

The Impact of Lexical Etymology on the Translation of Foreign Terms in *Holy Qur'an*: An Applied Approach through the Translation of Taqi Al-Din Al-Hilali and Mohammad Mohsin Khan

أثر التأثيل المصطلحي في ترجمة الألفاظ الأعجمية في القرآن الكريم :

مختارات من ترجمة تقي الدين الهلالي ومُحَمَّد محسن خان

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Abstract:

This study explores the impact of etymology on understanding the foreign terms mentioned in *Holy Quran* by examining their linguistic and cultural origins and development, and highlighting the role of this understanding in accurately interpreting and translating Quranic texts into English. It also sheds some light on the efforts of Dr. Taqi Al-Din Al-Hilali and Dr. Mohammad Mohsin Khan in translating the meanings of *Holy Quran* into English. Their translation has adopted a methodology that combines lexical translation with contextual interpretation. Selected samples of this translation are analyzed to reveal how they approached foreign terms, with reference to their use of marginal annotations based on reliable classical sources. The study concludes that employing an etymological approach in handling foreign terms contributes to producing more or less accurate translations that relatively reflect the original meanings of the Quranic text while preserving its doctrinal and cultural connotations, as well as enhancing the non-Arabic readers' understanding and reducing the likelihood of misinterpretation or misunderstanding.

Keywords: Etymology; Foreign Terms; Translating; *Holy Quran*; Contextual Interpretation; Etymological Approach

ملخص:

تتناول الدراسة أثر علم التأثيل في فهم الألفاظ الأعجمية الواردة في القرآن الكريم، من خلال دراسة أصولها وتطورها اللغوي والثقافي، وإبراز أثر ذلك في تفسير النصوص القرآنية وترجمتها بدقة إلى اللغات الأخرى. كما يبرز البحث على جهود الدكتور تقي الدين الهلالي والدكتور مُحَمَّد محسن خان في ترجمة معاني القرآن الكريم إلى اللغة الإنجليزية، معتمدين منهجًا يجمع بين الترجمة المعجمية والتفسير السياقي. وقد تم تحليل نماذج مختارة من ترجمتهما، للكشف عن كيفية تعاملها مع الألفاظ الأعجمية، مع الإشارة إلى توظيفهما للشروح الهامشية المستندة إلى المصادر التراثية الموثوقة. ويخلص البحث إلى أن استثمار المنهج التأثيلي في معالجة الألفاظ الأعجمية يسهم في تحقيق ترجمة دقيقة تعكس المعاني الأصلية للنص القرآني، وتحافظ على دلالاته العقدية والثقافية، فضلًا عن تعزيز فهم القارئ العربي والحد من احتمالات سوء الفهم أو التأويل الخاطيء.

كلمات مفتاحية: التأثيل، الألفاظ الأعجمية، ترجمة، القرآن الكريم، التفسير السياقي، المنهج التأثيلي

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Holy Quran, with its eloquence and precision of meaning, stands as a sacred text encompassing multiple linguistic and cultural dimensions. As is well known, the Arabic language, in which the Quran was revealed, has always been a living language that interacted dynamically with neighboring tongues, resulting in the incorporation of words and concepts from various cultures. Among the linguistic phenomena present in the Quran is the inclusion of foreign (non-Arabic) terms - words whose origins can be traced to languages such as Persian, Syriac, Hebrew, Greek, and others prevalent in the pre-revelation era. This phenomenon reflects the linguistic and cultural interaction between the Arabs and other nations and forms part of the Quran's linguistic inimitability, wherein Arabic assimilated these foreign terms and restructured them to align with its linguistic system and semantic context.

The significance of studying these foreign terms in the Quran arises from the need to understand their original connotations, their development within the Quranic context, and their influence on textual meanings. At this point, the role of etymology, the discipline concerned with tracing the origins and historical development of words becomes crucial. Etymology serves as an essential tool for uncovering the nuanced meanings of these terms, allowing for the identification of their linguistic roots and the documentation of their phonetic and semantic transformations over time. This approach enables a deeper understanding of the historical and linguistic dimensions embedded within these terms before their integration into the Quranic text.

Furthermore, the contribution of etymology to understanding these foreign terms extends beyond mere linguistic analysis, offering a clearer view of their cultural and semantic implications. By examining their evolution over time, etymology enhances the precision of Quranic interpretation. In this regard, assessing the translation of Dr. Taqi Al-Din Al-Hilali and Dr. Mohammad Mohsin Khan, and comparing it with other translations—allows for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of their rendering of Qur'anic meanings into English. This evaluation not only aids in refining future translations but also in improving the transmission of Islamic concepts to non-Arabic speaking audiences.

