality. For Allah is higher and wiser than the highest and wisest we can think of.

Gai Eaton<sup>12</sup> (d. 2010), a well-known British Sufi figure, points out that in Islam, Allāh is indescribable and unimaginable by human mental assumptions, not to mention those of language (1985, p.81). Human description, according to Eaton, is only applicable to created creatures, and not the Creator (ibid). Eaton maintains that Allāh does not exemplify Himself in any human form nor make His presence reasonably felt through pagan rituals, but rather He presents Himself and His Majestic Essence through His Most Beautiful Names and Attributes which He revealed in the Qurān (ibid.). Eaton's approach with regard to Divine Names and Attributes seems to be

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<sup>12</sup> A Charterhouse and Cambridge-educated former diplomat, Eaton became a Muslim in 1951 after studying the religion and spending a year in Cairo. (The Telegraph, 30<sup>th</sup> Mar. 2010).

based on the Qurānic principle, [*laysa kamithlihi shay'*], ‘there is none comparable to Him’ (Q.112: 4), from which many early Muslim scholars drew the concepts of *tanzīh* and *tathbīt*. The notion of *Tanzīh* basically refers to purifying the Divine descriptions from *tahrīf* (deviation), *ta'īl* (divesting), and *tashbīh* (anthropomorphism), while *tathbīt* indicates affirming that which has been affirmed in the Qurān and *Sunnah*, concerning the Divine Names and Attributes (for more on these doctrinal concepts, see sub-sec. 2.6.3).

He is the Creator and Guardian of everything (Q. 39:62), Sustainer of the universe and of mankind, uniquely One and not a trinity (Q. 5:75), principally the presenter of guidance for mankind who also judges them, individually and collectively, with a merciful justice (Rahman, 2009, p.1). In his commentary on Islam's distinctive understanding of God, presented in the Qurān, Yahya Michot (2008) points out that all His creatures are submitted to His power and are governed by Him. He is their sole Lord, their sole Master and their sole King, from whose decision and decree they cannot escape: (p. 180-81). ‘Call upon *Allāh* or call upon *Raḥmān*: by whatever **Name** ye call upon Him (it is well): for to Him belong the **Most Beautiful Names**’ Q. 17:110 (Ali’s translation).

It is worth mentioning that, unlike the way in which some Western writers prejudicially portray Allāh as a God of revenge and destructive power and unpredictable cruelty (Rahman, 2009), the Qurān is abundant with Divine Love (see Q.2:195, Q.3:31, Q.3-134, Q.60:8), which shows and proves *Allāh*’s entitlement of being *Wadūd*, one of the Divine Names which literally means ‘Most-Loving’ (ibid. see Q. 11:90 and Q.85:14). Fuzlur Rahman (2009, p.10) has expressed this point as he critically questions;

What shall we say about the frequent statements of so many Westerners, in some cases even made in the name of scholarship, that the God of the Qurān is a loveless, remote, capricious, and even tyrannical power which arbitrarily causes some people to go astray and others to come to guidance, creates some people for hell and others for paradise, without any rhyme or reason? Even the blind Fate of the pre-Islamic Arabs was not quite like this, let alone the creative, sustaining, merciful, and purposeful God of the Qurān.

The Qurān persistently emphasizes Divine tendencies of love and forgiveness rather than condemnation (Mondal, 2014). In about five hundred Qurānic instances, the Qurān portrays Allāh as the All-Forgiving (*Ghāfir*, in ninety-one instances, e.g., Q. 2:173; also *Ghāfir*, Q. 40:3; *Ghaffār*, six instances, e.g. Q. 20:82; and *ʿAfuw*, five instances Q. 4:43), Acceptor of repentance (*Tawwāb*, twelve instances, e.g. Q. 2:37 and 49:12) All-Generous (*Karīm*, six instances, e.g. Q 27:40), Benevolent (*Raʿūf*, eleven instances, e.g. Q. 2:143), All-Loving (*Wadūd*, Q. 11:90) and so on (see Madigan, 2006; Mondal, 2014).

### 2.5.2 The Prophetic *Ḥadīth* on the Divine Names

In a well-known prophetic *Ḥadīth* (Prophet' sayings and traditions), the Prophet referred clearly to an exceptional collection of ninety-nine Divine Names, but the Prophet did not enumerate them nor list them, i.e. name them one by one, as a number of inauthentic sources claim (*Al-Badr*, 2006). This *Ḥadīth*, which is narrated by Imam *Muslim*<sup>13</sup>, states that *Abu Hurairah*, a companion of the Prophet, reported the Prophet as saying 'there are ninety-nine Names of *Allāh*; he who commits them to memory [In another narration: He whoever enumerates them] would get into Paradise' (*Bukhārī*,

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<sup>13</sup> This *Ḥadīth* is also narrated in *Bukhārī* No. 419, vol. 8.



No. 419, vol. 8). ‘Scholars of Islamic theology have come to a consensus that the above-mentioned tradition [*Ḥadīth*] is not meant to limit the number of God's Names, but to give an idea of His many Names’ (Leaman, 2006, p.39).

### **2.5.3 Enumeration, *Iḥṣā'*, of the Divine Names**

As mentioned earlier in this section, the prophetic *Ḥadīth* narrated by both Bukhārī and Muslim points to a group of ninety-nine Divine Names and that whoever commits them to memory [in another narration: whoever enumerates them] would get into Paradise (Leaman, 2006). Many early scholars and theologians had argued that the abovementioned tradition [*Ḥadīth*] was not intended to limit the number of the Divine Names, but to attract knowledge seekers to better understand the Nature, Beauty and Perfection of the Most Glorious Lord (ibid.).

In his commentary on the aforementioned *Ḥadīth*, *Al-Ashqar* (2002) points out that the misperception that arises from the *Ḥadīth* of the Divine Names is that it indicates that among the Names of *Allāh* are names which He has not revealed in the Holy Book, but which He has told only to certain ones among His creation, or has kept to Himself and has not told to any of his creation. The *Ḥadīth* of *Abu Hurairah*, on the other hand, indicates that the names of *Allāh* number ninety-nine, all of which have been revealed and are known. As indicated by the phrase *man aḥṣāhā* (whoever counts them), this counting is impossible unless they are revealed and known. This implies that the names which *Allāh* has kept to Himself or revealed only to certain ones among His creation are other than these ninety-nine [Names]’ (p. 308).

It is worth mentioning that the Divine Names are not restricted to ninety-nine only, as widely misunderstood, even by some Muslims. For instance, in his *Musnad*<sup>14</sup>, Imam *Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal* (*Ḥadīth* 3712, see *Ḥanbal*, 2001) recorded *Abdullah bin Masʿūd* saying that the Prophet said:

عن عبد الله بن مسعود أن النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم قال في حديث الكرب: ما أصاب أحدًا قط هم ولا حزن فقال [اللهم إني عبدك و ابن عبدك، أسألك بكل اسم هو لك سميت به نفسك، أو أنزلته في كتابك، أو علمته أحدًا من خلقك، أو استأثرت به في علم الغيب عندك، أن تجعل..... إلخ].

*Abdullah Ibn Masʿūd* reported that the Prophet ‘may peace be upon him’ said in the *Ḥadīth* of hardships (anguish): whoever is afflicted by sadness or anxiety and says: O my Lord, I am your servant, the son of your servant, I earnestly beseech You by every Name of Yours, Whether You have named it (chose it for) Yourself, or revealed it in Your Book [the *Qurān*], or taught it to some of Your servants, or kept it within the Unseen Knowledge of Yours, to ... etc.

(My Translation)

A few other narrations<sup>15</sup> and various *Ḥadīth* reports support the aforementioned argument on the enumeration of the Divine Names, and leave no doubt for Muslims that the Divine Names are not limited to the special group of the ninety-nine. However, listing all the various narrations and *Ḥadīth* collections in this regard is certainly a difficult task and far beyond the scope of this study which is confined to assessing the accuracy and consistency of the English renderings of the Divine Names in some well-known *Qurān* translations. However, a brief account on some contemporary approaches to enumerating the Divine Names seems relevant to be highlighted in the remaining limited space in this section.

<sup>14</sup> *Imām Aḥmad*’s *Musnad* 3712, Also narrated by *Ibn Ḥibbān*, *al-Ḥakīm*, *Tabarānī*, and *Baihaqī*.

<sup>15</sup> لا أحصي ثناء عليك أنت كما أثنيت على نفسك.

For religious and devotional purposes, there have been many attempts by Muslim linguists and theologians to come up with an order or categorization of the Divine Names. Some of the early attempts simply made their lists according to frequencies of occurrence of each name in the Qurānic text. However, this way of listing the Divine Names had many problems in the past since dozens of the Names only occur in three or less instances (a few Names occur twice, and many occur once), which makes it difficult spot while reading or retrieve from memory (ibid). Inconsistent lists, including that of *Sanʿānī* and *Al-Ḥuṣain* (see Raḍhwānī, 2005), had resulted from such an approach, but this is not an issue anymore with the availability of modern technologies, particularly language computing, corpus-based analysis, word count and processing.

Other scholars attempted to enumerate and categorize the Divine Names according to their denotations and references. Recent examples are the works of Shaikh *Abdul-Rahmān As-Saʿdī* (1987/2000) and Shaikh *Ibn ʿUthaymīn*, (1987). *As-Saʿdī* classified the Divine Names based on their semantic fields rather than their morphological similarities. He enumerated the Names and distinguished between their subtle meanings in several groups, each of which belong or refer to the same Divine Attribute, i.e. near-synonymous Names that share the same semantic field. To illustrate, *As-Saʿdī* listed the Names that indicate, for instance, Divine Power such as *al-ʿAzīz* ‘the Mighty’, *al-Qawiyy* ‘The All-Powerful’, and *al-Matīn* ‘The Omnipotent’; Names which refer to Divine Wisdom and Justice such as *al-ʿAdl*, ‘the Just’, *al-Ḥaqq* ‘the True Lord’, *al-Ḥakīm* ‘the All-Wise’, *Al-Ḥakam* ‘the Magistrate’, and *al-Fattāḥ*, ‘the Judge’; and Names that refer to Divine Mercy and Compassion

such as *Ar-Raḥmān*, the All-Merciful Lord, *Ar-Ra'ūf* the Most Kind, *Al-Tawwāb* the Acceptor of Repentance, etc.

*Ibn ʿUthaymīn* (1987), on the other hand, produced a rather shorter but more systematic study on the Divine Names, which he entitled '*Al-Qawā'id Al-Muthlā fī Sharḥ Sifāt Allāh wa Asmā'ih Al-Ḥusnā*', 'the Optimal Rules in Explaining Allāh's Attributes and His Most Beautiful Names'. *Ibn ʿUthaymīn* enumerated ninety-nine Divine Names, from the Qurānic text (81 Names) as well as *Ḥadīth* (18 Names).

### **2.5.3.1 The Traditional List of *al-Asmā al-Ḥusnā* (the Divine Names)**

Enumerating the Divine Names, which involves acquiring sound knowledge of their meanings, is believed to be the core of all knowledge amongst Muslims and a path to paradise according to the Prophetic promise. The aforementioned *Ḥadīth* (see 2.5.2) did not actually list the Divine Names as it aims at encouraging believers to discover these exceptional and beautiful Names by themselves as well as expand their knowledge of their Lord, the Bearer of such descriptive epithets. Some scholars and *Ḥadīth* narrators have always pointed out that there is no authentic narration of a prophetic *Ḥadīth* that states the Divine Names one by one, and that the widely-spread inauthentic list of Names is no more than an *Ijtihād*, individual efforts, by some early Muslims. In other words, the fact that the wide spread traditional list of the ninety-nine Divine Names is not based on an authentic Prophetic *Ḥadīth* makes one doubts its reliability.

Muslims believe that the Names of Allāh are infinite, as are His Divine Words (see Q. 18:109 and Q. 31:27). However, the aforementioned Prophetic *Ḥadīth*, which brings glad tidings of heavenly reward to those who enumerate and seek knowledge of the

Divine Names, had encouraged early Muslim theologians to endeavour in their quest for such a promising reward. This resulted in many early attempts to enumerate and list the ninety-nine Divine Names by exploring the Qurānic text as well as many *Hadīth* narrations. The well-known traditional list of the ninety-nine Names is one of a few inauthentic lists which seemed to have originated in the second century of Islam. The wide spread traditional list, though it lacks reliability from a *Hadīth* perspective, is memorized and chanted by millions of Muslims throughout the world.

The well-known, but unreliable, traditional list of the ninety-nine Divine Names comprises the following Names<sup>16</sup> (compiled by Gamrad, 1996);

*Bism-il Lāh-ir Raḥmān-ir Raḥīm, huwa Allāh-ul laḍi lā 'ilāh-a 'illā huwa, 'ālim-ul Ghaibi wa-Sh-shahādah, huwa* (1) *ar-Raḥmān* (2) *ar-Raḥīm*; (3) *al-Malik* (4) *al-Quddūs* (5) *as-Salām* (6) *al-Mu'min* (7) *al-Muḥaymin* (8) *al-ʿAzīz* (9) *al-Jabbār* (10) *al-Mutakabbir* (11) *al-Ḳāliq* (12) *al-Bāri'* (13) *al-Muṣawwir*; (14) *al-Ghaḥfār* (15) *al-Qaḥḥār* (16) *al-Waḥḥāb* (17) *ar-Razzāq* (18) *al-Fattāḥ* (19) *al-ʿAlīm* (20) *al-Qābiḍh* (21) *al-Bāsiṭ* (22) *al-Ḳāfiḍh* (23) *ar-Rāfiʿ* (24) *al-Muʿizz* (25) *al-Muḍill* (26) *as-Samīʿ* (27) *al-Baṣīr* (28) *al-Ḥakam* (29) *al-ʿAdl* (30) *al-Laṭīf* (31) *al-Ḳabīr* (32) *al-Ḥalīm* (33) *al-ʿAzīm* (34) *al-Ghaḥfūr* (35) *ash-Shakūr* (36) *al-ʿAliyy* (37) *al-Kabīr* (38) *al-Ḥafīz* (39) *al-Muqīt* (40) *al-Ḥasīb* (41) *al-Jalīl* (42) *al-Karīm* (43) *ar-Raqīb* (44) *al-Mujīb* (45) *al-Wāsiʿ* (46) *al-Ḥakīm* (47) *al-Wadūd* (48) *al-Majīd* (49) *al-Bāʿith* (50) *ash-Shahīd* (51) *al-Haqq* (52) *al-Wakīl* (53) *al-Qawīyy* (54) *al-Matīn* (55) *al-Waliyy* (56) *al-Ḥamīd* (57) *al-Muḥṣī* (58) *al-Mubdi'* (59) *al-Muʿīd* (60) *al-Muḥyī* (61) *al-Mumīt* (62) *al-Ḥayy* (63) *al-Qayyūm* (64) *al-Wājīd* (65) *al-Mājid* (66) *al-Wāḥid* (67) *aṣ-Ṣamad* (68) *al-Qādir* (69) *al-Muqtadir* (70) *al-Muqaddīm* (71) *al-Mu'aḳḳir* (72) *al-'Awwal* (73) *al-Ākīr* (74) *aḏ-Zāhir* (75) *al-Bāṭin* (76) *al-Wālī* (77) *al-Mutaʿāl* (78) *al-Barr* (79) *at-Tawwāb* (80) *al-Muntaqim* (81) *al-ʿAfuw* (82) *al-Ra'ūf* (83) *Mālikul-*

<sup>16</sup> See Appendix B for a fairly-acceptable English translation of this traditional list of the ninety-nine Divine Names (compiled by Gamrad, 1996). Another approximate translation is found in Netton (2008). Muslims who chant or recite these Names usually start with *Basmalah* followed by couple of verses from the Quran which are loaded with Divine Names, namely Q. 59: 22-24, and, thus, the same tradition is followed here (ibid.). It is transliterated, transcribed, from Arabic rather than translated.

*Mulk* (84) *Ḍul-Jalāli wal-ikrām* (85) *al-Muqṣiṭ* (86) *al-jāmi<sup>c</sup>* (87) *al-Ghaniyy* (88) *al-Mughnī* (89) *al-Mu<sup>c</sup>fī* (90) *al-Māni<sup>c</sup>* (91) *aḍ-Ḍārr* (92) *an-Nāfi<sup>c</sup>* (93) *al-Nūr* (94) *al-Hādī* (95) *al-Badī<sup>c</sup>* (96) *al-Bāqī* (97) *al-Wārith* (98) *ar-Rashīd* (99) *aṣ-Ṣabūr*.

Islamic literature concerning the Divine Names and Attribute is undoubtedly rich and diverse. Early Muslim works of theology as well as philosophy revolve around the nature and meanings of these Names and Attributes (Netton, 2008). According to Murata and Chittick (1994, pp. 58-59):

Books about the ninety-nine Names of God have played an important role in Islamic theology. As many authors of these books point out, the number should not be taken too literally, since there is no completely dependable list of the names, and it is easy to find more than ninety-nine names of God in the Koran (although determining which Koranic expression is to be considered a most beautiful name of God is a task with important theological implications).

*Ibn Taymiyyah* (d. 1328) was amongst the early scholars to doubt the authenticity of various *Ḥadīth* narrations which listed the ninety-nine Most Beautiful Names. In his *Majmū<sup>c</sup> al-Fatāwā*, *Ibn Taymiyyah* (1996, v. 22, p. 486) is reported to have said that:

إن التسعة و التسعين اسما لم يرد في تعيينها حديث صحيح عن النبي<sup>17</sup> صلى الله عليه وسلم، ومما يدل على عدم صحة حديث الترمذي أنه خلا من عدة أسماء منصوص عليها في الكتاب والسنة مثل الرب، الخلاق، القدير، القريب وفي مقابل ذلك يورد عدد من الأسماء التي لم ينص عليها في الكتاب ولا في السنة مثل: الصبور، المحصي، الرشيد، الباقي

The ninety-nine Divine Names were not specified (listed) in any authentic *Ḥadīth* from the Prophet, peace be upon him, and what proves the inauthenticity of the narration of *Tirmidī* is the fact that it overlooked several Divine Names that are explicitly stated in the Qurān and the *Sunnah* such as *ar-Rabb* ‘the Lord’, *al-Ḳallāq* ‘the All-Creative’, *al-Qadīr* ‘the All-Capable’, and *al-Qarīb* ‘the Near’! By contrast, he listed a

<sup>17</sup> (مجموع الفتاوى الكبرى ج ٢٢ / ٤٨٦) *Majmū<sup>c</sup> Al-fatawa al-Kubra*, v.22, p. 486

number of Names that are not mentioned in the Qurān nor cited in the *Sunnah* such as *aṣ-Ṣabūr* ‘the Patient’, *al-Muḥṣī* ‘the Reckoner’, *ar-Rashīd* ‘the Guide’, and *al-Bāqī* ‘the Everlasting’.

(My Translation)

Unfortunately, many widely-published lists of the Divine Names are also inconsistent and unreliable. Some Divine Names appear in some lists but have no mention in others. Therefore, it can be said that there is not a single agreed-upon list which includes all of the ninety-nine Names, and many scholars believe that such a list was never explicitly given by the Prophet (Ghuṣn, 1996). It is not the interest of this study to collect all the various attempts to enumerate the Divine Names, but what seems relevant to mention here is the reason behind the popularity of the aforementioned traditional list which comprises the ninety-nine Names.

A few sources in Muslim literature explain the reasons behind the unreliability of some early narrations on the Divine Names, such as that of *Al-Walīd ibn Muslim al-Umawī*, who enumerated and collected the famous list of the ninety-nine names which Muslims still use today. It is said that when *al-Umawī*, who lived during the second century of Islam, started telling his fellow Muslims about his collection of names, he used to speak to people about the aforementioned *Ḥadīth* (see 2.5.2) of the ninety-nine Holy Names, and he often followed it by mentioning the Names he himself collected (Raḍhwānī, 2005). That this was his repeated practice made people around him, including famous narrators of *Ḥadīth*, think that all these names were mentioned by the Prophet himself, so they memorized them as part of the *Ḥadīth*, and *Umawī*'s list spread and has become ingrained amongst Muslims ever since (ibid).

Some famous Muslim scholars, such as *Ghazāli* (d.1111), *Ibn Taymiyyah* (d.1328) and *Ibn Al-Qayyim* (d.1350), did speak of the controversy and unreliability of the aforementioned list of the Divine Names, but this did not stop it from spreading and passing from one generation to another. Thus, *Umayyad's* list found its way into Islamic literature and history and was known as the traditional list of the ninety-nine Most Beautiful Names. This traditional list is, hitherto, still widely known, memorized and chanted by millions of Muslims, mostly *Ash'arīs* and *Sufīs*, throughout the world.

However, some recent studies in this field made the issue of listing *al-Asmā al-Ḥusnā* even more controversial. For instance, a recent study by *M. Raḍhwānī* (2005), a researcher of *ʿAqīdah* at Cairo University, argues that only sixty-nine Divine Names of *Umayyad's* well-known traditional list are authentic, i.e. explicitly stated in the Qurān and *Ḥadīth*, while twenty-nine should be disregarded as they are not mentioned in the Qurān or *Ḥadīth*, nor based on authentic sources. This broad study by *Raḍhwānī* (2005), though it was recognized and accredited by reputable Islamic institutions including *Al-Azhar* University of Cairo, was heavily criticised for overlooking major efforts by early scholars to enumerate and analyse the meanings of the Divine Names (see Arafah, 2006). It was also criticised by some clerics and members of *Al-Azhar* itself, such as Arafah (2006) who reproved *Raḍhwānī's* criteria of selecting some Divine Names and disregarding others, such as the compound (construct-phrase) Names, e.g. *Ḍul-Jalāli wal-Ikrām* and *Fāṭir as-Samāwāt wal-Arḍ* (Arafah, 2006).

In many contemporary English works and collections of the Divine Names in the Muslim World, invoking these Names has, regrettably, become schematised as to look much more like a supernatural incantation than a prayer (Gamard, 1996, p.10). Some authors, however, bear that in mind and indicate in their prefaces that there is



no mention in their work of gaining actual Divine blessings by intoning or invoking certain Names (ibid). Many of these resources, such as the widely-available but infamous book of Talib Samat, *The Ninety-nine Most Eminent Names of Allāh* (1959), claim to have sort of magical incantation and healing power when one recites or chants some Divine Names in special situations and for a certain number of times (ibid.). These are simply myths and false promises that have no place in the true belief and *Tawhīd* of the Divine Names (see sections 2.6.2 and 2.6.3). Such myths and fictitious beliefs forced some authors of recent theological and spiritual Islamic studies to indicate, when introducing their work, that nothing is mentioned about healing powers or obtaining certain blessings from God by chanting particular Divine Names (Gamrad, 1996).

### **2.5.3.2 The Greatest Name of All Divine Names**

In the Islamic literature, most, if not all, traditional works on *al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā* speak of *al-Isim al-A'zam*, which literally means the Greatest Divine Name. Like other Divine Names, the issue of *al-Isim al-A'zam* is deeply rooted in the history of Islamic theology as it was explicitly mentioned in four Prophetic narrations (Ghuṣn, 1996). The four *Hadiths* are often named after their narrators, who conveyed what the Prophet said, and they are known as the narrations of *Buraydah*, *Anas Ibn Mālik*, *Abu Umāmah* and *Asmā' Bint Yazīd*. These narrations spoke of more than a dozen Divine Names, each of which has the potential to be the greatest Divine Name (ibid.).

In the narrations of *Buraydah* and *Anas Ibn Mālik*, it is said that the Prophet had heard a man praying (praising and invoking *Allāh* ) by means of a few Divine Names he learned from the Qurān, so the Prophet told some of his present companions that:

والذي نفس محمد بيده ، لقد سأل الله باسمه الأعظم الذي إذا سئِلَ به أعطى وإذا دُعِيَ به أجاب

*Wallāḍī nafsū Muḥammad-<sup>in</sup> bi-yadih, laqad sa`ala Allāha bi`ismihi-l  
A<sup>c</sup>zam allāḍī `iḍā su`ila bihi `a<sup>c</sup>tā wa`iḍā du<sup>c</sup>iya bihi `ajāb*

By Him in Whose Hand my soul lies [i.e. By *Allāh*, Prophet Muḥammad vows], he [the man praying] has just invoked *Allāh* by His Greatest Name through which every request is granted and every call is answered.

(My translation)

The great Divine Names that are believed to had been pronounced by the man praying in the aforementioned narrations of *Buraydah* and *Anas Ibn Mālik* include the Proper Name of God, namely *Allāh*, as well as other Divine Names such as *al-Aḥad*, *Aṣ-Ṣamad*, *al-Mannān*, *al-Ḥayy*, *al-Qayyūm*, *Badī<sup>c</sup> As-Samāwāt Wal-Ardh* (Tamimi, 1999). However, some early scholar, such as *Abū Ja<sup>c</sup>far Aṭ-Ṭabarī* (d. 923) and *Abū Ḥasan al-`Ash<sup>c</sup>arī* (d. 935), opposed the idea of favoring one Divine Name as they regard all the Names to be equal in their greatness (ibid).

Though it was debated in the early years of the Islamic theology and philosophy, the issue of *al-Ism al-A<sup>c</sup>zam* was not as controversial as the traditional list of the ninety-nine Divine Names and, of course, the Divine Attributes around which medieval sectarianism and dogmatism in Islam revolve (cf. Netton, 1995). This is due to the fact that the aforementioned narrations did not specify the greatest Divine Name nor singled one Name out of each group of Names which are mentioned in each narration. Thus, it was believed that the Name is concealed so that people may remain in a state of spiritual observation and persistent invocation toward their Lord. Some scholars, however, had scrutinised all the narrations and concluded that the greatest Divine Name, which is stated in all the narrated prophetic statements, is God's Proper Name (itself), namely *Allāh*.

Commenting on the greatest Divine Name as well as the beauty and uniqueness of other Names in the Qurān, Deedat (1994, p. 218) explains that:

The last and final revelation of God - the Holy Qurān - gives us ninety-nine attributes of God with the crowning name, *Allāh*. These ninety-nine attributes or names [...] are interspersed throughout the whole Qurānic text, like a beautiful necklace of pearls with a magnificent pendant, *Allāh*.

Deedat also comments on the last two verses of the fifty-ninth *Surah* of the Qurān, namely *al-Ḥashr* ‘The Mustering’ (see Q.59: 23-4), which contain more than a dozen Divine Names. He points out that ‘even the most jaundiced and inimical opponent of Islam will be forced to admit that even in its translated form, the attributes and the phraseology are beautiful and unique’ (Deedat, 1994, p. 219). Deedat goes on to argue that in their original Arabic, ‘the wordings and their construction are absolutely inimitable and sublime’ (ibid. p. 219).

#### **2.5.4 Reasons to Call the Divine Names ‘Most Beautiful’.**

A simple and straightforward response to questions on the reason behind describing the Divine Names in the Qurān as ‘Most Beautiful’ is because the Qurān itself describes them as *ḥusnā*, which literally means ‘most beautiful’. *Ḥusnā* is a word which appears on at least seventeen occasions in the Qurānic text, four of which are in reference to the beauty of the Divine Names (see Q. 7:180; Q. 17:110; Q. 20:8 and Q. 59:24). Some early linguists and theologians argue that the term *ḥusnā* is an intensified form of the Arabic adjective *ḥasnā*, which literally means ‘beautiful’, which is derived from *ḥusn* ‘high degree of beauty’ (*Radhwanī*, 2004). *Ḥusn*, in some Arabic dictionaries (see *Ibn Manzūr*, 1956), is considered synonymous to *jamal* ‘beauty’. Early Arab Linguists, according to *Ibn Manzūr* (1956), argued that *ḥusnā* is

an elative (superlative) feminine adjective of *ḥasan*, from which the masculine elative adjective *aḥsan* (best or perfect) is also derived. To sum up, the Divine Names have been described as *ḥusnā*, an elative adjective, which has the morphological form (templatic pattern) *fu<sup>l</sup>lā*, indicating the highest degree of something, and in the Qurānic contexts, it designates the uppermost degree of beauty.

The type and degree of beauty cannot sometimes be described by linguistic means. In other words, linguistic restrictions and limitations of a given language force its speakers to use certain terms to describe a wide range of senses and concepts. In his comments on the *ḥusn*, beauty, of the Divine Names, Shaikh *Ṭantāwī* (1994: 62) says:

The languages which were evolved to express the material realities of this world fail to comprehend even human emotions and feelings not to speak of Divine Attributes. Since we lack in words, we use the word beautiful to convey a host of different senses. We, for instance, say: a beautiful garden, a beautiful expression, and a beautiful woman, although the beauty of a garden is different from that of an expression, and also from that of a woman. Moreover, the beauty itself is not the same from woman to woman. But still the language has only one word to express it.

Muslim linguists and theologians always affirm that the Most Beautiful Names are epithets of excellence and perfection which denote *Allāh's* perfection and indescribable Beauty and Excellence. Therefore, one could understand that the meaning that each Divine Name entails is the reason behind describing it as a perfect, excellent and beautiful name (see sec. 2.3.3 for more details). According to Murata and Chittick (1994, p.58):

By calling God's names 'the most beautiful', the Koran is implying that, just as God himself is good and beautiful, so also the names He gives to Himself in the Koran are good and beautiful, because they express His

Beauty. And, just as God's Beauty and Goodness infinitely surpass those of His creation, so also the Beauty of His Names is far greater than the beauty of the names of other things.

The beauty of *Allāh's* Names is not confined to their perfect meanings as it is also found in their textual, contextual, stylistic and rhythmical effects (Mir, 1988). Names that share the same morphological pattern 'wazn' usually collocate to form a verse-ending rhythmical melody and stylistic beauty (Abdul-Raof, 2001). In his book *The Construction of the Bible and the Koran*, Arbuthnot (1885, cited in Tzortzis, 2011, online), explains the linguistic and stylistic beauty and effect of the Qurānic descriptions of *Allāh*:

It is confessedly the standard of the Arabic tongue... The style of the Koran is generally beautiful and fluent... and in many places, especially where the majesty and attributes of God are described, sublime and magnificent... He succeeded so well, and so strangely captivated the minds of his audience, that several of his opponents thought it the effect of witchcraft and enchantment.

## **2.6 Theological Aspects of the Most Beautiful Divine Names**

This section introduces theological concepts related to *Al-Asmā Al-Ḥusnā*, the Most Beautiful Divine Names. It essentially provides insights into the significance of the knowledge of *al-Asmā al-Ḥusnā* from an Islamic perspective. It also briefly explains the concepts of *Tawḥīd* and *Ilḥād* with regard to the Divine Names. This section also sheds light on the stance of *As-Salaf aṣ-Ṣāliḥ*, early pious Muslim scholars, with regard to the Divine Names and Attributes.

### 2.6.1 The Significance of the Knowledge of the Divine Names

Throughout the Muslim World people regard the Divine Names as numinous aspect of their faith as well as the only possible way to get to know (communicate with) their Lord (Arafah, 2006). In fact, Muslims consider the belief in these Divine Names, which express the Attributes of Divine Perfection, as an inseparable principle of their *Tawhīd*, Islamic monotheism (ibid.). *Tawhīd*, in addition to being a concept which constitutes the foundation of Islam, is also considered a science that emerged in the early days of Islamic theology, and has been conventionally divided (Philips, 2003) into three main principles, as will be discussed later in the next section (2.6.2).

Muslims who chant the Divine Names are not only praising and thanking the Almighty, but also addressing their own needs or humbly making requests too. Both the praise of God (*Du‘ā’ thanā’*) and invocation (*Du‘ā’ ṭalab*) are forms of worship in Islam. Thus, several Muslim scholars point to the importance of knowledge of the Divine Names and Attributes as being a vital factor in Muslims’ spiritual lives. According to Murata and Chittick (1994, p. 64).

The Koranic names of God have provided Muslims with an endless source for meditation on the nature of reality. Discussion of the names of God does not entail some abstract and irrelevant endeavour having nothing to do with the real world. Quite the contrary, the signs of the divine names are present in everything we do and everything we are. If the universe and our own existence are nothing but a panorama of divine signs, [then] these signs are telling us who God is, or what His names are’.

Some early Muslim theologians, such as *Rāzī* (d. 1209), point out that part of ‘the knowledge which is compulsory for every Muslim is the knowledge of God’ (Saritoprak, 2006, p.36). However, this knowledge is not easily attainable as the

Qurān contains hundreds of terms and expressions that refer to God's Essence, His Most Beautiful Names and His Lofty Attributes. Many scholars maintain that the more Muslims know about their Lord's Names and Attributes the closer they get to Him, the more they appreciate His blessings, forgiveness and rewards, and the more secure they will feel in this life and be assured of what is prepared for them in the next (Rahman, 2009). Gai Eaton<sup>18</sup> (1985), *aka Hassan Abdul-Hakeem*, says in regard to the place of the Divine Names in Muslims lives:

We in our small way can exemplify these [Divine] qualities and attributes in our daily lives. Inspired and aided by the Most Merciful, we can show mercy. Inspired and aided by the One Who Creates Guidance we can guide our fellow men and women. Through His Light our lives may be illuminated [...] we love those who are kind to us, and God is Kindness [...]. We love generosity when it is directed toward us, and He is the Selflessly Generous. [...] Above all, we love Perfection, and we seek it in vain in this imperfect world. We find it in God, Who alone is perfect. And the Qurān tells us that 'the believers are strong in their love of God'. At the end of the road, sign-posted by the Divine Names, the Muslim rejoices in an overwhelming love for the one who awaits us at journey's end.

### **2.6.2. *Tawḥīd* and *Ilhād* of the Divine Names**

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, *Tawḥīd*, the unified monotheistic belief in God, is the foundation of faith in Islam. In fact, the measure of the uprightness of one's belief in Islam is the degree of his/her adherence to *Tawḥīd* and its principles (Philips, 2003). The Qurān, in many ways, addresses the concept of *Tawḥīd* in most of its *Surahs*, or chapters. In other words, The Qurān is dedicated to a complete monotheism, i.e. *Tawḥīd*, as it is abundantly rich with statements that emphasise the

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<sup>18</sup> A Charterhouse and Cambridge-educated former diplomat, Eaton became a Muslim in 1951 after studying the religion and spending a year in Cairo. (The Telegraph, 30<sup>th</sup> Mar.2010).

monotheistic Islamic principle (Campanini, 2007). For example, one relatively short Qurānic *Surah* (Ch. 112), namely *Al-Iklās* (lit. the sincerity), is unequivocally clear-cut in its concept of *Tawhīd*, and has thus been traditionally considered symbolic summary of the whole Qurān and its monotheistic concept of *Tawhīd* (Rahman, 2009). It is beyond the scope of this study to thoroughly discuss all aspects of the Islamic concept of *Tawhīd*, but it is of high importance and relevance to briefly explain such central concepts, as *Tawhīd* and its opposite, *Ilhād*, in relation to the Divine Names and Attributes since these are both sensitive and categorical notions for modern Qurān exegetes, scholars and translators.

#### **2.6.2.1 *Tawhīd* of Divine Names and Attributes**

The word *Tawhīd* basically means unification, oneness or asserting oneness, and it is derived from the Arabic root *w-ḥ-d*, as in the stem verb *wahḥada* which literally means to unite or unify (Philips, 2003). However, when the word *Tawhīd* is theologically used in reference to the Almighty, it essentially indicates acknowledging and upholding monotheistic view of Him in all daily activities, practices and conduct (ibid.). It is known amongst Muslims; however, that belief in *Allāh* requires belief in His Most Beautiful Names and Attributes. In other words, whoever claims to be a Muslim and does not acknowledge *Allāh*'s Names and Attributes, as they are revealed in the Qurān or taught by the Prophet, is not actually a Muslim as long as he/she denies an essential and inseparable part of *Tawhīd*. In fact, belief in the Divine Names and Attributes is one of three principles that shape *Tawhīd* in Islam (Philips, 2003).

As already mentioned, the Islamic concept of monotheism, i.e. *Tawhīd*, is based on three unwavering definite principles, the first of which is the firm assertion that *Allāh* is the One and Only Creator and Controller of the universe, and that He is in no need



for allies to run His Kingdom and creation (Philips, 2003). This assertion represents the first principle of *Tawḥīd*, namely *Rubūbiyyah*, a word derived from *Rabb*, a Divine Name of Lordship and Ownership (ibid.). The second principle of *Tawḥīd* has to do with the acts of worships as they should solely be devoted to *Allāh* without any sort of mediation or intercession in worship. This form of *Tawḥīd* has to do with ‘*Ulūhiyyah* (lit. Godhead), a word which is also derived from another Divine Name, namely *Al-Ilāh*<sup>19</sup>. The third principle of *Tawḥīd* is the firm assertion and belief of Divine Uniqueness and Perfection of Essence, Names and Attributes (*Tawḥīd al-‘Asmā’ wa Aṣ-Ṣifāt*) as they are expressed in the Qurān and the *Sunnah*, the Prophetic traditions (ibid.). These three principles constitute, as previously stated, the foundation of Islamic Monotheism, *Tawḥīd* (ibid, p.17).

It is worth mentioning that whenever *Tawḥīd* is discussed in relation to the Divine Names and Attributes, *Tawḥīd al-‘Asmā’ wa Aṣ-Ṣifāt*, some early and contemporary Muslim scholars often refer to a few intricate theological concepts that contradict this form of *Tawḥīd* including the notions of *ta‘ḥīl*, *tahrīf*, *tamthīl*, *tashbīh* and *Takyīf* (see *Ibn ‘Uthaymīn*, 2001) which will be briefly explained in the next section (see 2.6.3).

### **2.6.2.2 *Ilḥād* of Divine Names**

In some verses of the Holy Qurān, the believers are ordered to distance themselves and stand apart from those who belie and pervert (*yulḥidūn*) God’s attributes and His Most Beautiful Names (Ramli, 1999). An interpretation of one verse (Q. 7:180) states: ‘and leave the company of those who blaspheme (*yulḥidūn* or commit *Ilḥād*) in His Names; they will be requited what they do’ (ibid.). The term ‘*yulḥidūn*’ is also used to

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<sup>19</sup> For the difference between the two Divine Names *Al-ilāh* and *Allāh*, see chapter five (5.2.1.1).

describe those who make false references to the Qurān (see Q. 16:103) as well as those who distort, deny, and belie Divine signs and revelations (see Q. 41:40).

*Ilhād* is a verbal noun ‘derived from the Arabic verb *lahada*, meaning to deviate, to digress’ (Leaman, 2006, p.289). The Qurān applies this term to speak not only of those who profane the Divine Names or talk about them in a derogatory manner (Q. 7:180), but also about those who deviate from the right understanding of the Divine Names and Attributes by using their own logic and interpretations (ibid.). The Qurān explicitly condemns those who ignorantly argue about Allāh (see Q. 22:8) and refers to some people who, with no knowledge or guidance or any book of enlightenment, argue about His Divine Nature and Attributes (Rahman, 2009).

The Qurānic use of the term *Ilhād*, along with its variants and derivatives, has various denotations and connotations in many contexts (see *Ilhād* in Q. 22:25 and *yulhidūn* 16:103 and 41:40). The term is derived from the tri-consonantal root *l-h-d*, which literally indicates deviance and nonconformity. *Ilhād*, in relation to Divine Names and Attributes apparently ‘connotes some kind of wilful misrepresentation by unbelievers of God’s nature’ (Leaman, 2006, p. 289). *Ibn ‘Abbās* (d. 687) is believed to have commented on the term *Ilhād* in the aforementioned verse (7:180) and said; ‘to do *Ilhād* to God’s attributes and names means to misuse, deny or negate them partially or completely’ (Ramli, 1999). To commit *Ilhād* of the Divine Names, according to the Qurān exegete *Qatādah* (680-736), means to set up rivals and partners to *Allāh* with regards to His sublime attributes and names, a stance which is close to that of *Rāzī* (1149-1209) who observed that *Ilhād* in regard to *Allāh*'s Names and attributes means applying them to other beings or objects or, alternatively, trying to describe God in anthropomorphic terms and relationships like a ‘father’ or a ‘son’ (ibid.).

In many contexts, the Qurān denounces those who have an unjust opinion of *Allāh*, as well as those who do not make just estimate of His nature and greatness (Ramli, 1999). The Almighty says on three Qurānic occasions, namely Q. 6:91, Q. 39:67 and Q. 22:74 the statement [*Mā Qadaru Allāha Ḥaqqā Qadrihi*], which can be interpreted as ‘they measure not Allāh His rightful measure’. This is a general expressive verse the Qurān uses to indicate the main reason behind all sorts of *Ilhād* or disbelief in Him, His existence and Attributes (ibid.).

The Qurān also describes the hypocrites and polytheists both men and women as those ‘who assume an evil assumption concerning Allāh’ [*azzānnīna bil-lāhi ḡann-as saw’i ‘alayhim dā’irat-us saw’* Q.48:6] and ‘upon them is the turn of misfortune’ (Rahman, 2009; Ramli, 1999). Commenting on this verse, Ibn Al-Qayyim states that denying the Divine Attributes and Names, as well as rejecting the realities of their connotations, is among the worst kinds of having evil assumptions of God (ibid.).

It is worth mentioning that the prohibition of *Ilhād*, not showing respect and veneration to Allāh's Names and Attributes, has its foundation in other scriptures which also consider belittling the Divine Name a blasphemous act (see Nash, 2007). For instance, one statement from the Old Testament warns against the wrongful use of God’s Name or taking it in vain (Exodus, 20:7) ‘Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain’ (Gehweiler, 2008, p.71; cf. Lockyer, 1988).

### **2.6.3 The Stance of the *Salaf* on the Divine Names**

Whenever they address the issue of the Divine Names and Attributes, Muslim Scholars usually speak with special emphasis on the stance of *As-Salaf aṣ-Ṣāliḥ* السلف الصالح toward this sensitive and vital issue of Islamic *‘Aqīdah*, ‘doctrine’ or ‘creed’

(Tamimi, 1999). *As-Salaf aṣ-Ṣāliḥ*, or simply the *Salaf*, is a well-known expression for the pious believers of the first generations of Muslims, who are also called *Ahl As-Sunnah Wal-Jamā'ah* أهل السنة والجماعة (ibid.). The difference between the two expressions is that the word *Salaf* is confined to the first two or three generations of pious Muslims, while *Ahl As-Sunnah Wal-Jamā'ah* is used to refer to all those, including the *Salaf* and contemporary *Sunnis*, who adhere to the teachings of the Qurān and authentic *Sunnah* of the Prophet (pbuh).

Early Muslim theologians maintained that the stance, or *Manhaj*, of the *Salaf* concerning the Divine Names and Attributes is that they acknowledge and affirm all the Divine Names, Attributes and Descriptions as their apparent meanings in the Qurān and *Sunnah* suggest (Tamimi, 1999). The *Salaf* unarguably emphasised that the nature of the Divine Names and Attributes are *tawqīfiyyah* [لا مجال للعقل فيها] توقيفية, which means they should be understood as they were revealed without (i) partial or complete negation of their meanings (*ta'ṭīl*), (ii) distortion (*taḥrīf*), (iii) drawing parallels (*tamthīl*) or resemblance (*tashbīh*) to them, and (iv) without questioning, *bilā Kayf*, their manner or nature (*Takyīf*) (Ibn<sup>c</sup>Uthaymīn, 2001, cf. Netton, 1989).

*Bila Kayf*, according to Netton (1989), refers to the refusal to examine the mode of the Divine Attributes which had resulted in 'an intellectual *cul-de-sac* in which acceptance triumphed over analysis and incomprehension over reason' (p.4), i.e. full acceptance of the 'Qurānic theologoumena' without a possibility of 'enquiry into their exact modality' (p.26). *As-Salaf aṣ-Ṣāliḥ* base their stance of the Divine Names on the Qurānic principle that 'there is none comparable to Him', *Laysa kamithlihi shay* ليس كمثله شيء (112: 4), from which they also drew the concepts of *tanzīh* and *tathbīt* (Tamimi, 1999). *Tanzīh* basically refers to purifying Divine descriptions from *taḥrīf*

‘deviation’, *ta<sup>ʿ</sup>ṭīl* ‘divesting and emptying Divine Names and Attributes of their meanings’, and *tashbīh* ‘anthropomorphism’, while *tathbīt* indicates affirming what *Allāh* and his messenger have affirmed in the Qurān and *Sunnah*, respectively, concerning Divine Names and Attributes (ibid. cf. Saritoprak, 2006).

## **2.7 Early Works on the Divine Names and Some Controversial Issues**

This section provides a brief historical account of some major works by early Muslim scholars on the Divine Names (see 2.7.1). It also briefly shed light on some related controversial issues regarding the linguistic and theological concepts of names and naming (see 2.7.2). As previously mentioned, these controversial issues started between early linguistic schools and caused heated debates in the second-century Muslim community as well as sectarian divisions concerning the definitions and connotations of the terms *al-ism*, *al-musammā* and *at-tasmiyah*, which basically refer to the (proper) name, the object/thing named and the act of naming, respectively.

### **2.7.1 Early Major Works on the Divine Names**

Unlike the currently changing Islamic fields of knowledge, contemporary Islamic theology is mostly based on early Muslim contributions to the fields of *ʿAqīdah* and *Tawḥīd*. Some of these early contributions were dedicated to identifying the Divine Names as well as interpreting their meanings in the Qurānic contexts. It is, regrettably, beyond the scope of the current study, which focuses on the renderings of the Divine Names in some Qurān’s English translations, to provide a detailed account of all the early contributions to the meanings and interpretations of the Divine Names. Thus, three examples of early major works in this regard are briefly highlighted. These are the early works of *Zajjāj* (d. 922), *Ḳaṭṭābī* (d. 989) and *Bayhaqī* (d. 1066).

One of the early, if not the earliest, theological and linguistic works on *al-‘Asmā al-Ḥusnā* is that of *Zajjāj* (852-922), a well-known early Arab linguist from Baghdad, the capital of the <sup>6</sup>*Abbasids* (Ghuṣn, 1996). *Zajjāj* is known for his great contributions to primary studies on Arabic syntax and morphology and he is also recognized for his brief work on the interpretation of *al-‘Asmā al-Ḥusnā* (ibid.). *Zajjāj*’s relatively short but invaluable book, which he entitles *Tafsīr ‘Asmā’ Allāh al-Ḥusnā* (lit. *Interpreting the Most Beautiful Divine Names*) was probably the earliest contribution to the interpretation of the Divine Names in the history of Islamic studies. This concise work stood the test of time as it is still one of the main linguistic and theological sources for contemporary studies on the meanings of the Divine Names (ibid.).

What also distinguishes the early work of *Zajjāj* is the fact that he was a pioneer linguist of Arabic in his time and this was reflected in his linguistic approach to the interpretation of the meanings of the Divine Names. However, despite all the praise for its linguistic properties, this work was criticized for being too short and unsystematic (Ghuṣn, 1996). It was also criticized for its reliance on the aforementioned inauthentic list<sup>20</sup> of names narrated by *Walīd Bin Muslim* (ibid.). *Zajjāj* was also heavily criticized for some of his metaphorical interpretations of meanings regarding Divine Highness, Love and Contentment (ibid.). However, biographers of *Zajjāj*’s life maintain that he eventually reverted to the *Ḥanbalī* School and its *Salafī* stance on the Divine Names and Attributes (Ghuṣn, 1996).

Other early figures, known for their work on the Divine Names, are *Ḳaṭṭābī* (930-989) and *Bayhaqī* (994-1066). *Ḳaṭṭābī* was a narrator of Prophetic *Ḥadīths* and an overseer of their authenticity (Ghuṣn, 1996). He was also a theologian whose book *Sha’n Ad-*

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<sup>20</sup> See section 3 of this chapter.

*Du'ā'*, (lit. the Matter of Supplication) in which he attempted to explain *al-Asmā al-Husnā* (the Divine Names) linguistically and spiritually, became one of his well-known contributions to Islamic theology (Ghuṣn, 1996). *Bayhaqī* (d. 1066) was also a contributor to the works and knowledge of the Divine Names. His work, *Al-Asmā' wa Aṣ-Ṣifāt* (lit. Divine Names and Attributes), deals with both the theological and spiritual issues regarding the Divine Names and Attributes (ibid.). Following in the footsteps of his teacher *Al-Hulaimī*, *Bayhaqī* argues that the Divine Names are infinite and they should not be restricted to ninety-nine names.

### **2.7.2 Controversial issues about the Divine Names and Attributes**

As mentioned earlier (see 2.3.1 in this chapter), the derivation of the word *Ism* (name) as well as its various lexical and semantic forms, namely *tasmiyah* (naming), '*asmā'*' (names), and *al-musammā* (the thing named), were notably one of most debated issues between two early Arab/Islamic linguistic schools, namely *al-Baṣriyyūn* from the city of *Baṣrah*, and *al-Kūfiyyūn* from the city of *Kūfah*, both in modern Iraq. The debate was intense as it entailed aspects of Islamic Doctrine, particularly the Divine Names, which are recurring terms in the Qurānic text and whether these Names are representatives of the Divine Essence or not (Ghuṣn, 1996). The early linguists of *Kūfah* and *Baṣrah*, according to Shah (1999), 'engaged in [such] seemingly radical linguistic erudition, despite the fact that it encroached upon the strictures of a religious orthodoxy' (p. 27).

One of the first theologians to discuss the logic of *tasmiyah*, '*asmā'*', and *al-musammā* in the Qurān was Imam *al-Ghazālī* (d. 1111). *Ghazālī* was amongst the early scholars who heavily criticised early Islamic philosophy in relation to the Divine Attributes and the Most Beautiful Names (*Ghazālī*, 1992). In his introduction to his work (*The*

*Ultimate Purpose in Explaining the Meanings of Allāh's Most Beautiful Names*), Ghazālī (1995, p.5) states the following (translated by Burrell and Daher):

Many have plunged into the matter of the name and the thing named, and taken different directions, and most of the groups have deviated from the truth. Some say (a) that the name is the same as the thing named, but other than the act of naming, while others say (b) the name is other than the thing named, but the same as the act of naming. Still a third group, known for its cleverness in constructing arguments and in polemics [*kalām*], claims (c) that the name (c.1) can be the same as the thing named, as we say of God Most High that He is Essence and Existent; and that the name can also be other than the thing named, as in our saying that God is Creator and Provider. For these indicate creating and providing, which are other than Him. So it can be such that the name (c.2) may not be said either to be the same as the thing named or other than it, as when we say 'Knowing' and 'Powerful': both refer to knowing and power, yet attributes of God cannot be said to be the same as God or other than Him.

The truth, Ghazālī continues, is that 'the name is different from both the act of naming and the thing named, and that those three terms [name, naming, the thing named] are distinct and not synonymous' (ibid. p.5-6). Then, Ghazālī goes on to explain and distinguish, in detail, between these three concepts in relation to *al-Asmā' al-Ḥusnā*, the Most Beautiful Divine Names.

Other well-known Muslim theologians, including Imam *Abu Ḥanīfah*, were actively involved in the aforementioned controversial doctrinal debates in *Kūfah* and *Baṣrah* (Leaman, 2006). One of *Abu Ḥanīfah*'s debateable beliefs is that he deems reasoning an essential spring toward realising the Divine Nature, Attributes and Existence (ibid.). According to Leaman (2006, p.8), *Abu Ḥanīfah* also endorsed rational questioning of religious issues 'through *'ra'iy'*, individual judgment, and *'qiyās'*, parallel analogy, in religious judiciary affairs'. Consequently, he was severely criticised by other well-regarded scholars of the time (ibid.). However, *Abu Ḥanīfah*



opposed some of the standpoints of the aforementioned intellectual schools and acknowledged that the Divine Names and Attributes are everlasting, and that the nature of the Divine Qualities, such as the metaphysical Divine Face and Hand (s), cannot be intellectualised as they are beyond human perception (ibid.).

The sensitivity of such issues in the Muslim community of that time is indisputable. Some Qurānic verses which speak of the Divine Attributes and the obscurities of existence were the centre of heated debates and controversies. Such obscurities should not have been a source of dispute since they are part of one's Islamic belief in the unseen Divine Knowledge (Shanqīī, 1988). This belief in the unseen, however, is not meant to be a blind one as Rahman (2009, p.2) puts it:

God's existence can, however, be brought home to those who care to reflect so that it not only ceases to be an 'irrational' or 'unreasonable' belief but becomes the Master-Truth. This is the task of the Qurān: if the task is accomplished, everything has been accomplished; if not, nothing whatever has been achieved.

Other controversial issues with regard to the Divine Names and Attributes have resulted from various interpretive approaches, *manāhij at-tafsīr*, of some Qurānic statements ('*āyāt*) or verses (Philips, 2005). Some Qurānic verses speak about the Almighty Creator and the mysteries of creation in a manner that their concepts have always been inexplicable by means of *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* (ibid.). These statements are known as '*āyāt Mutashābihāt*, vague or ambiguous verses, which once were the centre of attention of many philosophical interpretations that led to early religious and political divisions in the Muslim community (these took place as early as the second half of its first Muslim century, after the era of the Prophet and his four Caliphs

onward) (ibid.). The *Mutashābihāt*<sup>21</sup> became the pillars upon which fallacies of groundless *ta'wīl* were built, and the Divine Names and Attributes became the starting point (ibid.). However, the idea that Divine Names and Attributes are part of the *mutashābihāt* in the Qurānic text was challenged by mainstream scholars such as *Ibn Taymiyyah* particularly in his collection '*Majmū' Al-Fatāwā*' (see Sheikh, 2007).

It is worth mentioning that the controversies surrounding the interpretations of the Divine Names and Attributes took place in the Muslim community until the ninth and tenth centuries (the third and fourth centuries of Islam). Prior to these controversies, *tafsīr* was conveyed by *ma'thūr*, narration (Philips, 2005). Leading companions of the Prophet, who engaged in shaping the early schools of *tafsīr*, used to quote the exegetical remarks of the Prophet or describe the setting, '*Asbāb An-nuzūl*, in which some '*āyāt* were revealed (ibid.). It is also worth mentioning that the first generations of Muslims did not actually distinguish between *tafsīr* and *ta'wīl* and used both interchangeably to refer to all forms of Qurānic exegeses as evident in some early works of *tafsīr* such as that of *Ṭabarī* (ibid.). Later schools of thought and speculative theology such as the Rationalist *Mu'tazilah*, *Jahmiyyah*, *Jabriyyah* and the *Qadariyyah*, however, introduced new exegetical concepts as well as deviant reasoning that endangered the purity of early Islamic thought (ibid.).

In the ninth and tenth centuries, according to Philips (2005), the term *ta'wīl* acquired new interpretive denotations most of which revolve around the shift of meaning of some Qurānic terms from their apparent senses to that of contextual and relative ones

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<sup>21</sup> The *Mu'tazilah* were inflexible in their refusal of Divine Attributes as well as in maintaining the outlook of a just God (Ayoub et al. 2014). For instance, they interpreted the superficial meanings of obscure '*mutashābihāt*' verses rationally and philosophically in an anthropomorphic manner in light of their own doctrine (ibid.).

(ibid.). These, of course, emerged with precarious consequences for the understanding of Divine-related concepts. A discussion of such consequences, however, is certainly beyond the scope of this study which is confined to examining the linguistic features of the root-sharing Divine Names as well as evaluating their English renderings in well-known existing translations of the Qurān. However, some major contributions and relevant works of prominent Muslim scholars are too important to ignore.

As previously mentioned, the early linguistic and exegetical disputes resulted in the emergence of the aforementioned intellectual schools of speculative theology. The Linguistic schools, both *Baṣriyyūn* and *Kūfiyyūn*, as well as the controversial intellectual schools were heavily criticised by prominent Muslim scholars such as *Ibn Ḥanbal* (d.855), *Ghāzali* (d.1111) *Ibn Taymiyyah* (1328), and *Ibn Al-Qayyim* (d.1350). Imam *Ahmad Ibn Ḥanbal* (780-855), the founder of the *Ḥanbalī* Sunni School of thought, was one of the prominent representatives and guardians of the *Salafī* position regarding the Divine Names and Attributes (Netton, 1989, p.4; Leaman, 2006. p.20).

*Ibn Ḥanbal* argued that a Muslim must believe in Allāh as He is literally presented in the Qurān without rational questioning of His Essence or inconceivable Nature (Leaman, 2006). So, *Ibn Ḥanbal* in this regard ‘rejects negative theology (*tanzīh*) and anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*)’ and believes in the eternity and infiniteness of *Allāh*'s Names and Attributes (ibid. p.20). He exposed and refuted the claims of the *Muʿtazilah* and *Qadariyyah* who negated the power or control of the Divine Will over mankind, and the *Jahmiyyah*, who negated the meanings of some, if not all, of the Divine Names and Attributes (ibid. cf. Netton, 1989 and Tamimi, 1999).

Other famous defenders of the *Salafī* stance on the Divine Names and Attributes are *Ibn Taymiyyah* (1263-1328) and his great student *Ibn Al-Qayyim* (1292-1350). In most of their works *Ibn Taymiyyah* and *Ibn Al-Qayyim* thoroughly discussed the various aspects of faith of the Divine Names Attributes and endeavoured to explain how those Names and Attributes are understood and interpreted by the early devout *Salaf* (Ramli, 1999). They also dealt with the innovative beliefs and rationalistic arguments of the aforementioned sects and schools of thoughts, particularly the *Muʿtazilah*, *Qadariyyah* and *al-Jahmiyyah* (ibid. cf. Sheikh, 2007). Both scholars played a prominent role in refuting the widespread misconceptions concerning the Divine Nature and struggled to show how some ideologies and philosophies of the Divine were deviant and different from the way and doctrine of the *Salaf* (ibid.).

It is worth mentioning that one of great sources for the study of Islamic theology in general, and the Divine Names, Attributes and anthropomorphism in particular is *Ibn Al-Qayyim's Nūniyyah*<sup>22</sup>, an extensive theological-polemical Ode of outstanding volume (about 6000 verses) known as *Al-Kāfiyah Ash-Shāfiyah* (lit. the sufficient and healing) (see Isā, 1986). It is also worth mentioning that *Ibn Al-Qayyim* composed this *Nūniyyah* as a reaction to the influential trials of *Ibn Taymiyyah*. Some of the relevant verses from it are analysed to clarify the meaning of some Divine Names discussed in this study.

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<sup>22</sup> An Ode in which all verses end or rhyme with an 'n' sound.

## **Chapter Three: Qurānic Arabic, Translation Criticism and the Divine Names**

### **1. Introduction**

Chapter Three briefly introduces Qurānic Arabic as well as translation criticism in Arabic literature. It also introduces some translation concepts and critically reviews the early translations of the Qurān. It will also shed light on previous works on the translations on the Divine Names of the Qurān. To achieve this, the chapter is divided into four main sections, the first of which is this brief introduction which highlights the purpose of this chapter and briefly introduces its contents. The second section presents a brief historical account of the Arabic language and explains how the divinely-inspired Qurānic Arabic is incomparable to all other forms of this language.

The third section sheds light on Qurān translations and reviews some of the often-criticised early renditions. It is subdivided into six subsections, the first of which provides a brief historical account of literary criticism and translation in Arabic literature (see 3.3.1). The second subsection highlights translation criticism and the sensitivity of translating religious texts (see 3.3.2). The third subsection addresses the need for and significance of Qurān translations (see 3.3.3). The fourth subsection briefly discusses the notions of translation equivalence as well as non-equivalence and un/translatability in relation to the Qurān. The fifth subsection sheds light on various approaches that have been adopted to translate the Qurān. The sixth subsection represents a critical review of early Qurān translations. These are divided into early translations in general and early Western (Latin and English) translations in particular.

The fourth section of this chapter reviews previous translation studies on the Divine Names. It also briefly discusses some of the strategies adopted to translate the Divine

Names. In this section, the notions of translation loss and compensation are also defined in relation to the translations of the Divine Names.

### **3.2 Arabic and Qurānic Arabic**

This section introduces the language of the Qurān, namely the Classical Arabic of the Qurān (aka Qurānic Arabic). It sheds light on the Arabic language in general and Qurānic Arabic in particular. The section is divided into two sub-sections, the first of which provides a brief history of Arabic (see 3.1.1), followed by a more detailed account of Qurānic Arabic and its linguistic excellence (see 3.1.2).

#### **3.2.1 Brief History of Arabic**

The early documented signs of Old Arabic (Proto-Arabic), on the one hand, date back to the seventh century BC and up to the third century AD, but very little is identified from some remaining records (Ryding, 2005). The only available attested evidence is in the form of epigraphic materials, such as engraved rocky outcrops, inscriptions and graffiti, which were discovered in northwest and central Arabia (ibid.). Early Classical Arabic, on the other hand, goes back to between the third and the fifth centuries, but, yet again, little is known from this period apart from a few remaining literary artefacts (ibid.). The documented period of Classical Arabic really begins from the sixth century onward, during which Arabic poetry robustly thrived in the form of orally-composed formal performances and long-recited odes or poems (ibid.). These odes represent stylish metrics and, according to Arberry (1957), a ‘highly conventionalized scheme [...] upwards of sixty couplets all following an identical rhyme’ (cited in Ryding, 2005, p.2).

In the seventh century AD, the Prophet ‘Muhammad’ was divinely chosen to convey the Divine Message of the Qurān over a twenty-three-year period. The revelation of the miraculous Arabic of the Qurān not only dominated the oral cultural scene of Mecca but transformed it from a preliterate to literate one (Philips, 2005). In fact, the first revealed Qurānic verses encouraged reading (Q.96:1) as well as writing (Q.96:4) and paved the way for later development of methods and materials of writing which were seen as a means of preserving the Divine Revelation as well the Prophetic instructions and traditions, known as the *Hadīth* (ibid.).

The Qurān was authoritatively collected in one official codex (Philip, 2005) during the rule of the third Muslim Caliph, namely *‘Uthmān Ibn ‘Affān* (645–656). Subsequently, the Arabic language went far beyond being merely the medium of classical poetic works and took on a role as a lasting sacralised language (Ryding, 2005). In other words, being divinely selected as the language of the Qurān, Arabic grew into a permanent vehicle of religious, theological and exegetical knowledge as well as linguistic, particularly grammatical, studies (ibid. cf. Watson, 2002).

From the eighth century onward, along with the expansion of the Muslim community, Arabic had thrived beyond the Arabian Peninsula and became the vernacular tongue of the growing Muslim civilization which extended beyond the Middle East (Martin, 2004). The rapid expansion of the Muslim Caliphate was not merely a religious and cultural one, but was also linguistic as Arabic had spread, in less than a century, to become not only the official language of all the newly-ruled Muslim territories of the Caliphate but also the medium of communication of the large Muslim nation which stretched from the Arabian Peninsula to the north into the Levant, to the east into Iraq, Persia, and Khuzestan, and to the west into northern parts of Africa (Watson, 2002).

As the tool to communicate with Islam's Holy Book, Arabic expanded further and became the *lingua franca* of the Islamic empire, encompassing various cultures and languages, on all levels of government, diplomacy, science and research. In the medieval era, it continued to exert a profound influence on languages within neighbouring as well as remote Muslim lands including Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Indonesian, and others (Abdel-Haleem, 2004, p. ix). Ultimately, the so called golden age of Arabic came to an end with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the first quarter of the twentieth century as many territories claimed back their independence as well as their original national tongue; these include the Turks, Persians and the Kurds (Watson, 2002; Ryding, 2005).

Arabic today is still the dominant and official language in twenty-two Arab states in the South-west of Asia (Middle East) and North Africa (Ryding, 2005). Colloquial rather than Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is often used in the daily lives of Arabs whereas MSA is officially used in the visual and written media as well as formal education and communication. Arabic is also one of the six official UN languages and it is partially used by non-Arabic-speaking Muslims around the globe as it is the ceremonial and religious language of Islam and its Holy Book, the Qurān (Abdel-Haleem, 1999). In fact, non-Arabic-speaking Muslims perform their five daily prayers, during which they recite the Qurān, in Arabic. The first Qurānic chapter, namely the *Fātiḥah*, which is memorised and often-repeated by non-Arabic-speaking Muslims, is only uttered in Arabic as well (ibid.).

### **3.2.2 Qurānic Arabic**

Qurānic Classical Arabic has always been distinguished from other forms of Classical (*fushā*) Arabic such as the Classical pre-Islamic Arabic, post-Islamic Mediaeval



Arabic, Modern Standard Arabic, and colloquial or diglossic Arabic, which is a mixture of Modern Standard and colloquial Arabic (Dickins, 2010). This is due to the fact that the Classical Arabic of the Qurān is believed to be a Divinely-inspired discourse that cannot, and religiously should not, be compared to any other form of human Arabic (Ghamidi, 2010). Throughout its history, Classical Arabic has presented a stable linguistic permanence from the pre-Islamic era to modern times due to being reinforced by Qurānic Arabic and its centrality in linguistic thought (Dickins, 2010). This is evident in ‘the essentially prescriptive approach of traditional Arabic grammar, the fundamental rationale for which was to serve the reading and interpretation of the Qurān’ (ibid. p. 1077).

Arab linguists and rhetoricians view the Qurān as the ultimate discourse of rhetoric with unparalleled articulacy, delicacy of style and accuracy of wording (Allaithy, 2014, p.17). The most eloquent Arabic speech falls far short when compared to the Qurānic rhetoric and style (ibid.). Since the rise of Islam, the Qurān has always been the core text for all Islamic as well as Arabic linguistic studies. In fact, it constitutes an authentic reference upon which other fields of knowledge were once established. According to Abdel-Haleem (2004, p. ix):

Arabic grammar was developed to serve the Qur’an, the study of Arabic phonetics was pursued to determine the exact pronunciation of Qur’an words, the science of Arabic rhetoric was developed in order to describe the features of the inimitable style of the Qur’an, and the art of Arabic calligraphy was cultivated through writing down the Qur’an. The Qur’an is the basis of Islamic law and theology; indeed, as the celebrated 15<sup>th</sup>-century scholar and author *Suyūfī* said, ‘everything is based on the Qur’an’.

The eloquent poets and orators of Makkah (Mecca), both those who accepted the message and those who opposed it and remained polytheists, acknowledged the

literary hegemony and exceptionality of Qurānic Arabic. Believers hearing it uttered on the spot by the Prophet, and recognising how different it was from the Prophet's day-to-day speech, saw in this a further proof of its divine origin (Abdel-Haleem, 1999). One tough opponent of the Prophet, who was in astonishment at the influence of the Qurān, described it by saying, 'it ascends to the heights and nothing ascends above it, and it crushes what is beneath it' (ibid. p. 8).

During its two-decade period of revelation, the Qurān explicitly challenged the eloquent people of *Quraish* to come up with such a miraculous speech, or even the likeness of its shortest verses (see for example Q. 52:33-34, 2:23 and 4:82). Early eloquent Arabs, though they achieved the highest level of eloquence as asserted by a number of western and eastern scholars, could not obviously stand up against this test, though there were a few pathetic attempts to do so (Philips, 2005). The Qurānic challenge goes beyond the early community of Makkah, in fact, challenging all mankind and the Jinn, combined, to produce the likeness of the Qurān (see Q. 17:88).

In his book *Mohammedanism* (1970, p.28), the famous Scottish Orientalist Hamilton Gibb (1895-1971), unlike most orientalists, acknowledges the indisputable reality of the miraculous nature of Qurānic Arabic and the failure of the early eloquent Arabs to match it. He confesses that:

The Meccans still demanded of him a miracle, and with remarkable boldness and self-confidence, Mohammad appealed as a supreme confirmation of his mission to the Koran itself. Like all Arabs they were connoisseurs of language and rhetoric. Well then, if the Koran were his own composition other men could rival it. Let them produce ten verses like it. If they could not (and it is obvious that they could not), then let them accept the Koran as an outstanding evidential miracle.

The Qurān itself asserts that the Prophet ‘Muhammad’ does not speak out of his own desire, *wa mā yanṭiqu ‘anil-hawā*, as it is no less than an inspiration revealed down to him, *in huwa illā wahy-un yūhā* (Q. 53:3-4). Since early Arabs accused the Prophet of being a magician and supernatural poet, the Qurān presented its own genre and made it clear that it should not be compared to poetry as it is inimitably well-constructed in both form and substance (Ali and Leaman, 2007). Though the Qurān often uses both prosodic and poetic forms of expression, it cannot be classified neither poetry nor prose as it has its own narrative and style (Rahman, 2009). It is simply a Divine Reminder, delivered by Noble Messenger (Q. 69:40), and it is not the wording of a poet, but little do people believe (Q. 69:41).

Since the Qurān is revealed in the ultimate articulate Arabic, it obviously uses the linguistic capacities of this language in order to convey meaning in an eloquent and lucid manner (Ghamidi, 2010). In other words, though Qurānic Arabic is believed to be a ‘divinely-elevated’ form of Arabic, it only conveys its messages by employing the linguistic features of ‘human’ Arabic (ibid.). One Ayah in the Qurān, namely (Q. 19:97) for instance, speaks of a Divine clarification of the choice of Arabic to be the medium of communication; ‘*We* have facilitated it [the Qurān], in your own tongue [Arabic], so that you may bring glad tidings to the pious and warnings to a stubborn folks’ (ibid.). Thus, the right understanding, reflection and interpretation of the Qurān is based on the right knowledge, competence and true appreciation of its unique Arabic (ibid.).

It is worth mentioning that the Qurān does not only use the linguistic challenge to persuade its first recipients but it also makes use of all sorts of rational, rhetorical as well as evidential tactics. For instance, the Qurān emphasises the well-known fact that

the Prophet was an illiterate person (Ar. *Ummī*), who not only was unable to read or write, but more importantly, who lived amongst the *Quraish* for four decades during which he never uttered a verse of poetry or prose nor showed any interest in learning about ancient cultures and their scriptures (Gibb, 1970; Ghamidi, 2010). One Qurānic argument states that; say [O Muhammad]; *‘if God had so willed, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have made it known to you. I lived a whole lifetime among you before it came to me. How can you not use your reason?’* (Haleem’s Translation, Q. 10:16). Another rational argument states that; *‘You [Muhammad] never recited any Scripture before We revealed this one to you; you never wrote one down with your hand. If you had done so, those who follow falsehood might have had cause to doubt* (Haleem’s translation, Q. 29:48).

### **3.3 Qurān Translations and Criticism: Background**

This section sheds light of the relation between translation, literary criticism and religious texts. For this purpose, it is subdivided into six main subsections, the first of which refers to early Arab critical views of literary texts and translation (see 3.3.1), such as that of *Al-Jāhiz* (776-869). The second subsection highlights the sensitivity of religious text particularly the Qurān (see 3.3.2). The third subsection throws light on the significance and need of Qurān translations (see 3.3.3). The translation concepts of equivalence and non-equivalence (untranslatability) are briefly discussed in the fourth subsection in relation to the translation of the Qurān (see 3.3.4). The fifth subsection discusses some translation approaches and strategies that have been adopted by a number of Qurān translators (see 3.3.5). The last subsection provides a critical review of early perverted translations of the Qurān (see 3.3.6).

### 3.3.1 Literary Criticism and Translation in Arabic Literature

Literary criticism is deeply rooted in the history of Arabic as well as Qurān interpretations. In fact, rational consideration of literary works is believed to have existed in the pre-Islamic era (sixth century) between the eloquent and poetic Arabs of Mecca, but they had neither rules nor systematic approaches (see *Zarkashī*, 1988; *Suyūṭī*, 1999). With the revelation of the Qurān, some Arabs of Mecca, particularly a few hardliners who opposed its Divinity and prosecuted the Prophet, unconsciously developed their linguistic capabilities and critical thinking as they attempted to either refute or imitate the Qurān during its two-decade period of revelation. Some of those who accepted the Qurānic message have also developed their literary skills as they were keen on articulating and memorising Qurānic verses as well as explicating their meanings to one another (*Suyūṭī*, 1999).

Later Muslim generations had more interest in the exceptionality and inimitability, *iʿjāz*, of the Qurān. Such interests stimulated more linguistic writings as well as critical investigation and, thus, more attention was paid to rhetorical and stylistic features in the Qurān (see *Khalafallah*, 1952). Some systematic critical writings, such as that of *Ibn al-ʿAthīr* (1160-1232) and *Hazim al-Qarṭajānī* (d. 1386), date back to the ‘golden’ age of Arabic in the early mediaeval times. These critical writings attempted to interpret the meanings and judge the artistic quality of early literary masterpieces. Many factors contributed to the production of such critical works as El Sadda (1992, p. 95) sums up:

Prompted by religious as well as political and cultural forces, early Arab works on literary criticism mainly concentrated on grammar and philology whereby lines of verse were used to explicate and interpret verses of the Quran for the benefit of both Arabs and all the peoples who joined the

rapidly expanding kingdom of Islam. Arabic literary criticism flourished from the ninth till the thirteenth century when the study of poetry as such became the subject of entire scholarly work.

Like Arabic literary criticism, translation criticism is also rooted in the history of Arabic literature as it dates back to the golden era of Arabic linguistics. This can be traced, for instance, in the works of *Al-Jāhiz* (776-869), who criticized early translations of Aristotelian works in a scholarly manner (Jackson, 1984, p.102-3). *Al-Jāhiz* argued that:

Particular meanings in Aristotle's work, [the] specificity of his doctrines [...] and the subtleties inherent in his definitions are never conveyed by the translator with perfect fidelity. He is unable either to afford these things their due and convey them faithfully or to discharge the duty of steward or proxy. For how can he convey these things, safely deliver their meanings, and inform (us) about them according to what is true and unperjured, except that he be absolutely certain as to their meanings, the manner in which these meanings have been packaged [...]? He must know these things as well as the original author of the work himself.

(Translated by: Jackson, 1984)

### **3.3.2 Translation Criticism and Religious Texts**

Any sort of cultural exchange or bilateral communication requires translation, especially when it comes to what each culture regards as sacred or holy (Long, 2005, p.10). This has become a necessity in the age of globalisation and international mobility (ibid). In fact, critical works on translation of religious texts, mainly the Biblical ones in the twentieth century, have played a prominent role in the development of translation theory (ibid.). However, Long (ibid.) notes that holy texts normally 'resist translation', since the place they aim to occupy in the target language

is usually loaded with other religious text and the existing lexis is often laden with local cultural referents (p.1). In his critical study of Bible translations, which regard the Bible to be the same Bible in whatever language, Nichols (1996) points, critically but enviously, to the Muslim stance on Qurān translations as well as the possible reasons, in his view, of its untranslatability. He (p. 27) says:

Many religions have shown no inclination to promote the translation of their religious texts. Islam is an obvious example. Moslems have never come to terms with translation. The Quran is regarded as being untranslatable. A crucial aspect of its revelatory credentials is the incomparability of its Arabic expression. Thus, even though many non-Arab races - Persians, Turks, Pakistanis, Indians, Indonesians, Malays, Hausas, and scores of others, have the Qurān at the centre of their religious existence, with only a fraction of their members having access to it in the original Arabic, its untranslatability into their language is an article of faith.

The issue of untranslatability is not, however, confined to Qurān translations as it has long before been debated in relation to Biblical translations. That was partially due, according to Chesterman (1997), to ‘the idea promoted by ecclesiastical authorities of more than one religion that the divine word should not be tampered with, that it should remain [the] exclusive property of those initiated in its original language’ (p. 11). Such a view, Chesterman maintains, is related to ‘cultural isolationism; the fear of the other; the belief that the world is composed of unconnected and impermeable billiard balls; the denial of the Oneness and inter-relatedness of everything’ (p.11).

Similarly, Muslims have their own cultural and linguistic attitudes toward the Divine Language of the Qurān. Early exegetical works on the Qurān largely contributed in the attitudes of Muslims toward Qurānic Arabic and its translatability. Nichols (1996),

for instance, explains how such attitudes are reflected, from his point of view, in some titles of English translations of the Qurān. He points that (ibid, p.27-8):

Centuries of exegesis have confirmed that if God willed that His Holy Book should be Arabic, submission demands that it should not be turned into another tongue. It is for this reason that [...] Pickthall [1930] entitled his translation '*The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*'. [...] There is dogma therefore about the form as well as the substance, and these are not separable. Once given, in the revelatory particular which is Arabic, Scripture cannot be transposed. Translation deliberately destroys form and this dishonours the Divine Mind that decreed the Arabicity.

Early Arab linguists and Muslim translators were evidently aware of the sensitivity of religious texts, particularly the Qurān, since the aforementioned golden era of Arabic linguistics. Some early works showed this awareness as they spoke of how the language of the Qurān was divinely enriched with all sorts of eloquence, rhetoric, articulateness, fluency and splendour of stylistic features (*Jawharī*, 1990). A good example is found in some works of *Al-Jāhiz* such as *Kitāb al-Ḥayawān*, in which he had the following to say regarding translating religious texts (cited in Jackson, 1984. pp. 104-5):

So much for translating books of geometry, astrology, mathematic and philology, now, [if] these books [were] the books of religion containing information about God, the Sublime, the Almighty, according to what may not be said with regard to Him, how should we state our case in order to induce the translator to observe the dictates of the principles of God's unity [*Tawḥīd*] [...]? How can we make sure that he [the translator] does not transgress the boundaries of what may and or may not be said concerning God - as well as man? [...] And how should the translator be



made aware of the workings of the rhetorical devices, simile and paronomasia? How will he be made to know what divine revelation is?

In addition to the abovementioned invaluable insight into translation, *Al-Jāhiz* discusses in detail the aspects of the sensitivity of religious texts. He questions, probably doubts, translators' ability to identify complex stylistic and semantic features of religious text, without which the outcome is deemed flawed or even catastrophic (cited in Jackson, 1984. pp.104-5):

What about metonymy? Will he [the translator] know the dividing line between pernicious and deliberately doubt-inducing prattle and that which is more innocent [...]? And what about the differences between restricted, unrestricted, and abridged speech? How do we induce him to know the syntactical structure of the language [...]? These are but a few of many things to be considered. And whenever the translator is ignorant of or insensitive to any one of these things, he will commit errors in interpreting religious texts. And error in religion is more detrimental than error in mathematics, craftsmanship, philosophy, chemistry [...etc.].

### **3.3.3 The Need for and Significance of Qurān Translation**

The universal nature of the Qurān demands translating it into other languages. The Qurān itself explicitly states that it is a universal revelation for all mankind; '*We have not sent thee [Muhammad] but as a universal (Messenger) to men, giving them glad tidings, and warning them...*' (Q. 34:28, 7:158. Ali, 1983). Without translating this universal text into other languages in general and today's lingua franca, English, in particular, the Qurān becomes not only inaccessible to the vast majority of Muslims who do not speak or understand Arabic, but also for all those who are interested, for various reasons, to understand the Qurānic message. The growing Muslim communities in English-speaking countries as well as the upsurge of academic

interest in studying the Qurān, sometimes for political and strategic purposes, create a great need for more accurate English translations (Khaleel, 2005).

Early Muslim scholars pointed out to the need for and significance of translating the Qurān to *al-ʿajam*, non-Arabs. One leading scholar in this regard is *Ibn Taymiyyah* (1263-1328), who argues that (*Ibn Taymiyyah*, 2006, v.4/114):

معلوم أن هذه الأمة مأمورة بتبليغ القرآن لفظه ومعناه كما أمر بذلك الرسول ولا يكون تبليغ رسالة الله إلا كذلك وأن تبليغه إلى العجم قد يحتاج إلى ترجمة لهم فيترجم لهم بحسب الإمكان؛ والترجمة قد تحتاج إلى ضرب أمثال لتصوير المعاني فيكون ذلك من تمام الترجمة.

It is known that this nation is commanded to convey both the wording and meaning of the Qurān, as instructed by the Prophet, to all nations. This is the only possible way [i.e. transferring both wording and meaning] to convey *Allāh*'s Message as conveying it to non-Arabs requires translating as much as possible of Qurān's meanings into other languages. The translation though might need setting examples to illustrate the intended meanings, which would make an adequate translation.

(My translation)

In the view of the importance of translating the Qurān, from a religious perspective, some early eminent scholars of Islamic *fiqh* (jurisprudence) argue that it is obligatory (*wājib*) to convey the Divine Message through translating it into all languages spoken by Muslims. Among these scholars are Imam *al-Bukhārī* (810-870), *Ibn Taymiyyah* (1263-1328), *Ibn Al-Qayyim* (1292-1350) and *Ibn Ḥajar* (1372-1449). Also, late *Sunni* scholars, such as *Ibn ʿUthaymīn* (1925-2001), have a similar stance on the permissibility of Qurān translation. *Ibn ʿUthaymīn* (2004) maintains that translating the Qurān *per se* is recommended, but based on a well-known ruling of Islamic jurisprudence; 'ما لا يتم الواجب إلا به فهو واجب' [what is required to fulfil an obligation is,

on its own, deemed obligatory], it then becomes obligatory if it is the only possible way to convey the Divine Message.

### **3.3.4 Equivalence, Non-Equivalence and Qurān Un/Translatability**

Equivalence is a key term, though controversially defined, in translation studies. In fact, there is no one agreed-upon definition of the notion of equivalence amongst translation theorists (Newmark, 1988; Bassnett, 2002). This section briefly introduces the concept of linguistic equivalence in the discipline of translation studies. It also discusses the existence and non-existence (non-equivalence) of such a notion in the context of Qurān translation (see 3.3.4.2 on the un/translatability of the Qurān).

#### **3.3.4.1 Equivalence and Non-Equivalence**

Equivalence in translation studies is a generally ill-defined notion (Baker, 1992). The term has been controversially debated since the establishment of the discipline of translation a few decades ago (ibid.). Prominent translation theorists attempted to define as well as categorize this notion such as formal equivalence versus dynamic equivalence (Nida, 1964) and communicative versus semantic (Newmark, 1981). Some early theorists of translation, such as Vinay and Darbelnet (1995), argued that equivalence can be achieved by replicating the original situation of the source language (SL) text through the use of target language (TL) wording, but, according to Baker (1992) ‘a certain amount of loss, addition, or skewing of meaning is often unavoidable in translation; language systems tend to be too different to produce exact replicas in most cases’ (p. 69). Thus, non-equivalence is recurrently a challenging obstacle in the process of translation.

During the process of translating any text from the SL into the TL, translators sometimes encounter specific SL terms and expressions that have no corresponding terminological counterparts in the TL (Baker, 1992). In other words, the TL lacks matching terms that express the same meanings as the original SL terms. This is due to the fact that all human languages, with the exception of highly homogeneous ones (e.g. Czech and Slovak), differ substantially from each other (Abdul-Raof, 2001). Whenever such a lack of equivalent terms arises, it creates a translation problem (Baker, 1992). Languages, according to Baker (ibid), tend to have equivalent words for their widely used common verbs of discourse such as 'walk' or 'talk', but many may not share equivalents for many linguistically or culturally specific terms (ibid.).

Non-equivalence usually refers to cases in which it seems problematic, if not impossible, to render a term or notion from the SL text into the TL text (Baker, 1992). It is recurrently a stumbling problem in the process of translation (ibid.). Such cases are mainly due to the fact that languages have their own linguistic (syntactic, morphological and semantic) features and they are inherently influenced by culture (ibid.). In Abdul-Raof's words, 'the intrinsic, syntactic, semantic and pragmatic differences in languages lead to cases of both non-equivalence and untranslatability between languages' (Abdul-Raof, 2001, p.9). For instance, since Arabic and English are linguistically and culturally distinct languages, a lack of equivalence, in the process of translation, is inevitable between them (Abdul-Raof, 2001). Such a lack of corresponding terms, or non-equivalence, in Arabic/English translations is likely to increase when it comes to sensitive and well-structured texts like the Qurān (ibid.).

### 3.3.4.2 Qurān Un/Translatability

Translatability is occasionally defined as ‘the capacity for some kind of meaning to be transferred from one language to another without undergoing radical change’ (Pym and Turk, 2001, p. 273). Undergoing drastic changes is seen as a translation problem usually referred to as non-equivalence or untranslatability (ibid.). Issues of non-equivalence as well as untranslatability between languages are frequently due to the inherent linguistic differences and cultural boundaries (Abdul-Raof, 2001). This poses many difficulties for translators who need to cross such differences and boundaries to ‘achieve an acceptable, informative, and effective translation by observing the target language linguistic and cultural norms’ (ibid. p.9). Crossing such boundaries, however, often results in that ‘the source text suffers structural changes which are inevitable in any process of translation’ (ibid. p.9).

In the context of translating the Qurān, it is widely believed amongst Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs alike, as previously mentioned (see 3.2.1), that the Qurān has always been, and will always be, a linguistic Divine Miracle that cannot be imitated or reproduced by a human tongue (Abdul-Raof, 2001). In fact, the subject of Qurān untranslatability has been addressed historically and theologically, but the ‘answer to what makes the Qur’an an untranslatable text from linguistic and rhetorical perspective have only reached the reader recently’ (Ab-Raof, 2001. p.1). The task of translating the Qurān, is ‘so frustrating [as] the Qurān-bound linguistic and rhetorical intricate problems [are] insurmountable’, and, therefore, can be considered untranslatable (Abdul-Raof, 2001, p.39). Any attempt to translate the Qurān, however, ‘cannot be more than an approximate interpretation, intended only as a tool for the study and understanding of the original Arabic text’ (Saeed, 2006).

Most translators of the Qurān of the past century refer, usually in the prefaces of their translations, to the issues of non-equivalence and untranslatability of many Qurānic terms. Shakir (1926), for instance, states that ‘in the matter of the lawfulness of translating the Qur’an into any foreign language, we can have little confidence in the balance of meaning being preserved’ (cited in Abdul-Raof, 2004: 92). In his comments on Qurān translations into French, Edward Montet, a French writer and professor of Oriental Languages at the University of Geneva, maintains that anyone who is familiar with Qurānic Arabic has to admire its beauty; ‘its grandeur of form is so sublime that no translation into any European language can allow us to appreciate it’ (Montet, 1929, p.53). Similarly, John Arberry (1905-1969), a well-known orientalist, Arabist and translator, states that the rhetoric and rhythm of Qurānic Arabic are ‘so characteristic, so powerful, and so highly emotive’ that any translated version, no matter faithful, ‘is bound in the nature of things to be but a poor copy of the glittering splendour of the original’ (Arberry, 1996. p. 24).

The aforementioned failure of the early Arab poets, linguists and rhetoricians (see 3.3.2) in confronting the Divine Challenge to imitate or reproduce the likeness of the Qurān makes ‘one wonders how a bilingual/bicultural individual [translator] can succeed in reproducing an equivalent ‘Qurān’ in a language [such as English] which is both culturally and linguistically incongruous to Arabic’ (Abdul-Raof, 2001, p.39). In other words, if the early eloquent Arabs, who were of a homogenous society, at least on the linguistic level of the time (see 3.2.1), could not reproduce the like of the Qurān, then no one else could (ibid.).

Al-Azzam (2005) has outlined some reasons behind the unfeasibility of decoding Qurānic Arabic. He argues that the style of the Qurān is exceptional, and that all

efforts and attempts to convey its elegance would certainly suffer a boundless loss. Another reason, according to Al-Azzam (2005), is the fact that the Qurān is a Divinely-inspired speech which is uniquely and extremely well-structured and, thus, cannot be replicated equally by a human translator (see Abdul-Raof, 2001). A third reason, Al-Azzam points out, has to do with the culturally-specific Qurānic lexes which cannot be easily explained in any culture other than the Arabic. To sum up, Al-Azzam (2005) argues that a translator's competence in both the SL and the TL and his motives as well as the closeness or remoteness between the SL and TL as well as their cultures are determining factors in the success or failure of most translations (ibid.).

Taking the aforementioned linguistic exceptionality of the Qurānic Arabic into account, it is not surprising that most Qurān translations into English have been heavily criticized for failing to match the linguistic phenomenon of the Qurān. This is simply due to the fact that 'English cannot penetrate Qurānic lexical and morphological defences' (Abdul-Raof, 2004. p. 93). Thus, 'the only way to penetrate this highly fortified text', according to Abdul-Raof (2001), is to 'explicate its intricate multi-layered meanings through either 'within-the-text' exegetical materials, as in the translation by Al-Hilali and Khan (1983), or through marginal notes and commentaries, as in the translations by Ali (1983) and Asad (1980)' (ibid. p.40).

It is argued that it is not merely the difficulty to adjust the Qurānic text to unfamiliar cultural settings that deems it impossible to translate (Long, 2005). Rather, the long resistance to Qurān translatability is attributed to Muslims' belief that the Divine Revelation was only reachable through the unreplaceable Qurānic Arabic (Anderson 1983). In other words, it seems that the long-held belief in the inimitability of the miraculous divinely-inspired language of the Qurān has played a central role in the

recent belief in its untranslatability. Such a widespread and reasonable belief in the Qurān's inimitability and untranslatability, the researcher argues, seems to have drawn much greater attention and inspired more Muslim/Arab' critical writings concerning Qurān's translation in the last few decades than all other critical works put together.

The linguistic uniqueness and superiority of the Qurān is manifested and reflected in the uncountable cases of inadequate renderings which are found in the majority of Qurān translations. According to Irving et al (1992, p.9):

The Qurān is unique. It embodies the word of God – unchanged, unabridged and uncompromised. It does not contain any element that is a product of a human mind. The Qurān is unique in almost every respect: in its divine origin, its style and methodology, its chronological descent, its textual arrangement, and its approach to the problems of man and society.

Due to its divinity, linguistic sensitivity and inimitability as well as uniqueness in every respect, the Qurān will continue to be challenging for every translator aspiring to render its miraculous discourse into other languages. It would be unreasonable, after all, to expect that such an inimitable and sensitive Divine text must have a uniquely accurate translation, and a *fortiori* the Divine Names which are most theologically sensitive and semantically subtle Qurānic terms (as will be later shown in the current study, see ch. five).

### **3.3.5 Approaches to Qurān Translation**

Most translators of the Qurān state their translation approaches explicitly in their prefaces. Some of them, however, introduce their work by lengthy prefaces which usually include historical facts, as well as criticism of previous translations of the



Qurān, with no explicit purpose and translation approach. Most translators, unfortunately, do not mention a word about their own educational background, linguistic competence, and religious affiliations, with few exceptions such as A. Y. Ali (1872-1953).

*Al-Jāhiz* (777-869), who was a pioneering linguist and intellectual critic of his time, had the following advice for early Arab translators more than eleven centuries ago (Jackson, 1984. p.103):

It is vital that the translator includes (directly) in the text of the translation his own formal statement clearly indicating the level of knowledge he has attained in the field presented in the translated piece. He should, above all, be most learned in both the target and source languages, to the point where he has mastered them both and is equally at home with either one of them.

*Al-Jāhiz* goes on to explain how serious translations faults can get if the translator is not up to the job. He maintains that ‘when the translator who has translated a particular piece does not fully meet the requisite qualifications, he commits errors of a magnitude proportionate to his level of deficiency in these areas’ (ibid. p.105). The seriousness of such errors, according to *al-Jāhiz*, varies from one text/context to another based on how important and sensitive the translated materials are (ibid.).

Abdul-Raof (2001) identifies two regular approaches to Qurān translation. These are formal ‘source-oriented’ translation and dynamic ‘target-oriented’ translation (p.21). The first approach aims at introducing a literal, word-for-word semantic translation, such as the works of Pickthall (1930) Ali (1936), and Arberry (1955). By contrast, the second approach aims at achieving a communicative (functional) translation, such as

the 2004 translation of Abdel-Haleem (ibid.). This categorization of translation approaches by Abdul-Raof (2001) seems to have been based on that of Peter Newmark (1981) who categorises translation into semantic and communicative.

Newmark (1981) argues that ‘semantic translation attempts to render, as closely as the semantic and syntactic structures of the second language allow, the exact contextual meaning of the original’ (p. 39). On the other hand, ‘communicative translation attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the original’ (ibid, p. 39). Newmark further emphasizes that ‘in communicative as in semantic translation, provided that equivalent effect is secured, the literal word-for-word translation is not only the best, but it is the only valid method of translation’ (ibid. p.39). This can be true and applicable to the context of Qurān translations which, considering Qurān’s authorship, authority and linguistic sensitivity, should be source-oriented rather than receptor-oriented translations. The excessive reliance on literal translation of the Qurān, however, is not recommended as it has, along with other reasons, resulted in unreliable renderings of key Qurānic concepts (see Al-Jabari, 2008).

To avoid the ambiguity of excessive literal translations, some translators of the Qurān tend to use clarifying notes and footnotes to briefly explain some Qurānic concepts for their readers. Such clarifications are used for various purposes including: (i) introducing a Qurānic chapter in terms of its title and main themes as well as its reason and place of revelation, as presented in Abdel-Haleem’s (2004) Translation, (ii) conveying the sensitive (denotative and connotative) meanings of some Qurānic terms and expressions, as followed in the explanatory notes of Hilali-Khan’s (1994) translation; and (iii) to provide the readers with relevant and important facts which

help them grasp the intended message of the original, as in the footnotes of Ali's (1983/1986) translation.

### **3.3.6 Critical Review of Early Translations of the Qurān**

In the following account, a brief criticism of early translations of the Qurān is provided. It is divided into two parts, the first of which briefly draws attention to the earliest forms of translation of the Qurān. The second part critically reviews some of the early Western (Latin and English) translations of the Qurān.

#### **3.3.6.1 Early Translations of the Qurān**

Early Muslims started to practice translation in a formal manner as soon as they established their state which was led by the Prophet 'Muhammad' who once sent some diplomatic delegations, each of which included *turjumān* 'an interpreter', to the neighbouring empires of Persia, Rome and Abyssinia (Abdul-Raof, 2004). In fact, some of the companions of the Prophet, such as *Ṣuḥaib Ar-Rūmī* and *Salmān Al-Fārisī*, spoke other languages, namely Greek and Farsi respectively (ibid.).

The first translations of the Qurān into other languages appeared in Persian during the early reign of the Abbasids (c. 750-1258), and they were mostly undertaken by early Persian converts to Islam (Abdul-Raof, 2004). These translations were in principle regarded as commentaries and they were based on a word-for-word strategy where sentence structure and syntax of Qurānic verses were kept intact and supplemented with extensive commentaries (ibid.). There were also other translations to Syriac in the early eighth century; a Berber one, by the mid of the eighth century; and a Sindhi one, during the second half of the ninth century, but none of these stood the test of

time (ibid.). Based on the early Persian versions, a later translation was completed into Turkish, carried out in the eleventh century (Abdul-Raof, 2004).

### 3.3.6.2 Early Western (Latin/English) Translations

Western literature of the Qurān as well as Qurān translations can be categorised, according to Fazlur Rahman (1919-1988), into three types (Rahman, 2009, p. v):

- (i) Works that seek to trace the influence of Jewish or Christian ideas on the Qur'an.
- (ii) Works that attempt to reconstruct the chronological order of the Qur'an.
- (iii.) Works that aim at describing the content of the Qur'an, either the whole or certain aspects. Though this last might be expected to receive the most attention, it has had the least.

The first translation of the Qurān to be introduced into a western language was that of Robert of Ketton (1110-1160) who translated the text into Latin in 1143 (Burman, 1998). Robert was an Englishman who travelled to Islamic Andalusia, Spain, and translated some literary and scientific, mostly astronomical and mathematical, Arabic works into Latin (ibid.). Though he made some success rendering scientific works, such as *al-Khwarizmi's* manual of algebra, he took a wrong turn in 1142 after accepting a request made by Peter the Venerable (1092-1156) to introduce a Latin version of the Qurān (ibid.). The mission was assigned to hopefully assist 'Latin Christians attempting to convert Muslims' to Christianity (ibid. p.704). Though it was not *mission impossible*, it was unaccomplished as it only succeeded partially to demonise Islam and Muslims in the eyes of Europeans for centuries to come.

In 1698, Marracci published the second Latin translation of the Qurān, and it was, according to Turner (1997), complemented with inauthentic exegetical remarks which were well-selected to depict Muslims (or Muhamedans, as they used to be labelled) as the title of the introductory volume of such translation, *A Refutation of the Qurān*, leaves no room for questioning the intention of the translator. What aggravated the problem is that such early mis/translations formed the foundation for a number of subsequent works.

The Christian cleric Alexander Ross was the first orientalist to convert a French translation of the Qurān to the English readers in 1649. His very title, *The Alcoran of Mahomet, newly Englished for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities*, reflects his motives and mischief. He (Ross, the AlCoran of Mahomet, p. A2, A3) made it clear in his introduction that:

Thou shalt find it of so rude, and incongruous a composure so farced with contradictions, blasphemies, obscene speeches, and ridiculous fables, that some modest, and more rational Mahometans have thus excused it . . . Such as it is, I present to thee, having taken the pains only to translate it out of French, not doubting, though it hath been a poyson, that hath infected a very great, but most unsound part of the universe, it may prove an Antidote, to confirm in thee the health of Christianity.

For centuries, unfortunately, Ross's perverted translation of the Qurān, as well as its translated versions into other European languages, penetrated the Western mind-set and caused a sort of an epidemic of misconceptions and fallacies about Islam and its followers. Abdul-Raof (2001) and other critics (such as Kidwai 1987, and Khaleel, 2005) emphasise that early Qurān translations not only abound in errors and

mistranslations, but, unfortunately, were driven by hostile motivations (p. 19). As Kidwai (1987, p.66) puts it.

Following a long polemical tradition, part of whose goal was also the production of a usually erroneous and confounding European version of the Muslim scripture; Christian missionaries started their offensive against a politically humiliated Islam in the eighteenth century by advancing their own translations of the Quran.

After nearly a century of Ross's twisted translation, George Sale introduced the second English translation in London in 1734, and it was the first English translation to be rendered by an orientalist directly from Arabic. It was widely-published and reprinted in London in 1749, 1764, and most recently in 1984. Sales' translation had a similar defamation purpose to that of Ross's and it continued, unfortunately, to be the prime source of the Qurān in the west for about 150 years. According to Ushama (2011) 'it is distressing to realize how many readers have been misinformed how many students of comparative religion given the wrong concepts and how many in search of the truth about the Qurān have been misguided by such Orientalist [translators]' (Ushama, 2011, *al-Bayan* online Journal).

In 1861, the English clergyman and London's St Ethelburga's Rector, John Rodwell (1808-1900), produced his translation which he entitled *El Koran* (London, 1861). Rodwell's preface, on its own (Kidwai, 1987), abounds in many misrepresentations and defamations of Islam (ibid.). Rodwell was heavily criticised not only for launching many lies and accusations against the Prophet and the Qurān itself, but more importantly, for committing serious translational blunders which aimed at distorting many Qurānic concepts (examples are found in Kidwai, 1987). In addition to his unpardonable errors and fabricated footnotes, Rodwell is guilt-ridden for

allegedly having introduced the controversial reordering of Qurān's *Surahs* based on the chronological order of revelation (ibid.) and it is no wonder that he is labelled in the academic circles as someone who 'was gunning for Islam' (see Turner, 1997, p. xii, and Abdul-Roaf, 2001, p.20).

Some orientalists, such as the infamous Richard Bell (1867-1952), went too far in their indefensible distortions and misrepresentation of the Qurān. Richard Bell, for instance had unjustifiably re-ordered the Qurānic chapters and cut it up into little bits based on his own unreliable criteria which he built on the chronological order of Quranic *surahs* (Rippin, 1992). Bell offered nothing but poor justifications for coming up with his groundless theory of revising of the Qurān (ibid.). He even held the story of Joseph, Qurān's twelfth chapter; *Yusuf*, which represents a beautifully coherent and consistent Qurānic narrative, as a 'hodgepodge, disjointed ancient fragments, but, at the same time, a product of a comprehensive scholarly collection and prophetic intervention' (cited in Sadeghi, 2011, p.268).

Furthermore, Bell disregards long and well-established historical accounts of compilation and documentation of the Qurān and oddly 'suggests a reconstruction of the text as a way to mend the so-called mistakes of the editors' (Awwa, 2006, p.18). Bell's claim of 'grammatical unevenness and interruptions' in the Qurān proved to be baseless as his work, itself, fails to show the value of his independent theory and interpretation (ibid. p.19). This is evident by means of his own uncertainty and inconsistency as he often uses the terms 'uncertain' or 'probably' when referring to his rearrangements (ibid.). This 'shows that he could not establish any convincing evidence for his suggestions and the work has, finally, received many criticisms from both Western and Muslim scholars' (ibid. p.19).

The aforementioned distorted translations and deliberate misrepresentations contributed greatly to the widely-spread misunderstandings about Qurān's origin and authorship in the West, namely that it was the Prophet 'Muhammad' who somehow authored the Qurān (Sabry and Saleh, 2007). This, unfortunately, has led western writers to critically and bitterly question Qurān's authenticity presumably for being a work of a man and not of Divine origin (ibid.). Such doubts, though sometimes understandable, are clearly reflected in the anti-Islam literature most of which have appeared in the second half of the past century, not to mention the anti-Muslim writings and media distortions since September-eleventh incident in 2001 (ibid.). In fact, the daily media hateful misrepresentations and defaming libels against Islam today, Sabry and Saleh (2007) argue, are not merely a result of Sep.11<sup>th</sup> incident, but are deeply rooted in the distorted concepts propagated by the aforementioned distorted translations of the Qurān which were deliberately perverted by orientalist working for colonial regimes out of fear that Islam was threatening Christianity (ibid.).

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that early Qurān translations into Western languages have received much heavier criticism than later ones. As mentioned earlier, old attempts to translate the Qurān were criticized for their betrayal and deliberate distortions (Abdul-Raof, 2001). This, however, encouraged Muslims to take the lead not only to oppose and criticise such perverted translations and resist the Christian missionary efforts (ibid.), but equally important, to introduce their own acceptable and faithful versions of the Qurān in Western languages, particularly today's *lingua franca*, i.e. English (see Asad, 1980; Kidwai, 1987).

It was not until the early twentieth century that the first Muslim translator produced an English version of the Qurān. It was carried out by M. A. Hakim Khan, of Patiala;



Indian Punjab, in 1905 (Abdul-Raof, 2001, p.20). Then Mirza Hairat of Delhi issued his English translation in 1919 (ibid.). There was also a third workable translation to emerge from the Indian subcontinent, and it was that of Hafiz Gulam Sarwar in 1930 (ibid.). However, the first English translation to be introduced by a native Muslim speaker was that of the British novelist Pickthall in 1930.

The Muslim translators of the Qurān, however, have not escaped criticism. Most, if not all, of their translations have faced different sorts of criticism, mainly to do with their linguistic inaccuracy, inadequacy and inconsistency. Many English translations have subsequently emerged, particularly in the second half of the past century, most of which aimed at avoiding archaic and Biblical style in their translations (Abdul-Raof, 2001). Some of these are amongst the five selected translations which are evaluated in the current study in terms of their accuracy and consistency in rendering the root-sharing Divine Names.

### **3.4 The Translation of the Most Beautiful Divine Names**

This section introduces the issue of translating the Divine Names in the Qurān (3.3.1). It also reviews some of the previous studies and recent attempts to investigate the renderings of these sensitive terms (3.3.2). The section also sheds light on some strategies that Qurān translators adopted in an effort to convey the meanings of the Divine Names (3.3.4). The last subsection discusses various sorts of loss of meaning in the Qurān's translations in relation to the existing renderings of the Divine Names.

#### **3.4.1 Introduction**

The linguistic and cultural obstacles upon which Qurān translators stumbled in the twentieth and twenty first centuries have triggered critical views as well as a number

of critical academic studies. Some aspects of Qurān translations, however, have not yet received enough academic attention by translation researchers and critical writers. The Divine Names, for instance, have received very little interest from the numerous critical translation studies of the Qurān. This is may be due to their linguistic sensitivity as well as their theological complexities, as admitted by Qurān’s exegetes, linguists and recent translators (see for instance the preface of *Ṣaḥīḥ International*, 1997). To understand how linguistically, morphologically and semantically, sensitive are the Divine Names as well as problematic to translate (particularly the near-synonymous Names) into English, an analysis of their meanings along with a translation assessment is carried out later in the current study (see chapter five).

The best example of the renderings of Divine Names to consider from the translations of the Qurān are found in the last two verses of the chapter of *al-Ḥashr* (see Q. 59: 23-24), which carry over a dozen Divine Names (see the example below). The different renderings given for each Divine Name by the five selected translators give us a sense of the kind of challenges and intricacies encountered by the translators who endeavour to provide approximate English counterparts but, still, their attempts suffer many inaccuracies and discrepancies. Here are the two Qurānic verses (Q. 59: 23-24) along with the five various renderings of the Divine Names (Arabic Divine Names and their renderings are highlighted in bold):

*{Huwa Allāh Alladī la Ilāha illā Huwa **al-Malik al-Quddūs as-Salām al-Mu’min al-Muhaymin al-<sup>ḥ</sup>Azīz al-Jabbār al-Mutakabbir** subḥān Allāh <sup>ḥ</sup>ammā yushrikūn [ ] Huwa Allāh **al-Ḳāliq al-Bāri’ al-Muṣawwir** lahu Al-Asmā’ Al-Ḥusnā yusabbiḥu lahu ma fī As-Samāwāt wa ma fī Al-Ardh wa Huwa **al-<sup>ḥ</sup>Azīz al-Ḥakīm}** Q. 59: 23-24.*

### The translations:

1. Pickthall: {...the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Peace, the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Majestic, the Compeller, the Superb [...] the Creator, the Shaper out of naught, the Fashioner, His are the most beautiful names [...] the Mighty, the Wise}.
2. Ali: {...the Sovereign, the Holy One, the Source of Peace (and Perfection), the Guardian of Faith, the Preserver of Safety, the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, the Supreme [...] the Creator, the Evolver, the Bestower of Forms (or Colours). To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names [...] the Exalted in Might, the Wise}.
3. Hilali-Khan:{ . . the King, the Holy, the One Free from all defects, the Giver of security, the Watcher over His creatures, the All-Mighty, the Compeller, the Supreme [...] the Creator, the Inventor of all things, the Bestower of forms. To Him belong the Best Names [...] the All-Mighty, the All-Wise}.
4. Arberry: {... the King, the All-holy, the All-peaceable, the All-faithful, the All-preserver, the All-mighty, the All-compeller, the All-sublime...} { He is God, the Creator, the Maker, the Shaper. To Him belong the Names Most Beautiful [...] the All-mighty, the All-wise}.
5. Haleem: [... the Controller, the Holy One, Source of Peace, Granter of Security, Guardian over all, the Almighty, the Compeller, the Truly Great; God is far above anything they consider to be His partner. [...] the Creator, the Originator, the Shaper, the best names belong to Him [...] the Almighty, the Wise}.

From the above renderings of the Divine Names in the two verses (59: 23-24), one notices the variations and disparities among translators who only agree on the renderings of one, out of thirteen, Divine Names which is *al-Ḳāliq*. Translators are nearly similar in their attempts to render two other Names, namely *al-Quddūs* and *al-‘Azīz*. Apart from Arberry who renders *al-Quddūs* as the ‘All-Holy’, the translators

render it similarly as ‘the Holy one’. Apart from Ali who renders *al-‘Azīz* as the ‘Exalted in Mighty’, they render it similarly as ‘Mighty’, ‘Almighty’ and ‘All-Mighty’. However, they all differ drastically in their choices of equivalents for the rest of Names. This shows the kind of problems translators encounter when they come across theologically sensitive and semantically subtle terms like the Divine Names.

### **3.4.2 Previous Studies on the translation of the Divine Names**

In spite of the fact that most challenging areas in the translation of the Qurān have been systematically examined, so far there is no considerable work, to this researcher’s best knowledge, that has so far been entirely devoted to critically evaluate the translation of the Divine Names which pose paramount challenges for all translators of the Qurān, with no exceptions. A few attempts to address such challenges, however, do arise in some critical, and sometimes biased, studies regarding the renderings of God’s Proper Name, namely Allāh, as well as *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm*, which are all found in the *Basmalah*, but they are either short-lived. This section briefly sheds light on the few studies on Qurān translation studies which paid attention to the hurdles posed by the renderings of the Divine Names.

There has been only one academic study that primarily attempted to investigate the translatability of some of the Divine Names in the Qurān, and it was carried out in 2009 by a PhD researcher named *Al-Bulushi* at *Universiti Saint Malaysia* (USM). The researcher of the current study could not get hold of *Al-Bulushi*’s thesis, but managed to obtain its summary and introductory chapter along with the table of contents, all of which can be found on the website of USM<sup>23</sup>. Unfortunately, this study lacks precision of its selection of the Divine Names as it adopts the unreliable traditional list

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<sup>23</sup> *Universiti Saint Malaysia*, see <http://www.usm.my/index.php/en>

of the Divine Names which comprise terms that should not be used as Divine Names (see sec. 2.5 for Names authenticity).

In his thesis, *Al-Bulushi* investigates the renderings of eighteen Divine Names, some of which are not actually Names of God in the Qurān such as what he calls ‘the Names that appear in the plural form’ such as *Muntaqimūn* and *Wāriṭhūn* (2009, p. 9). Though a few medieval Muslim works on the Divine Names include the singular forms of these titles, namely *muntaqim* and *wāriṭh* respectively, in their lists, many prominent scholars had excluded these plural forms of Divine Names from their enumeration attempts of the ninety-nine Names (see sec. 2.5). *Al-Bulushi* also unsystematically categorizes the Names into seven groups based on their plural and singular forms as well as their simple, nominal and compound forms, which appear to be useless categorisation in the sense that it does not help identify the delicate morphological as well as semantic features of the Divine Names.

Other academic studies have partially and briefly looked at the translatability of the Divine Proper Name, Allāh, as well as other recurring Names in the Qurānic text such as *Ar-Raḥmān* and *Ar-Raḥīm*. For instance, Al-Mulla (1989) briefly investigated whether some Divine Names and Attributes are translatable or not. In his unpublished study, which he entitles, ‘*the Question of the Translatability of the Qur’ān, With Particular Reference to Some English Versions*’, Al-Mulla (1989) devotes about ten pages on discussing how some translators are unable to convey the embedded meanings of some Divine Names (ibid, pp. 323-333). He doubted the possibility that the English terminology would be subtle enough to produce equivalent renderings for the near-synonymous Names of Divine Mercy, namely *ar-Raḥmān* and *ar-Raḥīm*, as well as the near-synonymous Names of Divine Creation in the Qurān, namely *al-*

*Ḳāliq*, *al-Bāri*' and *al-Muṣawwir* (Q. 59:24). Al-Mulla also criticised many unsuccessful attempts to render some 'untranslatable' Divine Names, such as *Al-Qayyūm* and *Aṣ-Ṣamad*, for which he recommends transliteration, rather than desperate attempts at translation, along with some explanatory notes.

Some other critical works on the Divine Names and their problematic renderings into English come under the umbrella of Qurān's limits of translatability. For instance, in his acclaimed book on Qurān translations, Abdul-Raof (2001) points out that some translators of the Qurān failed to distinguish between many Divine Names that are not even synonymous. He gives the example of the Qurān's translation into Modern Hebrew, which was carried out by Ben-Shemesh in 1969. Abdul-Raof (2001, p.63) criticises Ben-Shemesh's view on the Divine Names by saying that:

Ben-Shemesh (1969) talks about the ninety nine attributes of God in the Qurān and states that some of them are repetitions; He [...] confuses the subtle and delicate nuances between the epithets [ ] '*Raḥīm*' (the Most Merciful, All-compassionate, Dispenser of grace) and [ ] '*Ra'ūf*', (the most kind, Full of pity, All gentle) and is unaware of the fact that each epithet enjoys distinct componential semantic features.

(Italics and transliteration are mine)

Abdul-Raof goes on to explain that Ben-Shemesh was apparently 'misled by his misunderstanding that the root for [*Raḥīm*] is the same in both Arabic and Hebrew' which drove him to render [*Raḥīm*] unsuccessfully as 'the beloved' in his translation of the Qur'an into Modern Hebrew' (Abdul-Raof, 2001, p.63). Other researchers, however, argue that most scriptural Divine Names, particularly in the Qurān and the Torah, share their Semitic roots, as previously discussed in this study (see 2.4).

Unlike the case for many Qurānic themes and linguistic features, very little is written, usually in footnotes and brief comments, about the translations of the Divine Names in the English literature. These comments and footnotes are often found in translators' prefaces to their translations of the Qurān as well as their comments and footnotes on the translation of the *basmalah*, the opening verse of the *Fātiḥah*, the opening and often-repeated Qurānic chapter, which, as previously mentioned (see chapter two) contains some Divine Names such as *Allāh*, *Rabb*, *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm*. Some translators identify the complexity of meaning as well as translation challenges of these Names while others attempt to criticise previous renderings which were carried out by their predecessors and defend their own renderings. For instance, Hilali and Khan (1994) comments on their rendering of the Divine Name *Rabb* and justify their choice of the word 'Lord' as its English counterpart.

Hilali and Khan (1994) point to the fact that 'there is no proper equivalent for *Rabb* in the English language' as it comprises many denotations, all of which refer to 'the One and the Only Lord for all the universe, its Creator, Owner, Organizer, Provider, Master, Planner, Sustainer, Cherisher, and Giver of security' (p. 9). Hilali and Khan then justify their choice of the English corresponding term for *Rabb*, namely 'Lord' and say: 'we have used the word 'Lord' as the nearest to *Rabb*' [provided that] all occurrences of 'Lord' in the interpretation of the meanings of the Noble Qurān actually mean *Rabb* and should be understood as such' (ibid, p.9).

### **3.4.3 Some Adopted Strategies to Translate the Divine Names**

Translators use various semantic, syntactic and pragmatic translation strategies (see Chesterman, 1997). Translation theorists have classified various strategies based on their views of the concept of inter-lingual equivalence. This has resulted in shifts and

turns in the newly-established discipline of translation studies (see Snell-Hornby, 2006). The strategies can be summarised based on pioneering scholars in translation into: (i) literal in contrast to free translation (word-for-word or ‘*verbum pro verbo*’<sup>24</sup> formal equivalence versus dynamic equivalence) by Nida (1964), (ii) communicative in contrast to semantic translation, by Newmark (1981), (iii) foreignisation in contrast to domestication<sup>25</sup>, and (iv.) direct translation in contrast to indirect translation.

In the context of translating a sacred text like the Qurān, translators mostly rely on various semantic and syntactic strategies in order to convey the delicate meanings of sensitive Qurānic terms such as the Divine Names. However, the translations of many terms with subtle meanings, including the Divine Names, suffer from literalism and excessive (exegetical) renderings to the extent that the original meaning is compromised and sometimes lost (Abdul-Raof, 2001). Semantic strategies of translation include inter-lingual near synonymy (word-for-word formal equivalence) and paraphrasing while syntactic strategies include transposition and structural shifts as well as explanatory renditions such as flattening.

Some translators, due to uncertainty, use many loan words through transliteration<sup>26</sup> (transcription of Arabic terms), as is the case in the translation of Al-Hilali and Khan who excessively apply this strategy (as will be shown in this study) in their exegetical translation of the Qurān. Some experts on religious texts such as the Biblical translator Smalley (1991, p.102), however, view such an exegetical (interpretive)

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<sup>24</sup> Latin for word-for-word.

<sup>25</sup> Foreignisation and domestication are translation strategies which measure the degree of conformity between ST and TT.

<sup>26</sup> Some linguists, including those interested in Arabic, according to Beesley (1998) have not yet differentiated between transcriptions and transliterations, and these have caused great ambiguity. The term transliteration, Beesley (1998) explains, indicates orthography by means of attentively-replaced orthographical symbols in a one-to-one, completely-reversible drawing with that language’s regular orthography. On the other hand, transcription indicates an orthography that exemplifies phonology or morpho-phonology of a given language (ibid).



strategy as a positive step toward a better comprehension of scriptural discourse (see Noss, 2007). Smalley (1991, p.102) maintains: ‘to think that a translation without such interpretation could be possible is a deception, since understanding a text is only possible through interpretation’ (cited in Noss, 2007).

Abdul-Raof (2001) points out that ‘the provision of the literal translation can at times be attributed to negligence on the part of Quran translator who do not refer to Muslim exegetes to check what the accurate underlying Qur’anic meaning is’ (p. 29). Such an unintelligible literal renderings constitutes what Akbar (1978) calls; ‘hindrance to the full understanding of the Qur'an’ (cited in Abdul-Raof 2001, p.27).

In Inter-lingual communication, synonymy is considered a technique in translation. This strategy involves translating a source language text word or expression with a target language expression that is nearly, but not completely, functionally equivalent. According to Newmark (1988), synonymy is translation technique in which the translator uses a near TL equivalent to an SL word in a context, where a precise equivalent may or may not exist (p.84). According to Al-Ghoul (2010), synonymy, along with paraphrasing, footnoting and addition, is a useful strategy when there is no clear one-to-one equivalent between Arabic and English.

One of the strategies adopted by many translators is flattening through which the intensified (hyperbolic) participles, for instance, are simplified and treated as active participles (El-Zawawy, 2014). Such a strategy causes loss of meaning as it is adopted by some translators to convey some parts of the semantic content of the hyperbolic form by means of syntax or otherwise (ibid.). Conveying complete sense refers to the

success on the part of the translator to render the hyperbolic form accurately, using any transposition or compensation (see El-Zawawy, 2014).

In a fifteen-page article on translating Qurānic Divine Names, Amjad and Farahani (2013) discussed problematic aspects as well as some adopted strategies in the renditions of the Divine Names in three English translations, namely Shakir (1985), Qarai (2003) and Nikayin (2006). The study briefly reveals a few linguistic challenges concerning rendering the Divine Names, but it mainly focuses on the strategies which have been implemented to encounter them. Amjad and Farahani (2013) argued that the so called ‘lexical compression’, i.e. the delicate multi-layered meanings as well as the sensitive nuances of the Divine Names, has triggered a number of translation problems (p. 131). They found that the most frequent strategies adopted, to an equal extent, by the three translators with regard to rendering the Divine Names are ‘near-synonymy’ and ‘expansion’ (ibid.).

Amjad and Farahani (2013) concluded that the aforementioned ‘lexical compression’ of the Divine Names is one of the challenging obstacles that encounter translators of the Qurān. Other obstacles have to do with many linguistic and cultural differences between Arabic and English. They also concluded that the abovementioned three translators of the Qurān have fallen short in their attempt to adequately render some of the Divine Names. The researchers also blamed the three translators for distorting the ‘emotive overtones’ and ‘expressive effects’ that are embedded in the Divine Names (ibid. p.140). They advised that any translation of the Qurān that does not take into consideration the theological and contextual meanings of the Divine Names would certainly lose a considerable aspect of its accuracy as well as its validity (ibid.). This short study, however, overlooks other problematic aspects of rendering the Divine

Names, some of which are examined in the current study, such as distinguishing morphologically and semantically between the root-sharing Divine Names in the ST as well as maintaining verbal consistency in choices of TT equivalent terms.

#### **3.4.4 Loss and Compensation in the Translation of the Divine Names**

This section briefly highlights the translation notions of loss and compensation in relation to the translations of the Divine Names in the Qurān. It is divided into two subsections, the first of which introduces the notions of loss and compensation in translation (see 3.4.4.1). The second subsection sheds light on the aspects of loss in the translation of the Divine Names (see 3.4.4.2) including theological concepts (see 3.4.4.2.1), stylistic features such as rhythm, rhyme and harmony (see 3.4.4.2.2) and textual cohesion (see 3.4.4.2.3).

##### **3.4.4.1 Translation Loss and Compensation**

Translation loss is a universal characteristic of all types of inter-language translations (Baker, 2002). In other words, some sort of loss in meaning is inescapable in the process of translation because of various linguistic and cultural differences between languages. The inevitability of loss of linguistic, cultural and textual elements in translation is based on the fact that there is no perfect one-to-one linguistic correspondence between two given languages (Abdul-Raof, 2001). Thus, faultless translation does not exist since it falls beyond human capacity (ibid.).

Hervey and Higgins (1992) draw an interesting analogy by comparing translation loss to the loss of energy (Armstrong, 2005). They argue that energy loss is unavoidable, and engineers admit this fact, but they aim at reducing it to the minimum (ibid.). Similarly, translators should accept the fact that translation loss is also unavoidable

and endeavour to keep it to the minimum (ibid). Dickins et al. (2002) point to the fact that the challenge for translators is to identify ‘which features can most legitimately be sacrificed’ (p. 25), hence, translators are advised not to ‘agonize over the loss, but should concentrate on reducing it’ by means of compensation (p. 21).

According to Dickins et al. (2002), ‘the most obvious form of translation loss is when something which occurs in the ST is simply omitted from the TT. Such omission ‘occurs fairly frequently in Arabic/English translation, and is therefore worth specifically identifying’ (p. 23). Dickins et al. suggest that when a translator admits the fact that the translated text is not an identical replica of its original (source) text, then s/he can focus ‘on the realistic aim of reducing translation loss, rather than the unrealistic one of seeking the ultimate translation’ (ibid, p.21).

According to Dickins et al. (2002), translation loss is likely to occur at all levels, so translators are advised to compensate for such a loss by minimising it at the levels that have higher priority and accept greater translation loss at the less-important levels (ibid.). As previously mentioned, loss of meaning is mostly inescapable and it can only be reduced and compensated for, since compensation in the ‘interpretive sense’, aims at ‘restoring life’ to the target text (Hatim and Munday, 2004. p.31). Since translators are unarguably unable to always come up with equivalent TL terms to correspond to the SL ones, there has to be ways to compensate for what is either lost or omitted in the TT. Compensation in translation takes place when ‘the translator offsets an inevitable loss at one point in the text by adding a suitable element at another point, achieving a compensatory translation gain’ (ibid. p.31).

Compensation in translation is obviously a strategy which can be skilfully implemented by means of accepting the loss of one linguistic element in the translated text, and compensating for it by adding an appropriate replacing element elsewhere within the same context (ibid: 46). This strategy, however, should not haphazardly be implemented, as Hervey (2000, p. 25) puts it,

Compensation is not a matter of simply pumping stylish English into the TT in the vague hope of outweighing any translation losses that may have crept in, but of countering a specific, clearly defined loss with an equally specific and clearly defined, but less serious, loss.

#### **3.4.4.2 Aspects of Loss in the Translation of the Divine Names**

When it comes to translating the Qurān, a number of scholars and critics have strongly doubted the possibility of translating such an extraordinary text without a huge loss of meaning (Abdul-Raof, 2001). It has been claimed that it is not possible for anyone to combine in another language the sense, the form, the style, the tone, and, last but not least, the effect of the Qurān (ibid.). According to Abdul-Raof, ‘the target language cannot accommodate the linguistic and/or the rhetorical norms of the Qurānic discourse’ (2001, p.109). He goes on to say that ‘the Qurān itself will be lost when translated; its unique linguistic architecture, rhetorical beauty, music, and prototypical texture will be wasted’ (ibid. p. 40).

Qurān Translators are at pain to achieve the great task they laid upon themselves. According to Al-Azzam (2005), ‘the Qurānic style is said to be unique, and thus any attempt to translate it inevitably results in great loss’ (p.3). This is true since most Qurān translators have been heavily criticised for all sorts of losses in their attempts to convey it into other languages. Al-Azzam (2005) argues that any ‘imitation of the

Qurān through translation is subject to loss at many if not all levels extending from phonic to textual constituents' (p. 3-4). Commenting on cultural, particularly pragmatic, loss in Qurān translations, Al-Azab and Al-Misned (2012) explain that the inevitable loss of shades of meaning is the 'tax of translation', and translators should ensure some sort of analysis and precision in order to tackle such 'a plethora of linguistic problems' (p.42).

Translation loss and the various ways of compensating for it are undoubtedly evident in the translations of many Qurānic Divine Names and Attributes which suffer from literalism and inaccuracies to the extent that the original meaning is compromised (Abdul-Raof, 2001). The most affected aspects of the Divine Names in this regard include the theological concepts as well as some stylistic features such as rhythm, rhyme, harmony and the textual cohesion, all of which are briefly explained below.

#### **3.4.4.2.1 Theological Concepts**

The translator who aspires to render the Qurān into another language should be fully aware of the theological and exegetical background of all Qurānic concepts. This seems to be impossible particularly when it comes to the more sensitive Qurānic terms and expressions such as the Divine Names. In fact, having a sufficient theological knowledge to carry out a translation of a religious text has been a debated issue in the Biblical translations as well. For instance, Smalley (1991) points out that 'in order to render the Divine Names perfectly, there must be a 'divinely-inspired' translation, which, unfortunately, does not exist' (p. 91, cited in Noss, 2007).

Some previous translators of the Qurān have referred to the theological obstacle in relation to rendering the Divine Names, which makes the huge task of translating the

Qurān hardly achievable. For instance, the Muslim converts who teamed up<sup>27</sup> and produced their Qurān translation; known as *Ṣaḥīḥ International* (1997) said the following in their preface regarding the translation of the Most Beautiful Divine Names (*Ṣaḥīḥ Int.* 1997, p. v):

As for the names and attributes of *Allāh*, their translation is surely impossibility, for even in Arabic they cannot represent more than an approximation limited by human understanding. To any description given by *Allāh* of Himself in human terminology, the mind is required to apply the concept of absoluteness and perfection [that is] befitting Him.

It would be, however, beyond the scope of the current study to mention in detail all the theological issues related to translating the Divine Names and Attributes in the Qurān. The current study is limited to dealing with the accuracy and consistency of the renderings of the root-sharing Divine Names, which remarkably make the majority of Divine Names mentioned in the Qurān.

#### **3.4.4.2.2 Stylistic Features**

In translation, there is a sort of consensus, according to Gutt (1991), that it is likely to attain a high inter-language level of similarity with regard to semantic features between two or more languages, but ‘the same cannot be said of stylistics properties, which often consist in linguistic features that are far from Universal’ (cited in Abdul-Raof, 2001: 23). Rhythm, rhyme and harmony are amongst the stylistic characteristics of Qurānic Arabic. Such features often have a thematic, contextual, stylistic and expressive function (Dickins et al, 2002), but when translated, the message often loses parts of its meaning and has much less effect on both the reader and the listener.

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<sup>27</sup> Members of the team are Executive Director, Amatullah J. Bantley; Author and Translator, Umm Muhammad Aminah Assami; and English Editor: Mary M. Kennedy (see <http://www.saheehinternational.com/>).

Examples of the translation loss of these stylistic features of the Qurānic text are abundantly found in the verse-ending context-bound collocations of the Divine Names (see Stewart, 2013). The lyrical and rhythmical features of the Divine Names are observably absent in the English translations. The Qurān not only puts words in a specific order to achieve a communicative effect, but it strikingly fulfils that in addition to beautifully establishing verse-ending rhythmical harmonies which underpin the delivery of its instructions and increase its emotional impact.

#### **3.4.4.2.3 Textual Cohesion**

Verse-ending collocations of the Divine Names, which are numerous in the Qurānic text, play an important role in the overall textual cohesion, in addition to the aforementioned contextual and stylistic roles. In other words, collocated verse-ending Divine Names not only represent stylistic features of the Qurān, but equally important, textual cohesive devices. The verse-ending pairs of the Divine Names usually appear in similar morphological templatic patterns (see morphological patterns in chapter 4). In other words, the verse-ending collocated pairs (noun doublets) of the Divine Names usually have the same morphological forms which are often repeated in close proximity (Dickins et al. 2002, p.100). To make this clear, consider the following collocations (morphological repetition) of some Divine Names that are formulated on the same templatic pattern which are not only context-bound terms, but also textually-cohesive devices:

1. *Al-Ghafūr al-Wadūd* (Q. 85:14) This pair of Divine Names, which is often translated as the All-Forgiving the All-Loving respectively, appears in the same templatic pattern, namely *fa'ūl* (*al-fa'ūl*, in the definite form). This repetition of



pattern (*al-fa<sup>c</sup>ūl al-fa<sup>c</sup>ūl*), which serves stylistic and textual purposes, is absent in the English translations (cf. Abdul-Raof, 2001; Stewart, 2013 for more examples).

2. *Al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz al-Ḥakīm* (Q. 3:62, 3:126). This pair of Divine Names, which appears numerous times in Qurānic verse-ending collocations and is often rendered as the ‘Almighty’ the ‘All-Wise’, appears in the same templatic pattern, namely *fa<sup>c</sup>īl* (*al-fa<sup>c</sup>īl*, in the definite form). The repetition of this pattern (as *al-fa<sup>c</sup>īl al-fa<sup>c</sup>īl*) provides stylistic and textual effects which are absent in the English translations. Similar examples of collocated pairs of Names of the same templatic pattern include *Samī<sup>c</sup>-Baṣīr*, ‘the All-Hearing’-‘All-Seeing’ (Q.4:134, 17:1, 22:61, 22:75), and *Alīm-Ḥalīm*, the ‘All-Knowing’- the ‘Forbearing’ (Q. 4:12, 22:59, 33:51).

## Chapter Four: Linguistic (Morpho-semantic) Aspects of the Divine Names

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a theoretical framework for the linguistic aspects of the Most Beautiful Divine Names. In other words, it deals with linguistic issues, particularly morphological and semantic, in relation to the Divine Names mentioned in the Qurān. These aspects are needed for both the analysis of meanings of the Divine Names and the evaluation of their English renderings, both of which will be carried out in the next chapter (chapter 5). This chapter, in fact, links the theoretical linguistic aspects to the applied analysis, both of which are both necessary for a better understanding the delicate meanings of the Divine Names, particularly the near-synonymous ones, as well as evaluating their existing English translations.

This chapter is divided into three main sections in order achieve its aforementioned purpose. The first section presents a brief introduction to the content and purpose of each section and subsection of this chapter. The second section sheds light on Arabic morphology (see 4.2.1) as well as the morphological features of the Divine Names including *ishtiqaq* (derivation), root-and-pattern system (see 4.2.2) and Arabic descriptive nominal derivatives (see 4.2.3). These descriptive nominal derivatives include *ism al-fā'il*, the active participle; *ism al-maf'ūl*, the passive participle; *ṣiḡhat mubālaghah*, the intensified 'hyperbolic' participle; *ṣifah Mushabbahah*, the assimilated 'qualificative' adjectival; and *ism at-tafdhīl*; the superlative 'elative' noun; all of which represent the morphological forms of the Divine Names (see 4.2.3.1-5).

The third section discusses semantic aspects of meaning and its types in relation to the Divine names as well as two semantic notions regarding lexical relations of the

Divine Names, namely synonymy and polysemy. Thus, this section is subdivided into three subsections, the first of which presents a brief theoretical framework for the notion of meaning and its various interdisciplinary types. The second subsection provides a detailed account of the semantic types of meaning in relation to the Divine Names. These types include the denotative, connotative, contextual, morphological, emotive, thematic and collocative meanings (see sub-sec. 4.3.2). The discussion of each type of meaning varies based on its relevance to the Divine Names. For example the collocations and collocative meanings are discussed in more details than other types of meaning since they represent linguistic features of Qurānic style (see 4.3.2.7).

The third subsection (4.3.3) is divided into two parts to briefly discuss, in relation the Qurānic Divine Names, the semantic notions of synonymy and polysemy (see 4.3.3). The former is known as *tarāduf* in Arabic literature while the latter is termed *ishtirāk lafẓī* (polysemy) and it is known in the medieval exegetical works of *Tafsīr* as *wujūh Al-Qurān*. In the discussion of these semantic notions, more attention is paid to the aspects of synonymy in the Qurān in general and the Divine Names in particular. This would certainly play an important role in understanding the subtle differences between the root-sharing Divine Names. The discussion also includes a brief account on polysemy in general and its relation to some Divine Names in particular. Both semantic notions, synonymy and polysemy, will be discussed from Arabic/Qurānic perspective and in light of well-known exegetical and theological works, such as that of *Ghazālī* (d. 1111) and *Ibn Al-Qayyim* (d. 1350).

It is worth mentioning that other semantic notions such as antonymous lexical relations are not included in the discussion since no two Divine Names are opposite in meaning to each other. This does not contradict with complementary pairs of few

Divine Names such as *Al-Awwal* and *Al-Ākīr* which refer to Divine Pre-Existence and Infinite Existence as well as *Az-Zāhir* and *Al-Bāṭin* which speak of Divine Transcendence and Immanence respectively (these two pairs of Divine Names are found in Q. 57:3).

## **4.2 Morphological Structure and Derivation of the Divine Names**

Morphology is the linguistic study of the inner structure of words and the rules by which words are formed (Bauer, 2003). Languages differ considerably in the extent to which they depend on morphological structures. Semitic languages including Arabic, for instance, are highly dependent on their morphological capacities (Ryding, 2005, Watson, 2002). It is known that morphology is an essential and inseparable field of the study of both word-formation and meaning of many languages, as it will be discussed in this section which briefly introduces Arabic morphology as well as the morphological features of the Divine Names which are nominal descriptive derivatives. This will pave the way for discussing the derivation and morpho-semantic features of these descriptive Divine Names. This discussion is needed for both meaning analysis and evaluation of the English renderings of the Divine Names mentioned in the Qurān, which will be carried out in the next chapter.

### **4.2.1 Arabic Morphology**

The Science of Arabic Morphology, *‘ilm aṣ-Ṣarf* or *Taṣrīf*, can be defined as a branch of Arabic Grammar, which deals with word formation, components (morphemes) and phonological patterns. As a linguistic discipline, the science of *Taṣrīf* includes various issues of Arabic word-formation, inflection and derivation while *‘ilm an-Naḥw* (the Science of syntax) covers grammatical cases and mood (Ryding, 2005). Some early

traditional Arab grammarians regarded *Taṣrīf* as a linguistic art that examines the inner morphological structures of words and distinguishes their roots<sup>28</sup> as well as their vowels and consonants (Versteegh and Versteegh, 1997). One of the roles of *Taṣrīf* in Arabic is to examine the aforementioned morphological scales or templatic patterns (Ar. *awzān*) where consonants and vowels are put together to form many word variations and conjugations derived from the same linguistic root. In most languages, the science of morphology is divided, based on word structural features and affixation, into derivational morphology and inflectional morphology (ibid.).

Early Arab linguists of the schools of *Baṣrah* and *Kūfah* established rules of inflectional morphology under what they termed *Mīzān Ṣarfī* (lit. morphological scale). These rules soon developed to constitute the aforementioned sophisticated science known as *‘Im Aṣ-Ṣarf*, which covers many linguistic issue including *‘ishtiqaq’*, derivation, and *‘taṣrīf’*, inflection. The former is concerned with word origins and how they came into the linguistic system while the latter identifies the root-templatic relationship through the formation of Arabic terms based on a some morphological patterns, known as templates or templatic patterns where consonants and vowels are put together to form many variants and conjugations that not only share the same linguistic root but belong to the same semantic field (Watson, 2002; Ryding, 2005).

Early contributions to Arabic morphology include those of *Māzinī* (d. 863), *Zajjājī* (d. 950) and *Jurjānī* (d. 1078) to name a few (see Watson, 2002; Alshdaifat, 2014). *Māzinī* was the first grammarian to devote a whole work, namely *Kitāb At-Taṣrīf* (lit. *The Book of Inflectional Morphology*), to the identification and investigation of word formation and other morphological issues (ibid.). In his book which he entitled *Al-*

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<sup>28</sup> Arabic roots are also called radicals, central morphemes or allomorphs (holes, 1995, Watson, 2002).

*Munşif*, the well-known grammarian *Ibn Jinnī* (d. 1002) praised *Kitāb At-Taşrīf* of *Māzinī* and regarded it as a core reference for Arab linguist in general, and for morphologists in particular (Ibn Jinnī, 1960).

The Semitic languages, including Arabic, are characterized by complex and generative root-and-pattern morphological systems (Watson, 2002). These languages essentially have highly nonconcatenative (non-agglutinative) systems through which words are formed based on combining consonant and vowel letters (ibid.). This combination is built, as mentioned above, on morphological *awzān*, templatic patterns. This indicates that word construction is not produced through concatenation (i.e. linking morphemes together) as is the case in the English language morphological system (ibid.). The nonconcatenative system is best represented by the sophisticated and well-structured Arabic morphological system, which is governed by manipulating consonantal roots and inflecting vowels according to systematic templatic patterns and vocalic melodies (ibid.).

The consonantal root in Arabic mostly contains three letters and infrequently two or four. Most of Arabic nominal and verbal terms are derived from tri-consonantal roots, and the rest are derived from bi-literal and quad-literal consonantal roots. Consonantal roots in Arabic are the basic morphological units for all root-sharing cognate words and usually signify their core meaning, whereas the vowels carry particular morpho-syntactic and morpho-semantic information (McCarthy, 1981). It is worth mentioning that early Arab grammarians agree on the fact that any change in the morphological form of Arabic roots or stem verbs always signals differences in meaning. In other words, any increase in word structure necessitates an increase of word meaning and this will be used as a rule in distinguishing between the root-sharing Divine Names.

## 4.2.2 Derivation and Lexical Roots of the Divine Names

The study of word origins and derivation (etymological history) is an essential procedure during the process of meaning analysis of words in many languages, especially in the highly derivational ones such as the Semitic Languages (Bauer, 2003). This subsection provides a brief discussion on the notion of derivation (Ar. *ishtiqaq*) as well as the root-and-pattern system. This will pave the way for discussing the Arabic nominal descriptive derivatives and the morphological templatic patterns of the Divine Names in the Qurān.

### 4.2.2.1 Derivation ‘*Ishtiqaq*’

The Oxford Dictionary of English defines the term ‘derivation’ as the act of acquiring something from a source or origin (see Stevenson et al. 2010). In the field of linguistics in general and morphology in particular, the term is often applied to refer to one of two types of word-formation and affixation processes, namely derivational and inflectional (Crystal, 2008, p.138). The derivational morphology is basically a linguistic process of affixation that results in the formation of a new word of different grammatical class (e.g. nature ⇒ natural), whereas the non-derivational affixation process of inflectional morphology results in the formation of a different form of the same word (e.g. nations, nationals) (ibid. p.138-39).

In Arabic, the morphological notion of *ishtiqaq*, which generally refers to the derivation process of words, is deeply rooted in its long history of linguistics (see Versteegh, 1997; Watson, 2002). Early Arab linguists knew *ishtiqaq* as a linguistic tool which helps enrich and develop their mother tongue, Arabic. Early linguists and luminaries of *Kūfah* and *Başrah* had a great interest in *Ishtiqaq* which was used to

meet the challenges which Arabic language encountered when it expanded beyond the Arabian Peninsula and started to rival well-established languages such as Persian and Greek (Elmgrab, 2011). The inter-lingual contact and translation between the Arabs, Greek and Persians, have led early linguists of Arabic to come up with new means of communication as well as linguistic instruments in order reduce the influence on Arabic and guard its purity (ibid.).

As soon as Arab linguists and translators started translating early scientific works from Greek and Persian into Arabic, alien terms began to infiltrate the Arabic linguistic system (Elmgrab, 2011). This soon led Arab grammarians to adopt some linguistic strategies to help the language cope with the influx of technical terms by generating new lexicons and enriching its terminologies (ibid.). These strategies include derivation ‘*ishtiqaq*’, Arabization<sup>29</sup> ‘*ta’rīb*’ and coining ‘*naḥt*’ (ibid.). It is not the interest of this study to explain these strategies in a detailed manner, but for the purpose of the morpho-semantic analysis of the Divine Names, it will shed light on derivation, along with morphological aspects, as it is more relevant to the Divine Names, which are descriptive nominal derivatives carrying delicate meanings.

One of early grammarians to discuss *ishtiqaq*<sup>30</sup>, derivational issues of Arabic morphology, and the way they categorically affect meaning is *Sībawayh* (d.796). In his well-known treatise *Kitāb An-Naḥw* (Book of Syntax), he largely discusses syntactic aspects but also pays attention to some morphological issues including how some words are formed or structured. He successfully, though unsystematically,

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<sup>29</sup> Arabization started as a national linguistic movement to restore Arabic as the official language (national medium) for some Arab countries after regaining independence in the early twentieth century. Most Arab countries later adopted Arabization as a language policy to endorse using Arabic and resist using foreign technical terms.

<sup>30</sup> *Ishtiqaq* was traditionally and conventionally divided into two main categories, namely *ishtiqaq ṣaġhīr* (lit. minor or simple derivation) and *ishtiqaq Kabīr* (lit. major derivation).



attempted to morphologically distinguish between various derivational patterns through investigating their functions within several contexts (*Sībawayh*, 1996).

#### **4.2.2.2 Root-and-Pattern System**

Arabic language is believed to be the best example of a complete growth of classical word-formation in Semitic languages (Watson, 2002). Being a member of the Semitic family makes Arabic morphologically derivational, i.e. based on the root and pattern system. Early Arab grammarians (morphologists) paid a great attention to verbs (and their roots) as they change more often than other types of words (*ibid.*). In fact, the majority of Arabic nouns, including adjectives, are derived from stem verbs which contain the roots of most word-forms and patterns of the Arabic Language (*ibid.*).

Morphologically, almost every Arabic word contains two parts, namely root and pattern. The root, at one hand, is typically tri-consonantal unpronounceable bound morpheme and it constitutes the simplest form of word semantics, i.e. it is a sequence of consonants which hold the core sense of the semantic network of other variants and conjugations (Ryding, 2005). The pattern, on the other hand, contains vowels affixed on the root, i.e. vowels are interpolated between skeleton of consonants (Dickins et al. 2002). In other words, the inflections change the internal/phonological root structure (Crystal, 2008). The inflection of vowels on the consonantal root, which form the templatic pattern<sup>31</sup>, often determines structural (syntactic) and functional aspects of meaning (Ryding, 2005). From a semantic standpoint, it is worth emphasising that the root normally carries the central element of meaning in most words in Arabic (Crystal, 2008). In other words, the root represents the basic linguistic component of meaning

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<sup>31</sup> There are two types of templatic pattern at the derivational level: verbal stem patterns and nominal stem patterns. Verbal stem patterns in Arabic are more restricted than the nominal stems (Watson 2002: 133).

of all words they share it, but different templatic patterns indicate various morpho-semantic senses, though they belong to the same semantic field (ibid. p.419).

Arabic has a well-organized and rich root-and-pattern system to the extent that dozens of related words can share the same linguistic root and, hence, the core element of meaning. This is not the case of the Western languages including English which has a limited morphological system to semantically and grammatically correspond to the abundant vocabulary of Arabic. According to Abdul-Raof (2004, p.94):

The morphological mechanism of Arabic enables it to produce lexical items derived from the same root (theoretically over 200 words can be derived from one root). The accurate meaning of the Arabic word produced is often difficult to be achieved through a one-word target language.

The change caused by inflecting vowels on the consonantal root is variable and often comprises associating the consonants with various melodic templates/patterns that belong to the same semantic field (Watson, 2002). In other words, affixation of the roots results in forming verbal and nominal derivatives which share the central sense carried by the root. To make this clear, consider the tri-consonantal Arabic root *k-s-r* ‘to break’. When this root is joined with the vowels /-ā-i-/, they form *kāsir* ‘breaker, which is an active participle based on the templatic pattern *fā<sup>c</sup>il* (McCarthy and Prince, 1990). But when the same root, *k-s-r* ‘to break’, is joined with the vowels /-a-ū-/ and an affix, namely *ma-*, which precedes the typical passive-participle form, they altogether form the adjective (passive participle) *maksūr* ‘broken’. Arabic also makes use of affixes (prefixes, suffixes) which act as subject markers of gender and number, as well as pronouns, prepositions, and a definite article.

#### 4.2.2.3 Derivation and Lexical Roots of the Divine Names

The majority of early Muslim scholars and theologians do not doubt the linguistics derivation of all Divine Names, with the exception of *Ibn Ḥazm* (d. 1064) who claimed that such Names are abstract or concrete entities and should be seen as proper names that linguistically cannot be derived (Ghuṣn, 1996). Other linguists, such as *Farāhīdī* (d.820), *Ibn al-ʿArabī* (d.1148) and his student *Suhailī* (d.1185), believe that the Divine Proper Name, *Allāh*, is not derived while the rest of the Divine Names are descriptive epithetical derivatives which are derived from smaller lexical roots (ibid.). In his long Ode known as *al-Kāfiyah Ash-Shāfiyah*, *Ibn Al-Qayyim* (d.1350) explicitly refers to the derivation of the Divine Names and says (Isā, 1986, p. 488):

أسماءه دلت على أوصافه \*\*\* مشتقة منها اشتقاق معان

*Ibn Al-Qayyim* (d.1350) poetically explains that the Divine Names indicate the Divine Attributes, and these [the Names] are derivatives from which meanings are derived as well. It is worth mentioning that the Divine Names that are mentioned in the Qurān, on the one hand, are nominal masculine singular terms. On the other hand, the Divine Attributes such as *Raḥmah* (mercy) and *Maghfirah* (forgiveness) are mostly nominative feminine indefinite nouns, referring to the action or concept to which every Holy name denotes. A study of the stem-verbs or roots that form the Divine Names will certainly help to reach a better understanding of their meanings in the Qurān and, as a result, suggest a better way of interpreting and translating them into English, as will be discussed in details in the next chapter (see ch.5).

### 4.2.3 Morphological Patterns/Templates of the Divine Names

In Arabic, word-formation processes involve patterns of consonants that have a certain meaning; this meaning is interleaved with vowel patterns which, themselves, have meanings or morpho-syntactic information (McCarthy, 1981). McCarthy explains that the Arabic verb system of the tri-literal root is based on many derivational categories, but due to the limited space and scope of this study, our discussion will be confined to the abovementioned descriptive nominal derivatives.

The nominal descriptive derivatives (also known as verbal nouns), upon which many Divine Names are morphologically structured, are:

- 1) *Ism al-fā'il* 'the active participle' اسم الفاعل.
- 2) *Ism al-Maf'ūl* 'the passive participle' اسم المفعول.
- 3) *Ṣiġhat al-Mubālaghah* 'the exaggerative (hyperbolic) noun' صيغة المبالغة.
- 4) *Ṣifah Mushabbahah* 'the assimilated (qualificative) adjective' صفة مشبهة.
- 5) *Ism at-Taḏhīl* 'the Elative (Superlative) noun' اسم التفضيل.

In the following, each of these descriptive nominal derivatives will be briefly discussed in relation to the Divine Names, along with examples and illustrating tables:

#### 4.2.3.1 Active Participle, *Ism al-Fa'il*

The active Participle (AP), *Ism al-fā'il*,<sup>32</sup> is a descriptive nominal derivative that describes the doer or participant in an action, whether temporal or perpetual, e.g. *kātib* 'writer' (see Watson, 2002; Ryding, 2005). This adjectival noun, *kātib*, is either derived from the act of writing *kitābah* or the stem verb *ka-ta-ba* 'to write' (Ryding,

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<sup>32</sup> *Ism al-fā'il* is sometimes referred to in English as the agent noun or present participle.

2005). In Arabic morphology, the templatic pattern of the basic form of the active participle contains a group of disconnected consonants and vowels (ibid.). To illustrate, the basic templatic pattern of the active Participle ‘*fā’il*’, which is the typical morphological pattern for all tri-literal form-I verbs (or tri-consonantal roots), is represented by the templatic pattern C1VVC2VC3 where the long vowel *ā* and the short vowel ‘*i*’ are infixed in-between the three consonants to give the vocal sound of the active participle (see Watson, 2002; Ryding, 2005).

Many divine names appear in the aforementioned basic form of the active participle (see table, 4.1). Some of these, along with their roots, are shown in following table:

Root (stem verb)	Active-Participle Divine Names
<i>q-d-r</i> قدر ‘to be able’	<i>Qādir</i> قادر ‘Capable’
<i>gh-f-r</i> غفر ‘to forgive’	<i>Ghāfir</i> غافر ‘Forgiver’
<i>q-h-r</i> قهر ‘to compel’	<i>Qāhir</i> قاهر ‘Compeller’
<i>k-l-q</i> خلق ‘to create’	<i>Ḳāliq</i> خالق ‘Creator’

Table 4.1 Active-Participle Forms of Divine Names

#### 4.2.3.2 Passive Participle, *Ism al-Maf’ūl*

The second descriptive derivative is known as *Ism al-Maf’ūl*, the Arabic counterpart of the passive participle<sup>33</sup> (Watson, 2002). It is a nominal derivative indicating an abstract notion that refers to an object being affected by action, e.g. *maktūb* ‘written’, *maghfūr* ‘forgiven’ which are derived from tri-literal form-1 verbs *ka-ta-ba* ‘to write’ and *gh-fa-ra* ‘to forgive’ respectively (ibid.). In addition to its typical templatic pattern, namely *maf’ūl*, the Arabic passive participle appears in several morphological

<sup>33</sup> *Ism al-Maf’ūl* is sometimes referred to as the English past participle

patterns including *maf'al*, *mufta'al* and *mufta'āl* as in the Divine Name *Musta'ān* 'Besought for help', which appears in two Qurānic occasions (see 12:18, 21:112).

#### 4.2.3.3 Intensified (Hyperbolic) Participle, *Ṣīghat Mubālaghah*

*Ṣīghat al-Mubālaghah* is an intensified form of the active participle (table 4.2 below). It is sometimes referred to as hyperbolic or exaggerative noun which emphatically describes a perpetual action or quality. This nominal derivative, which comes in many templatic patterns including *fa<sup>cc</sup>āl* and *fa<sup>c</sup>ūl*, has an affective and emphatic purpose that indicates an augmentation of a possessed quality (Watson, 2002).

Intensified Divine Names, therefore, are not exaggerative but they indicate the absoluteness and perfection of some perpetual Divine Actions. Hence, they are applied in the Qurān in order to leave a positive impression on the listener or emphasise the limitlessness and infinity of a specific Divine Quality (*As-Sa<sup>c</sup>dī*, 1987). Many Names appear in the intensified forms of the active participle. Some Names, along with their roots and active-participle forms, are shown in following table:

Root (stem verb)	Active Participle forms	Intensified forms of Divine Names
<i>k-l-q</i> خلق 'to create'	<i>Ḳāliq</i> خالق 'Creator'	<i>Ḳallāq</i> خالق 'All-Creator'
<i>gh-f-r</i> غفر 'to forgive'	<i>Ghāfir</i> غافر 'Forgiver'	<i>Ghaffār</i> غفار 'Oft-Forgiving'
<i>q-h-r</i> قهر 'to compel'	<i>Qāhir</i> قاهر 'Compeller'	<i>Qahhār</i> قهار 'All-Compeller'
<i>r-z-q</i> رزق 'to provide'	<i>Qāhir</i> رازق 'Provider'	<i>Razzāq</i> رزاق 'All-Provider'

Table 4.2 Intensified (Hyperbolic) forms of Divine Names

#### 4.2.3.4 Assimilated (Qualificative) Adjective, *Ṣifah Mushabbahah*

The assimilated or qualificative adjective, which is known in Arabic as ‘*ṣifah mushabbahah*’, is an adjectival nominal derivative that functions as a noun (Ryding, 2005). It was named by early Arab linguists as *ṣifah mushabbahah* because it bears resemblance to the aforementioned active and passive participles but differs in its derivation and function (ibid.). Unlike the case in other descriptive derivatives, the qualificative adjective is always derived from intransitive verbs and it indicates inherent and lasting feature or quality (ibid.). In other words, the qualificative adjective is not confined to time or temporary states whereas the active and passive participles are necessarily bearing permanent quality or attribute (ibid.). For instance, the derived active participle from the root *sh-h-d* (stem verb شَهِدَ *sha-hi-da*), which basically means ‘to attend, watch or witness’, is *shāhid* شاهد and it indicates temporal or occasional form of witness such as eye-witnessing in courts whereas the derived qualificative adjective from the same verb, namely *shahīd* شهيد, indicates natural and lasting observation as in the Divine Name *Shahīd*.

Many Divine Names are structurally formed as assimilated (qualificative) adjectives which function as nouns (see table 4.3 below).

Root (stem verb)	Qualificative-Adjectival Divine Names
<i>q-d-r</i> قدر ‘to be able’	<i>Qadīr</i> قدير ‘All-Capable’
<i>gh-f-r</i> غفر ‘to forgive’	<i>Ghafūr</i> غفور ‘All-Forgiving’
<i>m-l-k</i> ‘to own, rule’	<i>Malīk</i> ملك ‘Sovereign, King’
<i>sh-h-d</i> ‘to watch or witness’	<i>Shahīd</i> شهيد ‘All-Witness’

Table 4.3 Assimilated (Qualificative) Adjectival Divine Names

#### 4.2.3.5 Superlative (Elative) Noun, *Ism At-Tafdhīl*

*Ism At-Tafdhīl* (superlative or elative nominal derivative) in Arabic differs from that of English in the sense that the former corresponds to both the comparative and superlative forms in English. The English superlative is often defined as a derived noun which is mostly used ‘to express a comparison between more than two entities, and it contrasts with comparative, where only two entities are involved’ (Crystal, 2008, p. 465). In English, according to Crystal (2008, p.465), ‘there is both an inflection (-est) and a periphrastic construction (most) to express the superlative notion (e.g. biggest, most interesting respectively).

*Ism at-tafdhīl* usually appears in many forms in Arabic based on the number and gender of the entities involved in the comparison (Ryding, 2005). The singular masculine form, which is more popular than other forms, takes the templatic pattern of *ʿafʿal* as in *ʿakram* and *ʿarḥam* while the singular feminine form takes the the templatic pattern of *fūʿla* as in *kubrā* and *ḥusnā* (see *ḥusnā* 2.5.4). A few Divine Names in the Qurān appear in the forms of *ism at-tafdhīl*, superlative (or elative) forms. Some of these, along with their roots, are shown in following table (table 4.1):

Root (stem verb)	Superlative (Elative) Divine Names
<i>k-r-m</i> كرم ‘to honour, be generous’	<i>Akram</i> أكرم ‘Most Generous/Bountiful’
<i>ʿ-l-w</i> علو ‘to rise, to ascend’	<i>ʿAlā</i> أعلى ‘, Highest, Most High’
<i>r-ḥ-m</i> رحم ‘to show mercy’	<i>Arḥam</i> أرحم ‘Most Merciful’
<i>ḥ-k-m</i> حكم ‘to judge, to rule’	<i>Aḥkam</i> أحكم ‘Best to Judge’

Table 4.1 Superlative (Elative) Forms of Divine Names



### **4.3 Meaning and Semantic Aspects of the Divine Names**

The previous section highlighted important linguistic aspects of the Divine Names, namely the morphological aspects, including clarifying the structural and morphological issues of derivation as well as templatic patterns of the nominal descriptive derivatives which represent the morphological forms of the Divine Names. The following section will also highlight another significant linguistic aspect of the Divine Names, namely meaning, which serves the purpose of the morpho-semantic analysis of the Divine Names (to be carried out in chapter 6). The current section presents the concept of meaning as well as its types in relation to the Divine Names. This will include brief theoretical issues along with semantic aspects from the Arabic/Islamic literature on the Divine Names.

#### **4.3.1 Meaning; Definition and Types**

Meaning, as a linguistic term, cannot be easily and clearly defined (see Ullmann, 1967, Riemer, 2010 and Goddard, 2011). In fact, the term has for long been debated and philosophically and controversially discussed by early language theorists (Cruse, 1986). These philosophical disputes could be due to the fact that it is not an easy task to understand the complex relation between a word and its meaning since words, at one hand, usually acquire their meanings through their usage within a linguistic system. Meaning, on the other hand, can be carried by smaller elements of a single word, i.e. smaller units (linguistic ‘bits’) of words, namely morphemes, carry meaning (Dickins et al. 2002:33, Baker, 1992).

Though there have been many attempts to arrive at a clear straightforward definition of ‘meaning’, there is, still, no agreed-upon description of meaning. In the early

twentieth century, Ogden and Richards listed about twenty scholarly attempts to define meaning in their well-known work of semantics '*The Meaning of Meaning*' (Ogden and Richards, 1923). There have been interdisciplinary attempts to explain what is meant by meaning in various contexts (see Speaks 2006, Crystal 1980). Many scholars, including linguists, psychologists, sociologists and translation theorists have provided various definitions (of meaning) from various perspectives, and in relation to several fields of knowledge. The concept of 'meaning' in a linguistic context, for instance, requires referring to non-linguistic situational and intentional issues.

The aforementioned book by Ogden and Richards (1923), along with other works that discuss the '*meanings of meaning*', have categorised and listed several kinds of meaning, which represent three basic themes (Crystal, 2008, p.299):

(I) When the emphasis is on the relationship between language, on the one hand, and the entities, events, states of affairs, etc., which are external to speakers and their language, on the other, terms such as 'referential/ descriptive/ denotative/ extensional/ factual/ objective meaning' have been used.

(ii) When the emphasis is on the relationship between language and the mental state of the speaker, two sets of terms are used: the personal, emotional aspects are handled by such terms as 'attitudinal/ affective/ connotative/ emotive/ expressive meaning'; the intellectual, factual aspects involve such terms as 'cognitive/ ideational meaning'.

(ii) When the emphasis is on the way variations in the extra-linguistic situation affect the understanding and interpretation of language, terms such as 'contextual/ functional/ interpersonal/ social/ situational' have been used.

Some linguists, particularly semanticists, and translation theorists (see Riemer, 2010) categorize different kinds of meaning based on linguistic analysis and textual relationships, which enable them to distinguish between direct (referential or denotative) meaning and indirect (contextual or connotative) meaning (ibid.). These semantic types<sup>34</sup> of meaning are more relevant to this evaluative/linguistic study than all other interdisciplinary types of meaning. In other words, the reason this study limits itself to a few types of meaning in relation to the Divine Names is the fact that there are many other multi-disciplinary and overlapping types of meanings which are beyond the scope of this evaluative study. These types, according to Crystal (1980), represent the situational relevance, analysis and relationship between, for instance, language and mind (psycholinguistic types of meanings), and language and society (sociolinguistic types of meanings).

In the field of translation, meaning is a central, though debatable, factor in any translation activity (see Quine's '*Translation and Meaning*' 1959). From a linguistic and translational point of view, 'the meaning of any linguistic sign is its translation into some further, alternative sign, especially a sign in which it is more fully developed' (Jakobson, 2000, p.114). Translation scholars, however, admit the complexity of defining meaning within translation, as it differs from word level to text level. Venuti (1995, p.17-18), for instance, gives the following description of the complexity of meaning within the process of translation:

Translation is a process by which the chain of signifiers that constitutes the source-language text is replaced by a chain of signifiers in the target language which the translator provides on the strength of an interpretation.

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<sup>34</sup> Linguists and translation theorists have dealt with more than a dozen of forms of meaning including the literal, semantic, denotative, connotative, thematic, figurative, vocative, pragmatic, emotive, functional, conceptual, expressive, logical, intentional, contextual meanings and so on.

Because meaning is an effect of relations and differences among signifiers along a potentially endless chain (polysemous, intertextual, subject to infinite linkages), it is always differential and deferred, never present as an original unity.

The definition of meaning is, as mentioned above, one of the most debated issues between linguists, particularly semanticists and lexicographers. In his essay '*Toward a Theory of Translating*', renamed later as '*Toward a theory of comprehending*', Richards (1955) had a great interest in the nature of meaning within texts and maintained that 'in principle it is possible, though exasperatingly difficult, to reach an adequate understanding of a unique text through a careful mapping of all its denotative and connotative dimensions' (cited in Kuhlweck and Littau, 2007, p.82). To sum up, it is sometimes appealing for translators and linguists to categorise various types of meaning, though it seems a vague procedure, in order to reach a better understanding on both the word and text levels. As Baker (1992, p. 24) puts it:

The very notion of 'types of meaning' is theoretically suspect. Yet, I believe that [drawing] distinctions [...] can be useful for the translator since one of the most difficult tasks that a translator is constantly faced with is that, notwithstanding the 'fuzziness' inherent in language, s/he must attempt to perceive the meanings of words and utterances very precisely in order to render them into another language.

#### **4.3.2 Types of Meaning in Relation to the Divine Names**

As mentioned above, it is beyond the scope of this study to survey all definitions and types of meaning along with their controversial debates, given their extent and interdisciplinary nature, but it is in the interest of this study to shed a light here on the sorts and types of meaning in relation to the Divine Names mentioned in the Qurān. This is of high importance since the analysis and evaluation of the existing English

translations of the Divine Names (carried out in chapter 5) revolves around conveying, from Qurānic Arabic into English, the true and accurate meaning of every Name.

#### **4.3.2.1 Denotative Meaning**

The denotative meaning (sometimes referred to as the referential, conceptual, logical, and cognitive meaning of a linguistic expression) is its ‘stable, abstract [dictionary] meaning [which is] independent of the context and situation’ (Palumbo, 2009, p.34). In the field of translation, this type of meaning was termed ‘central meaning’ by Nida (1975) and ‘primary meaning’ by Eco, (1976) (Crystal, 2008). Dickins et al. (2002) define this type of meaning as ‘the conventional range of referential meaning attributed to a linguistic expression’ (p. 235).

According to Crystal (2008), denotative meaning is often associated with literal meaning, ‘contrasting with the subjective and personal associations of connotative meaning’ (p. 136). The denotative sense of an expression, Crystal clarifies, is the ‘set of properties that something has to have to allow the expression to be applied to it’ (ibid.). Denotation in this case is ‘equivalent to intension’ (ibid.). Some semanticists define the denotative meaning as the ‘kind of meaning which is fully supported by ordinary semantic conventions, such as the convention that ‘window’ refers to a particular kind of aperture in a wall or roof’ (Dickins et al. 2002, p.52). Denotative meaning is usually contrasted with connotative meaning (see examples in 4.3.2.2).

The denotative meaning of a word might seem straightforward to the reader but this is not always the case when it comes to translation. Nida and Taber (1969:58–9), for instance, discussed some linguistic problems related to denotative meanings. This is true in the case of some sensitive Qurānic terms such as the Divine Names, which are

laden with denotative senses, particularly the near-synonymous Names that share the same linguistic root but differ in their morphological forms as well as denotative meanings. For instance, *Ghāfir*, *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār* are root-sharing near-synonymous Divine Names which all represent the Divine Forgiveness, but they all slightly differ in their denotative senses as they refer to various degrees or types of forgiveness (as will be explained in the next chapter, see 5.2.1.4).

#### **4.3.2.2 Connotative Meaning**

Unlike the abovementioned direct denotative meaning, which has to do with what links ‘a linguistic unit [a word] and the non-linguistic entities to which it refers’ (Crystal, 2008, p.102), the connotative<sup>35</sup> meaning of a word is ‘the emotive, affective, largely context-independent component of meaning’ (Palumbo, 2009, p.24). In other words, the connotative meaning is an emotively and subjectively ‘variable component of meaning’ (ibid, p.34). Semanticists have used various labels and terms to refer to connotative meaning including affective, expressive, figurative and metaphorical meaning and have sometimes confused it with the emotive meaning (Crystal, 2008, p.103). This type of meaning, according to Hatim and Munday (2004), often refers to the ‘the emotional reaction engendered in the reader by a word’ (p. 35).

Dickins et al. (2002) describe connotative meaning as the implicit ‘overtones’ or ‘associations’ of a word, whether personal or communal, which ‘form part of its overall meaning’ in addition to its primary denotative meaning (p. 234). For instance, the denotative sense of the term ‘night’ is its dictionary meaning; ‘a period of

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<sup>35</sup> According to Crystal (2008), theoretical understanding of the denotative vs. connotative meanings is relatively diverse. Differentiating between these types of meanings basically resemble distinguishing between sense and reference, ‘the former being concerned with the relationships of equivalence between terms and propositions, the latter with their external-world status and truth-value’ (ibid. p.103). For instance, the word *December*, has its ‘connotations’ of *bad weather*, *dark evenings* (for north Europeans, at least), or *parties*, *Christmas*’ (ibid. 102-3).

darkness between sunset and sunrise' while it can be related to the connotative sense of 'scariness' and 'loneliness' (Palumbo, 2009, p.34). Another example is the word 'dog', which has the denotative sense of 'canine quadruped' as well as the connotative sense of 'friendship', 'help' and faithfulness (Crystal, 2008, 136). A third example, given by Palumbo (2009), is the word 'sunset' which has the denotative meaning of 'daily disappearance of the sun behind the horizon', but it also carries connotative senses related either to 'romance' or the last phase of someone's life, i.e. death (p. 24).

When it comes to the meanings of the Divine Names in the Qurān, it can be argued that some of the Names carry various emotive connotations, particularly the Names that speak of the Divine Mercy, Kindness and Forgiveness. Some of the Arabic terms that represent the Divine Names were known prior to the revelation of the Qurān, which introduced and framed new concepts for such terms. These terms underwent a semantic shift and, therefore, carried various pre-Islamic and Islamic linguistic as well as cultural connotations. Al-Mulla (1989), for instance, points out that with the revelation of the Qurān, some Arabic terms, including some the Divine Names, such as *Karīm*, experienced a semantic alteration in their connotations and, therefore, acquired new dimensions and Islamic concepts which differ from their pre-Islamic (*Jahili*) usage (cf. Sells, 1989, p.77).

There are many examples of Divine Names that carry various connotative meanings in the Qurān such as *al-Laṭīf*, *al-Ḥaqq*, *aṣ-Ṣamad*, *al-Mawlā*, and *al-Fattāḥ*. Such Divine Names proved to be challenging to grasp and translate into English, though some of them are only mentioned once in the Qurānic text such as *al-Fattāḥ* and *aṣ-Ṣamad* (see Q. 34:26 and Q. 112:2 respectively). A brief account on two of these

Divine Names<sup>36</sup>, namely *al-Fattāḥ* and *aṣ-Ṣamad*, is provided here to explain the importance of realising the underlined connotations of such sensitive Qurānic terms.

To start with, *Fattāḥ* is a nominal descriptive derivative, i.e. derived from the stem verb *fa-ta-ḥa* (of the root *f-t-ḥ*), and it is an intensified form of '*fātiḥ*', the active participle which speaks of the doer of the action '*fath*', which basically means opening, but it also carry various denotations and connotations. The feminine form of the active participle is '*fātiḥah*', as in the title of the first 'opening' Qurānic chapter, namely the *Fātiḥah*. The polysemous term *fath*, also denotes victory or conquest (as in Q. 8:19 and 48:1), which makes the active participle, *fātiḥ*, in this case to mean 'the grantor of victory'. The term, *fath*, also carries the connotative meaning of judgement, decision-making and mediation between adversaries (Q. 7:89, 26:118 and 34:26). In such a context, the active participle, *fātiḥ* means a judge or a decider. Thus, referring to Allāh as *Fattāḥ*, according to Muslim theologians such as *Ibn Al-Qayyim*, who poetically explains what *Fattāḥ* means<sup>37</sup>, indicates that He is the One Who opens everything that seems inaccessible, mediates by revealing the reality, simplifies intricacies, and rules over all creation.

#### 4.3.2.3 Contextual (Exegetical) Meaning

In interlanguage communication, meaning is not carried by the text *per se*, but it is essentially determined by the inferential combination of the text within a context (Gutt, 1996). According to Crystal (2008) contextual meaning usually speaks of

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<sup>36</sup> One example is provided here due to limits of space and to avoid repetition, other Divine Names of connotative meanings will be discussed later in this chapter as well as in the next chapter.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibn Al-Qayyim* says in his *Nūniyyah* (Isā, 1986):

وكذلك الفتاح من أسمائه \*\*\* والفتح في أوصافه أمران  
فتح بحكم وهو شرع إلها \*\*\* والفتح بالأقدار فتح ثان  
والرب فتاح بذين كليهما \*\*\* عدلاً وإحساناً من الرحمن



certain factors which influence ‘the interpretation of a sentence which derive from the rest of the discourse or text within which the sentence occurs’ (p. 300). Words of multiple meanings differ from most words in the sense that they require to be contextualized, i.e. to be put into a context to identify its ‘contextual’ meaning (ibid.).

There were early Muslim efforts to contextualize and explicate the meanings of many Qurānic terms in order to fully comprehend and appreciate the overall messages of a certain context as well as develop religious rulings from it (*As-Sa<sup>c</sup>dī*, 1987). Some Qurān exegetes, for instance, used to contextualize many terms, within the Qurānic text itself, in order to arrive to their real meaning/s in several contexts and give them a communicative value rather than treat them in isolation from their contexts (*Ibn Kathīr*, 1983; *Alūsī*, 1996). In other words, they systematically explain the subtle shades of meaning of a given Qurānic term through analysing its sense, role, relevance and position in two or more real Qurānic contexts. In his comments on the reliable approaches to interpret the meanings of the Qurānic terms and expressions, *Ibn Taymiyyah* (1986, 2:231) refers to Qurānic contextualization as he says:

إن أصح الطرق في ذلك أن يفسر القرآن بالقرآن، فما أجمل في مكان فإنه قد فسر في موضع آخر، وما اختصر في مكان فقد بسط في موضع آخر، فإن أعيانك ذلك فعليك بالسنة، فإنها شارحة للقرآن وموضحة له.

The most reliable approach to interpret the Qurān is using the Qurān itself to explicate its own verses since what was generalized in one Qurānic context had been specified in another; what was briefly mentioned in one Qurānic context had been detailed in another, and if this [approach] ails you, then refer to the *Sunnah* (*Ḥadīth*) as it surely clarifies the Qurān.

Qurān exegetes also utilised other surrounding non-Qurānic linguistic contexts to serve their interpretations of some unfamiliar Qurānic terms. It is said that *Ibn<sup>c</sup> Abbās*

(619-687), one of the earliest and well-known interpreters of the Qurān, was the first exegete to make use of such linguistic sources, including pre-Islamic poetry as well as the etymology of lexis (ibid.). An example of this in relation to the Divine Names is what Ṭabarī (d. 923) reported in his *Tafsīr* of Q. 6:14 that *Ibn ʿAbbās* commented on the interpretation of *Fāṭir As-Samāwāt Wal-Arḍh*<sup>38</sup>, by saying (Ṭabarī):

كنت لا أدري ما فاطر السماوات والأرض حتى أتاني أعرابيان يختصمان في بئر فقال أحدهما لصاحبه : أنا فطرتها يقول: أنا ابتدأتها ؛ تفسير الإمام الطبري

I was not aware of what *Fāṭir As-Samāwāt wal-Arḍh* means until two Bedouins came to me to solve their dispute over a water well, and one said to the other ‘*anā faṭartuhā*’ (lit. I originated it) i.e. he was the first to dig it.

(My translation)

#### 4.3.2.4 Emotive (Emotional) Meaning

In some literary works, emotive meaning is sometimes referred to rhetorical or aesthetic meaning, but these concepts are not always similar. Emotive meaning generally refers the emotionally-loaded denotations and connotations which reflect the emotive function of a given term or expression. According to Stevenson (1963, p.21), the emotive meaning of a word is a constant tendency of a word, during the course of its linguistic history, to evoke emotional human reactions. The emotive effects sometimes include feeling-arousing rhetorical terms and stylistic aspects, including tone, rhythm, and other melodic aspects, of literary works which are often used to express moods and excite emotional states (see Stevenson, 1963).

The emotive terms in the Qurān, according to Abdul-Raof, (2001), contain various shades of meaning with ‘emotive overtones’ and these emotive overtones often

<sup>38</sup> A compound Divine Name which can be translated as the Originator of the Heavens and the Earth

become ‘diluted’ in translation (p. 33). There are many Qurānic terms with emotive denotations and connotations particularly the Divine Names and epithetical Attributes such as *rahmah* and *Maghfirah*<sup>39</sup>. In his discussion on the emotively-laden Qurānic terms, Abdul-Raof gives the example of the term ‘*Maghfirah*’ which is often rendered using the unnecessarily-accurate English term ‘forgiveness’, which, unlike the Arabic *Maghfirah*, only conveys a ‘limited idea of God's mercy’ (2001, p. 33). Abdul-Raof goes on to explain that the Qurānic concept of *Maghfirah* suggests a wider range of meanings and has much more implications than the English mostly-used equivalent term ‘forgiveness’. He argues that *Maghfirah* denotes a ‘grace’ which guards the believers, helps them refrain from committing wrong-doing and leads them to the Divine contentment, and this is definitely unlike the everyday meaning of the English term ‘forgiveness’ (ibid.). The concept of *Maghfirah* in the of Qurān, Abdul-Raof concludes, cannot obviously be translated as ‘to spit on the ground in front of someone’ or ‘not to hang up jawbones’ in a Qurān translations as once advocated by Nida (1994:148) for a Biblical rendition (ibid. p.33).

#### **4.3.2.5 Morphological Meaning**

As previously mentioned (see 2.4.1), early Arab grammarians agree on the fact that any morphological alteration in roots or stem verbs, i.e. word formation, always triggers a change in meaning, with the exception of what is known as *Lughah* (an exclusion to the linguistic rules and norms). In other words, any sort of word affixation which results in structural change necessitates a change of word meaning as well, and this is a linguistic rule of Arabic on which some early theologians, such as *Ghazālī* (d. 1111) as well as linguists, such as *Jawharī* (1990), *Ibn Fāris* (d. 1004) and

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<sup>39</sup> Though *rahmah* and *Maghfirah* are often rendered in English as mercy and forgiveness, respectively, the renderings do not actually reflect the emotive and delicate meanings of the original, as well seen in chapter 5.

*Al-<sup>c</sup>Askarī* (d. 1005), build their arguments in their attempts to distinguish between the near-synonymous and root-sharing terms (Dūrī, 2005). The same argument of the morphological meaning is also adopted in the current study which aims at identifying the subtle morphological denotations of the root-sharing Divine Names in order to facilitate the evaluation of their English renderings in well-known existing translations of the Qurān.

#### **4.3.2.6 Thematic Meaning**

The term ‘theme’ has various meanings in different contexts (Crysta, 2008). When something is described as ‘thematic’, it usually has to do with an organised structure of integrated elements and units. In linguistics, particularly semantics, the thematic meaning has basically to do with how word order connects and influences the intended meaning (Webster, 2008). In other words, thematic meaning is what can be understood through the way in which a statement is arranged in terms of emphasis and word order (ibid.).

On a few occasions in the Qurānic text, some Divine Names may appear to be normal non-divine terms, i.e. designating entities other than the Divine Being, but some Qurān exegetes explain, that these terms are thematically Divine Names of the Exalted Lord (Qānū<sup>c</sup>, 2006). These Qurānic cases mostly occur in contexts in which Allāh is described in construct phrases as the ‘the Lord of the Throne’ such as Q. 9:129, 27:26 and 85:15. Some of these construct phrases, namely *Rabb al-<sup>c</sup>Arsh* رب العرش and *Dul-<sup>c</sup>Arsh* ذو العرش, refer to the Almighty as ‘Lord or Owner of the Throne’ and are usually followed by epithets of praise, such as *al-Karīm*, *al-Majīd*, and *al-<sup>c</sup>Aẓīm*. These epithets of praise can be confusing in the sense that they can apply to either the Lord Himself or to His Throne. Some translators of the Qurān did not pay

attention to such cases and ended up rendering the Divine Name as an adjective (attribute) of the Throne rather than the 'Owner' of the Throne' Himself, as it is the case in the translations of Ali and Pickthall of Q. 85:15 in which they unsuccessfully rendered the Divine Name *al-Majīd* 'the All-Glorious' as an attribute of the Throne.

#### **4.3.2.7 Collocative Meaning**

Collocative meaning is paid more attention in the current study than other types of meaning. This is due to the fact that collocation is not merely a semantic relation between two or three words, but more importantly for the current study, a linguistic phenomenon in the Qurān that plays an important role in the overall textual and contextual meanings. This linguistic phenomenon is particularly evident in the verse-ending collocations of the Divine Names. Thus, the following subsections will shed light on the linguistic notion of collocation (4.3.2.7.1), collocative meaning (4.3.2.7.2) as well as the Qurānic verse-ending collocations of the context-bound Divine Names.

##### **4.3.2.7.1 Collocation**

The term collocation refers to the tendency of certain sets of words to occur regularly together; in such a way that the meaning of an individual word can be identified in relation to the words it collocates with (Dickins et al. 2002). Words collocate when they 'typically occur in close proximity with' each other (ibid, p.71). Linguists particularly phraseologists have pointed to many types of collocations between all lexical categories or parts of speech such as collective nouns and nominal-adjectival collocations (ibid.). The combination of these collocated terms usually creates what is known as 'collocative meaning' (ibid.).

#### **4.3.2.7.2 Collocative Meaning**

Collocative Meaning is that which is understood via associations of words that tend to occur together. It is, according to Dickins et al. (2002) ‘the meaning given to an expression over and above its denotative meaning by the meaning of some other expression with which it collocates to form a commonly used phrase’ (p.71). Some translators are not fully aware of language-specific as well as culture-specific collocations (ibid.). Baker (1992, p.65) points out that:

When the translation of a word or a stretch of language is criticized as being inaccurate or inappropriate in a given context, the criticism may refer to the translator's inability to recognize a collocational pattern with a unique meaning different from the sum of the meanings of its individual elements.

Baker (1992) goes on to explain the influence and significance of translator’s awareness of collocational meanings, in the process of translation, in comparison with the mere practice of replacing SL individual terms with their dictionary TL counterparts (for more details see Baker’s coursework book ‘*In Other Words*’, 1992).

#### **4.3.2.7.3 Qurān’s Verse-Ending Collocations of Divine Names**

For contextual, semantic and rhetorical purposes, the Divine epithetical Divine Names often collocate in many occasions in the Qurān. In early as well as recent Qurānic studies, the notion of collocation in relation to the Divine Names is known as *Iqtirān* (see Qānū<sup>c</sup>, 2006). Only a few early exegetical works such as that of *Ibn Al-Qayyim* (1292-1350) pay attention to the issue of the Qurānic regular combinations, mostly at verse-endings, of the Divine Names. Throughout most of his Qurān-related works, *Ibn Al-Qayyim* deals with the collocation of the Divine Names as a stylistic and rhetorical feature of the Qurān (Qānū<sup>c</sup>, 2006). He points out that when the Divine Names

collocate, they add beauty to their perfectness and perfectness to their beauty in order to form a perfect combination which is needed to reach a perfect meaning (ibid.).

In addition to explaining the aforementioned purpose of collocations of Divine Names (double epithets) in the Qurān, *Ibn Al-Qayyim* goes further to explain the reason each Divine Name colligates, rather than collocates, with another Name which often shares grammatical features and that is to serve rhetorical purposes (Qānū<sup>c</sup>, 2006). In other words, He argues that such verse-ending colligations or collocations do not occur haphazardly in any context, but they are context-bound terms that precede or succeed one another for contextual reasons (Abdul-Raof, 2001). For example, *Ibn Al-Qayyim* maintains that the Divine Name *Ghafūr* ‘Oft-Forgiving’ and *Rahīm* ‘All-Merciful’, which collocate dozens of times throughout the Qurān, usually conclude verses that speak of Allāh accepting and forgiving those who whenever exceed His limits, still, do repent and ask for forgiveness (e.g. Q. 2:192 and 2:199). The reason that *Ghafūr* usually precedes *Rahīm*, according to *Ibn Al-Qayyim*, is the fact that the forgiveness of Allāh is prerequisite to His mercy. In other words, one will not attain Allāh's mercy unless he/she repents, at first, and attains Allāh's forgiveness (Qānū<sup>c</sup>, 2006).

In another work, namely *At-Tibyān Fī<sup>c</sup> Ulūm-il Qurān*, *Ibn Al-Qayyim* sheds lights on the collocation of the Divine Name *Wadūd* ‘All-Loving’ and the two aforementioned Names, namely *Ghafūr* ‘Oft-Forgiving’ and *Rahīm* ‘All-Merciful’, as in 85:14 and 11:90 respectively. In his well-known book ‘*Rawdhat Al-Muhibbīn Wa Nuzhat Al-Mushtāqīn*’, *Ibn Al-Qayyim* says regarding such collocations (Qānū<sup>c</sup>, 2006, p. 222):

What a beautiful collocation that is between *Wadūd* and *Rahīm*, as well as between *Wadūd* and *Ghafūr*! It is known that a man may forgive or show mercy to someone he does not love. That is incomparable to Allāh who

not only accepts, forgives and shows mercy to those who repent, but He, Exalted be His Name, encompasses them with unimaginable Divine Love.

(My Translation)

Abdul-Raof (2001) points to some contextual reasons behind the Qurānic collocations of some Divine epithets, the Most Beautiful Names, which occur as double adjective expressions or descriptive double epithets. The collocated Divine Names, Abdul-Raof explains, such as *Tawwāb<sup>um</sup> Ḥakīm* (e.g. verse-ending of Q. 24:10) and *Ghaffūr<sup>um</sup> Raḥīm* (e.g. verse-endings of Q. 2:173, 3:31 and 5:74), which are found in many occasions in the Qurān, are conditioned by and compatible with their surrounding contexts of various situations (ibid.). Abdul-Raof goes on to argue that such verse-ending collocations (double epithets) not only stylistically appropriate for their surrounding contexts, but they are also required for them to complete the picture or reach the most perfect meaning of Qurānic message (ibid.).

Mir (1988) refers to several Qurānic verse-ending collocations that describe the Lord as *‘Azīz* ‘Almighty’, and *Ḥakīm* ‘All-Wise’, and points out to a few contextual reasons behind such a frequent collocation. Mir (ibid, p.55) states that:

A powerful [Mighty] being often abuses his power. The word ‘wise’ in this construction provides assurance that Almighty does not use His power indiscriminately. Conversely speaking, a wise being may be ineffectual if he lacks the power to enforce a wise plan. But God does not labour under this limitation, for, besides being wise, He is also Almighty and powerful. It can be seen that a relationship of complementarity exists between *‘Azīz* and *Ḥakīm*.

Such a context-bound complementary relationship, which can be found in many Qurān’s verse-ending collocations<sup>40</sup>, serves as stylistic and rhetorical feature since it

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<sup>40</sup> Many examples are found in the second chapter of the Qurān, see for instance the verse-endings of Q. 2: 209, 220, 228, 240, 260.



entails extra delicate senses of contextual meaning (Mir, 1988). Similar collocated relationship is also found in Q. 8:10, which speaks of the role of the Divine Power as well as Wisdom during one of the battles the Prophet and his companions fought (ibid.). The verse-ending pair indicates that victory comes from God alone, the verse ending with the statement that God is powerful and wise (ibid.). The meaning, Mir points out, is that God is the one who secures victory, but, if the believers happen to ‘suffer a setback’ during their fight, ‘their faith in God’s power should not be shaken; rather they should understand that some good will come out of that setback too, for God is not only powerful but also wise’ (ibid, p. 56).

Mir (1988) also comments on the same collocated pair, *‘Azīz* and *Ḥakīm*, in other occasion, namely 29:42, in which the idolaters are exposed and warned that God is not only aware of their wrongdoing, but He is ‘Powerful’ and ‘Wise’ (ibid.). The collocation here indicates, Mir explains, that if God wants to penalize the idolaters for worshipping false gods, he could do so at once and without delay for He is Almighty and Powerful; but that, ‘if He is giving them respite, then it is in accordance with the principle which, being Wise, He has established, namely that men will be given an opportunity to mend their ways and thus avert punishment’ (p.56).

#### **4.3.3 Semantic Relations of the Divine Names**

Most early as well as recent works on the Divine Names have focused on the explanation of the meaning of each Name usually in isolation from the meanings of other Names (Qānū<sup>c</sup>, 2006). A few studies, however, by some theologians have paid attention to some lexical relations. For instance, *Ghazālī* (d. 1111) drew attention to some morpho-semantic differences between root-sharing Divine Names and *As-Sa<sup>c</sup>dī* (1987) categorised them based on the semantic field to which each group of Names

belong. In the following subsections, two Arabic semantic notions, namely *tarāduf*, synonymy and *Ishtirāk Lafẓī*, polysemy, are defined and discussed in relation to the Divine Names in the Qurān. In our discussion, more attention is paid to the notion of *tarāduf* as it is unarguably present in the Qurān amongst the near-synonymous and root-sharing Divine Names. The latter notion, namely *Ishtirāk Lafẓī*, which is known in the medieval works of *Tafsīr* as *wujūh Al-Qurān*, is only briefly discussed as it is rarely found amongst the Divine Names.

#### **4.3.3.1 Synonymy and Near- Synonymous Divine Names**

This sub-section briefly sheds light on the lexical relation of synonymy and its Arabic corresponding term, namely *tarāduf*, as well as synonymy in the Qurān in General and in relation to the translation of the Divine Names in particular. It starts with a definition of synonymy as a semantic notion (or lexical relation). Then it deals with the disputes over the existence of *tarāduf*, synonymy (in its absolute form or to a less degree; near synonymy) in the Qurānic text. The last part of this subsection sheds light on what is known as *shibh tarāduf*, near-synonymy, in relation to the Divine Names that share the same linguistic roots or belong to the same semantic field.

##### **4.3.3.1.1 Definition of Synonymy**

Synonymy can be simply defined as sameness of meaning between two or more words, or the relation between two lexical items which fully or partially share the same meaning. However, the degree of sameness between lexical items varies from one pair of words to another and it is widely believed that complete or total synonymy<sup>41</sup> is rarely found in human languages (Dickins et al. 2002). Some linguists

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<sup>41</sup> Complete synonymy is sometimes referred to as total, true, perfect, full or absolute synonymy. This study uses the terms total, complete and absolute synonymy interchangeably.

of English, such Crystal (2008), argue that for a pair of words to be deemed synonyms, they should not always be indistinguishable in meaning, i.e. 'interchangeable in all contexts, and with identical connotations – this unlikely possibility is sometimes referred to as total synonymy' (p. 470). Crystal obviously considers any pair of words synonymous as long as they share some aspects of their meanings that are sufficient to make them interchangeable in certain contexts providing that the overall meaning of such contexts remain unaffected (ibid.).

According to Cruse (1986), semanticists believe that absolute synonymy hardly exists in natural languages, which 'abhor' such a perfect (identical) lexical match 'just as nature abhors a vacuum' (p. 270, cf. Goodman, 1952). In other words, the existence of two synchronously and identically synonymous words is highly unusual as it is doubted that they could both survive in one language (Dickins et al. 2002). Such an argument is adopted by the majority Arab linguists, both early and contemporary, who believe that Arabic does not have completely identical synonyms. Rather, it has numerous words that partially share some shades of their meanings (near-synonymous words), and that explains the richness of Arabic vocabulary.

It is necessary, therefore, to make a distinction between total synonymy and near synonymy. Total synonymy, as mentioned above, usually indicates indistinguishable meaning between two or more words, which makes them interchangeable even when they occur in various contexts (see Dickins et al. 2002). Near synonymy, on the other hand, indicates likeness or similarity of meaning between two or more words that share the semantic range and communicate similar meanings, but they are not always interchangeable as they differ in their connotations when they occur in various contexts (ibid.). To sum up, near synonymous words can be differentiated from the

absolutely identical ones in that the former have slight connotative differences, so they do not have identical semantic effects, which is the case in the latter (ibid.).

#### 4.3.3.1.2 *Tarāduf*, Synonymy in the Qurān

The semantic notion of *tarāduf*, synonymy, is deeply rooted in the Arabic linguistic studies, particularly *‘ilm al-ma‘ānī*, the science of semantics. Though the term, *tarāduf*, itself was not known until the third century of Islam (the tenth century), this linguistic notion was addressed and discussed in as early as the second half of the first Islamic century. Early Arab linguists and Qurān exegetes who showed interest in *tarāduf* saw it as a technique to facilitate the interpretation of the Qurān as well as investigate its linguistic inimitability (cf. Al-Munjed, 1997).

In the context of the Qurān, the majority of early Muslim theologians and linguists (examples provided later) argue that synonymy, in its absolute sense, has no place between the Qurānic terms. What is believed to exist is merely near-synonymous terms that might initially sound or look equal in meaning ‘but reveals different and distinct semantic meanings upon deeper semantic analysis’ (Al-Omari and Abu-Melhim, 2014, p.2619). A leading example of such a scholarly stance is that of *Ibn Taymiyyah* (d. 1328) who, in this regard, said (1996, p.341):

إن الترادف في اللغة قليل وأما في ألفاظ القرآن فإما نادر وإما معدوم وقل أن يعبر عن لفظ واحد بلفظ واحد يؤدي جميع معناه ، بل يكون فيه تقريب لمعناه وهذا من أسباب إعجاز القرآن

Synonymy in the [Arabic] language is infrequent, and it is rare, if not non-existent, among the terms of the Qurān. A single Qurānic utterance is hardly expressed by another single utterance which can convey all the shades of its meaning, but it can bring about a close [non-identical] meaning, and this is one aspect of the Qurān’s inimitability.

(My Translation)

*Ibn Taymiyyah* obviously opposes those who claim the existence of absolute or total synonymy between Qurānic terms that share the same semantic field. This stance by *Ibn Taymiyyah* is similar to that of his predecessor and great scholar, Imam *Ghazālī* (d. 1111). However, some early Arab linguists and philosophers, such as *Ibn Al-'Athīr* (d.1233) and *Ibn Al-<sup>c</sup>Arabī* (d.1240), opposed this argument and pointed out that the Qurān was revealed in Arabic and, for this reason, its language must have carried all the stylistic and semantic relations and features of Arabic, including *tarāduf*, synonymy (Al-Munjed, 1997).

Unsurprisingly, some Arab linguists of the twentieth century, such as *Ibrāhīm Anīs* (d.1977) and *Ṣubḥī Ṣālīḥ* (d.1986) took similar stance, but they were criticised for being oblivious to the subtle meanings of some Qurānic terms and the slight morpho-semantic differences between them (Al-Munjed, 1997). One recent study based on contrastive analysis by Al-Omari and Abu-Melhim (2014, p. 2625) on synonymy in Arabic and English with reference to the Qurān reached the following conclusion:

We can safely claim through the detailed and careful analysis of a considerable number of terms that are often regarded as synonymous in the Holy Qur'an that the proposed existence of synonymous terms in the Holy Qur'an is simply an illusion and that practically do not exist in any form or fashion. [...] Careful analysis of such terms in the Holy Qur'an reveals that each term is used for a specific reason and significance which leads us to the solid belief that exact and absolute synonymy does not at all exist in the Holy Qur'an.

#### **4.3.3.1.3 Near-Synonymous Divine Names in the Qurān**

Dickins et al. (2002) point out that 'a number of words and phrases, while [they are] not synonyms or even near-synonyms, belong to the same semantic field' (p.62). This

is true and applicable to many Divine Names in the Qurān which are *shibh mutarādifah*, near synonymous. Some Names, for instance, speak of the Divine Power and Omnipotence such as *Qāhir*, *Qādir*, *Matīn*, <sup>6</sup>*Azīz* and *Jabbār*, but no two of these Names are absolute synonyms as they describe distinct features of the Divine Omnipotence. Thus, absolute or total synonymy does not really exist between two or more near-synonymous Divine Names; even between the root-sharing Names as argued by great Muslim theologians such as *Ghazālī* (d. 1111) whose view in this regard is adopted in the current study.

As stated earlier, *Ghazālī* (1995) argues that no two of the Divine Names are absolute synonyms even if both share the same linguistic root. Each Name, according to *Ghazālī*, has a meaning that expresses its particular concept, even though each group of near-synonymous Names revolve around One Divine Essence and describe the Actions of One Divine Being. *Ghazālī*'s argument seems to be based on the fact that when two or more Divine Names indicate or affirm the same Divine Attribute, such as Mercy or Forgiveness, it cannot be simply said that they are total synonyms even if they belong to the same semantic field or share the same linguistic root (*ibid.*). What supports *Ghazālī*'s argument is the fact that Divine Names in the Qurān, including the root-sharing ones, are context-bound epithetical terms and any two Names cannot be used interchangeably in two or more contexts without sacrificing semantic, rhetorical and stylistic (aesthetic or rhythmical) features (Abdul-Raof, 2001).

To illustrate his point and support his argument, *Ghazālī* (1992) introduces a 'word-formation analysis' of some of the near-synonymous Divine Names, namely *Ghāfir*, *Ghafūr*, and *Ghaffār*, which share the same linguistic root, namely *g-f-r*, and indicate the same Divine Attribute, i.e. 'Forgiveness'. He argued that the fact that *Ghāfir*,

*Ghafūr*, and *Ghaffār* belong to the same semantic field and share the same linguistic root does not necessarily render them absolute synonyms. He went on to explain that such Names are semantically-related but morphologically different, which results into having them carrying various denotations in their designative meanings (ibid.).

However, when it comes to translating the Divine Names in the Qurān, it is reasonable to say that the fact that some of the Names have been rendered synonymously into English does not in any way make them absolute synonyms even if they share the same linguistic root or indicate the same Divine Attribute, i.e. belonging to the same semantic field. In other words, some of the Divine Names were, unjustifiably, given the same renderings by many translators as if they were absolute synonyms while they are not even near synonymous. Pickthall (1930), for instance, translated both Divine Names ‘*‘Azīz*’ (Q. 3:6, 3:18) and ‘*‘Qahhār*’ (Q. 12:39, 13:16, and 14:48) using the same English term, namely ‘Almighty’. From a semantic perspective, absolute synonymy is untenable. The two Names ‘*al-Aziz*’ and ‘*al-Qahhār*’ definitely do not have the same meaning and far from being absolute synonymous, though they share the same semantic field, and therefore, they should not be translated into English using the same equivalent term. Similarly, Abdel-Haleem (2004) has rendered two Divine Names, namely *Qāhir* and ‘*‘Azīm*’, synonymously using the same English term ‘Supreme’ while they are not even synonymous, as in (Q.6:18, 6:61) and (Q. 56:74 and 56:96) respectively.

It is worth mentioning that the view on the non-existence of absolute synonyms in the Qurān, which is in line with the stance of great scholars such as *Ghazālī* (d. 1111) and *Ibn Taymiyyah* (d. 1328) as well as early linguists such as *Al-‘Askarī* (d. 1005) and *Ibn Fāris* (d. 1004), is adopted by the current study which distinguishes between the

near-synonymous Divine Names in the Qurān and evaluate their English renderings. The meanings and translations of the aforementioned Names will be discussed, along with many examples, in further details in the next chapter (see ch.5).

#### **4.3.4 Polysemy and the Polysemous Divine Names**

Unlike the lexical relations of *tarāduf*, synonymy and *shibh tarāduf*, near-synonymy, the semantic phenomenon of polysemy (Ar. *Ishtirāk Lafẓī*) hardly exists amongst the Divine Names in the Qurān. However, some scholars such as *Ibn Al-Qayyim* (d. 1350) argued, mostly in his *Nūniyyah ‘Al-Kāfiyah Ash-Shāfiyah’*, that a number of the Divine Names carry slightly different senses when they appear on various Qurānic occasions (see Isā, 1986). Thus, the following subsections briefly shed light on the notion of polysemy, its definition and its existence in the Qurān in general and amongst the Divine Names in particular.

##### **4.3.4.1 Definition of Polysemy**

Words of multiple meanings in various contexts are described as polysemous. Polysemy is a widely-used term by semanticists and it refers, according to Crystal (2008, p. 373) ‘to a lexical item which has a range of different meanings, e.g. plain = ‘clear’, ‘unadorned’, and ‘obvious’ [and it is sometimes termed] polysemia; in contrast with monosemy (or univocality). The meaning of a polysemous word in a given context is usually determined by contextual factors or the ‘semotactic environment’, as labelled by Hatem and Munday (2004, p.35).

A great number of terms in any language can be categorised as polysemous (Crystal, 2008). It is also theoretically tricky for linguists and translators to sometimes make a distinction between polysemy and other semantic features such as homonymy (cf.



Dickins et al. 2002), which refers to two words of unrelated meaning that hold identical phonological form (Crystal, 2008). To solve such confusion, linguists and translation theorists are advised to apply some measures including investigating the etymology of terms in question as well as the relativeness of their senses (ibid.). Still, such measures often comprise analytical hurdles, which leave distinguishing between both polysemy and homonymy a continuous debateable issue among semanticists and translation theorists alike (ibid.). This issue, however, is not the interest of the current study, but what seems significantly relevant to briefly discuss here is the issue of polysemy in the Qurān in general, and in relation to the Divine Names in particular.

#### **4.3.4.2 Polysemous Divine Names in the Qurān**

Polysemy, *Ishtirāk Lafẓī*, in the Qurān is one of the early linguistic issues to be investigated and thoroughly studied by early Arab linguists as well as Qurān exegetes (Abdel-Haleem 2008: xxx-xxxix). This linguistic feature is known in early exegetical works of *tafsīr* as well as contemporary Qurānic studies as *wujūh Al-Qurān* (ibid.). It is a branch of science which analyses the various senses of some recurring Qurānic terms that carry several meanings in several contexts (ibid.). The fact that several classical exegeses of the Qurān had provided different interpretations for some Divine Names has resulted in a sort of mismatch in the array of meanings linked for the same Divine Name in various Arabic dictionaries as well as linguistic and exegetical books. This, of course, dramatically increases the intricacy and complexity of the possible meanings as well as translations of some of the Divine Names in the Qurānic text.

Most early Muslim linguists and theologians, following in the steps of *Ghazālī* (d. 1111), argue that unlike some polysemous terms in the Qurān, Divine Names are

monosemous and that each Name has only one meaning in all the Qurānic contexts in which it appears to always describe the same Divine Attribute (Qānū<sup>c</sup>, 2006). They also argue that when a term (Divine Name) appears on a non-divine Qurānic occasion, it is then no more than an epithet which can be used to describe anything other than the Divine Attribute it usually describes, and, can; on these occasions have unlimited meanings. This stance is adopted in the current study as it is prevalent in the majority of works, whether linguistic or exegetical, on the Divine Names.

However, a few well-known theologians such *Ibn Al-Qayyim* (d. 1350), have opposed the aforementioned stance with regard to the meanings of the Divine Names within various Qurānic contexts. As previously mentioned, *Ibn Al-Qayyim* poetically explained in his extensive *Nūniyyah ‘Al-Kāfiyah Ash-Shāfiyah’*, that a number of the Divine Names such as *Laṭīf*, *Karīm* and *Ḥaqq* carry multiple meanings when they occur in different Qurānic contexts (see Isā, 1986). This linguistic dispute, however, is not relevant to the current study which only aims at investigating the accuracy and consistency of the English renderings of the root-sharing Divine Names.

## Chapter Five: Meaning Analysis and Translation Evaluation of the Root-Sharing Divine Names in the English Translations of the Qurān

‘No matter how difficult it may be to translate; it is even more difficult to judge a translation’ (Oettinger, 1963, cited in Reiss, 2014, p.6).

### 5.1 Introduction

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, this chapter is the core of this thesis. It provides meaning analysis (both linguistic and exegetical) of all of the root-sharing near-synonymous Divine Names as well as an evaluation of their English renderings in the existing selected translations of the Qurān. A thorough linguistic analysis of each Divine Name is certainly beyond the scope of this study, so the linguistic and exegetical analysis will focus on the root-sharing Divine Names and present a brief clarification of the morpho-semantic differences between each group of root-sharing Names. Many recurring Divine Names in the Qurān share some aspects of their semantic field with each other (As-Sa<sup>c</sup>dī, 1987), and one can find that almost every Name has at least one or two near-synonymous Names. Thus, the attention in this study is dedicated only to the root-sharing Divine Names which represent nearly half of the total number of the explicitly-mentioned Divine Names in the Qurān.

The meaning analysis of the Divine Names is occasionally supported by brief commentaries from well-known Qurān exegetes and theologians as well as some classical Arabic dictionaries and some linguistic works. Some books of *Tafsīr* have been selected based on the attention they paid to the explanation of the Divine Names. These include the works of *Ṭabarī* (d. 923), *Baghawī* (d.1122), *Zamaḵsharī* (d.1144), *Rāzī* (d. 1209), *Ibn Kathīr* (d. 1373), and most recently *As-Sa<sup>c</sup>dī* (d. 1956). Some of the consulted *Tafsīrs* are characterised by their linguistic approach such as the works of *Zamaḵsharī* and *Rāzī*.

The relevant works of some prominent Muslim theologians such as *Ghazālī* (d.1111), *Ibn Taymiyyah* (d.1328) and *Ibn Al-Qayyim* (d.1350) have been often consulted as well. Many classical Arabic dictionaries and linguistic works have also been referred to for meaning analysis and word origins. These include *Mu<sup>c</sup>jam Maqāyīs Al-Lughah* ‘the Dictionary of Language Metrics’ by *Ibn Fāris* (d. 1004), *Lisān Al-<sup>c</sup>Arab* (lit. ‘Tongue of Arabs Dictionary’) by *Ibn Manẓūr* (d. 1311), *Al-Qāmūs Al-Muḥīṭ* ‘the Comprehensive Dictionary’ by *Fairuzabādī* (d. 1414) and *Al-Muzhir fī <sup>c</sup>Ulūm Al-Lughah wa Anwā<sup>c</sup>ihā* ‘*The Flourishing Book of Linguistics and its Subfields*’ by *Suyūṭī* (d. 1505). The researcher often needs to refer to some bilingual and etymological dictionaries as well. However, this study made little reference to English dictionaries as it is a source-oriented investigation of the meanings of Qurānic terms, the Divine Names, and how they should be dealt with when rendered into English.

Assessing the accuracy and consistency of the English translations is based on the criteria of evaluation, which are stated in the introductory chapter. The aim of the criteria is basically to determine whether each translator has succeeded or failed in distinguishing, morphologically and semantically, between the near-synonymous root-sharing Divine Names, which could be judged through translators’ consistent choices of the appropriate English corresponding terms. The linguistic (morpho-semantic) and exegetical (contextual and theological) analysis is sometimes needed not only to investigate the denotative and connotative meanings of the root-sharing Names, but more importantly in this research, to evaluate both the accuracy and the consistency of their existing English counterparts in the five selected translations. The researcher intends not only to critically compare the translations to the original Qurān,

but also compare them with one another, based on the evaluation criteria, in order to avoid, as much as possible, subjective judgements.

As mentioned above, the focus in this chapter is to analyse the meanings of the root-sharing Divine Names as well as evaluate the accuracy and consistency of their English renderings in the five selected English translations of the Qurān. In order to achieve this purpose and cover all of the root-sharing Names mentioned in the Qurān, the Names are divided into small groups of two or three terms, based on the tri-consonantal roots they share, i.e. Names of each group share the core element of meaning ‘the root’ as they all refer to the same Divine Attribute. Other Names that do not share the roots are sometimes referred to in the discussion of some cases of inconsistency in translation. These include a few examples of compound Divine Names that does not share their linguistic roots but, like other root-sharing Names, belong to the same semantic field.

The root-sharing Divine Names are subdivided into fifteen randomly-ordered<sup>42</sup> small groups of two and three Names (five groups of three Names and ten groups of two in each). This raises the total number of the root-sharing Names covered in this chapter to thirty-five. A few other non-synonymous as well as polysemous Divine Names have been previously discussed in chapter four. The aim of this chapter is to analyse the meanings of the root-sharing Divine names and draw a distinction between them in order to evaluate the accuracy and consistency of their English counterparts.

## **5.2 Meaning Analysis and Translation Evaluation**

As mentioned above, in order to carry out a morpho-semantic analysis as well as an evaluation of the English renderings of the root-sharing Divine Names, the Names

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<sup>42</sup> The fifteen groups of the root-sharing Divine Names are headed by the most common Divine Names in Islam, namely *Allāh* and *ilāh* as well as *Ar-Rahmān* and *Ar-Rahīm*, then the rest of the groups are randomly ordered.

have been divided into fifteen small groups of two and three root-sharing Names. Examples of Qurānic verses along with their English renderings usually represent samples of translations for each group of Names. Other occurrences of these Divine Names in the Qurānic text are also examined for the purpose of both analysing their meanings and evaluating the accuracy and consistency of their English renderings.

### 5.2.1 *Al-ilāh* and *Allāh*

الله الإله

#### 5.2.1.1 Meaning Analysis of *Allāh* and *Al-ilāh*

*Allāh* and *Al-ilāh*, which are the Arabic terms for the Almighty God, are believed by many early Arab linguists and Qurān exegetes to have been derived from the same linguistic root, namely *a-l-h*, or its stem verb '*a-la-ha*' (see *Lisān* by Ibn Manẓūr 1995 and *Aṣ-Ṣāhibī* by Ibn Fāris, 1963). The root *a-l-h*, along with its semantic network of variants and conjugations, appear abundantly (2851 times) in the Qurān<sup>43</sup>, most of which are represented by the proper noun (Divine Name), *Allāh*, which occurs 2699 times. *Al-ilāh*, and its indefinite form *ilāh*, appears 147 times while '*Allāhumma*' (lit. *O Allāh*; an invocation) appears for five times in five Qurānic contexts.

*Ilāh* (or *Elāh*), on the one hand, is basically the Arabic word for any god, but when it appears in the definite form, *Al-ilāh*, it often refers to the Divine Being, *Allāh*. On the other hand, *Allāh* is the Arabic proper name for the One and Only God, the Lord and the Creator of everything, as explained by the Qurān (see Q. 6: 102, 13:16, 39:62, and 40: 62). Muslim theologians point out that the word *Allāh* is not just a proper Name of the Almighty God, but also the greatest Name of all of the Most Beautiful Divine Names (Tamimi, 1999). Its greatness is due to its uniqueness as it denotes the absolute Oneness and Divine Perfection of its Bearer, *Allāh* (ibid.).

<sup>43</sup> Qurānic Arabic Corpus online, see <http://corpus.quran.com>

Some early Arab linguists and Qurān exegetes argue that this proper name of God, *Allāh*, cannot be used to refer to anything other than the Creator of heaven and earth, which is not the case with the term *ilāh* that simply means god in its broader sense (Tamimi, 1999). In other words, the term *ilāh* can be used to refer to anything or anyone that is adored and worshipped whether it is a physical object such as an idol or a creature, or a spiritual or unseen creature or object (any form of *tāghūt*) or even one's own desires (*hawā* or evil-self) as explained by the Qurān in (Q. 16:36), and (Q. 25:43) respectively (ibid.).

Based on Arabic dictionaries as well as books of *Tafsīr*, Murata and Chittick (1994) made a distinction between God's Proper Name *Allāh* and His Divine Epithet *Al-ilāh*. They point out that the Arabic word *ilāh* (god), in its indefinite form, refers to any object that is perceived as an entity of adoration be it the True God or a false deity. The general Qurānic concept of *ilāh* does not necessary speak of an external or physical god (ibid. cf. Rahman, 2009). In several contexts, the Qurān strongly condemns (see Q. 20:16, 28:50 and 18:28) the worshippers of their own desires and inclinations, *hawā* (pl. *ahwā'*), and considers them blind and self-destructive followers of non-physical false gods, which are their own lusts and leanings (ibid.). As Murata and Chittick (1994, p.48) put it:

We tend to think of a god as something 'out there', something up in heaven, some being of a higher order than ourselves. But the Arabic word *ilāh* does not demand that. You can perfectly well worship a god that is within your [evil]-self or less than that.

Murata and Chittick maintain that the Qurānic usage of the term *ilāh* varies from one context to another as the term is often applied in positive ways to confirm *Allāh*'s

Oneness and worthiness of worship (ibid. p.47), such as ‘No god there in except One God’ (Q. 5:73), [...] and ‘Your god is one God, so submit to Him’ (Q. 22:34). By contrast, Murata and Chittick further explain, the word *ilāh* is used in other Qurānic contexts (see for example Q. 6:74 and Q. 7:138) to negatively refer to the unworthiness and unfair adoration for false gods and idols (ibid. p. 47).

Concerning the frequent usage of the Divine Proper Name, *Allāh*, Murata and Chittick (1994) point out to the fact that many English-speaking Muslims are inflexible and uncompromising in their use of the term *Allāh* whenever they need to speak about God for various purposes. Murata and Chittick then justify such a practice from several standpoints. They argue that for Muslims, the term *Allāh* is the only unique proper name of God in the Qurān and the term on its own is regarded exceptionally divine and uniquely sacred (ibid.).

Murata and Chittick (1994) also argue that the vast majority of Muslims are not native speakers of English, so they are more familiar with the word *Allāh* than any other Divine references, including the English capitalised word ‘God’. These Muslims, Murata and Chittick (1994) explain, do not conceive or imagine the misperceptions that come across to the non-Muslim western mentality whenever the term *Allāh* is mentioned (ibid.). The third justification provided by Murata and Chittick (1994) is the fact that countless Muslims do not fully understand some basics of Islam as they believe that the English term ‘God’ does not refer to *Allāh* in the Judaeo-Christian communities (ibid). Such Muslims ‘represent the mirror image of those English speakers who think that God is the true God and *Allāh* is a false god worshiped by pagans’ (ibid, pp.46-7).



From the above arguments, it is safe to assume that the term *ilāh* does not necessarily refer to *Allāh*, unless it is mentioned in its definite form, i.e. *Al-ilāh*. In other words, the terms *Allāh* and *ilāh*, in its indefinite form, do not mean the same thing, and therefore, should not be treated as total synonyms nor translated synonymously using the very same English equivalent, whether it is capitalised (God) or not. However, not every translator would agree with this assumption as most Qurān translators into English opt for translating the term *Allāh* (as God) rather than treating it as a proper Divine Name and transliterate it using Latin characters.

Sells (1999, p.30), for instance, explains why he prefers translating the Divine Proper Name, *Allāh*, as ‘God’ to keeping it in the TT through transliteration:

Considered as a proper name, it [the Divine Name *Allāh*] cannot, of course, be translated. But to render it *Allāh*, in the context of a translation of the Qurān, sets up a factor of alienation. For Muslims, *Allāh* in the Quran is the same God as the God of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus [peace be upon them all], although in other contexts, it may be wise to keep the term *Allāh* or to vary between *Allāh* and God [gods].

ElShiekh and Saleh (2011) do not see any need for transliteration when it comes to rendering God’s Proper Name ‘*Allāh*’ into English. They argue that the concept of *Allāh* is ‘neither lacking in the target language culture nor even fundamentally different’ (ibid, p. 144). Thus, they maintain that the term ‘is better translated, rather than transliterated, into ‘God’; in the same way the German word ‘Gott’ is to be translated into its English equivalent ‘God’. They support their argument by referring to definitions of the term ‘*Allāh*’ in English dictionaries<sup>44</sup>, most of which describe it as ‘the name of God among Muslims’ (ibid, p. 144). They conclude that, the term,

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<sup>44</sup> See for example Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary.

after all, ‘is not the name of the Muslim God but the name of God, and it is neither a pagan deity such as *Ra* of ancient Egypt or *Zeus* of Greece’ (ibid, p. 144).

Geoffrey Parrinder (1965), who was a Reader in the Comparative Study of Religion in the University of London, points out that it might be ‘quite misleading’ when some Muslim individuals who happen to be speakers of English ‘insist on using only the word Allāh’ (p.13, cited in El-Shiekh and Saleh, 2011). Parrinder explains that it is not only that its ‘thin English pronunciation makes it most unintelligible to an Arabic-speaking Muslim [,] but also the sentimental associations of Allāh in the European’s mind, and the notion that he is speaking about another God, are most deceptive’ (1965, p.13-14). Parrinder goes on to justify his argument by referring to the fact that differences concerning the concept of God between Islam and Christianity cannot be ignored and ‘it would be fatal to any chance of understanding to doubt that one and the same God is the reality in both [religions] ‘Our God and your God is One’ (Parrinder, 1965. p. 14, cited in El-Shiekh and Saleh, 2011). To further stresses his argument, Parrinder refers to the long-practised English renderings of Biblical Figures found in the Qurān in which the proper names of such figures are not transliterated but translated using their familiar English forms such *Isa*, which is rendered as ‘Jesus’, *Maryam*, as ‘Mary’, *Injīl* as ‘Gospel’, and *Naṣārā* as ‘Christians’ (ibid. cited in El-Shiekh and Saleh, 2011).

#### **5.2.1.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of *Allāh* and *Al-ilāh***

As mentioned earlier, when the term *ilāh* appears in the definite form, i.e. *al-ilāh*, it then exclusively refers to the One Divine Being, *Allāh*, but this is not the case in the Qurān whereas *ilāh* always appear in its indefinite forms (singular, إله *ilāh* and plural, آلهة *ālihah*) throughout the text. The following examples show how our five selected

translators render *Allāh* and *ilāh* (the latter is often regarded as a Divine Name in its definite form, *al-ilāh*). The four examples have been carefully selected to see how the translators deal with both the verses that combine the two terms *Allāh* and *ilāh*, and the verses which do not contain both terms:

إنما إلهكم الله الذي لا إله إلا هو

1. *Innamā ilāhukum Allāhu allaḏī lā ilāha ʿillā huwa* Q. 20:98

Pickthall: Your **Allah** is only **Allah**, than Whom there is no other **Allah**...etc.

Ali: But the **god** of you all is the **One Allah**: there is no **god** but He... etc.

Hil-Khan: Your **Ilah (God)** is only **Allah**, the **One** (La ilaha illa Huwa)

(none has the right to be worshipped but He)...etc.

Arberry: Your **God** is only the **One God**; there is no **god**, but He alone...etc.

Haleem: [People], your true **god** is the **One God**– there is no **god** but Him...etc.

2. *Annamā ilāhukum ilāh<sup>un</sup> wāḥid* Q. 21:108 أنما إلهكم إله واحد

Pickthall: your **Allah** is One **Allah**...etc.

Ali: your **Allah** is One **Allah**...etc.

Hil-Khan: your **Ilah (God)** is only one **Ilah (God- Allah)**...etc.

Arberry: Your **God** is One **God**...etc.

Haleem: Your **God** is One **God**...etc.

3. *Fa ilāhukum ilāh<sup>un</sup> wāḥid* Q. 22:34 فإلهكم إله واحد

Pickthall: and your **god** is One **God**...etc.

Ali: But your **god** is One **God**...etc.

Hil-Khan: your **Ilah (God)** is only one **Ilah (God- Allah)**...etc.

Arberry: Your **God** is One **God**...etc.

Haleem: your **God** is One...etc.

4. *Allāh and Ilāh* Q. 23:91 ما اتخذ الله من ولد وما كان معه من إله إذا لذهب كل إله بما خلق

*Mattaḳaḏa ʿAllāhu min walad<sup>in</sup> wa mā kāna ma<sup>c</sup>ahu min ilāh-in iḏan laḏahaba ḳullu-ilāh<sup>in</sup> bimā ḳalaq* Q.23:91

Pickthall: **Allah** hath not chosen any son, nor is there any **god** along with Him;

else would each **god** have assuredly championed that which he created.

Ali: No son did **Allah** beget, nor is there any **god** along with Him (if there were many **gods**), behold, each **god** would have taken away what he had created.

Hil-Khan: No son (or offspring or children) did **Allah** beget, nor is there any **ilāh** (**god**) along with Him; (if there had been many **gods**), behold, each **god** would have taken away what he had created.

Arberry: **God** has not taken to Himself any son, nor is there any **god** with Him; for then each **god** would have taken off that he created.

Haleem: **God** has never had a child. Nor is there any **god** beside Him– if there were, each **god** would have taken his creation aside.

The above examples show that the terms *Allāh* and *ilāh* proved challenging for our five translators. Pickthall and Ali, for instance, show uncertainty and inconsistency in their renderings. They sometimes treat the terms *Allāh* and *ilāh* as complete synonyms (by transliterating *Allāh* and rendering *ilāh* as ‘Allāh’) and use them interchangeably (as in the second example above, Q. 21:108). Surprisingly, Pickthall and Ali occasionally and inconsistently use the term ‘god’ to render *ilāh* as in Q. 22:34 and Q. 23:91. Both translators are obviously inconsistent in their choices as they are not holding to a single corresponding TL term to render the recurring Divine Names *Ilāh* and *Allāh* throughout the Qurānic text. Such inconsistencies and unjustified shifts of choices confuse the readers and have negative effects on their overall comprehension of the Qurānic message.

Both terms, *Allāh* and *ilāh*, have also proved problematic for other translators, namely Arberry and Haleem, who opted to translate ‘*Allāh*’ as ‘God’ rather than treating it as a Proper Divine Name by transliterating it in the target text. The researcher argues here that such renderings create unnecessary repetition and result in a sort of confusion and ambiguity in the translations of the verses that contain both, *Allāh* and

*ilāh*, in general, and the verses that combine both names, but also exclude the Divine Proper Name, *Allāh*, from all forms of deities, *ālihah*, or false gods.

The researcher would also argue that the issue of exclusion, *istithnā'*, in some Qurānic verses makes translating the Divine Names, *Allāh* and *Ilāh*, synonymously inaccurate. For instance, the first example above combines both Names (see Q. 20:98) and starts with *innamā* while the second example (Q. 21:108) starts with *annamā*. These are Arabic particles of emphasis and exclusion which are applied in some Qurānic contexts to exclude *Allāh* from false deities *'ilāh* (pl. *'ālihah*). Logically, the exclusion of *innamā*, or *annamā*, cannot be applied to synonyms, but it is often used to separate two different entities and distinguish them from each other. The translators, however, attempted to convey the exclusion by using the words 'only', as in Pickthall, Hilali-Khan and Arberry, as well as the word 'true' as in Haleem's translation (see the first example above, Q. 20:98). To sum up, treating both terms, *Allāh* and *ilāh*, as complete synonyms is inaccurate as it would confuse readers, particularly non-Muslims, and disregard the exclusive grammatical role of the Arabic particles *innamā* and *annamā* (as in ex.2, Q. 21:108).

In Hilali-Khan's translation, the translators opted for both transliteration and translation. The latter are usually provided in parentheses and they are quite lengthy and exegetical, as can be seen in the first example. Considering the distinction between the terms, *Allāh* and *ilāh*, as well as their renderings in the aforementioned examples, Hilali and Khan, after all, show more accuracy and consistency in their choices to render both Divine Names than the other four translator who either did not distinguish between the two near-synonymous names, such as Arberry and Haleem, or

did not show accuracy or maintain consistency in their choices, such as Ali and Pickthall.

## 5.2.2 *Ar-Raḥmān* and *Ar-Raḥīm*

الرحمن الرحيم

### 5.2.2.1 Meaning Analysis of *Ar-Raḥmān* and *Ar-Raḥīm*

Apart from the proper Name of God, *Allāh*, the most uttered Divine Names in Muslims' daily lives are *ar-Raḥmān* and *ar-Raḥīm*. Both Names are derived from *Raḥmah* (lit. mercy), which is one of the lofty Divine Attributes (Ibn ʿAbbās, 2007). The tri-literal root *r-ḥ-m* basically refers to the womb and it is metaphorically used to indicate the notions of mercy, clemency, tenderness and compassion (*Ibn Kathīr*, 1997). The root *r-ḥ-m* (stem v. *raḥīma*), along with its semantic network of variants and derivatives, appear 339 times in the Qurān<sup>45</sup>. *Ar-Raḥmān* and *ar-Raḥīm* often collocate in the Qurān, most notably in the *Basmalah*, which is recited during the daily prayers and at the start of reading all but one of the 114 chapters of the Qurān.

According to early exegetes of the Qurān, *ar-Raḥmān* and *ar-Raḥīm* have close but slightly different range of meanings. As mentioned above, the root *r-ḥ-m*, from which *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm* are derived, indicates the womb which provides protection and nourishment, and from which all of humans are brought into this life (Murata and Chittick, 1994). From Islamic perspective, 'God's mercy overshadows all the mercy in the universe [and] His mercy is true mercy, and other mercy is not worthy of the name' (ibid. p.60). The root *r-ḥ-m* has also different classical Arabic connotations such as to have tenderness, kindness, love, mercy, pity, and to have all that is required for beneficence (ibid. cf. *Aṣ-Ṣāhibī* by Ibn Fāris, 1963).

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<sup>45</sup> Qurānic Arabic Corpus, see <http://corpus.quran.com/>

Y. Ali (2006) explains that *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm*, which he translates Most Gracious and Most Merciful respectively, are intensified and hyperbolic terms that speak of various aspects of the Divine Mercy. Ali, who seems to have mastered both Arabic and English, explains that Arabic intensified forms are more appropriate to describe the Divine Qualities than English superlative terms (ibid.). He argues that the English superlatives involve a comparison with other creatures as well as comparing times or places, while none is the like of Divine Being who is Free from the limitations of time and place (ibid.). Ali (2006, p.7) goes on to argue that:

Mercy may imply pity, long-suffering, patience, and forgiveness, all of which the sinner needs and *Allāh* Most Merciful bestows in abundant measure. But there is a Mercy that goes before even the need arises, the Grace which is ever watchful, and flows from *Allāh* Most Gracious to all His creatures, protecting them, preserving them, guiding them, and leading them to clearer light and higher life.

In Arabic morphological ‘weighing’ (templatic) patterns, *awzān* (sing. *wazn*), *Raḥmān* is formed on the *fa<sup>c</sup>lān* templatic pattern, which is an emphatic form (Ar. *ṣīghat mubālaghah*; lit. intensified formula) signifying regeneration and revival of the action whereas *Raḥīm* is formed on the *fa<sup>c</sup>līl* templatic pattern, which indicates an unlimited, untimed, consistent and unchangeable attribute<sup>46</sup> (Ghuṣn, 1996). The Qurān uses the two forms, *fa<sup>c</sup>lān* and *fa<sup>c</sup>līl*, to assert that the Divine Mercy is ever regenerated and unchangeable. In her comments on the Divine Name *Ar-Raḥmān*, Bodman (2009) states that ‘the mercy of God is generative; it is not merely a particular attitude of mercy with which God regards the world’ (p. 698). The Divine Mercy is, Bodman

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<sup>46</sup> For more details on the semantic differences between the two root-sharing Names, *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm*, refer to Ghazālī’s acclaimed work '*Jawahir al-Qurān*' [*The Jewels of the Qurān*], translated into English by M. Abul Qasim, 1983

explains, ‘that ontological nature of God through which the world, in all its goodness and provision, is created’ (ibid. p. 698). This is clearly referred to in the Qurān as the All-Merciful declares (see Q.7:156) *wa Raḥmatī wasīʿat kulla shayʿ*, ‘My Mercy encompasses everything’ (ibid.). Bodman concludes by saying that all the creation we know bears witness to the reviving and generative Divine Mercy (ibid.).

It has been traditionally argued that *Raḥīm* refers to the one who shows mercy to specific group of a specific nature while *Raḥmān* is a Divine epithet that refers to the Lord who persistently discloses a compassionate nature to His creation (Bentley, 1999). Thus, the concept of *Raḥmah* in *Raḥmān* is wider than that of *Raḥīm*. It has been argued that *Raḥmān* is not just a name amongst the ninety-nine Names of God as ‘it sometimes refers not [only] to an attribute [mercy] of God, but to God’s [Him] Self’ (Bodman, 2009). One Qurānic verse, (Q. 25:60), states that: ‘and if it is said to them, ‘prostrate to *Ar-Raḥmān*’, they say, ‘what is *Ar-Raḥmān*? [They say] shall we prostrate to what you command us? and it increases for them alienation’ (ibid.).

It is worth mentioning that the word *raḥmah* does not always mean mercy or refer to an Attribute of God in the Qurān. According to some famous exegetical works of the Qurān such as that of *Ibn ʿAbbās* (d. 687), *Ṭabarī* (d. 923), *Baghawī* (d.1122), *Qurṭubī* (d. 1273) and *Ibn Kathīr* (d. 1373), this word has range of denotative and connotative meanings in various Qurānic contexts. For example, in Q. 7:57, 25:48 and 30:50 the term *raḥmah* refers to the rain as a blessing that brings dead lands to life. In other Qurānic narratives, it refers to the Prophecy and Divine message as in Q. 2:105 and Q. 11:28. And in some contexts, such as Q. 10:58, it refers to the Revelation, the Qurān. According to *Ṭabarī*, it also refers to victory, which God grants the believers on the battle field, which is the case in Q. 33:17 (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1994). There is also a



Qurānic verse, namely Q. 3:107, which speaks of the Divine Mercy as a heavenly place in which the believers abide forever. Most, if not all, Qurān exegetes point out that *rahmah* in such contexts connotes paradise (ibid.).

Although the connotative meanings of *rahmah* in the Qurān have been observed by most early exegetical works, they are, unfortunately, not present in English translations of the Qurān, with few exceptions such as the translation of Hilali and Khan (1994). This indicates that most translators did not fully rely on Qurānic exegeses in their renderings of some Qurānic terms, and opted for translating their literal and superficial meanings. Such an approach (literal translation) is not sometimes recommended as it is usually based on translator's personal judgment and his competence of Arabic in general, and Qurānic Arabic in particular. Unlike most Qurān translators, Al-Hilali and Khan (1994) attempt to clarify what the term *rahmah*, mercy, connotes in various Qurānic contexts. The following examples, from Hilali-Khan translation, show how they refer, usually in explanatory notes between brackets, to some of the aforementioned connotative<sup>47</sup> meanings of *rahmah* (or *rahmat*):

- (i) *Wa huwa alladī yursilur-riyāḥa bushran bayna yadāi rahmatih* (Q. 7:57), 'and it is He Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His Mercy (rain)...etc. (see Q. 25:48 for similar translation).
- (ii) *'in kuntu <sup>c</sup>alā baiyyinat<sup>in</sup> min rabbī wa 'ātānī rahmat<sup>an</sup> min <sup>c</sup>indih* (Q. 11:28) 'if I have a clear proof from my Lord, and a Mercy (Prophethood, etc.) has come to me from Him ...etc.
- (iii) *Fa-fī rahma-til-lāhi hum fihā Khālidūn* (Q. 3:107), they will be in Allah's Mercy (Paradise), therein they shall dwell forever.

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<sup>47</sup> Refer to the previous chapter for the differences between denotative and connotative meanings (see 4.2.3).

- (iv) *Qul bifadhli-llāhi wabi-rahmatihī fa biḍlika falyafrahū* (Q. 10:58), Say: ‘in the Bounty of *Allāh*, and in His Mercy (i.e. Islam and the Qurān); therein let them rejoice...etc.

Al-Hilali and Khan’s (1994) attempt to identify the various meanings of *rahmah* in the Qurānic text was preceded by Pickthall who occasionally attempted to clarify some of the connotative meanings of *rahmah* in his 1930 translation. The following example shows how he referred to what *rahmah* connotes in Q. 30:50 (the rain and its impact on creation);

*Funzur ‘ilā ‘āthāri rahmat-illah kayfa yuhyī al’arḍha ba‘da mawtihā,*

‘look, therefore, at the prints of Allāh's mercy (in creation): how He quickeneth the earth after her death...etc.

Other morphological forms of the root *r-ḥ-m* may entail various connotations. Many famous Qurān exegetes, such as *Baghawī* (d.1122), *Zamaḳsharī* (d.1144), *Rāzī* (d. 1209) and *Ibn Kathīr* (d. 1373), agree on the connotative meaning of the verb *raḥima* (past tense of *yarḥam*) which appears in Prophet Joseph’s story. The Qurān speaks of Joseph’s speech, ‘*illā mā Raḥima Rabbī*’, to which the aforementioned exegetes point out that *raḥima* in this context connotes *‘iṣmah* (human infallibility) granted by God’s Will and Mercy to His prophets and messengers (Rahman, 2009).

### 5.2.2.2 Evaluating the Renderings of *Ar-Raḥmān* and *Ar-Raḥīm*

In his commentary on the translation of the *Basmalah*, (*Bismillah Ar-Raḥmān Ar-Raḥīm*), Ali (2006) explains that *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm*, which he translates ‘Most Gracious’ and ‘Most Merciful’ respectively, are both intensified and hyperbolic terms that speak of various traits of the Divine Mercy. Due to this, Ali points out, the Divine Name *Raḥmān* does not refer to any but *Allāh*, while *Raḥīm* is not confined to

describing the Divine Mercy, based on the Qurānic usage, and it is applicable to human beings as well (ibid.).

Many Qurān translators justify their choices in their attempts to render both *Ar-Raḥmān* and *Ar-Raḥīm*. These justifications are often found in explanatory footnotes under the translation of the *Basmalah*, the first verse of the opening chapter, namely *Al-Fātiḥah*. For instance, Sells (1999) justifies his translation of *Ar-Raḥmān* and *Ar-Raḥīm* as ‘the Compassionate’ and ‘the Caring’ respectively, and opposes the widely used rendering (of *basmalah*) which is ‘in the name of God the Compassionate the Merciful’. Sells asserts that early Muslim scholars agreed that the Divine Names *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm* are ‘based upon an Arabic etymology linked to the word for womb (*raḥm*)’ (p. 20). Sells goes on to say that ‘mercy’ [*raḥmah*] ‘as a quality of forgiveness has been strongly marked by Christian associations with the doctrine of original sin’ (ibid.). Due to this, along with reasons of ‘euphony and alliteration’, Sells opts for ‘the Compassionate the Caring’ (ibid. p.21).

For other translators such as Asad (1980), *Ṣaḥīḥ International* (1997), and Abdel-Haleem (2004), the shared root ‘*r-ḥ-m*’ is taken into account when rendering both, *Ar-Raḥmān* and *Ar-Raḥīm*, into English (Shah, 2010). Asad renders them as ‘the Most Gracious, the Dispenser of Grace’, whereas Abdel-Haleem opts for ‘the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy’, respectively (ibid). Asad has used the terms ‘Gracious’ and ‘Grace’ in his rendering of both Names to maintain the core element of *raḥmah* shared by this pair of near-synonymous Names. Similarly, Abdel-Haleem, according to Shah, (ibid.) ‘has used ‘mercy’ in translating both Divine epithets because *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm* derive from the same root, translating them into two words with different roots, like ‘Compassionate and Merciful’ loses the connection’ (p. 6).

Other Qurān translators have also attempted to keep the core element of *raḥmah* which connects the two root-sharing Names, *Raḥmān and Raḥīm*. For instance, the three female Muslim converts<sup>48</sup> from America who teamed up and translated the Qurān in their *Ṣaḥīḥ International* (1997) have also paid great attention for this connection between the two Near-synonymous Names. The preface of *Ṣaḥīḥ International* includes the following comments on the translation of both *Ar-Raḥmān and Ar-Raḥīm* (Ṣaḥīḥ International, 1997: ix):

Particular attention has been given to the names ‘*Ar-Raḥmān and Ar-Raḥeem*’ [...] since both express certain aspects of divine mercy, ‘the Most Merciful’ was used for *Ar-Raḥmān* and simply ‘the Merciful’ for ‘*ar-Raḥeem*’. However, when they occur together, as in *Surah al-Fatiḥah*, the adjectives ‘entirely’ and ‘especially’ have been used to indicate the complementary relationship between the two.

The following examples show how our five-selected translators have rendered *Ar-Raḥmān and Ar-Raḥīm* in a few Qurānic occurrences other than the *Basmalah*:

1. *lā ilāha ’illā huwa Ar-Raḥmān Ar-Raḥīm* Q. 2:163 الرحمن الرحيم

Pickthall: the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Ali: Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Hil-Khan: the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

Arberry: the All-merciful, the All-compassionate.

Haleem: the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy.

2. *Tanzīl-un min-ar Raḥmān-ir Raḥīm* Q. 41:2 تنزيل من الرحمن الرحيم

Pickthall: A revelation from the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Ali: A Revelation from (Allah), Most Gracious, Most Merciful.

Hil-Khan: A revelation from Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful.

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<sup>48</sup> (i) Executive Director Amatullah J. Bentley, (ii) Author and Translator: Umm Muhammad, Aminah Assami, and (iii) English Editor: Mary M. Kennedy.

Arberry: A sending down from the Merciful, the Compassionate.

Haleem: A revelation from the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy.

The translations of the root-sharing Divine Names *Ar-Raḥmān* and *Ar-Raḥīm* in the above examples, along with their renderings in the *Basmalah*, have obviously fallen short keeping the connecting core element of meaning, namely mercy, shared by both Names, with the exception of Haleem who showed interest in keeping the sense of ‘mercy’ noticeable in his rendering of both Names. This makes his renderings more accurate than the other four translators. However, by examining many attempts by the selected translators to render both *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm* consistently, it has become clear that Pickthall and Hilali-Khan made more consistent choices in their renderings throughout their work than the other translators (Ali, Arberry, and Haleem) did.

In explanatory footnotes for his renderings of both Names *Ar-Raḥmān* and *Ar-Raḥīm* as ‘the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy’ respectively, Abdel-Haleem (2004) points out, that; ‘most occurrences of this term *Raḥmān* in the Qurān are in the context of Him being mighty and majestic as well as merciful’ (p.3). Then he justifies adding the word ‘Lord’ saying that it is ‘intended to convey [the aforementioned] aspects of the term [whereas] the term *Raḥīm* is ‘an intensive form suggesting that the quality of giving mercy is inherent in God's nature’ (ibid, p.3). Haleem's rendition of *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm*, however, was not endorsed by Rippin (2004) who pointed out that though they are merited by the use of the term ‘mercy’ in both renderings, they sound rather a mouthful when compared to the two terms of Arabic (online<sup>49</sup>). This is true as the use of six English words to correspond to two Arabic terms is lengthy and, therefore, makes it too different from the Qurānic style and tone.

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<sup>49</sup> <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=10080>

Haleem's claim to maintain the connection of between *Raḥmān* and *Raḥīm*, however, is not shown in his translation of *Ruḥamā*' (see Q. 48:29), which is a plural form of both *Rāḥim* and its emphatic epithet *Raḥīm*, as he opts for a different English equivalent term, namely 'compassionate', which was used as such by Ali as well! Moreover, Haleem seems to render *Raḥīm* as the 'Giver of Mercy' whenever the term collocates with *Raḥmān*, but he inconsistently opts for slightly different renderings in several contexts. He, for instance, opts for 'most Merciful' on one occasion, namely Q. 49:12 and Q. 49:14, 'the Merciful One' on another occasion, Q. 52:28, and 'Full of mercy' on a third occasion, namely (Q. 4:16). Such unjustifiable inconsistency of choice confuses the reader and gives the impression that the differences came from the original text and not from the translator, which is not the case in the aforementioned Qurānic occasions.

Similarly, Pickthal, Arberry and Ali have not maintained consistent translations of *Raḥmān and Raḥīm*. At one Qurānic occasion, Pickthall, for instance, inconsistently and unjustifiably renders *Raḥmān* as 'Lord' (see Q.19:87). Arberry makes slight changes in his renderings of both Names, which seem to be due to his attempt to reflect the intensified meanings of Divine Mercy in both terms (see the two examples above). Ali renders *Raḥīm* as 'Most Merciful' as in the above examples, but he occasionally opts for different renderings such as 'Full of Mercy' as in Q. 11:90 and Q. 16:47. In some Qurānic contexts, Ali confuses the two Divine Names and treats them as complete synonyms, i.e. use their rendering interchangeably. For instance, he uses his often-repeated rendering of *Raḥīm*, namely 'the Most Merciful', to render *Raḥmān* in some contexts such as Q. 25:26 and 67:20, unjustifiably replacing his usual rendering of *Raḥmān*, i.e. 'Most Gracious'.

### 5.2.3 *Aḥad* and *Wāḥid*

#### 5.2.3.1 Meaning Analysis of *Aḥad* and *Wāḥid*

*Aḥad* and *Wāḥid* are near-synonymous Divine Names which speak of the oneness and singleness of *Allāh*. Both terms are derived from the root *w-ḥ-d*, which occurs, along with its variants and conjugations, 68 times in the Qurān<sup>50</sup>. *Wāḥid*, in its indefinite form, is basically the Arabic equivalent of number one. In its definite form, namely *al-wāḥid*, the word simply means ‘the one’, but it has a unique meaning when it is used in the Qurān as a Divine Name. Theologically and philosophically, some early scholars argue that as a Divine Name, *al-Wāḥid* ‘the One’ speaks of *Tawḥīd*, which is the most important principle of the Islamic religion (for more on *Tawḥīd* see 2.6.2.1).

The term *Aḥad*, at one hand, is only mentioned once in the Qurān in the well-known 112<sup>th</sup> *Surah*, namely *al-Iklās*, which is relatively short but significantly emphatic to the extent that it equals, according to a Prophetic tradition, a third of the entire Qurānic text (Rahman, 2009). *Wāḥid*, on the other hand, appears in reference to the ‘One God’ in more than a dozen occurrences, in definite and indefinite forms, on several Qurānic occasions. In six of these occurrences, the definite form of the term, i.e. *al-Wāḥid*, is applied in reference to the Divine Oneness (see Q. 12:39, 13:16, 14:48, 38:65, 39:4 and 40:16). In all of these six appearances, the Divine Name, *al-Wāḥid*, collocates with another Name which speaks of the Divine Omnipotence, namely *al-Qaḥḥār*, the ‘All-Compeller’, which gives the meaning of *al-Wāḥid* an extra sense of absoluteness of the Divine Oneness (As-Sa<sup>c</sup>dī, 1987).

Little is written in the Arabic/Islamic literature about the scholarly disagreement concerning the derivation and meaning of *Aḥad* and *Wāḥid*. Some early linguists

<sup>50</sup> Qurānic Arabic Corpus, see <http://corpus.quran.com/>

differed on whether the two near-synonymous Names indicate exactly the same meaning (Dūrī, 2005), but they all agreed that both Names refer to the Divine *Wahdāniyyah* and *Aḥadiyyah*, which both denote *Tawḥīd*. Classical Arabic dictionaries differ in their definitions of the two terms when they are used as Divine Names, but some suggest that *Wāḥid* refers to the One Who is in no need for anything and anyone while *Aḥad* refers to the One Who Has no parts and, thus, cannot be divided (see Ibn Manzūr, 1999; Ibn Fāris, 1994). Some early linguists such as *Farāhīdī* (d.820) considered these two Divine Names totally synonymous as they share the same root and origin whereas others, such as *Azharī* (895-980), refused to treat them as absolute synonyms (Al-<sup>c</sup>Askarī, 1981). *Azharī* (ibid, p.138) states that:

لا يوصف شيء بالأحدية غير الله تعالى، فلا يقال: رجل أحد ولا درهم أحد بل يقال: رجل واحد  
ودرهم واحد

Nothing [in Arabic] can be described as having ‘Oneness’ [*aḥadiyyah*] except the Almighty God. Thus, it is inaccurate to say ‘one [*aḥad*] man’, or ‘one [*aḥad*] dirham’. Rather, what should be said is ‘one [*wāḥid*] man’ and ‘one [*wāḥid*] dirham’

In his statement above, *Azharī* (895-980) argues that none should be described as *Aḥad* but Allāh, the Exalted, and this description cannot be used to label a man or any other object while the term *wāḥid* can be used to indicate number ‘one’ whether it refers to someone or something (Al-<sup>c</sup>Askarī, 1981). Thus, *wāḥid* is broader than *Aḥad* in terms of its semantic field and references. In other words, *Aḥad*, from a Qurānic perspective, is an epithet that applies to no one but to the Unique and Incomparable One and Only God while this is not the case with the meaning of *Wāḥid* which does not negate comparison and multiplicity (Al-<sup>c</sup>Askarī, 1981; Ibn Fāris, 1994). Another linguistic difference between these two near-synonymous Names is that *Aḥad* has a plural form, namely *āḥād*, while *wāḥid* does not take any plural form.



### 5.2.3.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of *Aḥad* and *Wāḥid*

Consider the following two examples of the renderings of the near-synonymous Names *Aḥad* and *Wāḥid*. Other occurrences of the Name *Wāḥid* are also looked at to check the translators' consistency.

1. *Qul huwa Allāh 'Aḥad* Q. 112:1 قل هو الله أحد

Pickthall: Say: He is Allah, **the One**.

Ali: Say: He is Allah, **the One and Only**.

Hil-Khan: Say (O Muhammad, 'peace be upon him'): 'He is Allah, **(the) One**'.

Arberry: Say: 'He is God, **One**'.

Haleem: Say, 'He is God the **One**'.

أرباب متفرقون خير أم الله الواحد القهار Q.12:39

2. *A 'rbāb-un mutafarriqūna khayr-un 'am-illāh-ul Wāḥid-ul Qahhār*

Pickthall: Are diverse lords better, or Allah **the One**, Almighty?

Ali: are many lords differing among themselves better, or **the One** Allah, **Supreme** and Irresistible?

Hil-Khan: Are many different lords (gods) better or Allah, **the One**, the Irresistible?

Arberry: many gods at variance, or God **the One**, the Omnipotent?

Haleem: would many diverse gods be better than God **the One**, the All Powerful?

[No indeed!] (brackets from the original).

From the above renderings of *Aḥad* and *Wāḥid*, along with a consideration of other renderings of *Wāḥid* in some Qurānic contexts, it is clear that the five translators have either overlooked or ignored the difference between this pair of near-synonymous Names, with the exception of Ali who occasionally uses more than one corresponding English term to convey the meaning of each Divine Name. Ali seems to have consulted some exegetical works (*Tafsīrs*) to differentiate between the two root-sharing terms. He renders *Aḥad* (see ex.1, Q.112:2) as 'the One and Only' using the English prenominal adjective, namely 'only', which is sometimes used as an adverb,

to convey the concepts of singleness and uniqueness which are inherent in the term. Ali also translates *al-Wāḥid*, as in Q.12:39 and Q. 38:65, using a two-word phrase rendering, which consists of the term ‘Supreme’ in addition to ‘the One’ in order to give an extra sense of Absoluteness of Divine Oneness. Other translators treated both Names as total synonyms and rendered them accordingly, i.e. using the exact English corresponding term, namely ‘One’.

Though Ali’s renderings seem to be good attempts not only to distinguish between *Aḥad* and *Wāḥid* but, equally important, to convey such a delicate distinction of meanings to the readers, he is unfortunately inconsistent in his choices as he unjustifiably opts not to use the word ‘Supreme’ to translate *Wāḥid* in other Qurānic occurrences (see Q. 2:163, 14:48, 39:4 and 40:16) and in one occasion, namely Q. 2:133, he uses the word ‘True’ instead of ‘Supreme’ to add the aforementioned inherent senses of the Divine Name *Wāḥid* (def. *al-Wāḥid*).

#### 5.2.4 *Ghāfir*, *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār*

غافر غفور غفار

##### 5.2.4.1 Meaning Analysis of *Ghāfir*, *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār*

Among the root-sharing Divine Names in the Qurān are *Ghāfir*, *Ghafūr*, and *Ghaffār*. These near-synonymous Names speak of the Divine Forgiveness and they are frequently mentioned in hundreds of Qurānic instances. The three terms are derived from the same root, namely *gh-f-r*, which occurs about 264 times, including its semantic cognates of variants, in the Qurān<sup>51</sup>. According to Arabic dictionaries, the stem verb *gh-fa-ra* has several denotations and connotations such as: to cover, veil, conceal, hide, pardon, forgive, and set aright (Ibn Fāris, 1994). According to *Ghazālī* (1995), *Ghāfir*, *Ghafūr*, and *Ghaffār* are not complete synonymous and should be

<sup>51</sup> Qurānic Arabic Corpus, see <http://corpus.quran.com/>

considered as three separate Divine Names as they describe dissimilar aspects of Divine forgiveness (see *al-Maqṣad* of *Ghazālī*, 1995).

*Ghazālī* explains that *Ghāfir* ‘Forgiver’ is an active participle which merely refers to the simple form of forgiveness, while *Ghafūr* ‘the All-Forgiving’ is a qualificative epithet which points to a regenerated forgiveness in relation to many offences to the extent that whoever forgives only one sort of wrongdoing is not worthy to be named *Ghafūr* (*Ghazālī*, 1995). *Ghazālī* seems to have drawn this concept of *Ghafūr* from many Qurānic contexts, such as Q.39:53, in which *Ghafūr* refers to the One who forgives all sorts of wrongdoings no matter how grave they are (cf. *Suyūṭī*, 1999).

*Ghazālī* goes on to clarify that the third emphatic Name, i.e. *Ghaffār* (often rendered as Oft-Forgiving or Perpetual Forgiver), describes a Divine Forgiveness which is not only infinite and limitless but, equally important, endlessly recurring, i.e. in a periodic or habitual manner (1995). In other words, *Ghaffār* forgives all one’s offences over and over again to the extent that whoever forgives all the offences for once and for all, but does not keep forgiving the perpetual offender every time he sins and repents, will not be worthy of the name *Ghaffār* (*ibid*). Similar to *Ghazālī*, some interpreters of the Qurān paid attention to the aforementioned morpho-semantic differences such as *Zamaḡsharī* (d.1144), *Rāzī* (d. 1209) and *Ibn Kathīr* (d. 1373) while others did not clearly distinguish between them and treated them synonymously.

#### **5.2.4.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of *Ghāfir*, *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār***

Some translators seem to have taken the aforementioned delicate differences between *Ghāfir*, *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār* into consideration, but their renderings are, unfortunately, not semantically and morphologically accurate, nor always consistent. This point can be further explained after considering the following examples:

1. *Ghāfirī Athanbi wa qābili attawbi* Q. 40:3 غافر الذنب وقابل التوب

Pickthall: **The Forgiver** of sin, the Acceptor of repentance

Ali: **Who forgiveth** sin, accepteth Repentance

Hil-Khan: **The Forgiver** of sin, the Acceptor of repentance

Arberry: **Forgiver** of sins, Acceptor of penitence

Haleem: **Forgiver** of sins and Acceptor of repentance

2. *Wahuwa al-Ghafūr al-Wadūd* Q. 85:14 وهو الغفور الودود

Pickthall: And He is **the Forgiving**, the Loving

Ali: And He is the **Oft-Forgiving** Full, of loving-kindness

Hil-Khan: And He is **Oft-Forgiving**, full of love

Arberry: And He is the **All-forgiving**, the All-loving

Haleem: And He is **the Most Forgiving**, the Most Loving.

Q. 71:10 استغفروا ربكم إنه كان غفارًا

3. *Istaghfirū Rabbakum innahu kāna Ghaffāra*

Pickthall: Seek pardon of your Lord. Lo! He was **ever Forgiving**.

Ali: Ask forgiveness from your Lord; for He is **Oft-Forgiving**.

Hil-Khan: Ask forgiveness from your Lord; Verily, He is **Oft-Forgiving**.

Arberry: Ask you forgiveness of your Lord; surely He is ever **All-forgiving**

Haleem: Ask forgiveness of your Lord: He is **ever forgiving**.

4. *Wa 'nnī la Ghaffār-un liman tāba wa 'āmana* Q. 20:82 وإني لغفار لمن تاب وأمن

Pickthall: verily I am **Forgiving** toward him who repenteth and believeth...etc.

Ali: I am (also) He that **forgives again and again**, to those who repent, believe...

Hil-Khan: I am indeed **Forgiving** to him who repents, believes...

Arberry: Yet I am **All-forgiving** to him who repents and believes...

Haleem: Yet I am **most forgiving** towards those who repent, believe...

The translators' attempts to render *Ghāfir*, *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār* in the four examples above, as well as in other Qurānic occurrences of these root-sharing Names, may look sound and accurate to the readers but they actually suffer from many deficiencies in

terms of their accuracy and consistency, with the exception of the renderings of Arberry. Regrettably, Pickthall, Ali, Hilali-Khan and Haleem did not pay enough attention to the delicate morpho-semantic differences between the three near-synonymous Names, and this has resulted in inconsistent renderings, particularly between *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār*.

Pickthall, for instance, uses the term ‘Forgiver’ to render *Ghāfir* (Q.40:3) which is an acceptable rendering, since *Ghāfir* is an active participle that refers to the doer of an action, but he unjustifiably uses the very same term to render the intensified participle *Ghaffār* on some Qurānic occasions such as Q. 39:5 and 40:42. Unlike the other translators, Pickthall simply renders *Ghafūr* as ‘the Forgiving’, which ignores the dynamic and generative sense of the word, and he inconsistently uses the same translation, the Forgiving, to render *Ghaffār*, as in Q. 20:82. He also inconsistently opts for different renderings for *Ghaffār* on other Qurānic occasions such Q. 38:66 in which he renders it as ‘the Pardoning’, and as ‘ever Forgiving’ in Q. 71:10.

Similarly, Ali’s renderings lack both accuracy and consistency. He treated the Divine Name and active participle *Ghāfir* as its present verb, namely *yaghfir*, ‘to forgive’ (see ex. 1 above). He follows the same unsuccessful strategy with *Ghaffār* (see ex. 4), which is also replaced by a simple present verb, forgives, though Ali attempted to compensate for the loss of meaning (the absence of hyperbole) by using ‘again and again’ to convey the intensified meaning of perpetual forgiveness in *Ghaffār*. Ali did not also distinguish between *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār* (see ex. 2 and 3) as he picked the same English equivalent ‘Oft-Forgiving’ for both Names. Moreover, he renders *Ghafūr* differently on various occasions as (Oft-Forgiving, All-Forgiving, and Most Forgiving) and he inconsistently opts for other explanatory renderings for *Ghaffār* on

several occasions including ‘forgiving again and again’ (see Q. 38:66) and ‘He Who forgives again and again’ (see Q. 39:5 and 40:42).

Though Hilali and Khan attempted to distinguish between these near-synonymous Names, *Ghāfir*, *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār*, they only partially succeeded as can be seen in their rendering of *Ghāfir* as ‘the Forgiver’ in the first example above, but they overlooked the morpho-semantic differences between *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār* as they render them synonymously. In other words, following the footsteps of Ali (1936/1983), Hilali and Khan unjustifiably opted for the same English equivalent ‘Oft-Forgiving’ for both *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār* in most of their Qurānic occurrences.

Haleem’s renderings of *Ghāfir*, *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār* are no better than his predecessors. Though his choice of ‘Forgiver’ to correspond to *Ghāfir* is successful, his choices of English equivalent term for *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār* are not consistent, though they convey the intensified meaning of forgiveness in both Names. Haleem sometimes does not differentiate between *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār* and treat them as total synonyms (as in the second and forth examples above). In fact, he is inconsistent in his choices as he opted for slightly different renderings for *Ghaffār* in various context such as ‘most forgiving’ (see, Q. 20:82) and (Q. 38:66), ‘the Forgiving’ (see Q. 39:5), ‘the Forgiving One’ (see Q. 40:42) and the ‘ever forgiving’ (see Q. 71:10).

Arberry’s renderings of *Ghāfir*, *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār* seem to be partially successful. He attempted to convey the meanings of these near-synonymous Names accurately and consistently to his readers, so he translates *Ghāfir*, *Ghafūr* and *Ghaffār*, as the ‘Forgiver’, ‘All-forgiving’, and the ‘All-Forgiving’ respectively. Though Arberry, like other translators, seems to have overlooked the difference between *Ghafūr* and

*Ghaffār*, his renderings are of a better quality than the other four translators as he maintains consistent renderings throughout the Qurānic text.

### 5.2.5 *Qādir, Qadīr and Muqtadīr*

القادر القدير المقتدر

#### 5.2.5.1 Meaning Analysis of *Qādir, Qadīr and Muqtadīr*

Among the root-sharing Divine Names in the Qurān are *Qādir, Qadīr and Muqtadīr*. These near-synonymous Names are derived from the same root, namely *q-d-r*, which occurs, along with its derivatives, 132 times in the Qurānic text<sup>52</sup>. The stem verb *qa-da-ra* basically indicates ability, capability, empowerment and having control over something (*Ibn Fāris*, 1994). It also has various connotations in several Qurānic contexts. In order to come to an understanding of the meanings of *Qādir, Qadīr and Muqtadīr*, it is necessary to identify what their root (*q-d-r*) really means.

In the Qurānic Divine-related usage, the Arabic root *q-d-r* indicates two sensitive concepts, namely *qudrah* and *taqdīr*. A distinction should be drawn here between the two terms before distinguishing between the aforementioned near-synonymous Divine Names. *Qudrah* (also called *maqdirah*) basically means ability, skill, determination, capacity, power or aptitude while *taqdīr* refers to measuring things out, quantifying, calculation and estimation (see *Lisān of Ibn Manzūr*, 2003). According to Rahman (2009, p.8), the Qurān uses *qadar* in the two aforementioned distinctive senses, but its usage differs from that of pre-Islamic Arabic. In pre-Islamic literature, *qadar* was mostly applied in one of its plural formulas, namely *aqdār*, to pessimistically speak of one's fate or predestination, regarding issues beyond human perception (e.g. birth, death, provisions), which were believed to be pre-arranged and well-measured by an invisible superpower (*ibid.*).

<sup>52</sup> Qurānic Arabic Corpus, see <http://corpus.quran.com/> (by Dukes, 2011).

There has always been a sort of confusion between the two concepts of *qudrah* and *taqdīr* since the early studies of Qurānic Arabic (Ṭabarī, 2002). In fact, such confusion stems from the derivation of the aforementioned terms and the way one pronounces their basic verb, i.e. either *qadara* or *qaddara* (ibid.). If the verb is emphatically articulated as a pattern II *qaddara*, then it indicates *taqdīr*, but when it is uttered as a pattern I *qadara*, it then speaks of *qudrah* and *maqdirah* (Ibn Fāris, 1994). Early reciters<sup>53</sup> of the Qurān differed on which was the most appropriate way to pronounce this stem verb, i.e. uttering it as either *qadara* or *qaddara*, in a few Qurānic verses. The disagreement resulted in different interpretations for the same verse, and this consequently resulted in various translations today. To illustrate, consider the following example which can provide an idea of the kind of complexity faced by Qurān translators (see Rahman, 2009, p.13):

- *fa Qadarnā fa ni<sup>c</sup>m-al Qādirūn* Q. 77:23      فقدرنا فنعم القادرون  
 ‘So We determined; and how Fine Determiners We are’ (Q.77:23)

Early Quran exegetes disagreed (see Ṭabarī, 2002) on the meaning of the above verse as it could indicate both the Divine Omnipotence (*Qudrah*) and the Divine Knowledge of Pre-Existence or Pre-determination (*Taqdīr*). Rahman (2009) points out that this is the case since this verse ‘*fa Qadarnā fa ni<sup>c</sup>m-al Qādirūn*’ speaks of both the Divine Determination and Knowledge in regard with human creation (see Q. 77:20-23). Thus, it can be said that the abovementioned verse indicates both concepts *qudrah* and *taqdīr* and this could verify, the researcher argues, that reciting the verse in either way does not profoundly change its overall meaning.

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<sup>53</sup> Qurān reciters from Medina uttered the verb in (Q.77:23) as *qaddar*, while those of Baṣrah and Kūfah uttered it as *qadar* (Ṭabarī, 2002).



As mentioned above, the Qurānic text applies the concepts of *qudrah* and *taqdīr* in various forms and for several purposes. The concept of *aqdār*, along with other related terms, has been transformed from depicting an invisible and random superpower into that of a Mighty, All-Powerful, Invincible Lord (Rahman, 2009). These concepts of the Divine *Qurdah* and *Taqdīr* are manifested in the meanings the aforementioned root-sharing Divine Names, namely *Qādir*, *Qadīr* and *Muqtadir*. Though all these near-synonymous Names indicate Divine Omnipotence, they have some morpho-semantic differences that should be taken into consideration by both interpreters and translators.

Morphologically, *Qādir* is an active participle from the tri-literal verb *qadara*, which functions as an adjective, representing the doer of an action. *Muqtadir* is an active participle which functions as an adjective as well, but it derives from the verb *iqtadara*, which is more emphatic than *qadara*. *Qadīr*, which appears recurrently in the Qurān, is a qualificative adjective which functions as a noun (see *ṣifah mushabbahah*, subsec. 4.2.3.4). In most of its Qurānic occurrences, the Divine Name *Qadīr*, often rendered ‘All-Capable’, is preceded by the expression ‘*alā kulli Shay<sup>‘in</sup>*’, which literally means ‘over everything [or all things]’, and this indicates the multi-layered Divine Omnipotence carried by the Divine Name *Qadīr* (Rahman, 2009).

The morphological and structural differences between *Qādir*, *Qadīr* and *Muqtadir* make them semantically dissimilar terms, and they should be treated as such when translated into English. As previously mentioned (see 4.4), the early Arab grammarians agree on the fact that any change in the morphological form of Arabic

roots or stem verbs always signals a difference in meaning. In other words, any additional feature of word structure necessitates additional feature of word meaning<sup>54</sup>.

### 5.2.5.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of *Qādir*, *Qadīr* and *Muqtadir*

All Qurānic terms related to *taqdīr* and *qudrah* proved problematic to translate into English. This is particularly evident in the English renderings of the near-synonymous Divine Names *Qādir*, *Qadīr* and *Muqtadir*, as shown in the following examples:

Q. 6:65 قل هو القادر على أن يبعث عليكم عذاباً

1. *Qul huwa al-Qādir-u<sup>c</sup> alā 'an yab<sup>c</sup>atha<sup>c</sup> alaikum<sup>c</sup> aḏāba*

Pickthall: Say: He is **able** to send punishment upon you.

Ali: Say: He **hath power** to send calamities on you.

Hil-Khan: Say: He **has power** to send torment on you.

Arberry: Say: He is **able** to send forth upon you chastisement.

Haleem: Say, He **has power** to send punishment on you.

2. *Wa huwa-l<sup>c</sup> Alīm-ul Qadīr* Q. 30:54 وهو العليم القدير

Pickthall: He is the Knower, **the Mighty**.

Ali: and it is He **Who has** all knowledge and **power**.

Hil-Khan: And it is He Who is the All-Knowing, the **All-Powerful** (i.e. Able to do all things).

Arberry: and He is the All-knowing, **the All-powerful**.

Haleem: He is the All Knowing, **the All Powerful**.

Q.54:55 في مقعد صدق عند مليك مقتدر

3. *Fī maq<sup>c</sup>adi ṣidq<sup>in c</sup>inda Malīk<sup>in</sup> Muqtadir*

Pickthall: Firmly established in the favor of a **Mighty King**.

Ali: In an Assembly of Truth in the Presence of a Sovereign **Omnipotent**.

Hil-Khan: In a seat of truth (i.e. Paradise), near the **Omnipotent King**.

Arberry: in a sure abode, in the presence of a King **Omnipotent**.

Haleem: secure in the presence of an **all-powerful** Sovereign.

<sup>54</sup> Similar statement is mentioned in the previous chapter as well as the introductory chapter, and it is repeated here for convenience.

وكان الله على كل شيء مقتدرا Q. 18:45

4. *Wa kāna Allāhu ʿalā kulli Shayʿin Muqtadirā*

Pickthall: Allāh is **Able** to do all things.

Ali: it is (only) Allāh **Who prevails** over all things.

Hil-Khan: And Allāh is **Able** to do everything.

Arberry: and God is **omnipotent** over everything.

Haleem: God **has power** over everything.

5. *Fa ʿaḡathnāhum ʿaḡtha ʿAzīz<sup>in</sup> Muqtadir* Q. 54:42 فأخذناهم أخذ عزيز مقتدر

Pickthall: Therefore We grasped them with the grasp of the Mighty, **the Powerful**.

Ali: But We seized them with such Penalty (as comes) from One Exalted in Power, **able to carry out His Will**.

Hil-Khan: So We seized them with a seizure of the All-Mighty, **All-Capable to carry out what he Will (Omnipotent)**.

Arberry: So We seized them with the seizing of One mighty, **omnipotent**.

Haleem: So We seized them with all Our might and **power**.

The English renderings of *Qādir*, *Qadīr* and *Muqtadir* in the five examples above, as well as in other translations of Qurānic verses containing these Divine Names, may look acceptable but they lack accuracy and suffer many shortcomings. For instance, none of the above attempts to translate *al-Qādir*, in the first example, is successful since no rendering makes the reader aware of the fact that the original Qurānic verse contains a Divine Name. In other words, the Divine Name, *al-Qādir*, is absent in the English renderings and translators did not make efforts to find an adequate English equivalent term (or title) that conveys, to some extent, its great meaning.

The above renderings also lack consistency as the five translators, with the exception of Arberry, opt for various English corresponding terms to convey the meaning of the very same Divine Name as is the case, for instance, in the renderings of *Muqtadir* (examples 3, 4, and 5). Pickthall renders *Muqtadir*, which is not a polysemous term,

inconsistently on three different occasions using three English terms, namely ‘Mighty’ in Q. 54:55, ‘Able’ in Q. 18:45 and ‘the Powerful’ in Q. 54:42. He also uses the English terms ‘Able’ and ‘Mighty’, to render *Qādir* and *Qadīr* respectively (see ex. 1 and 2). He uses ‘the Powerful’, as well, to render *Qadīr* on other Qurānic occasions (see Q. 4:149, 16:70, 25:54 and 42:50). He also unjustifiably and inconsistently uses the English term ‘Mighty’ to render other Divine Names such as ‘*‘Azīz*’ (on dozens of Qurānic occasions, e.g. Q. 2:109, 3:6, 3:18) and *Qahhār* (see Q. 12:39, 13:16, 14:48 and 40:16). Pickthall obviously overlooked the delicate differences between *Qādir*, *Qadīr* and *Muqtadīr* and, as a result, opted for inaccurate and inconsistent renderings.

Similarly, Ali, Hilali-Khan and Haleem also overlooked the delicate morpho-semantic differences between the three Divine Names. Ali’s translation in the first two examples above do not appear to contain Divine Names as he flattens his renderings of both *Qādir* and *Qadīr* and renders them synonymously as He hath/has power (see ex. 1 and 2). But in other Qurānic occurrences of these terms, he treats *Qadīr* as a Divine Name and renders it according as ‘All-Powerful’ (see Q. 16:70). Ali is also uncertain of the meaning of *Muqtadīr* (see ex. 3, 4 and 5) as he inaccurately and inconsistently renders it differently on the three abovementioned Qurānic occasions. Obviously, Ali sometimes treats *Muqtadīr* as a Divine Name (ex.3) and renders it as ‘Omnipotent’, but when he encounters it on other occasions, he unjustifiably flattens his renderings of the term and provides explanatory alternatives such as the One ‘Who prevails’ (ex.4) and the One Who is ‘able to carry out His Will’ (ex.5).

Hilali and Khan seemed to have paid little attention to the differences between *Qādir*, *Qadīr* and *Muqtadīr* as their renderings, unfortunately, suffer some deficiencies. First

of all, they flatten the rendering of the Name *Qādir* by using the third-person simple present verb of possession ‘has’ followed by ‘power’ (ex.1), while they treat *Qadīr* as a Divine Name rendering it, along with in-brackets description, as All-Powerful (i.e. Able to do all things) (see ex.2). Secondly, with other occurrences of *Qadīr*, Hilali and Khan inconsistently rendered it using equivalent terms other than ‘All-Powerful’ and sometimes by resorting to explanatory translation such as ‘Able to do all things’ (see Q. 42:50). Thirdly, Hilali and Khan’s renderings of *Muqtadir* are inconsistent as well. They use different equivalent terms such as ‘Omnipotent’ and ‘able’ as well as explanatory renditions such as ‘All-Capable to carry out what he Will (Omnipotent)’ as in the abovementioned third, fourth and fifth examples respectively.

To sum up, though our five translators seem to have attempted to differentiate between the root-sharing Divine Names, *Qādir*, *Qadīr* and *Muqtadir*, they are obviously unable to distinguish, morphologically and semantically, between them or show consistency when translating each Divine Name in various Qurānic contexts, with the exception of Arberry who remarkably shows more accuracy and consistency in his choices throughout his translation.

## 5.2.6 *Mālik*, *Malik*, and *Malīk*

مالك ملك و مليك

### 5.2.6.1 Meaning Analysis of *Mālik*, *Malik*, and *Malīk*

The root-sharing Divine Names in the Qurān include *Mālik*, *Malik*, and *Malīk* which speak of Divine Kingship, Sovereignty, Control and Ownership. These near-synonymous terms share the root *m-l-k*, which appears in several derivative, cognates and variants on 206 Qurānic occasions (Dukes, 2001). The basic verb *ma-la-ka* basically means to own, rule, have control over something or someone (Ibn Fāris, 1994). It also means to be entrusted with *mulk*, kingship, i.e. to be ruler or king (ibid.).

Early Muslim theologians attempted to explain the concept of Divine Kingship as represented in *Mālik*, *Malik*, and *Malīk*. Their explanations and views are summarised by Murata and Chittick (1994, p.59) who point out that:

The divine name with perhaps the most concrete sound is King. But this name, like other divine names, does not imply that God is pictured in concrete terms. Rather, the name means that God is a reality that possesses the attributes of kingship to such a degree that nothing else really deserves the name. If God is King, this means that all power and ruling authority belong to him, while earthly kings, presidents, and dictators represent at best pale reflections of God's kingly power.

The Qurān makes it clear that Allāh is *Mālikul-Mulk* 'Owner of the Kingdom' (Q. 3:26), He, alone, is the Possessor of everything, and that none can own whatsoever for itself (Murata and Chittick, 1994). Many Qurānic contexts refer to the Divine Kingship using terms like *Malakūt*<sup>55</sup>, Dominion and Control, and *Mulk*, Sovereignty of Kingdom (Rāzī, 1995) which emphasize that 'to Allah belongs the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth' (Q. 3:189, 5:17, etc.), and that He 'has no associates in the Kingdom' (Q. 17:111), and, thus, (Q. 67:1) 'Blessed is He in Whose Hand is the Dominion, and He is powerful over everything' (ibid, p.61).

A few Qurān exegetes such as Zajjāj (1975) and *As-Sa<sup>c</sup>dī* (1987) have pointed out the linguistic and theological differences between the root-sharing Names, *Mālik*, *Malik*, and *Malīk*. What are most important here to take into account are the morpho-semantic distinctions between these Names which are nominal and descriptive derivatives carrying various denotative meanings, though they share the core element of their meanings. Morphologically, *Mālik* is an active participle which basically

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<sup>55</sup> For more insight, see Rāzī's account on the term *Malakūt* in his commentary on Q. 23:88 (Rāzī, 1995).

means ‘owner’, ‘master’ or ‘holder’, and it appears in two Qurānic Divinely-related construct phrases, namely *Mālik Al-Mulk* (*Mālikul-Mulk*) and *Mālik yawm Ad-Dīn*. The first term in both phrase, i.e. *Mālik*, means ‘Owner’ or ‘Master’ (renderings of these construct phrases are discussed in the next subsection).

*Malik* and *Malīk* differ from *Mālik* in terms of their morphological and semantic features (Jawharī, 1990). Both terms *Malik* and *Malīk* indicate having control, along with kingship and sovereignty while the concept of ownership in *Mālik* does not entail being in full control over what is owned (Zajjāj, 1975). Morphologically, each of *Malik* and *Malīk* is a form of qualificative adjectival which functions as a noun (see *ṣifāh mushabbahah*, sub-sec. 4.2.3.4), and they are sometimes used interchangeably<sup>56</sup>. Some early linguists, however, consider *Malīk*, which is formulated on the *fāʿīl* templatic pattern, more emphatic than *Malik*, which is formed on the rare and less forceful Arabic *fāʿīl* adjectival pattern (cf. *Rūḥ Al-Maʿānī* of *Alūsī*, 1996).

#### 5.2.6.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of *Mālik*, *Malik*, and *Malīk*

The near-synonymous and root-sharing Divine Names *Mālik*, *Malik* and *Malīk* pose various difficulties for translators into other languages such as English. The following four examples, along with other Qurānic contexts in which these Names appear, are considered in order to show such translation difficulties as well as to examine translation consistency:

1. *Māliki yawm-id-Dīn*      Q. 1:4      مالك يوم الدين

Pickthall: **Master** of the Day of Judgment.

Ali: **Master** of the Day of Judgment.

Hil-Khan: The **Only Owner** (and the **Only Ruling Judge**) of the Day of Recompense

<sup>56</sup> In Modern Standard Arabic, both terms, *Malik* and *Malīk*, are used interchangeably to refer to kings and monarchs in the Arab world. *Malīk*, for instance, appears to mean *Malik*, King, in the last statement of the national anthem of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

(i.e. the Day of Resurrection).

Arberry: the **Master** of the Day of Doom.

Haleem: **Master** of the Day of Judgement.

2. *Qul-illāhumma Mālik-al Mulk* Q. 3:26 قل اللهم مالك الملك

Pickthall: Say O Allāh, **Owner** of Sovereignty!

Ali: Say: 'O Allāh! **Lord** of Power (and Rule).

Hil-Khan: Say (O Muhammad SAW): "Allāh! **Possessor** of the Kingdom

Arberry: Say: 'O God, **Master** of the Kingdom

Haleem: Say, 'God, **holder** of all control

3. *Fa ta'ālā Allāh-ul Malīk-ul Ḥaqq* Q. 20:114 فتعالى الله الملك الحق

Pickthall: Then exalted be Allāh, the True **King**.

Ali: High above all is Allāh, the **King**, the Truth.

Hil-Khan: Then high above all is Allāh, the True **King**.

Arberry: So high exalted be God, the true **King**!

Haleem: exalted be God, **the one who is truly in control**.

4. *Fī maq'adi šidq<sup>in</sup> c'inda Malīk<sup>in</sup> Muqtadir* Q. 54:55 في مقعد صدق عند مليك مقتدر

Pickthall: Firmly established in the favor of a Mighty **King**.

Ali: In an Assembly of Truth in the Presence of a **Sovereign** Omnipotent.

Hil-Khan: In a seat of truth (i.e. Paradise), near the Omnipotent **King**.

Arberry: in a sure abode, in the presence of a **King** Omnipotent.

Haleem: secure in the presence of an all-powerful **Sovereign**.

The renderings of *Mālik*, *Malik*, and *Malīk* in the four examples above as well as in many other translation attempts of similar Qurānic verses containing these Divine Names show that the translators are, to some extent, aware of the differences between these near-synonymous Names. Regrettably, however, apart from Arberry's, these renderings fall short in terms of their accuracy and consistency particularly in the renderings of *Mālik*, as can be seen in the first two examples above. Pickthall, Ali and



Haleem similarly render *Mālik* as ‘Master’ in the first example (Q. 1:4), but they inconsistently and unjustifiably opt for different renderings, namely ‘Owner’, ‘Lord’ ‘Holder’ respectively, in the second example (Q. 3:26).

Likewise, Hilali and Khan rendered *Mālik* in the first two examples above in two completely different ways using two drastically dissimilar techniques. In the first example, Hilali-Khan opted for an adverb-cum-adjective rendering, namely ‘the Only Owner’, along with an explanatory in-brackets note, namely ‘and the Only Ruling Judge’, which is an exegetical and unjustifiably long<sup>57</sup> rendition of one Qurānic term, namely, *Mālik*. However, in the second example, Hilali-Khan surprisingly opt for a word-for-word rendering, namely ‘Possessor’, for the same Divine Name; *Mālik*.

For *Malik*, which basically means ‘King’, the translators, with the exception of Arberry, have inconsistently used different English renderings in a few Qurānic occurrences of this monosemous Divine Name. Ali and Pickthall, for instance, render *Malik* as King in some instances, such as the third example above, but they opt for another rendering, namely ‘Sovereign’, for the same Divine Name in other instances such as Q. 59:23 and Q. 62:1. Ali uses ‘Sovereign’ as well to render *Malīk* as in the fourth example above.

Hilali and Khan and Haleem made slight changes to their choices of renderings *Malik* its three occurrences as a Divine Name in the Qurānic text. Hilali and Khan, for instance, added an unnecessary in-brackets phrase, namely ‘of everything’, to their rendering of *Malik* in Q. 62:1, while Haleem uses a sort of dynamic (communicative)

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<sup>57</sup> Note that the restrictive adverb, ‘only’, is unnecessarily inserted twice in Hilali Khan’s rendering. This seems to be an unsuccessful attempt to compensate for an inevitable loss of meaning in the rendering of the Divine Name.

rendering for *Malik*, namely ‘the Controller’ in Q. 59:23<sup>58</sup>, 62:1 and 114:2, but he sometimes flattens the meaning of *Malik* and renders it ‘the one who is in control’, as his rendering in the third example above (Q. 20:114), which does not seem to be containing an English equivalent term for such a great Divine Name. Haleem, however, attempts to distinguish between *Malik* and *Malīk* as he renders the latter as ‘Sovereign’, a term which he inconsistently uses to convey the meaning of another Divine Name, namely *Muqtadir* in Q. 54:55.

Though he does not distinguish between *Malik* and *Malīk*, Arberry seems to be the only translator to maintain consistent renderings for these root-sharing Names when they appear on several Qurānic occasions. He is also the only translator to stick to one rendering for *Mālik*, as shown in the first two examples above.

### 5.2.7 *Al-‘A<sup>c</sup>lā, al-<sup>c</sup>Aliyy and al-Muta<sup>c</sup>āl*

الأعلى العلي والمتعال

#### 5.2.7.1 Meaning Analysis of *Al-‘A<sup>c</sup>lā, al-<sup>c</sup>Aliyy and al-Muta<sup>c</sup>āl*

Among the root-sharing Divine Names which pose difficulty when interpreted or translated are *al-‘A<sup>c</sup>lā, al-<sup>c</sup>Aliyy and al-Muta<sup>c</sup>āl*. These Names share the same root, namely <sup>c</sup>-l-w (stem v. <sup>c</sup>alā), which occurs nearly 70 times in the Qurānic text<sup>59</sup>, including its semantic linkage of variants and conjugations. The stem verb <sup>c</sup>a-li-ya literally points to height (Arabic, علو <sup>c</sup>uluw), which indicates rising up, highness, being in a higher position or above something (Ibn Fāris, 1994). <sup>c</sup>Uluw in Arabic also refers to elevation and exaltedness to a certain rank, position or status (ibid.). In a few Qurānic instances, a negative ‘<sup>c</sup>uluw’ is vilified when it indicates earthy (human) haughtiness; corruption and self-exaltedness (see Q. 17:4, 27:14 and 28:83).

<sup>58</sup> Haleem seems to be unsure of the meaning of *Malik* in Q. 59:23 as he adds a footnote stating ‘Or King/Sovereign’ which is mentioned here as alternative meanings for his rendering ‘the Controller’.

<sup>59</sup> Qurānic Arabic Corpus, see <http://corpus.quran.com/>

The aforementioned root-sharing Divine Names share the concept of *ʿuluw* (see *ʿAlā* Q. 87:1, *ʿAliyy* Q. 2:255 and *Mutaʿāl* Q. 13:9) which, in addition to its literal meaning of height or highness, has several denotative and connotative meanings (Jawharī, 1990). In fact, the concept of *ʿuluw* was one of many notions that caused some early Muslim philosophical controversies with regard to its meaning in Divine-related contexts (Ghuṣn, 1996), which will not be discussed due to the limited linguistic scope of the study. It is of high relevance and significance, however, to point that the concept of *ʿuluw* shared by the three Divine Names above, is believed to be one of status, loftiness and eminence, i.e. *ʿuluw makānah* علو مكانة, and should not be merely understood as one of height or escalation of place, i.e. *ʿuluw makān* علو مكان (ibid.).

Morphologically, the term *ʿAlā* is a superlative (elative) noun, *ism tafdhīl*, which is formulated on the templatic pattern of *afʿal* as it gives the sense of superiority when comparing two or more objects, and in this case of *ʿAlā* it speaks of highest level of heights, status, ranks or positions (Jawharī, 1990; Bustānī, 1990). A distinction between the indefinite and definite forms of *ʿAlā* should be drawn since the usage of the Arabic article of definiteness, namely *al-*, has a prominent role in meaning, particularly in the contexts of comparisons. The indefinite comparative form, *ʿAlā*, which is formulated on the basic templatic pattern of superlatives (*afʿal*), literally means ‘higher than’, when comparing between two heights. When this term appears in the definite form, namely *al-ʿAlā*, it is then a superlative noun of absoluteness, i.e. it indicates the absolute sense of highness (Ibn Fāris, 1994). This explains the reason it is usually rendered in the translations of the Qurān as the highest or the most high.

Secondly, *ʿAliyy* is linguistically different from *ʿAlā* in the sense that it is an intensified form, *ṣīghat mubālaghah*, of the active participle *ʿālī* عالي (see sub-sec.

4.2.3.3) and it hyperbolically indicates the absolute highness of status rather than mere highness (Ghuṣn, 1996). In other words, <sup>ʿ</sup>*Aliyy* speaks, in an emphatic manner, of an inherent Divine Attribute of Superiority and Sublimity (ibid.). The Arabic famous male proper name <sup>ʿ</sup>*Alī* (or <sup>ʿ</sup>*Aliyy*) means high in rank or status, but it does not indicate the absolute highness as it is the case when the term is used in reference to the Divine Being and His Sublime Essence (Ibn Fāris, 1994). In eight Divine-related Qurānic contexts, <sup>ʿ</sup>*Aliyy* describes the Lord who is inherently majestic and superior to all and everything (e.g. Q. 22:62, 42:4 and 40:12). In some of these contexts, the term appears to negate any misconception about the Lord as well as affirm His entitlement of such a Beautiful Divine Name (see *Ibn Kathīr*'s *Tafsīr* of Q. 2:255 and 42:51). In these Qurānic contexts, the Divine Name <sup>ʿ</sup>*Aliyy* obviously refers to the abovementioned <sup>ʿ</sup>*uluw* of *Makānah* rather than <sup>ʿ</sup>*uluw* of *Makān*. In fact, other non-divine Qurānic occasions use the term <sup>ʿ</sup>*Aliyy* to confirm this argument, i.e. highness of status rather than height of place (see for instance Q. 19:50).

Unlike *al-ʿAlā* and *al-ʿAliyy*, *al-Mutaʿāl* means the Most Exalted Lord who is Transcendent (cf. Netton, 1995) in character and nature to a degree that is beyond the level or reach of anyone or anything, and also beyond any thought or imagination (Ibn Manzūr, 2003). *Mutaʿāl* is derived from the five-literal stem verb *taʿālā* which has an emphatic sense of the tri-literal root <sup>ʿ</sup>*a-l-ā*, shared by the three aforementioned Divine Names. Some Qurān exegetes, such as *As-Saʿdī* (1987) point out that *Mutaʿāl* also speaks of the Divine Superiority and Sublimity of status <sup>ʿ</sup>*uluw* of *Makānah*, but in a hyperbolic manner. In other words, the term *Mutaʿāl* contains more features of word structure than <sup>ʿ</sup>*Aliyy* and *ʿAlā* and that necessitates more emphasis of word

meaning<sup>60</sup>. *Muta<sup>c</sup>āl* appears only once in the Quran (Q. 13:9), but its stem verb occurs more than a dozen of times (e.g. Q. 6:100, 7:190, 10:18, 16:1-3, 17:43 and 72:3) all of which refers to the *tanzīh* of the All-Exalted Lord (Ghuṣn, 1996).

### 5.2.7.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of *Al-‘A<sup>c</sup>lā*, *al-‘Aliyy* and *al-Muta<sup>c</sup>āl*

The following translation examples show whether the five translators take the abovementioned morpho-semantic distinctions between the three root-sharing Divine Names, *‘A<sup>c</sup>lā*, *‘Aliyy* and *Muta<sup>c</sup>āl*, into consideration in their English translations of the Qurān. Other occurrences of *‘Aliyy*, which appears more frequently than *‘A<sup>c</sup>lā* and *Muta<sup>c</sup>āl* are also examined to evaluate translators’ consistency of their renderings:

1. *Sabbih ism-i Rabbik-al ‘A<sup>c</sup>lā* Q. 87:1 سبح اسم ربك الأعلى

Pickthall: Praise the name of thy Lord **the Most High**.

Ali: Glorify the name of thy Guardian-Lord **Most High**.

Hil-Khan: Glorify the Name of your Lord, **the Most High**.

Arberry: Magnify the Name of thy Lord the **Most High**.

Haleem: [Prophet], glorify the name of your Lord **the Most High**.

2. *Wa huwa Al-‘Aliyy Al-‘Azīm* Q. 2:255 وهو العلي العظيم

Pickthall: He is **the Sublime**, the Tremendous.

Ali: He is **the Most High**, the Supreme (in glory).

Hil-Khan: He is **the Most High**, the Most Great.

Arberry: He is **the All-high**, the All-glorious.

Haleem: He is **the Most High**, the Tremendous.

3. *Al-Khabīr Al-Muta<sup>c</sup>āl* Q. 13:9 الكبير المتعال

Pickthall: the Great, **the High Exalted**.

Ali: He is the Great, **the Most High**.

Hil-Khan: the Most Great, **the Most High**.

Arberry: the All-great, the **All-exalted**.

Haleem: He is the Great, **the Most High**.

<sup>60</sup> الزيادة في البناء تقتضي الزيادة في المعنى In Arabic

The above renderings of *al-A<sup>c</sup>lā*, *al-<sup>c</sup>Aliyy* and *al-Muta<sup>c</sup>āl* vary in terms of their accuracy and consistency. As previously mentioned, the Arabic morphological pattern *al-af<sup>al</sup>* describes the extreme level or the highest degree when comparing someone or an entity as the ultimate and absolute holder of a given attribute (Bustānī, 1990). Thus, translators are expected to render *al-A<sup>c</sup>lā* using an English equivalent that indicates the perfection of highness, elevation and superiority. They are also expected to render *al-<sup>c</sup>Aliyy* and *al-Muta<sup>c</sup>āl* with terms that speak of the Divine Superiority of status rather than highness or height of place.

To start with, it is clear that Pickthall has paid attention to the morpho-semantic differences between these three near-synonymous Names and attempted to render them accordingly using three different English equivalents, but his translation, still, suffer few discrepancies. Though he renders *al-A<sup>c</sup>lā*, *al-<sup>c</sup>Aliyy* and *al-Muta<sup>c</sup>āl* as the Most High, the Sublime and the High Exalted respectively, he is unfortunately confusing the reader in other Qurānic contexts as he is not maintaining the same rendering for each of these near-synonymous Names throughout his translated text. For example, he uses the English term ‘Sublime’, which he sometimes uses to render *al-<sup>c</sup>Aliyy*, to render the superlative adjective *al-A<sup>c</sup>lā* in at least two occasions in the Qurān (see Q. 16:60 and Q. 30:27) in which *al-A<sup>c</sup>lā* does not refer to the Divine Highness but to an incomparable similitude or ‘loftiest likeness’ as Arberry renders it. Pickthall also inconsistently uses the terms ‘Exalted’ and ‘High Exalted’, which he once used to render the Divine name *al-Muta<sup>c</sup>āl* as seen above (ex. 3), to render another root-sharing Divine Name, namely *al-<sup>c</sup>Aliyy* (see Pickthall Q. 4: 34 and Q. 42: 51) though he often renders the latter using the English rendering of ‘the Sublime’!

The attempts of Ali, Hilali-Khan and Haleem to render *A<sup>c</sup>lā*, *Al<sup>c</sup>iyy* and *Muta<sup>c</sup>āl* suffer even more inaccuracies and discrepancies than their predecessor, i.e. Pickthall. They inaccurately treat these root-sharing Divine Names as total synonyms and they inconsistently use the same rendering, namely ‘Most High’, as the corresponding equivalent for all the three Names in all their Qurānic occurrences. Ali, Hilali-Khan and Haleem obviously overlooked the morpho-semantic differences between these terms and, as a result, treated them as one Divine Name instead of three.

Arberry is the only translator here who not only distinguished between the three root-sharing Names, but managed to maintain consistency of his choices throughout the text. He renders *al-‘A<sup>c</sup>lā*, *al-‘Al<sup>c</sup>iyy* and *al-‘Muta<sup>c</sup>āl* as ‘the Most High’, ‘All-High’ and ‘All-Exalted’ respectively, and he made no shifts nor showed uncertainty when rendering *al-‘A<sup>c</sup>lā* and *al-‘Al<sup>c</sup>iyy* in other Qurānic occasions. This makes his renderings of better quality in terms of accuracy and consistency, though his accuracy is questionable since he literally rendered the concept of *‘uluw* as highness or highest degree of height rather than *‘uluw* of *makānah*, i.e. status.

## 5.2.8 *‘Ālim*, *‘Alīm* and *‘Allām*

عالم علم علام

### 5.2.8.1 Meaning Analysis of *‘Ālim*, *‘Alīm* and *‘Allām*

Amongst the near-synonymous and root-sharing Names that speak of the Divine Knowledge (Arabic; علم *‘ilm*) are *‘Ālim*, *‘Alīm* and *‘Allām*. These Names share the same root, namely *‘-l-m*, which abundantly appear, along with its wide semantic network of morphological variants and cognates, about 854 times in the Qurānic text. This root, and its stem verb *‘a-li-ma*, indicates, in its basic sense, a mark or label of identification ‘*alamah*’ as well as knowledge *‘ilm* (Ibn Fāris, 1994). Hence, the one

who possesses *ilm* is often identified with his/her knowledge or awareness as *ālim/ālimah* (male/female scholar or scientist).

Morphologically, *Ālim* is an active participle which simply means knower, but it also means an intellectual person or a cleric (pl. *ulamā'*). The adjectival term *Ālīm* is a qualificative (assimilated) form of the active participle *Ālim*, and it refers the one whose knowledge is not only broad (as in the meaning of *Ālim*) but, inherently comprehensive and limitless (Jawharī, 1990). It is, thus, usually rendered as the 'All-Knowing' in the English translations of the Qurān. More emphatic concept of knowledge is found in *Allām*, which is an intensified formula, *ṣ̣ghat mubālaghah*, of *Ālim* and this why an outstanding religious cleric is labelled in Arabic as *Allāmah* (ibid.). When *Allām* appears in a Divine-related context, it speaks of the all-encompassing Divine Knowledge in a hyperbolic manner (Ibn Fāris, 1994).

Some Qurān exegetes, such as *Zamaḡsharī* (d. 1144) and *Rāzī* (d. 1209), pointed out that both Names *Ālim* and *Allām* always collocate with the Qurānic term *al-ghaib* الغيب (lit. the unseen), but they have slightly distinct meanings and thus, cannot be used interchangeably in the contexts in which they appear (Ghuṣn, 1996). The Name *Allām*, which hyperbolically emphasises the meaning of *Ālim*, usually collocates with the plural form of *al-ghaib*<sup>61</sup>, namely *al-ghuyūb* whereas *Ālim* always collocates with its singular form, i.e. *al-ghaib*. In other words, the intensified meaning of an encompassing knowledge in *Allām* requires the use of *al-ghaib* in its plural form while the less emphatic Name *Ālim* does not require plurality in the forms of the terms it collocates with. Thus, *Ālim* and *Allām* are not absolute synonyms and translators are advised to consider such delicate morpho-semantic differences.

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<sup>61</sup> The expression *Ālim-ul-ghaibi* is found in nearly a dozen Qurānic occasions including Q. 6:73, 9:94, 9:105, 13:9, 23:92, 32:6, 39:46, 59:22, 62:8, 64:18 whereas *Allām-ul-Ghuyūb* appears in four occasions, namely Q.9:78, 34:48, 5:109 and 5:116.



It is worth mentioning that both interpreters and translators of the Qurān have found it tricky to distinguish between other near-synonymous Names that speak of the Divine Omniscience. These include *Ḳabīr* خبير, *Muḥaymin* مهيمن, *Muḥīṭ* محيط, *Raqīb* رقيب and *Shahīd* شهيد, which are all Divine Names referring to an All-Aware, All-Knowing, Self-Informed, Watcher, Acquainted, Knowledgeable and Omniscient Lord (As-Sa<sup>o</sup>dī, 1987). Some Qurān exegetes, such as *Zamaḵsharī* (d.1144), *Rāzī* (d.1209) and *As-Sa<sup>o</sup>dī* (d.1956), point out that in many Qurānic contexts, these near-synonymous Names not only indicate the Divine Knowledge, but speak of the Divine Ascendancy, Control and Dominance. This was also argued by some early Arab linguists and theologians such as *Zajjāj* (d. 922), who distinguished between these Divine Names and the three root-sharing Names <sup>o</sup>*Ālim*, <sup>o</sup>*Alīm* and <sup>o</sup>*Allām*. Unfortunately, most translators of the Qurān have often confused the meanings of these Divine Names and used their renderings interchangeably, as will be discussed in the next subsection.

### 5.2.8.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of <sup>o</sup>*Ālim*, <sup>o</sup>*Alīm* and <sup>o</sup>*Allām*

The root-sharing Divine Names <sup>o</sup>*Ālim*, <sup>o</sup>*Alīm* and <sup>o</sup>*Allām* proved to be challenging for translators into other languages, particularly English. The following five examples, in addition to other Qurānic occurrences of these terms, are considered in order to examine their translations as well as evaluate their accuracy and consistency:

1. <sup>o</sup>*Ālim-ul ghaibi Wa-sh Shahādah* Q. 6:73 عالم الغيب والشهادة

Pickthall: **Knower** of the Invisible and the Visible

Ali: He **knoweth** the unseen as well as that which is open

Hil-Khan: **All-Knower** of the unseen and the seen

Arberry: He is **Knower** of the Unseen and the visible

Haleem: He **knows** the seen and the unseen

2. *Wa Kunnā bihi ʿĀlimīn* Q. 21:51 وكنا به عالمين

Pickthall: and We were **Aware** of him.

Ali: and well were We **acquainted** with him.

Hil-Khan: and We were **Well-Acquainted** with him.

Arberry: for We **knew** him.

Haleem: and We **knew** him well.

3. *Wa fawqa Kulli Dī ʿilm-in ʿĀlīm* Q. 12:76 وفوق كل ذي علم عليم

Pickthall: and over every lord of knowledge there is one **more knowing**.

Ali: but over all endowed with knowledge is one, the **All-Knowing**.

Hil-Khan: but over all those endowed with knowledge is the **All-Knowing** (Allah)

Arberry: over every man of knowledge is **One who knows**.

Haleem: Above everyone who has knowledge there is the One who is **all-knowing**.

4. *ʿAllām-ul Ghuyūb* Q. 9:78 (see 34:48, 5:109, 5:116) علام الغيوب

Pickthall: the **Knower** of Things Hidden.

Ali: Allah **knoweth** well all things unseen.

Hil-Khan: Allah is the **All-Knower** of the unseen.

Arberry: God **knows** the things unseen.

Haleem: God **knows** all that is hidden.

5. *ʿAllām-ul Ghuyūb* Q. 34:48 علام الغيوب

Pickthall: (He is) **the Knower** of Things Hidden.

Ali: Say: He that **has full knowledge** of (all) that is hidden.

Hil-Khan: the **All-Knower** of the Ghaib (unseen).

Arberry: the **Knower** of the Unseen.

Haleem: He **has full knowledge** of all that is unseen.

From the five examples above as well as other Qurānic contexts which contain the root-sharing Divine Names *ʿĀlim*, *ʿAlīm* and *ʿAllām*, it is clear that the translators have overlooked the morpho-semantic differences between these terms, with the exception of Hilali-Khan who paid partial attention to their morphological as well as semantic

features. By examining translators' consistency in their attempts to render these root-sharing Names which appear in dozens of Qurānic occasions, it was found that Arberry and Hilali-Khan have showed a higher level of consistency and uniformity in their English renderings than other translators, i.e. Pickthall, Ali and Haleem.

To some extent, Hilali-Khan and Haleem seem to have partially succeeded to render <sup>ʿ</sup>*Alīm* as 'the All-Knowing' in most of its Qurānic occurrences whereas Pickthall and Ali clearly failed to render it accurately and consistently, as will be explained below. Apart from Hilali-Khan, translators regrettably fall short to convey the intensified meaning of <sup>ʿ</sup>*Allām* (see ex. 4-5 above) as they flattens their renderings by using either explanatory phrases such as 'full of knowledge' (e.g. Ali and Haleem in ex.5) or simple subject-cum-verb rendering as 'God knows' (e.g. Arberry and Haleem, ex.4).

To start with, Pickthall's renderings of <sup>ʿ</sup>*Ālim*, <sup>ʿ</sup>*Alīm* and <sup>ʿ</sup>*Allām* are neither accurate nor consistent. In many contexts in his translation, Pickthall sometimes shows some awareness of the delicate morpho-semantic distinctions between these near-synonymous Names and renders them differently as 'Knower', 'Knowing' and 'All-Knowing' respectively. However, he often makes shifts and unjustifiably mixes between his renderings which not only confuse the reader but affect the overall meaning of some Qurānic verses (examples below). In most of their Qurānic occurrences, Pickthall inaccurately and interchangeably uses the terms 'Knower' and the archaic 'Who knoweth' to correspond to the three root-sharing Names, and he also unjustifiably uses various terms to render the very same Name in many contexts.

By examining Pickthall's renderings of <sup>ʿ</sup>*Alīm*, for instance, we find that while he renders this Divine Name as 'knower' in Q. 2:127, 2:137, 2:224 and 2:181, and as

‘All-Knowing’ in Q. 2:247, 2:261, 2:268 and 3:73, he unjustifiably opts for another rendering, namely ‘Aware’, to translate the very same Divine Name, <sup>c</sup>*Alīm*, in other contexts such as Q. 2:95, 2:158, 4:147, 6:83, 6:128 6:139, 15:25 and 27:6. He also uses the terms ‘Wise’ to render <sup>c</sup>*Alīm* in other occasions such as Q. 6:96, 27:78, 35:44 and 36:38 as well as ‘All-Wise’ as in Q. 15:86. By using of the terms ‘Aware’ and ‘Wise’ to render <sup>c</sup>*Alīm*, Pickthall’s renderings are not only inaccurate, but more importantly, confusing for the readers as he often uses these very same renderings, ‘Aware’ and ‘Wise’, to convey the meanings of other Divine Names, namely *Ḳabīr* and *Ḥakīm* as in Q. 4:35 and 2:209 respectively.

Pickthall, surprisingly, uses the rendering ‘All-Knowing’, which is an appropriate equivalent for <sup>c</sup>*Alīm*, to render *Ḥakīm*, the ‘All-Wise’, as in Q. 4:130. Similarly, he uses the term ‘Knower’, which is a proper rendering for <sup>c</sup>*Ālim*, to render *Ḳabīr* ‘the All-Aware’, as in Q. 17:17. He even mistranslated the rendering of <sup>c</sup>*Alīm* in Q. 33:51 as he renders it as ‘ever Forgiving’; a rendering that can be better used to correspond to the meaning other Divine Names of Forgiveness such as *Ghafūr* or *Ghaffār*.

Ali makes similar shifts to that of Pickthall and shows some inconsistency in his renderings of <sup>c</sup>*Ālim*, <sup>c</sup>*Alīm* and <sup>c</sup>*Allām*. He sometimes overlooks one of these Divine Names and treats it as a verb (see the first example above where he archaically renders <sup>c</sup>*Ālim* as ‘knoweth’). Ali unjustifiably follows the same technique of flattening the renderings of Divine Names with the term <sup>c</sup>*Alīm* as he renders it ‘knoweth’ in many Qurānic contexts as in Q. 2:158 and 2:224, and as ‘he knows’ as in Q. 2:181.

Similar to Pickthall, Ali also provides dissimilar renderings for the most recurring Name amongst the aforementioned root-sharing Divine Names, namely <sup>c</sup>*Alīm*, as he

renders it in a number of contexts as the ‘All-Knowing’ (see Q. 4:11, 4:24, 4:26 and 4:170), while he opts for slightly-different renderings such as ‘full of Knowledge’ (as in Q. 4:17, 4:104, 4:111), ‘hath full knowledge’ (as in Q. 4:35), and ‘hath all knowledge’ (as in Q. 4:92). Ali sometimes surprises his readers and inconsistently comes up with a rendering, which he never opted for to render the recurring Name <sup>ʿ</sup>*Alīm* in other Qurānic contexts, such as ‘the Omniscient’ in Q. 6:96, and ‘well-acquainted’ in the verse-endings of Q. 2:95, 2:231, 4:127, 5:97, 8:75 and 23:51. The latter rendering, well-acquainted, was often used by Ali to render another Divine Name, namely *Ḳabīr* as in the verse-endings of Q. 2:234, 2:271 and 3:180)<sup>62</sup>.

Similar to Pickthall and Ali, other translators, namely Arberry, Hilali-Khan and Haleem, show little interest in distinguishing between <sup>ʿ</sup>*Ālim*, <sup>ʿ</sup>*Alīm* and <sup>ʿ</sup>*Allām*, though they present a little higher level of consistency than Pickthall and Ali in rendering the most recurring term of these root-sharing Names, namely <sup>ʿ</sup>*Alīm* which they render as the ‘All-Knowing’ in most of its Qurānic occurrences. Translators committed countless cases of inconsistent renderings and only a few will be highlighted here. For instance, similar to Pickthall, Hilali-Khan use the term ‘Knower’, which is an appropriate equivalent term for <sup>ʿ</sup>*Ālim*, to render *Ḳabīr* ‘the All-Aware’ as in Q. 17:17.

Though Hilali-Khan and Haleem render <sup>ʿ</sup>*Alīm* as ‘All-Knowing’ in most instances, they sometimes change their renderings and opt for ‘All-Aware’ and ‘Fully Aware’ respectively as in their rendering of Q. 2:95. In fact, Haleem sometimes treats some Divine Names such as <sup>ʿ</sup>*Alīm* ‘All-Knowing’, *Ḳabīr* ‘All-Aware’ and *Baṣīr* ‘All-Seeing’ as absolute synonyms and renders them accordingly in some Qurānic

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<sup>62</sup> Though Ali uses the rendering ‘well-acquainted’ to render <sup>ʿ</sup>*Alīm* in a few contexts, he more often uses the same rendering to translate *Ḳabīr* in many verse-endings occurrences such as Q. 2:234, 3:180, 4:128, 5:8, 6:73, 9:16, 11:1, 17:96, 22:63, 24:30, 27:88, 31:16, 33:2, 48:11, 49:13, 57:10, 58:3, 59:18, 63:11, 64:8, 66:3, 76:14 and 100:11

occasions as ‘fully aware’ as in Q. 2:215, 2:234 and 3:15 (see also Q. 3:20, 5:71) respectively. He sometimes uses the rendering ‘All-Aware’ to render these very same terms in other Qurānic occasions (e.g. <sup>°</sup>*Alīm* in Q. 6:139, *Ḳabīr* in Q. 11:1).

To sum up, Arberry seems to be the only translator to show a sort of consistency in his renderings, though he does not clearly distinguish between the root-sharing Names <sup>°</sup>*Ālim*, <sup>°</sup>*Alīm* and <sup>°</sup>*Allām*. He, unlike other translators, does not confuse <sup>°</sup>*Alīm* with *Ḳabīr*, as he always renders the latter as ‘All-Aware’ in all of its Qurānic occurrences and never uses this rendering interchangeably with the renderings he opts for to translate each of the root-sharing Names <sup>°</sup>*Ālim*, <sup>°</sup>*Alīm* and <sup>°</sup>*Allām*.

### 5.2.9 *Karīm* and *Akram*

الكريم الأكرم

#### 5.2.9.1 Meaning Analysis of *Karīm* and *Akram*

The generally-agreed-upon and root-sharing Divine Names in the Qurān include *Karīm* and *Akram*. This pair of Names shares the same linguistic root, namely *k-r-m*, which occurs, along with its semantic linkage of variants and conjugations, 47 times in the Qurānic text<sup>63</sup>. The tri-consonantal root *k-r-m* (stem verb *ka-ru-ma*) has many denotative and connotative meanings. According to Arif (2007) the word *Karīm* in pre-Islamic times indicated innate virtue and one’s dignity and graciousness, often expressed by excessive generosity. The semantic aspects of this term, according to Arif (ibid.), were considerably enriched in the Qurān, particularly in some contexts where the terms *karīm* and *akram* appear in connection with the recurring Qurānic term ‘*taqwā*’<sup>64</sup>. The term *Karīm*, thus, was used to refer to a person who devotedly

<sup>63</sup> Qurānic Arabic Corpus, see <http://corpus.quran.com/>

<sup>64</sup> State of being pious and mindful of God and it is usually rendered into English as God-fearing, which is not an accurate rendering of the Arabic term, i.e. *Taqwā*.

and humbly pays out his/her wealth (see Q. 89:17) for a Good Divine Cause (*fi sabīl Ellāh*) rather than arrogantly squandering it irresponsibly (ibid.).

Some early classical exegetes of the Qurān pointed out that on every occasion the term *karīm* appears in a divinely-related Qurānic context, Izutsu<sup>65</sup> (1914-1993) explains, it usually refers to the Divine Goodness and Beneficence, as in the verse-ending statement of Q. 27:40 ‘*verily, my Lord is Self-sufficient and Beneficent*’ (Arif, 2007). On the contrary, in every non-divine occasion the term *karīm* occurs, Izutsu further describes, it then refers either to the moral virtue of generosity and praiseworthy acts (Q. 17:23), the honourable status of an Angel (Q. 81:19), a messenger (Q. 69:40, 44:17) or a revelation (Q. 27:29, 56:77) (ibid.).

The term *karīm*, the researcher argues, seems to have one single meaning when it occurs in the Qurān as a Divine Name, but it appears to be a polysemous term carrying other senses in non-divine occurrences in the Qurān as it describes various objects such as an **honouring** dwelling (whether in heaven Q. 4:31, or on earth Q. 26:58 and 44:26), a **bounteous** heavenly sustenance (Q. 8:4, 8:74, 22:50 and 33:31), a **respectful** dialogue (Q. 17:23), a **generous** heavenly reward (Q. 33:44, 36:11 and 57:11) and a **resting** shadow (Q. 56:44).

In some of its contexts, the Qurān links the two concepts *karam* and *taqwā* using their comparative superlative forms, *akram* and *atqā* respectively, in a way that presents the Qurānic view of simple *karam*, which is different from the Divinely-related *karam* shared by the near-synonymous pair of Divine Names, *Karīm* and *Akram*. According to Arif (2007), the Qurān makes it clear that ‘*inna akramakum ʿind Allāh-i atqākum*,

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<sup>65</sup> A Japanese theologian and scholar of Islam who introduced the first direct translation of the Quran into Japanese in 1958

(Q. 49:13) ‘*verily, the most honoured amongst you (mankind), in the sight of Allāh, are those most mindful (of Him)*’. This verse is a Divine definition of what constitutes *karam* and it distinguishes those who hold more *taqwā* and do good deeds as the most honourable amongst people (ibid.).

Sells (1989) points out that the word ‘*karīm*’, as it was originally used in pre-Islamic Arabia, is untranslatable (Dickins, el. 2002). In the pre-Islamic *Jāhili* period, the word was used to refer to one’s social status, honour, nobility, patriotism (clan-loyalty), and extravagant generosity (ibid.). Sells explains that the broad and complex usage of the word in the pre-Islamic literature, makes rendering it as ‘generous’ or ‘noble’ simply inaccurate (ibid.). However, the Qurān gives the term *Karīm*, Sells goes on to explain, greater ethical and religious dimensions (ibid.), not to mention its use as an epithetical Divine Name which refers to the Most Generous and Bountiful Lord. The use of *Karīm* (as a Divine Name) ‘reinforces the earlier allusion to generosity as the matrix of ethnic value’ (Sells, 2007, p.53).

Morphologically, *Karīm*, on one hand, is a qualificative adjectival noun (epithetical Divine Name) which refers to the Divine Grace, Generosity and Bountifulness in two occasions in the Qurān, namely Q. 27:40 and Q. 82:6. On the other hand, the Name *Akram* (def. *al-Akram*) is a superlative noun which carries more emphatic concept of Divine *Karam* (Grace) than that of *Karīm*, and it is mentioned only once (see Q. 96:3) in the whole Qurānic text. Another Qurānic term which shares the same linguistic root with *Karīm* and *Akram* is *ikrām*, which is part of a compound Divine Name in the Qurān, namely *Ḍul-Jalāli wal-Ikrām* (see Q.55:27 and 55:78).



*Ḍul-Jalāli wal-Ikrām* is an expressive composite Name which speaks of the Divine Majesty, Glory, and Sublimity (Ghazālī, 1995). The term *Jalāl*, which literally means majesty, has become a well-known masculine proper name in many parts of the Muslim World, and it is found in other languages, such as Persian and Urdu, with an almost identical meaning to that of the Arabic (see Beeston, 1971). *Al-Jalīl*, which is extracted from *Ḍul-Jalāli*, is a widely-used Divine Name in the Muslim World though it is not explicitly mentioned in the Qurān. *Ḍul-Jalāli wal-Ikrām*, however, is mentioned twice in the same Qurānic *Surah* (see Q.55: 27, 78). Similar to *Karīm* and *Akrām*, the term *ikrām* proved challenging for translators and, thus, the renderings of the compound Divine Name *Ḍul-Jalāli wal-Ikrām* will be examined along with the rendering of both *Karīm* and *Akrām*.

It is worth mentioning that most translators of the Qurān into English have often confused the notion of *karam* with other two Qurānic terms, namely *faḍhl* and *ṭawl*, both of which appear in two compound Divine Names<sup>66</sup> which are *Ḍul-Faḍhl* ذو الفضل (Q. 2:105, 3:74 and 62:4) and *Ḍiṭ-Ṭawl* ذي الطول (Q. 40:3). *Al-faḍhl* (Q. 4:70), on one hand, speaks of excessiveness of riches and in the recurring Divine-related Qurānic contexts. As such, it refers to the immense and unbounded favours upon creation (Ibn Kathīr, 1997). *Aṭ-ṭawl*, on the other hand, means wealth, affluence and abundance (see *aṭ-ṭawl* in Q. 9:86). As a result of translators' confusion between the terms, *karam*, *faḍhl* and *ṭawl*, they could not make a clear distinction between them in their English renderings and, thus, used their renderings interchangeably. The specificity of the meanings of the aforementioned terms seems to have made it difficult for translators

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<sup>66</sup> Many Muslim scholars such as *Bayhaqī* (d. 1066) and *Ibn Ḥajar Al-ʿAsqalānī* (d. 1450) included compound names in their lists of the ninety-nine Divine Names. Both Divine Names *Ḍul-Faḍhl* and *Ḍiṭ-Ṭawl* are compound nouns formed by attaching the short possessive noun *Ḍū* which means to own or have a certain property or feature to *faḍhl* and *ṭawl*, both of which speak of the Divine Bounteousness in the Qurānic contexts.

to come up with the right corresponding English equivalents for their complex denotations. This will not be discussed in further details here since the interest of this study is to investigate the renderings of the root-sharing Divine Names, and in this subsection, it is concerned with evaluating the renderings of *Karīm* and *Akram*.

### 5.2.9.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of *Karīm* and *Akram*

The following examples represent the English translations for three Qurānic contexts in which *Karīm* and *Akram* appear as Divine Names. Other non-divine occurrences of these terms are also taken into consideration in order to examine and evaluate their various renderings, as seen in the following three examples:

1. *fa inna Rabbi Ghaniyy<sup>um</sup> Karīm* Q. 27:40 فان ربي غني كريم

Pickthall: For lo! my Lord is Absolute in independence, **Bountiful**.

Ali: truly my Lord is Free of all Needs, **Supreme in Honour**.

Hil-Khan: Certainly! My Lord is Rich (Free of all wants), **Bountiful**.

Arberry: my Lord is surely All-sufficient, **All-generous**.

Haleem: then my Lord is self-sufficient and **most generous**.

يا أيها الإنسان ما غرك بربك الكريم

2. *Yā 'ayuhā al'insānu mā ġarraka bi rabbik-al Karīm* Q. 82:6

Pickthall: O man! What hath made thee careless concerning thy Lord, **the Bountiful**?

Ali: O man! What has seduced thee from thy Lord **Most Beneficent**?

Hil-Khan: O man! What has made you careless concerning your Lord,

**the Most Generous?**

Arberry: O Man! What deceived thee as to thy **generous** Lord?

Haleem: Mankind, what has lured you away from God, **your generous Lord**,  
who... etc.

3. *Iqra' warabbuk-al'Akram* Q. 96:3

اقرأ وربك الأكرم

Pickthall: Read: And thy Lord is **the Most Bounteous**.

Ali: Proclaim! And thy Lord is **Most Bountiful**.

Hil-Khan: Read! And your Lord is **the Most Generous**.

Arberry: Recite: And thy Lord is **the Most Generous**.

Haleem: Read! Your Lord is **the Most Bountiful One**.

The renderings of *Karīm* and *Akram* by the five translators in the above examples suffer some deficiencies, with the exception of Pickthall who clearly distinguishes between the two root-sharing terms while maintaining the sense of *karam*, bounty, in both renderings. Pickthall, however, replaces the sense of ‘bounty’ with the sense of ‘glory’, with no justification, in his rendering of *ikrām* in the compound Divine Name, *Ḍul-Jalāli wal-Ikrām* (see Q. 55:27). The other translators, surprisingly, were inconsistent in their attempts to render *Karīm* in its two appearances (see ex. 1 and 2 above). They, unfortunately, seem to have paid no attention to the morphological and semantic differences between *Karīm* and *Akram*, as will be further explained below.

Ali, for instance, renders *Karīm* in one occasion, namely Q. 27:40 as ‘Supreme in Honour’, and he inconsistently and unjustifiably opts for ‘Most Beneficent’ to render the same term in another instance, namely Q. 82:6. He renders *Akram* in Q. 93:3 as ‘Most Bountiful’, which has no direct connection to his renderings of *Karīm*. In other words, since *Akram* is a superlative form of *Karīm*, Ali’s rendering of *Akram* as ‘Most Bountiful’ would have been more appropriate if he had rendered *karīm* as ‘the Bountiful’ instead of the aforementioned two inconsistent renderings. Ali seems to have understood the core sense of *karam* to mean a combination of ‘honour and bounty’. This is evident not only in his rendering of *Karīm* and *Akram* (as in the first and third examples above), but also in his renderings of many Qurānic terms that share the root *k-r-m*, including *ikrām* which he renders ‘Bounty and Honour’ in an attempt to convey the meaning of the compound Divine Name *Ḍul-Jalāli wal-Ikrām* (see Ali’s translation of Q.55:27 and 55:78).

Hilali-Khan, Arberry and Haleem’s renderings of *Karīm* and *Akram* are inconsistent as well. They not only render *Karīm* differently in two Qurānic occasions (compare their renderings in ex. 1 and 2), but pay no attention to the morpho-semantic distinction between *Karīm* and *Akram* (compare ex. 3 with ex. 1 and 2). It is clear that Hilali-Khan provided almost identical renderings of *Karīm* and *Akram* as in the second and third examples above while the renderings of Arberry show no real difference between these root-sharing terms (compare Arberry’s translation in the three examples above). Similarly, Haleem renders *Karīm* as ‘most generous’ in one occasion (ex. 1), and less emphatically as ‘Generous’ in another (ex. 2) while he opts for the ‘Most Bountiful One’ to render *Akram*. His rendering of *Akram* would have been more appropriate and linked to *Karīm* if he had opted for ‘the Bountiful’ to render the latter instead of his renderings ‘generous’ and ‘most generous’.

### 5.2.10 *Ḳāliq* and *Ḳallāq*

### الخالق و الخلاق

#### 5.2.10.1 Meaning Analysis of *Ḳāliq* and *Ḳallāq*

The near-synonymous root-sharing Divine Names in the Qurān include *Ḳāliq* and *Ḳallāq*. These are amongst the scholarly-agreed-upon Names that speak of a Creator whose creation (and ability to create) is beyond human comprehension (*Ghazālī*, 1995). Both near-synonymous Names are derived from the same root, namely *ḵ-l-q*, which recurrently occurs, along with its semantic network of cognates and morphological variants, 261 times in the Qurān<sup>67</sup>. The root *ḵ-l-q* is the core element of meaning from which many descriptive nouns and adjectives are derived such as the active participle *Ḳāliq* ‘Creator’, the passive participle *maḵlūq* ‘creature or the state of being created’ and *ḵalq*, which basically means creation (see Ibn Fāris, 1994). The

<sup>67</sup> Qurānic Arabic Corpus, see <http://corpus.quran.com/>

term *ḵalq* has various denotative meanings, most of which revolves around one basic definition; which is to bring something out of non-existence into existence (ibid.).

*Ḵāliq* and *Ḵallāq* are descriptive Names that indicate the utmost ability to create, re-create, originate and engender (Suyūṭī, 1999). They are only two of a many semantically-related Names in the Qurān which speak of the Divine Act of Creation including *al-Bari'* الباري and *al-Muṣawwir* المصور as well as the compound Divine Names (construct phrases<sup>68</sup>) *Fāṭir As-Samāwāt wal-Arḍ* فاطر السماوات والأرض and *Badī' As-Samāwāt wal-Arḍ* بديع السماوات والأرض, which will be briefly discussed later in this subsection. These near-synonymous Names refer, as argued by early Qurān exegetes (As-Sa'ādī, 1987), to different aspects of the Divine Attribute of Creation, and, therefore, they should not be treated as absolute synonyms (*Ghazālī*, 1995). The root-sharing pair *Ḵāliq* and *Ḵallāq* speaks of the actual notion of creation starting from possessing the sufficient knowledge to originate and carry out the whole process as well as the power to fashion, maintain and control what is being created (ibid.).

Morphologically, the term *Ḵāliq* is an active participle (*ism fā'il*) which basically refers, in the Qurānic narrative, to the Prime Doer of creation (Suyūṭī, 1999). This Divine Name appears in six contexts, each of which affirms the Divine Attribute of Creation as well as Him 'Allāh' being the Sole Creator of the universe, everything which ever existed in it and everything that will ever come to existence (ibid.). The term *Ḵallāq* is an intensified participle (*ṣiḡhat mubālaghah*), which refers to the repeated and perpetual act of creation. It occurs in two Qurānic occasions in which it contextually indicates the recurrent act of creation; i.e. speaks of various aspects of Divine Creation in a hyperbolic manner (see Q. 15:86 and 36:81). This distinction

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<sup>68</sup> Arabic construct phrase or genitive construction expresses a relationship of possession between two parts; this is not to be confused with the prepositional genitive cases that are prepositions followed by nouns

between the two Divine Names have been only observed by a few translators such as Ali (1936) and Arberry (1955), as will be shown in the next subsection.

It is worth mentioning that the aforementioned semantically-related Names which speak of various aspects of the Divine Attribute of Creation, namely *Bāri'*, *Muṣawwir*, *Fāṭir* and *Badī' As-Samāwāt wal-Arḍh*, have also posed difficulties for translators when rendered into English. By examining many attempts to translate these sensitive terms, it becomes clear that translators seem to pay attention to the delicate differences between these terms when they occur close to each other in a side-by-side position or one Qurānic context. For instance, translators have managed to distinguish between *Ḳāliq* 'Creator', *Bāri'* 'Originator' and *Muṣawwir* 'Shaper' when these terms appeared in juxtaposition as in Q.59:24 (see ex. 1 below), but they often confused the meanings of *Bāri'*, *Fāṭir* and *Badī'* with the meaning of *Ḳāliq* and used their renderings interchangeably in many non-juxtaposed occurrences. This will be further explained in the following renderings evaluation of *Ḳāliq* and *Ḳallāq*.

### 5.2.10.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of *Ḳāliq* and *Ḳallāq*

The following examples of the renderings of the near-synonymous Names *Ḳāliq* and *Ḳallāq* show the level of attention paid by the five translators to the aforementioned morpho-semantic differences between the two terms. Other Qurānic occurrences of the term *Ḳāliq*, which appears more frequently than *Ḳallāq*, are also examined to evaluate translators' consistency.

1. *Huwa Allāh-ul Ḳāliq-ul Bari'ul Muṣawwir* Q. 59:24 هو الله الخالق البارئ المصور

Pickthall: He is Allah, **the Creator**, the Shaper out of naught, the Fashioner...etc.

Ali: He is Allah, **the Creator**, the Evolver, the Bestower of Forms (or Colours).

Hil-Khan: He is Allah, **the Creator**, the Inventor of all things, the Bestower of forms.

Arberry: He is God, **the Creator**, the Maker, the Shaper.

Haleem: He is God: **the Creator**, the Originator, the Shaper.

2. *Balā wa huwa-l Ḳallāq-ul ʿAlīm* Q. 36:81 بلى وهو الخلاق العليم

Pickthall: Aye, that He is! for He is the All-Wise **Creator**.

Ali: Yea, indeed! for He is the **Creator Supreme**, of skill and knowledge (infinite)!

Hil-Khan: Yes, indeed! He is the All-Knowing **Supreme Creator**.

Arberry: Yes indeed; He is the **All-Creator**, the All-knowing.

Haleem: Of course He is! He is the All Knowing **Creator**.

3. *Inna Rabbaka Huwa-l Ḳallāq-ul ʿAlīm* Q.15:86 إن ربك هو الخلاق العليم

Pickthall: Lo! Thy Lord! He is the All-Wise **Creator**.

Ali: For verily it is thy Lord who is **the Master-Creator**, knowing all things.

Hil-Khan: Verily, your Lord is the All-Knowing **Creator**.

Arberry: Surely thy Lord, He is the **All-Creator**, the All-knowing.

Haleem: Your Lord is the All Knowing **Creator**.

From the above attempts to render *Ḳāliq* and *Ḳallāq*, it is clear that not all translators paid attention to the morpho-semantic differences between both near-synonymous Names. Arberry seems to be the only translator to clearly distinguish between both terms in his renderings as well as maintain consistency of his choices throughout his translation. He renders *Ḳāliq* as ‘Creator’ consistently in all of its Qurānic occurrences and he accurately and consistently renders *Ḳallāq* as the ‘All-Creator’, which reflects his awareness of its intensified meaning comparing to that of *Ḳāliq*.

Other translators’ attempts to render *Ḳāliq* and *Ḳallāq* suffer some shortcomings. Pickthall and Haleem, on the one hand, have obviously overlooked the difference between both of the root-sharing terms and, as a result, rendered them synonymously as ‘Creator’. On the other hand, Ali and Hilali-Khan have partially succeeded in conveying the emphatic meaning of perpetual creation found in *Ḳallāq* by means of

rendering it as ‘Creator Supreme’ and ‘Supreme Creator’ Respectively (see ex.2 above). These renderings by Ali and Hilali-Khan appear doubtful and comparable, though not identical, as they use the same English adjective, namely ‘Supreme’, though in different order, in their attempt to convey the emphatic meaning of *Ḳallāq*. Ali and Hilali-Khan, unfortunately, did not maintain consistency of their choices to render *Ḳallāq* as they opt for different renderings in another, and surprisingly similar, context (see ex.3 above).

Ali’s aforementioned renderings of *Ḳallāq*, i.e. ‘Creator Supreme’ and ‘Master-Creator’, certainly reflect his efforts to distinguish it from *Ḳāliq*, but he should have had maintained consistency of his choices of the most appropriate equivalents. Similarly, Hilali-Khan’s renderings of *Ḳallāq* are not consistent as they once treated it as *Ḳāliq* and simply rendered it as ‘Creator’ (see ex.3), but in another occasion, they opted for a different rendering, namely ‘Supreme Creator’, which better convey the hyperbolic meaning of creation, which is inherent in *Ḳallāq* (see ex.2).

It is worth mentioning that translators have inadequately and inconsistently used some terms such as ‘Creator’ and ‘Originator’ to correspond to the meanings of a number of Divine Names of Creation in the Qurān including **Ḳāliq**, **Bāri’**, **Fāṭir** *As-Samāwāt wal-Arḍh* and **Badī’** *As-Samāwāt wal-Arḍh*. Translators have also used both renderings, Creator and Originator, to translate the very same Name in two or more contexts. For instance, Pickthall, Hilali-Khan and Arberry, on the one hand, render *Bāri’* in 59:24 (see ex.1) as ‘Shaper out of naught’, ‘Inventor of all things’ and ‘Maker’ respectively, but they all render the same Name as ‘Creator’ in another occasion, namely 2:54. Ali and Haleem, on the other hand, render the same term *Bāri’*



in 59:24 (see ex.1) as ‘the Evolver’ and ‘the Originator’ respectively, but they opt for a different rendering for the same term in 2:54, namely ‘the Maker’.

As mentioned above, translators have often used both English renderings, Creator and Originator, to translate the very same Divine Name of Creation (e.g. *Fāṭir* or *badīʿ*) in two or more Qurānic contexts. For instance, Pickthall renders *Fāṭir* as ‘Originator’ in Q. 6:14, but opts for ‘Creator’ for the same Divine Name in other contexts such as Q. 12:101, 14:10 and 35:1. Similarly, Ali renders *Fāṭir* as ‘Maker’ in Q. 6:14, but changes his choice and renders it as ‘Creator’ in other contexts such as Q. 12:101, 14:10, 39:46. Similar inconsistency is also found in the renderings of *Badīʿ*. Haleem, for instance, renders *Badīʿ* as ‘the originator’ in Q. 2:117, but he unjustifiably opts for ‘the Creator’ for the very same term in Q. 6:101. Hilali-Khan showed uncertainty as well in their rendering of *Fāṭir* as they use both terms, Creator and Originator, in an attempt to convey its meaning as in Q. 35:1 in which they render *Fāṭir* as ‘the (only) Originator [or the (only) Creator]’. Such a rendering is not only inaccurate but also regrettably vague and indecisive.

## 5.2.11 *Shākir* and *Shakūr*

الشَّاكِرُ الشُّكُورُ

### 5.2.11.1 Meaning Analysis of *Shākir* and *Shakūr*

The near-synonymous root-sharing Divine Names in the Qurān include *Shākir* and *Shakūr*. These two terms share the same root, namely *sh-k-r*, which occurs 75 times, including its variant cognates in the Qurān<sup>69</sup>. Both terms are used in Divine and non-divine references in many Qurānic contexts. The notion of *shukr* in non-divine context basically means offering thanks, appreciation, acknowledgement, gratitude and speaking largely of someone’s favours and beneficence. In the Divine-related

<sup>69</sup> Qurānic Arabic Corpus, see <http://corpus.quran.com/>

contexts, some exegetes point out that the term carries more concepts and connotations than their usual literal meanings (Ghazālī, 1995).

Morphologically, *Shākir*, on the one hand, is an active participle of the stem verb *shakara* (to thank or appreciate), and it refers to the one is offering thanks and appreciation, i.e. acknowledging the beneficence of someone. *Shakūr*, on the other hand, is a qualificative adjectival form<sup>70</sup> (*ṣifah mushabbahah*) of *Shākir* and it describes an inherent quality of being perpetually grateful and appreciative (...). Both terms have more delicate and sensitive senses when they are used in Divinely-related occasions (see *Shākir* Q. 2:158, 4:147 and *Shakūr* in Q. 35:30/34). As mentioned above, the meanings of these terms differ in non-divine Qurānic contexts such as Q. 14:5, 17:3 and 31:31 in which *shakūr* refers to those ‘people’ who are thankful and grateful as well as Q. 16:121 and Q. 76:3 in which *shākir*, for instance, refers to a grateful Prophet, namely Abraham (Ar. *Ibrāhīm*, pbuh<sup>71</sup>). In the Muslim tradition, a person is described as *Shakūr* when s/he whole-heartedly acknowledges the favours of God as well as practically submits to His commands and abstains from His disobedience (Mawdūdī, 2013).

When *Shākir* and *Shakūr* are used as Divine Names in the Qurān, according to Ghazālī (1995), they not only mean that God is Appreciative and Responsive but also denote kindness as well as open-handed clemency and rewards. It also indicates a Divine Appreciation for the believers and good-doers in this life for their patience, obedience and devotion by granting them an infinite pleasure and happiness in the second life (ibid.). In other words, *Shākir* and *Shakūr* in Divine-related use have greater meanings than that of non-divine context as the infinite appreciation and

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<sup>70</sup> As mentioned in the previous chapter, (see 4.2.3.4), qualificative or assimilated adjective functions as a noun.

<sup>71</sup> May ‘peace be upon him’

reward given by God in return for limited acts of goodness and worship is incomparable to any sort of acknowledgement or appreciation. Such linguistic and theological differences between the Divine and non-divine usage of *Shākir* and *Shakūr*, some of which had been recognised by early Qurān exegetes should be taken into consideration by contemporary interpreters and translators.

### 5.2.11.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of *Shākir* and *Shakūr*

The aforementioned denotations of *Shākir* and *Shakūr* make it challenging for translators of the Qurān into English to come up with equivalent terms that could adequately convey their meanings, particularly in the Divine-related contexts as can be seen in the following examples:

1. *fa`inna Allāha **Shākir**<sup>mn</sup> cAlīm* Q. 2: 158 فإن الله شاکر علیم

Pickthall: lo! *Allāh* is **Responsive**, Aware.

Ali: be sure that *Allāh* is He Who **recogniseth** and knoweth.

Hil-Khan: *Allāh* is **All-Recogniser**, All-Knower.

Arberry: God is **All-grateful**, All-knowing.

Haleem: God **rewards good deeds**, and knows everything.

2. *Wa Kāna Allāh-u **Shākir**<sup>an</sup> cAlīma* Q. 4:147 وكان الله شاکراً علیمًا

Pickthall: Allah was ever **Responsive**, Aware.

Ali: Nay, it is Allah that **recogniseth (all good)**, and knoweth all things.

Hil-Khan: And Allah is Ever **All-Appreciative** (of good), All-Knowing.

Arberry: God is **All-thankful**, All-knowing.

Haleem: God always **rewards gratitude** and He knows everything.

3. *ʾInnahu Ghafūr<sup>mn</sup> **Shakūr*** Q. 35: 30 إنه غفور شکور

Pickthall: He is Forgiving, **Responsive**.

Ali: He is Oft-Forgiving Most, **Ready to appreciate (service)**.

Hil-Khan: He is Oft-Forgiving, **Most Ready to appreciate (good deeds and to recompense)**.

Arberry: surely He is All-forgiving, **All-thankful**.

Haleem: He is most forgiving, **most appreciative**.

From the three examples above as well as other Qurānic contexts (e.g. Q. 35:43 and Q. 42:23) which contain the root-sharing Divine Names *Shākir* and *Shakūr*, it is clear that the translators have overlooked the morpho-semantic distinctions between these near-synonymous Names. Generally, some translators, such as Pickthall and Arberry, have treated the two terms as absolute synonyms as they have mostly used the same renderings to correspond to the meanings of both terms. They are also inconsistent in rendering the same term in different contexts (examples below). Others, such as Ali, Hilali-Khan and Haleem unsuccessfully attempted to distinguish between the two Divine Names, but they occasionally and unnecessarily provided explanatory (exegetical) renditions as it is the case in the lengthy translations of *Shākir* by Ali and Haleem (ex. 1 and 2 above) as well as Hilali-Khan's rendering of *Shakūr* (see ex. 3).

The above attempts to render *Shākir* and *Shakūr* vary in terms of their accuracy and consistency. Pickthall, on the one hand, does not differentiate between these two root-sharing Divine Names as he often uses the same rendering, namely Responsive, to convey the meanings of both Names. In one Qurānic occurrence of *Shakūr*, namely Q. 35:34, Pickthall makes an inaccurate as well as inconsistent attempt to render *Shakūr* by using a different term, namely 'Bountiful', which he more often uses to render other Names of Divine Generosity, namely *Karīm* (see Q. 27:40)<sup>72</sup> and *Ḍuṭ-Ṭawl* (see Q. 40:3), which are not even close in meaning to *Shakūr*. In fact, Pickthall's unsuccessful attempt surprisingly took place in neighbouring Qurānic occurrences, i.e.

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<sup>72</sup> see Pickthall's rendering of the verse-ending Divine Name '*Karīm*' in Q. 27:40 and 82:6.

in close positions of the Qurān, namely Q. 35:30 and Q. 35:34, in which he inconsistently uses the renderings ‘Responsive’ and ‘Bountiful’ respectively.

Hilali and Khan’s renderings of *Shākir* and *Shakūr* are not consistent as they render *Shākir*, in one occasion (Q. 2:158), as ‘All-Recogniser’ and as ‘All-Appreciative’ in another occasion, namely Q. 4:147. They also change their explanatory terms to exegetically render *Shakūr* in three different occasions in the Qurān (see Q. 42:23, 64:17 and 35:34). Unlike the aforementioned word-for-word renderings Hilali and Khan provided for *Shākir*, their attempt to come up with an equivalent rendering for *Shakūr* is unsuccessful as they unnecessarily use an explanatory translation of what this Divine Name could possibly mean.

Haleem’s renderings of *Shākir* and *Shakūr* are not consistent as well. In one occasion, namely Q. 2:158, he flattens the meaning of *Shākir* and renders it as ‘God rewards for good deeds’. In another instance, namely 4:147, he also flatteningly renders the same Divine Name as ‘God always rewards gratitude’. He also inconsistently renders *Shakūr* as ‘most appreciative’ in two Qurānic occasions, namely 35:31 and 35:34 while in 64:17, Haleem inconsistently opts for ‘ever thankful’. Such unjustifiable cases of inconsistency affect the overall meaning in each case and make the reader think that such renderings must have been produced for different Divine Names whereas the Qurān actually uses the same Divine name in more than one context.

## 5.2.12 *Hāfiẓ* and *Hafīẓ*

الحافظ الحفيظ

### 5.2.12.1 Meaning Analysis of *Hāfiẓ* and *Hafīẓ*

The root-sharing Divine Names in the Qurān include *Hāfiẓ* and *Hafīẓ*. These epithetical terms speak of the Divine Safeguarding, Maintenance and Observance

(As-Sa<sup>c</sup>dī, 1987). Both terms share the tri-literal root *h-f-z*, which occurs, along with its variants and cognates, 44 times in the Qurān<sup>73</sup>. This root refers to the basic sense of *ḥifẓ* *حفظ*, which essentially indicates preservation, protection from harm and keeping something or someone safe (Ibn Fāris, 1994). It also means committing something to memory, i.e. learning it by heart to preserve it from being forgotten (ibid.). The term, *ḥifẓ*, has many denotations and connotations in many Qurānic contexts. For instance, *ḥifẓ* as Divine Preservation and Maintenance of the heaven and the earth as mentioned in the well-known verse of the Throne, *‘Āyat-ul Kursī* (2:255), *walā ya’ūduhu ḥifẓuhumā* [lit. *burdens Him not preserving them both*, i.e. heaven and earth].

Morphologically, *Ḥāfiẓ* is an active participle which speaks of the doer of *ḥifẓ* and it literally means keeper, preserver and guardian while *Ḥafīẓ* is an intensified formula ‘*ṣīghat mubālaghah*’ of *Ḥāfiẓ* and it refers to the absolute safeguarding and guardianship (ibid.). The sense of *ḥifẓ* (explained above) in *Ḥafīẓ* differs from that of *Ḥāfiẓ* in terms of its continuity and conditionality. In other words, *ḥifẓ* is not continuous in *Ḥāfiẓ* while it indicates perpetuity in *Ḥafīẓ* and it is also unconditioned by time, number and space as it is the case in *Ḥāfiẓ*. This could explain the reason *Ḥāfiẓ* is often preceded in the Qurān by the expression ‘*alā kulli Shay<sup>in</sup>*’ (see ex. 3 and 4 below), which literary means ‘over everything [or all things]’, and this indicates the multi-layered sense of Divine Safeguarding carried by this term, i.e. *Ḥāfiẓ*.

The morpho-semantic differences between *Ḥāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ* are rarely found in the literature of Islamic theology as well as works of *tafsīr*. Some Qurān exegetes such as *Zamakhsharī* and *Rāzī* as well as great theologians such as *Ibn Al-Qayyim* have only addressed some of the differences between these root-sharing Divine Names.

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<sup>73</sup> Qurānic Arabic Corpus: see <http://corpus.quran.com/>

*Zamaḵsharī* (2006) pointed out that *Ḥafīẓ* has broader meanings than *Hāfiẓ* as it refers, in addition to the basic sense of preservation and protection, to the Divine observance, awareness and record-taking (and recompensing) for the actions of people who will be accounted for whatever good or bad they do. This view was also shared by *Rāzī* and *Ibn Al-Qayyim* through the Qurānic contexts, in which *Ḥafīẓ* appears such as (Q. 11:57), seem to suggest the sense of preserving (from possible harm) rather than observing (record-taking of actions).

Similar to the previous root-sharing pair of Divine Names, namely *Shākir* and *Shakūr*, *Hāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ* also appear in various Divine and non-divine usages in the Qurān. For instance, the believing women are sometimes described using the feminine form of the active participle *ḥāfiẓ* as in the expression *ḥāfiẓāt lilghaibi*, guarding themselves and their homes during the absence of their husbands, i.e. being faithful to them (Q. 4:34). The same term, *ḥāfiẓ*, is also used in its plural masculine form, namely *ḥāfiẓūn* (Q. 82:10), in reference to Angels who are divinely-appointed as faithful watchers over mankind and honourable recorders (Q. 82:11) of their daily actions (Ali, 2006). Similar to *ḥāfiẓ*, *ḥafīẓ* also appear in non-divine references such as a human quality, namely care and honesty, as in the story of Joseph (Q. 12:55) and self-guarding believers (Q. 50:32) as well as a retaining Divine Record, *Kitāb<sup>um</sup> Ḥafīẓ* (Q. 50:4). These non-divine occurrences of the near-synonymous Divine Names *Hāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ* posed various difficulties for translators into English, as will be discussed below.

### **5.2.12.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of *Hāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ***

The following examples of the renderings of the near-synonymous Names *Hāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ* show how attentive are the five translators to the abovementioned morpho-semantic distinctions between the two terms. Other Qurānic occurrences of the term

*Ḥafīẓ*, which appears more frequently than *Ḥāfiẓ*, are also examined to evaluate translators' consistency.

1. *Fa-llāhu Ḳayr<sup>um</sup> Ḥāfiẓ<sup>um</sup>* Q. 12:64 فإله خيرٌ حافظاً

Pickthall: Allah is better at **guarding**.

Ali: Allah is the best **to take care**.

Hil-Khan: Allah is the Best **to guard**.

Arberry: God is the best **guardian**.

Haleem: God is the best **guardian**.

2. *Wa 'innā lahū la Ḥāfiẓūn* Q. 15: 9 وإنا له لحافظون

Pickthall: and lo! We verily are its **Guardian**.

Ali: and We will assuredly **guard** it (from corruption).

Hil-Khan: and surely, We will **guard** it (from corruption).

Arberry: and We **watch over** it.

Haleem: and We Ourselves will **guard** it.

3. *'Inna rabbī<sup>c</sup> alā kulli shay<sup>in</sup> Ḥafīẓ* Q. 11: 57 إن ربي على كل شيء حفيظ

Pickthall: my Lord is **Guardian** over all things.

Ali: for my Lord **hath care and watch** over all things.

Hil-Khan: surely, my Lord is **Guardian** over all things.

Arberry: my Lord is **Guardian** over everything.

Haleem: it is my Lord **who protects** everything.

4. *Wa Rabbuka<sup>c</sup> alā kulli shay<sup>in</sup> Ḥafīẓ* Q. 34: 21 وربك على كل شيء حفيظ

Pickthall: and thy Lord (O Muhammad) **taketh note** of all things.

Ali: and thy Lord **doth watch** over all things.

Hil-Khan: And your Lord is a **Hafiz** over everything. (**All-Knower** of everything i.e.

He **keeps record** of each and every person as regards deeds, and then He will reward them accordingly).

Arberry: Thy Lord is **Guardian** over everything.

Haleem: your Lord **observes** everything.



5. *Allāhu Ḥafīẓ<sup>unn</sup> c alayhim* Q. 42:6

الله حفيظ عليهم

Pickthall: Allah is **Warden** over them.

Ali: Allah **doth watch** over them.

Hil-Khan: Allah is **Hafiz (Protector)** over them (i.e. **takes care** of their deeds and will **recompense** them).

Arberry: God is **Warden** over them.

Haleem: God is **watching** them.

By examining the renderings of *Ḥāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ* in the five examples above as well as in other Qurānic contexts which contain this root-sharing pair of Divine Names, it becomes evident that translators not only overlooked the morpho-semantic differences between these Divine Names, but equally important, failed to maintain a consistent renderings for these Names when they appear in several Qurānic contexts. To start with, it is clear that Pickthall is not fully aware of the meanings of *Ḥāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ* as he sometimes treats them as absolute synonyms and inaccurately use one rendering, namely ‘Guardian’ to correspond to the meanings of both terms in some Qurānic occasions (see ex. 2 and 3 above). In a few occurrences of *Ḥafīẓ*, Pickthall inconsistently and unjustifiably opts for different renderings such as ‘Warden’ (Q. 42:6), a ‘Keeper’ (Q. 11:86) and sometimes turns to the archaic ‘taketh note’ (Q. 34:21) in an attempts to simplify what *Ḥafīẓ* means. He also inconsistently uses these very same renderings more often to translate other verse-ending Divine Names such *Wakīl* (see Q. 12:66 and 17:54) which he occasionally renders as ‘warden’.

Arberry shows similar performance to that of Pickthall. He also makes no clear distinction between *Ḥāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ* as he sometimes render both Names synonymously using the same English rendering, namely ‘Guardian’ (see examples 1, 3 and 4). He also maintains no consistency of his choices of renderings as he

sometimes renders *Ḥāfiẓ* as the one ‘watches over’ (ex. 2) and as ‘watcher’ in another occasion (86:24). Following the steps of Pickthall, Arberry at times opts for different equivalent term for *Ḥafīẓ*, namely ‘Warden’ as in the fifth example above (Q. 42:6).

Ali has unfortunately ignored the two root-sharing Divine Names, *Ḥāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ*, in his renderings as he flattens both Names into various verb-cum-prepositions such as ‘to take care’, ‘guard’, ‘hath care and watch’, and ‘doth watch’ (ex. 1 to 5). These unsuccessful attempts to render *Ḥāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ*, along with unjustifiable omissions, leave Ali’s readers unaware of coming across some Divine Names and certainly cause a loss of the overall meaning of each context in which such Names occur.

Similarly, Hilali-Khan’s attempts to render *Ḥāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ* are not only unsuccessful, but they reflect more uncertainty of the meanings of both terms than other translators’ attempts do. They also show a great deal of confusion with regard to the morpho-semantic distinctive features of *Ḥāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ* as both translators have desperately applied various strategies in order to convey the meanings of these two Divine Names, as shown in the examples above. To illustrate, the two translators overlooks the Divine Name *Ḥāfiẓ* and flattens its normal rendering, namely ‘Guardian’, using its present simple verb, namely ‘to guard’ (see ex. 1-2). However, they sometimes use the direct word-for-word rendering as they render *Ḥafīẓ* using an appropriate English equivalent, namely ‘Guardian’. In other Qurānic occurrences of *Ḥafīẓ*, surprisingly, they sometimes find it difficult to come up with a word-for-word English rendering, as a result, opt for transliterating (transcribing) the Arabic term, for which they also provide a lengthy exegetical explanation of possible contextual meaning (see ex. 4-5).

Haleem’s renderings of *Ḥāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ* are not by all means better than his translation predecessors. His attempts to render both terms reflect a sort of exegesis-based

uncertainty of the aforementioned concept of *ḥifẓ*, which is the core element of meaning in both *Hāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ*. In other words, Haleem's rendering are confusing the two possible exegetical meanings of the Qurānic Divine-related *ḥifẓ*, namely observing (watching over mankind and taking records of their actions) and preserving (safeguarding and protection from all sorts of harm).

As shown in the above examples, Haleem only renders *Hāfiẓ* as 'guardian' in one Qurānic occasion, namely Q. 12:64 (ex.1), but he overlooks this Divine Name as well as its root-sharing Name (*Ḥafīẓ*) in many other occasions (see ex. 2 to 5). Haleem has obviously flattened the rendering of *Hāfiẓūn* (pl. of *Hāfiẓ*) and provided an explanatory rendition, namely 'will guard it'. Similarly, he also flattens the renderings of *Ḥafīẓ* as the 'Lord who protects' (see ex.3, 11:57) and as 'Lord observes' in another occasion (ex.4, 34:21) and he inconsistently opts for 'is watching' in a third occasion (ex.5, 42:6). As mentioned above, Haleem seems to confuse the concept of *ḥifẓ*, which shared by *Hāfiẓ* and *Ḥafīẓ*, as he fluctuates in his choices between the senses of preservation and observation. He should have opted for a word-for-word rendering such as 'Guardian' to reflect the sense of preservation or 'Watcher' to reflect the sense of observation. He also should have maintained consistency in his choices of the most appropriate equivalents throughout his translation.

### 5.2.13 *Waliyy* and *Mawlā*

الولي و المولى

#### 5.2.13.1 Meaning Analysis of *Waliyy* and *Mawlā*

Among the near-synonymous root-sharing Divine Names that pose difficulty when interpreted or translated are *Waliyy* and *Mawlā*. A third root-sharing term, namely *Wālī* (lit. the Ruler or Governor) can be found in many Islamic theological books as well as the traditional list of Divine Names, but it will not be included in this study as

it is not explicitly mentioned in a Divine-related reference in the Qurān. The two recurring Divine Names *Waliyy* and *Mawlā* share the root *w-l-y* (stem verb *wa-li-ya*) which recurrently occurs, along with its large network of semantic cognates and morphological variants, about 232 times in the Qurānic text<sup>74</sup>.

The root *w-l-y* indicates *wilāyah* ولاية, *muwālāh* موالة and *walā'* ولاء (also see *walāyah* in the Qurān, 18:44), all of which have several denotative and connotative meanings of closeness, love, loyalty, friendship and allegiance (Jawharī, 1990; Ibn Fāris, 1994). However, the discussion here is mainly concerned with the Qurānic usage of the terms, particularly the Divine Names *Waliyy* and *Mawlā*, which share *wilāyah* as their core element of meaning. The verb *waliya* basically means to be near, close to, befriend someone, to help and support or be in charge of something (see *Lisān* of Ibn Manzūr, 1956). Thus, *wilāyah* speaks of help, patronage and support which are usually parts of true allegiance and friendship (ibid.).

Morphologically, *Waliyy*, on the one hand, is an intensified term for the active participle *wālī* and is used in both Divine and non-divine references in the Qurān (Ibn Manzūr, 1956). As a Divine Name, the term *Waliyy* speaks of a Helper, Supporter, Patron, Protector and Loving Lord and it appears in Qurānic contexts which generally revolve around these meanings (e.g. Q. 2:257, 42:28). Commenting on the meaning of *Waliyy*, as a Divine Name, in the Qurān, *Ghazālī* (1987, p.126) points out:

الولي هو المحب الناصر ومعنى نصرته ظاهر فإنه يجمع أعداء الدين وينصر أوليائه

The *Waliyy* is the Loving Supporter whose support is evident as He suppresses His enemies and supports His allies.

(My Translation)

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<sup>74</sup> Qurānic Arabic Corpus online, see <http://corpus.quran.com>

In non-divine contexts, the term *waliyy* can have various meanings as it is used to refer to both the provider and receiver of *wilāyah* (Ibn Fāris, 1994). In other words, *waliyy* literally speaks of each participant of an allegiance whether in reference to the sponsor or to the sponsored party (ibid.). This is also the case in the Qurānic text in which the term *waliyy* is not only used as a Divine Name but also as description of a devout believer (*waliyy*, pl. 'Awliyā') who is blessed by the Divine Patronage and Protection, i.e. *wilāyah* (Ghazālī, 1987). It is worth mentioning here that the word *waliyy* is often used in religious contexts as a traditional term for the Muslim 'saint'<sup>75</sup> or companion of God, i.e. a person with a privileged proximity to God (Dickins, 2009; Nimis, 2014), but this is not an accurate usage of the term.

The term *Mawlā*, on the other hand, is a noun of multi-layered shades of meanings (Jawharī, 1990). In fact, the term is not only polysemous one with multiple meanings, but some of its denotations are laden with many cultural references, such as the pre-Islamic slavery-related usages of the term, which are too complicated to discuss within the limited scope of this study which is interested in the use of this term as a Divine Name in the Qurān (see Urban, 2013). Unfortunately, studies of Qurānic terminology hardly refer to culturally-sensitive terms like *mawlā*. However, a recent short study by Urban (2013) has investigated the Qurānic shades of meanings of *Mawlā*. Urban concluded that attempting to grasp the meaning of this term in the Qurān is a challenging task, for in the Qurān there is no precise and categorical definition of *mawlā*, and 'it clearly means different things in different contexts' (ibid. p.23). Urban goes on to say that (ibid. p.23):

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<sup>75</sup> According to Nimis (2014) 'the term *waliyy* is often rendered in English as 'saint' by analogy to Christian saints, due to common features, including the role of the *awliyā*' as exemplary models, teachers, intercessors and means to divine power, miracle-workers, ascetics, and source of divine wisdom [...] An important difference is that, in absence of any process of canonization in Islamic tradition, *walāya* has relative and progressive quality' (p.190-91)

the term *mawlā* itself remains difficult to define: the term is usually translated as ‘client’ or ‘freedman’, but it can also mean ‘patron’, ‘kinsman’, ‘ally’, ‘friend’, ‘convert’, ‘non-Arab Muslim’ or several of these things at once. Because of this range and flexibility of meaning, I suggest [...] looking at how the term [*Mawlā*] is deployed in different [Qurānic] settings.<sup>76</sup>

Examining the Qurānic usages of the terms *waliyy* and *mawlā* as well as their cognates and morphological variants would certainly require a thorough textual analysis of hundreds of occurrences of these recurring terms. Due to the limits of time and space, the analysis of the meanings of both terms as well as their English renderings will be confined to their Divine-related appearances in the Qurānic text. Like most of the terms that appear as Divine Names, each of *Waliyy* and *Mawlā* has one meaning in its reference to the Lord, but as previously stated, each term has various denotative and connotative meanings in other non-divine contexts (see *Ghazālī*'s argument in sub-sec. 4.3.3.1.3 and 4.3.4.3).

Though the terms *waliyy* and *mawlā* carry various denotations and connotations, both terms are close in meaning when they are used as Divine Names in the Qurānic narrative. Many scholars consider them near-synonymous Names since both terms refer to aspects of Divine Patronage, Mastery, Lordship, Ownership, Protection and Guardianship of a Ruler (*Ghazālī*, 1987). *Waliyy*, however, seems to give more sense of intimacy, friendship and protection than *Mawlā* (*Jawharī*, 1990).

Some contemporary critical studies of Qurān translations (see for instance *Abdul-Raof*, 2001), argue that using the English term ‘friend’ to render *Waliyy* (or in plural forms, friends for ‘*awliyā*’) is not accurate since the word *Waliyy* carry connotations

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<sup>76</sup> According to *Urban* (2013, p.29), at least 21 attestations of the word *mawlā* (and its plural form) can be drawn from the Qurānic usage of the term. These attestations can be divided into three conceptual layers: ‘(i) pre-Islamic /Late Antique usages; (ii) descriptions of God as the *Mawlā* of the believers, and evil or hell as the *mawlā* of unbelievers; and (iii) *Mawlā* as defining and clarifying the internal workings of the Islamic community’.

of protection, patronage, intimacy, loyalty and guardianship, all of which are absent in the meaning of the English word ‘friend’. Sells (2007) pointed out that due to the various connotations it bears, the word *Waliyy* ‘is one of those words that defies any single translation’ (p.169). However, many translators of the Qurān have unjustifiably used the word ‘friend’ to convey the meanings of many near-synonymous Qurānic terms including *ṣāhib* صاحب (see Haleem’s translation of Q.18:34), *ṣadīq* صديق (Q. 24:61 and 26:101), *ḵalīl*<sup>77</sup> خليل (Q. 4:125, 17:73, also see *ḵullah* خلة in Q. 2:254, *ḵilāl* خلال in Q. 14:31), *ḥamīm* حميم (Q. 40:18, 69:35, 70:10) and *waliyy* ولي (Q. 41:34).

### 5.2.13.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of *Waliyy* and *Mawlā*

Some translators seem to have taken the aforementioned morphological and semantic delicate differences between *Waliyy* and *Mawlā* into consideration, but their renderings, unfortunately, are inaccurate and inconsistent. This point can be further explained after considering their renderings in the following five examples:

1. *Wa huwa-l Waliyy-ul Ḥamīd* Q. 42:28 وهو الولي الحميد

Pickthall: He is the **Protecting Friend**, the Praiseworthy.

Ali: He is **the Protector**, Worthy of all Praise.

Hil-Khan: He is the *Wali* (Helper, Supporter, Protector, etc.), Worthy of all Praise

Arberry: He is **the Protector**, the All-laudable.

Haleem: He is **the Protector**, Worthy of All Praise.

2. *Allāh-u Waliyy-ul Laḍīna ‘Āmanū* Q. 2:257 الله ولي الذين آمنوا

Pickthall: Allah is the **Protecting Guardian** of those who believe

Ali: Allah is **the Protector** of those who have faith

<sup>77</sup> Most English translations of the Qurān inaccurately and inconsistently render the plural forms of *ḵalīl* and *Waliyy*, namely ‘*aḵillā*’ and ‘*awliyā*’ respectively, as friends. Few translations, such as *Ṣaḥīḥ international* and Hilali-Khan’s, distinguish between the two terms by adding notes or adjectives, such as intimate or close, which help the reader to understand that the term ‘*aḵillā*’ (Q. 43:67) speaks of intimate human friendship, while ‘*awliyā*’ (see Q. 10:62) simply means allies (and gods in few contexts), but has other Divine-related senses of protection, patronage and guardianship.

Hil-Khan: Allah is the *Wali* (Protector or Guardian) of those who believe

Arberry: God is **the Protector** of the believers.

Haleem: God is **the ally** of those who believe.

3. *Mawlā* Q. 8:40 الله مولاكم نعم المولى ونعم النصير

*Allāh Mawlā-kum ni<sup>ʿ</sup>m-al Mawlā wa ni<sup>ʿ</sup>m-an Naṣīr*

Pickthall: Allah is your **Befriender** - a Transcendent **Patron**, a Transcendent Helper.

Ali: Allah is your **Protector** - the **best to protect** and the best to help.

Hil-Khan: Allah is your **Maula (Patron, Lord, Protector and Supporter, etc.)**,  
(what) an Excellent **Maula**, and (what) an Excellent Helper.

Arberry: God is your **Protector** - an excellent **Protector**, an excellent Helper.

Haleem: God is your **protector**, the best **protector** and the best helper.

4. Q. 22:78 هو مولاكم فنعم المولى ونعم النصير

*Huwa Mawlā-kum fa ni<sup>ʿ</sup>m-al Mawlā wa ni<sup>ʿ</sup>m-an Naṣīr*

Pickthall: He is your **Protecting friend**. A blessed **Patron** and a blessed Helper.

Ali: He is your **Protector** - the **Best to protect** and the Best to help.

Hil-Khan: He is your **Maula (Patron, Lord, etc.)**, what an Excellent **Maula**  
(**Patron, Lord, etc.**) and what an Excellent Helper.

Arberry: He is your **Protector** - an excellent **Protector**, an excellent Helper.

Haleem: He is your **protector**—an excellent **protector** and an excellent helper.

5. Q. 47:11 الله مولى الذين آمنوا وأن الكافرين لا مولى لهم

*Allāh-a Mawlā-ladīna 'āmanū wa 'nn-al kāfirīna lā Mawlā lahum* Q. 47:11

Pickthall: Allah is **patron** of those who believe, and because the disbelievers  
have no **patron**.

Ali: Allah is the **Protector** of those who believe, but those who reject Allah  
have no **protector**.

Hil-Khan: Allah is the **Maula** (Lord, Master, Helper, Protector, etc.) of those who  
believe, and the disbelievers have no **Maula** (lord, master, helper, protector, etc.).

Arberry: God is the **Protector** of the believers, and that the unbelievers have  
no **protector**.



Haleem: God **protects** the believers while the disbelievers have no one to **protect** them.

The renderings of *Waliyy* (ex. 1-2) and *Mawlā* (ex. 3, 4 and 5) in the above examples, as well as in other translations of Qurānic verses containing these recurring Divine Names, may look acceptable to the readers but they unfortunately suffer many deficiencies and lack accuracy and consistency. To start with, it is clear that Pickthall is more interested in distinguishing between the two root-sharing Names than other translators, though he is not showing a good level of consistency in his choices to render these terms in several occasions. He unjustifiably opts for different renderings for the very same Name, *Waliyy*, as it is the case in the first two examples above. Pickthall also show uncertainty in his renderings of *Mawlā* in the third, fourth and fifth examples above as he inaccurately and inconsistently renders it as ‘Befriender’, ‘Protecting friend’ and ‘patron’. Unlike other translators, Pickthall failed to stick to one rendering for *Mawlā* even when the term appears twice in the very same Qurānic verse as it is the case the three abovementioned examples (ex. 3, 4 and 5).

Ali, Arberry and Haleem have obviously overlooked the morpho-semantic differences between *Waliyy* and *Mawlā* as they treat both terms synonymously and translate them using the same rendering, namely ‘Protector’, in most of the Qurānic occurrences of these two Divine Names. Though he treats both Names as absolute synonyms and renders them accordingly, Arberry seems to be the only translator to maintain consistency in his choices of renderings throughout his translation. Haleem and Ali, however, do not show steadiness in their choices as they opt for other renderings for the root-sharing pair in other Qurānic contexts, as in the second example above, for

instance, in which Haleem renders *Waliyy* as ‘the ally’ (see also Haleem’s rendering of *Waliyy* as ‘close’ in Q. 3:68).

Both Ali and Haleem are not consistent in their choices to render *Mawlā* in several Divine-related occurrences of the term as they sometimes use the word ‘Lord’, which they more often applied to render another recurring Divine Name, namely *Rabb* (see Haleem and Ali’s rendering of Q. 6:62 and 10:30 respectively). With no justification, Haleem inconsistently uses the term ‘Master’, which he also uses to translate other non-synonymous Divine Names, namely *Mālik* (e.g. Q. 1:4) and *Qāhir* (e.g. Q. 6:18, 6:61), in an attempt to render *Mawlā* in other contexts (see Haleem’s renderings of Q. 9:51 and 22:13). He sometimes simplifies the meaning of *Mawlā* (see Q. 66:2) and renders it as ‘Helper’; a term which he also uses to render another Divine Name that often collocates with *Waliyy* and *Mawlā*, namely *Naṣīr* (see Q. 8:40, 22:78).

Unlike other translators who opted for short and straightforward renderings of *Waliyy* and *Mawlā*, Hilali-Khan seem to have failed to come up with appropriate equivalents for these terms and, as a result, opted for transliterating (transcribing) them in addition to providing a lengthy in-brackets possible meanings of each term. What is provided between brackets by Hilali-Khan is not actually an explanatory note or exegetical clarification for each name; rather, they are inconsistent possible meanings (alternatives) of each term, which shows the extent of uncertainty and confusion with regard to the real meanings of the root-sharing Names. These transliteration attempts by Hilali-Khan are perplexing as well as tedious for the readers, particularly when this strategy is applied to verses which combine two or more of the same transliterated Name, as it is the case in some of the above examples (see ex. 3, 4 and 5).

**5.2.14.1 Meaning Analysis of *Qāhir* and *Qahhār***

Another example of near-synonymous Divine Names that share the same root and are considered problematic when interpreted or translated are *Qāhir* and *Qahhār*. Both Names are derived from the root *q-h-r* which occurs, along with its semantic cognates and morphological variants, ten times in the Qurān<sup>78</sup>. The stem verb *qahara* basically means, based on Arabic dictionaries, to conquer, dominate over, subjugate, subdue, prevail, or compel someone or something (*Ibn Manẓūr's Lisān Al'arab*, 1956). *Qāhir* and *Qahhār* are two of many Names that speak of the Divine Omnipotence including *ʿAzīz*, *Qawiyy*, *Matīn* and *Jabbār*. Both Names share the sense of compulsion with other Divine epithets such as *Jabbār* (Q. 59:23), which is derived from the root *j-b-r* whose basic meaning indicates compulsion against one's wishes (Jawharī, 1990).

Morphologically, *Qāhir*, on the one hand, is an active participle which speaks of the doer of the act of *qahr*, compulsion, and it basically refers to the one who controls or prevails over someone or something else (Ibn Fāris, 1994). This definition might explain using the Arabic article *fawq* (Q. 6:18, 6:61, 7:127) alongside every occurrence of the term *Qāhir* in the Qurān. The use of *fawq* alongside this Divine Name means that the Almighty Lord not only compels and controls his subjects, but he does so while He is above 'overseeing' everything (all creation), which makes Him victorious over any opposition (Ghazālī, 1987). In other words, *Qāhir* is an epithet for the one who is able to subjugate his rivals and the one who always has control (ibid.).

On the other hand, *Qahhār* is an intensified formula (emphatic form), *ṣīghat mubālaghah*, of the active participle *Qāhir*, and it is used to describe the ever-existing

<sup>78</sup> See Qurān Dictionary at the Qurānic Arabic Corpus at: <http://corpus.quran.com/>

and perpetual dominance and subjugation (As-Sa<sup>c</sup>dī, 1987). As a Divine Name, *Qahhār* is the One to whom everything submits and whose Resolve is irresistible (ibid.). *Ghazālī* (1987) maintains that *Qahhār* is the one who breaks the backs of the powerful among His enemies. It also indicates that every living and non-living creature is not only submitted under His Dominance but powerless in His Grip (ibid.).

#### 5.2.14.2 Evaluation of the Renderings of *Qāhir* and *Qahhār*

The aforementioned subtle differences between *Qāhir* and *Qahhār* make it difficult for interpreters and translators into other languages particularly English, to distinguish between the two Names, as can be seen in the following translations (the second example summarises the renderings of *Qahhār* in six identical Qurānic occasions):

1. *Wa huwa-l Qāhir-u fawqa<sup>c</sup> ibādihi* Q. 6:18 (Q.6:61) وهو القاهر فوق عباده

Pickthall: He is the **Omnipotent** over His slaves.

Ali: He is the **Irresistible (watching)** from above over His worshippers.

Hil-Khan: And He is the **Irresistible (Supreme)**, above His slaves.

Arberry: He is **Omnipotent** over His servants.

Haleem: He is the **Supreme Master** over His creatures.

2. *Al Wāḥid-ul Qahhār* الواحد القهار

Pickthall: the One, **Almighty** (Q. 12:39, 13:16, 14:48, 40:16),

the **Absolute** (Q. 38:65, 39:4).

Ali: the One Allah, **Supreme and Irresistible** (Q. 12:39, 38:65, 13:16),

**Irresistible** (Q.14:48, 39:4, 40:16).

Hil-Khan: the One, the **Irresistible** (Q. 12:39, 13:16, 14:48, 38:65, 39:4, 40:16).

Arberry: the One, the **Omnipotent** (Q. 12:39, 13:16, 14:48, 38:65, 39:4, 40:16).

Haleem: the One, the **All Powerful** (Q.12:39, 38:65, 40:16), the **All Compelling** (Q.13:16), the **Overpowering** (Q.14:48), the **Almighty** (Q. 39:4).

By examining the above renderings, along with the renderings of other Qurānic occurrences of *Qāhir* and *Qahhār*, it is clear that translators made some efforts to convey the meanings of both Divine Names. However, their renderings suffer from many deficiencies. To start with, Ali, Hilali-Khan and Arberry, at one hand, did not obviously distinguish between *Qāhir* and *Qahhār* as they treat them as absolute synonyms by opting for the same English terms to convey their meanings. Ali and Hilali-Khan overlooked the morpho-semantic differences between these root-sharing Names, and as a result, used the very same English equivalent, namely ‘Irresistible’, to correspond to the meanings of both terms. Ali and Hilali-Khan, however, add the term ‘Supreme’ in an attempt to clarify the meanings of both Names and differentiate between them, but their attempt falls short to provide a real distinction. Similarly, Arberry did not pay attention to such morpho-semantic differences between the two Divine Names as he opted for the very same English rendering, namely ‘Omnipotent’, to convey the delicate meanings of both Names.

Pickthall, on the other hand, appears to have attempted to differentiate between the two Names. His attempt, however, to render *Qahhār* is not actually successful. He, for instance, uses the word ‘Almighty’ in at least four instances, namely Q. 12:39, 13:16, 14:48 and 40:16, but he more often uses this very same term to translate another recurring Divine Name, namely *al-‘Azīz*, in dozens of Qurānic occasions. In two other occurrences of *Qahhār*, Pickthall inconsistently and unjustifiably renders it as ‘the Absolute’ instead of the Almighty (see Pickthall’s renderings of Q.38:65 and Q.39:4).

Similar to his predecessors, Haleem provides his readers with inaccurate and inconsistent renderings of *Qāhir* and *Qahhār*, though he attempts to distinguish between both root-sharing terms. He inadequately renders *Qāhir* as ‘Supreme Master’

which does not imply the sense of compulsion ‘*qahr*’ which is shared by both Divine Names. On the six Qurānic occurrences of *Qahhār*, Haleem inconsistently provides four different renderings, namely ‘the All Powerful’, ‘the All Compelling’, ‘the Overpowering’ and ‘the Almighty’ for this very same Divine Name, i.e. *Qahhār*. He also uses these renderings to translate other Divine Names such as ‘*Azīz*’, which he often renders as ‘Almighty’ as well as *Qadīr* (Q. 60:7) and *Muqtadir* (Q. 54:55), both of which he occasionally renders as ‘the All-Powerful’. Such inconsistencies and unjustified shifts of choices confuse the readers and have negative effects on their overall comprehension of the Qurānic message.

### 5.2.15 *Kabīr* and *Mutakabbir*

الكبير والمتكبر

#### 5.2.15.1 Meaning Analysis of *Kabīr* and *Mutakabbir*

The root-sharing Divine Names in the Qurān include *Kabīr* and *Mutakabbir*. These are also amongst the generally-agreed-upon Names, though not usually referred to as near-synonymous terms in early as well as late linguistic and exegetical works on the Divine Names. In fact, very little is mentioned in the literature concerning the morphological and semantic relations between these two Names though they share the root *k-b-r* which recurrently appears, along with its semantic network of cognates and morphological variants and conjugations, in 161 occasions in the Qurānic text<sup>79</sup>. The root *k-b-r* indicates, in its basic sense, notions of physical and non-physical growth, greatness and massiveness (Suyūfī, 1999). In the Qurānic usage, both terms speak of the Divine Majesty, Grandeur, and limitlessness (ibid.).

The terms *Kabīr* and *Mutakabbir* refer to the lofty and great status of the Creator, which the Qurān calls *Kibriyā*’ (Ar. كبرياء). *Kibriyā*’ literally means ‘pride’ and can be

<sup>79</sup> See Qurān Dictionary at the Qurānic Arabic Corpus at: <http://corpus.quran.com/>

translated in the Qurānic contexts as the Divine Glory and Magnificence (see. Q. 45:37). According to *Ibn ʿAbbās* (2007), *Kibriyāʾ* indicates the majesty and magnificence of might and sovereignty. *Ibn ʿAbbās* points out that the Divine Names *Kabīr* and *Mutakabbir* basically refer to the One who is majestically ‘Great’; not only that He is Greater than everything, but equally important, the Greatest in the sense of eminence, superiority and transcendence (see Netton, 1995). *Mutakabbir* also means ‘He Who exonerates Himself from what [people] had imagined about Him’, and the ‘Superb towards His enemies’ (*Ibn ʿAbbās*, 2007: 661).

### 5.2.15.1 Evaluation of the Renderings of *Kabīr* and *Mutakabbir*

The following examples of the renderings of the root-sharing pair, *Kabīr* and *Mutakabbir*, show how attentive are the five translators to the abovementioned morpho-semantic distinctions between the two terms. Other Qurānic occurrences of the term *Kabīr*, which appears more frequently than *Mutakabbir*, are also examined to evaluate translators’ consistency.

1. *Al-Khabīr Al-Mutaʿāl* Q. 13:9 الكبير المتعال

Pickthall: **the Great**, the High Exalted.

Ali: He is **the Great**, the Most High.

Hil-Khan: **the Most Great**, the Most High.

Arberry: **the All-great**, the All-exalted.

Haleem: He is **the Great**, the Most High.

2. *Wa anna Allāha huwa-l ʿAliyy-ul Kabīr* Q. 22:62 وأن الله هو العلي الكبير

Pickthall: and because Allah, He is the High, **the Great**.

Ali: verily Allah is He, Most High, the **Most Great**.

Hil-Khan: verily, Allah He is the Most High, **the Most Great**.

Arberry: for that God is the All-high, **the All-great**.

Haleem: it is God who is the Most High, **the Most Great**.

3. *Al-<sup>c</sup>Azīz Al-Jabbār Al-Mutakabbir* Q. 59:23

العزیز الجبار المتکبر

Pickthall: the Majestic, the Compeller, **the Superb**

Ali: the Exalted in Might, the Irresistible, **the Supreme**.

Hil-Khan: the All-Mighty, the Compeller, **the Supreme**.

Arberry: the All-mighty, the All-compeller, the **All-Sublime**.

Haleem: the Almighty, the Compeller, **the Truly Great**.

From the above examples, it is clear that the translators managed to distinguish between the two near-synonymous Names, *al-Kabīr* and *al-Mutakabbir*, with the exception of Haleem who does not show clear distinction between them as he opts for almost similar renderings, namely ‘Most Great’ and ‘Truly Great’ respectively (ex. 2-3). The translators’ attempts, however, are not accurate as they seem to have rendered *al-Kabīr* literally without taking the aforementioned sense of *Kibriyā’* into account.

There are also some cases of inconsistency in other Qurānic occasions in which two or more terms are used to correspond to the meaning of the very same Divine Name, namely *al-Kabīr*. For instance, Pickthall renders *al-Kabīr* as ‘the Great’ in a few occurrences (see ex. 1), but he opts for a different rendering, namely ‘the Majestic’, as in 40:12. Ali and Haleem have also made unjustifiable changes in their choices of the equivalent renderings of *al-Kabīr* as shown in the first two examples. Both translators render the Name as ‘the Great’ in the first instance (ex.1), but opt for a slightly different rendering, namely ‘the Most Great’ in the second (ex.2). Ali seems to have confused *al-Kabīr* and *al-Mutakabbir* with another Divine Name, namely *al-<sup>c</sup>Azīm*, as he occasionally renders the latter using the same equivalent terms he had chosen for *al-Kabīr*, namely ‘the Most Great’ (e.g. 42:4). He also uses the same rendering he opted for *al-Mutakabbir*, namely ‘the Supreme, more often to render *al-<sup>c</sup>Azīm* in several occurrences (see Ali’s renderings of 2:255, 56:74 and 56:96).



## **Chapter Six: Conclusion and Recommendations**

This chapter concludes the research and briefly answers the three research questions. It also puts forward the general findings from the evaluation of the renderings of the root-sharing Divine Names. The chapter also dedicates a section to a few translation recommendations with regard to the linguistic issues of the Divine Names in the Qurān as well as a suggested technical solution to tackle the problem of inconsistency in rendering recurring Qurānic terms in general and the Divine Names in particular. The chapter also offers some relevant topics for future research.

### **6.1 Findings and Implications**

The current study aimed at examining and assessing five well-known English translations of the Qurān in terms of their renderings of the root-sharing Divine Names. The study has raised and attempted to answer the following questions<sup>80</sup>:

1. How accurate are the translations of the Qurān with regards to rendering the root-sharing Divine Names?
2. Have the translators shown consistency in their choices to render the recurring root-sharing Divine Names in the Qurān?
3. Based on the outcome of the above questions (1 and 2), what are the technical solutions that can be adopted to improve both the accuracy and consistency of future translations of the Qurān in general and the renderings of the recurring Divine Names in particular?

In its attempt to answer the first two questions, the study has carried out a linguistic analysis of all the root-sharing Divine Names in order to facilitate the evaluation of

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<sup>80</sup> The questions have been stated in the introductory chapter and are repeated here for convenience.

their English renderings in the five existing translations of the Qurān. Based on the criteria of assessment as well as the morpho-semantic analysis, the evaluation process has revealed that none of the five selected translators had full control over the morphological and semantic features of the root-sharing Divine Names. Remarkably, those translators of the Qurān who are native speakers of Arabic, namely Hilali and Abdel-Haleem, did not apparently pay sufficient attention to the subtle morpho-semantic distinctions between these root-sharing Names. This has resulted in many inaccurate and inconsistent English renderings of the near-synonymous Divine Names, particularly the root-sharing ones.

When it comes to Ali and Khan, who are not native speakers of either Arabic or English, they can to some extent be excused for their shortcomings in their attempts to render the root-sharing Divine Names. Unpredictably, Arberry, a British Arabist who translated from a foreign SL (Arabic) into his TL (English) tongue, showed much more control over the subtle morphological differences between the root-sharing Divine Names as evident in the accurate and consistent choices he made in most of his attempts to render the recurring root-sharing Names (exceptions are found in 5.2.12 and 5.2.14). This reflects Arberry's commitment and high competency in Arabic, though he was assisted by a native speaker of Arabic from Egypt, particularly in his ability to identify the subtle morpho-semantic differences between most of the root-sharing Divine Names as well as convey their delicate meanings, in a consistent manner, into smooth and well-structured English.

The evaluation process has also revealed the following general findings:

- The English renderings of the Divine Names in the Qurān suffer many shortcomings and discrepancies which reflect a great deal of uncertainty and

confusion on the part of the translators with regard to the morphological and semantic features of the Divine Names particularly the root-sharing ones.

- Translators' inability to distinguish between the root-sharing Divine Names has negatively affected the accuracy of their renderings. Most of the morphological as well as semantic features of these Names have been absent in the English translation, though some translators attempted to compensate for these losses of meaning by means of transliteration and explanatory notes.
- Most translators have been unjustifiably inconsistent in their renderings of most of the root-sharing Divine Names as they use different corresponding terms for the very same Name when it appears on different occasions in the Qurānic text. Most Qurān translators have also inconsistently and unjustifiably used one English corresponding term to render two, if not three, near-synonymous Divine Names.
- Some translators of the Qurān seem to be oblivious to the change, if not the misrepresentation, of meaning they create in terms of their inaccurate and inconsistent choices, which appears to be based on their *ijtihād* 'individual judgment', in rendering Qurānic sensitive terms like the Divine Names.

The investigation of the accuracy and consistency of the English renderings of the root-sharing Divine Names in the five selected English translations can provide us with an indication of how competent translators are in Arabic and its subtle morphological rules. The translators' ability to differentiate between root-sharing Divine Names, which can also be deduced from their choices of appropriate English equivalent terms, is a useful diagnostic element that could help to identify the level of their knowledge of Arabic in general and the morphological features of descriptive derivatives in particular. In other words, examining the translators' skill in making the

right subtle distinctions between near-synonymous, root-sharing Divine Names can suggest a great deal about the degree of competency in Arabic every translator enjoys. To sum up, the researcher concludes that the problems of rendering the Divine Names in the Qurān seem to be not generally due to the translators' lack of necessary cultural, linguistic and theological knowledge but mainly to not paying a sufficient attention to the extensive recurrence as well as the morpho-semantic subtleties of the Divine Names in general and the root-sharing Names in particular.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

The current study has various recommendations and suggestions for various purposes. In addition to critically evaluating the accuracy and consistency of the English renderings of the Divine Names in the Qurān, the study also provides some recommendations regarding what should be done to improve the consistency of future translations of the Qurān in general, and the consistency of the renderings of the recurring Divine Names in particular (this answers the third research question).

The recommendations are divided into two types, the first of which is about solving the issue of inconsistency in the translations of the Qurān, which is discussed earlier.

### **6.2.1 Tackling the Problem of Inconsistency in Qurān Translations**

The researcher has pointed out in the introductory chapter that translators of the Qurān are expected to maintain a high level of lexical cohesion (through consistency and uniformity of terminology) in their choices of the appropriate renderings of many sensitive Qurānic terms in general and the recurring root-sharing Divine Names in particular. Based on the revelations of the current study, the researcher argues that there is a dire need to adopt some of the available technical solutions in Qurān

translations in order to tackle the noticeable problem of terminological inconsistency in rendering many frequently-mentioned terms, including the Divine Names. Translators, despite their shortcomings, cannot be thought of as perfect machines, but as individuals with limited abilities which enable them to reasonably convey meaning from a given language into another. Therefore, the use of technology and computer-assisted-translation (CAT) tools in translating the Qurān is a necessity in order to ensure a high level of uniformity and consistency in future translations.

Having surveyed the available technical solutions for translation problems that are similar in nature to the problems discussed in the current study, the researcher recommends the use of one of the widely-used language-technology solutions such as translation memory (TM), bilingual concordances and intercalated texts. Recent translation studies have shown the efficiency in adopting such technological tools in terms of improving both the quality and consistency of translated materials. These can be very useful when applied to future Qurān translations in general and the translation of the Divine Names in particular. Qurān Translators, particularly contemporary ones such as Abdel-Haleem (2004), should have taken advantage of such translation technology solutions, including CAT tools, to avoid many cases of inconsistency and inaccuracy in their renderings of the recurring Divine Names throughout the Qurān.

A translation memory is basically a database which scans a segment of a source text and tries to match it against stored segments with the aim of making use of existing pre-translated materials. According to Isabelle el (1993), ‘existing translations contain more solutions to more translation problems than any other existing resource’ (Isabelle 1993). For translators, according to Hutchins (2005) ‘one of the most useful facilities is storage and access to previously translated texts [...] in a ‘translation

memory’, enabling them to avoid the re-translation of unchanged texts or to extract and adapt examples of previous translations’. TM software typically involves a storing database of a lined-up previously-translated examples and a matching algorithm which will take as input a source-language segment and attempt to find in the database a set of examples whose source-language part matches the input (Whyman and Somers, 1999).

Commenting on the advantageous use of bilingual concordancers, such as ‘Key Word In Context (KWIC)<sup>81</sup>, Munday (1998) explains how KWIC concordances work efficiently when it is joint with a sentence alignment tool in order to spot shifts in the TT overall consistency and lexical cohesion (uniformity of terminology), which is a significant feature in literary texts (Cyrus, 2009). Munday (1998) clarifies that through extracting a concordance for a particular SL item and then checking out its renderings in the aligned sentences, it becomes tireless to examine whether this term has been consistently rendered throughout the target text or not (Cyrus, 2009). However, Munday maintains that it would not, still, be simply observable if the instances of inconsistency are caused by systemic differences, but overall, the computerised approach makes it more possible to go further than an individual shift (inconsistent choice) and ‘see if it becomes a trend over the whole text’ (Munday 1998: 552, cited in Cyrus, 2009).

Qurān translators can take advantage of TM technology as a CAT tool to improve both quality and consistency of their translations (see figure 6.1 below). The Qurān contains many repetitive terms and phrases which are scattered throughout the 114 chapters. One Qurānic chapter may also contain frequent repetition of a whole

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<sup>81</sup> The KWIC Concordance is a corpus statistical and analytical tool which lists word frequencies, concordances and collocation tables by using electronic files (Munday, 1998).

sentence ‘ayah’ (e.g. Ch.55 and Ch.77). Qurānic repetition is a stylistic feature used for the reinforcement of certain Qurānic messages and has been thoroughly investigated in the Arabic literature. The researcher argues here that the fact that repetition is unarguably a Qurānic linguistic phenomenon makes it a ‘good candidate for use with a TM system’ (Bowker and Barlow, 2008, p.18).

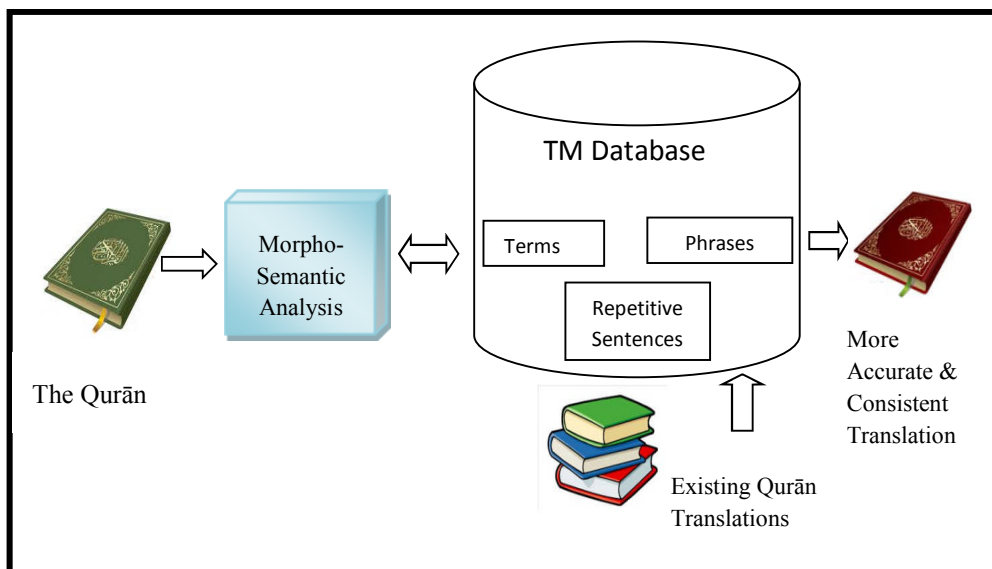


Figure 6.1 Suggested Solution for Translation Inconsistency; the Use of TM Database

A TM system can even work well in accurately translating identical Qurānic *Ayahs* and phrases or similar ones with few mismatching words. The Qurān often repeats the same event, incident, advice and reminders on different occasions, and sometimes with different wording. These statements, expressions and collocations in different parts of the Qurān are neither contradictory nor repetitive. Some of them go under the *Mutashabih*, which simply indicate similarity in contents and not in wording or style. In few Qurānic occasions, one could find almost identical *Ayahs* which are obviously used to put emphasis on a certain fact (e.g. Q. 10:108, 17:15 and 39:41), draw

attention to a good conduct (Q. 59:9, 64:16) or describe the state of a group of people (Q. 2:5, 31:5).

### **6.2.2 Suggestions for Future Translators of the Qurān**

When it comes to translating the Divine Names in the Qurān into English in general, and rendering the near-synonymous root-sharing ones in particular, which the current research has revealed to be suffering from many cases of inaccuracy and inconsistency, future translators of the Qurān are advised to bear in mind the following linguistic issues:

- (i) There are subtle morphological variances between the near-synonymous Divine Names particularly the Names that share the same tri-consonantal roots but carry slightly different denotations and connotations.
- (ii) Since the Divine Names are nominal descriptive derivatives, translators should be aware of the Arabic linguistic fact that any change of the morphological forms (templatic patterns) of the root-sharing Names is always accompanied by a change in both meaning and function.
- (iii) The morpho-semantic differences between the root-sharing Divine Names should be reflected in accurate and consistent choices of English equivalent terms, and in case of non-equivalence and the use of transliteration, the target audience should be provided with brief explanatory notes to enable readers grasp the closest possible meaning.
- (iv) The Divine Names are frequently mentioned in the Qurānic text. Thus, every translator is expected to maintain a high level of verbal consistency so that every term is rendered in the same way (using the same equivalent term)



throughout the target text (with the exception of a few polysemous Names which require contextual consistency, rather than verbal consistency, since such Names have various senses in different contexts).

#### **6.4 Suggestions for Future Research**

The current interdisciplinary study has briefly shed light on many issues that require further research and investigation. These issues not only revolve around criticism and evaluation of the English translations of the Qurān, but they extend to include theological as well as linguistic issues. The issues that touch upon inter-faith comparative studies in general and the Scriptural Divine Descriptions in particular have been briefly discussed in the current study and would require further research. This may include aspects of Islamic theology with regard to the Divine Names such as the authenticity of the widely-celebrated Muslim traditional list of the ninety-nine Divine Names. Moreover, the issue of the universality of the Divine Names (see ch.2 sec.4) across major religions of the world is also a fertile area of research. Likewise, the possibility that one common Divine Name could be translated in the same way in the English translations of different Scriptures requires further academic investigation.

It is worth mentioning that while carrying out the evaluation of translations within the context of this doctoral research (see chapter five), I carried out a preliminary study to investigate the renderings of other non-root-sharing Divine Names, and initially found out that they all have many problems that need to be revealed and subsequently resolved. These were not fully addressed due to limitations of time, space and the scope of the current study.

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