The Qur'anic text contains numerous terms of foreign origin, drawn from Persian, Greek, and Syriac, among other languages, which Arabic eventually adopted and imbued with meanings consistent with the devotional and legislative context of the verses. Thus, etymology is not only instrumental in understanding these terms but also in analyzing their integration into Qur'anic structure and their rhetorical significance.

Translating Qur'an into other languages, especially English, presents profound challenges due to the complexity of its linguistic and rhetorical meanings. These challenges become more pronounced when dealing with foreign terms that often lack precise equivalents in the target language, necessitating supplementary

explanations to preserve the intended meaning as faithfully as possible.

Among the well-known English translations of Qur'an is that of Taqi Al-Din Al-Hilali and Mohammad Mohsin Khan, which is notable for its attempt to convey Quranic meanings, particularly those involving terms of foreign origin. The translators adopted a methodology combining lexical translation with contextual interpretation, employing explanatory notes in the margins to clarify meanings when necessary. Nevertheless, like other translations, their work faced challenges, as certain foreign terms did not have precise English equivalents, compelling the translators to adopt various strategies include transliteration, marginal interpretation, or in-text explanatory renderings.

Against this backdrop, this paper seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How does etymological analysis assist in uncovering the original meanings of foreign terms in Qur'an?

2. What methodology did Taqi Al-Din Al-Hilali and Mohammad Mohsin Khan employ in translating these terms into English?

The study aims to highlight selected foreign terms in the Quran and analyze them through the lens of etymology to uncover their linguistic roots and historical evolution. It also seeks to evaluate the accuracy of Hilali and Khans' translation in conveying Quranic meanings into English while exploring the linguistic and cultural challenges of translating such terms. Furthermore, this research offers a critical perspective on the strategies employed in rendering these foreign terms and proposes recommendations to enhance the accuracy of future Quranic translations.

1. Etymologizing the Term: Establishing the Concept

1.1. The Arabic definition of the term (Ta'thil)

The Arabic term ta'thīl is derived from a purely Arabic root that encompasses connotations of origin, gathering, antiquity, precision, nobility, and stability. Ibn Fāris, in his analysis of the root -th-l, states: "athl—the hamza, thā', and lām" denotes the root of a thing and its aggregation. Al-Khalīl said: Al-'athl is a type of tree resembling the ṭarfā' but larger and of better wood, from which fine drinking vessels are made. Abū Ziyād said: Al-'athl is among the tall trees that reach great heights (Ibn Fāris. 1979. p.56). Everything that has an ancient origin or has been gathered to acquire an established foundation is described as mu'aththal. (Ibn Mandhour. 2004. p.69)

In classical Arabic, ta'thīl originates from the verb 'athala, meaning 'to search for the origin of something' or 'to trace it back to its root.' The lexicons describe it as: "athala something: To ascertain its origin"; 'athila' 'uthūlan and ta'aththala: To become deeply rooted; 'aththala one's wealth: to consolidate or establish it; ta'aththala wealth: to acquire and preserve it; 'aththala wealth: to purify it; 'aththala his property: To magnify it; ta'aththala: To grow in stature. Anything old and well-

rooted is called ‘athīl, mu’aththal, or muta’aththil; likewise, māl mu’aththal denotes consolidated wealth. In prophetic tradition, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said concerning the guardian of an orphan: “He may eat from his wealth without ta’aththul,” meaning without amassing or hoarding it (Ma’luf, nd, p.3).

The term ta’thīl, in its technical sense, is relatively modern in Arabic usage and is attributed to ‘Abd al-Ḥaqq Fāḍil as its first proponent in the past century. (Fāḍil. 1970, p.45) We adopt the term in the sense he employed, as equivalent to the foreign term etymology (Kandris. 1950. p.266), derived from the Greek philosophical tradition that explored the origins of words and the rationale behind naming, within the broader framework of linguistic philosophy studying the relationship between names and their referents (whether arbitrary, conventional, natural, or reconciliatory) and the genesis of language and its vocabulary. Fāḍil preferred ta’thīl over ta’ṣīl (rooting), as the latter had become overused across various fields, thereby losing its specificity.

Adjacent to ta’thīl is the term tarsīs, which refers to a specific type of etymology concerned with tracing distant origins of words, as opposed to general etymology, which focuses on nearer roots. While some scholars also employ alternative Arabic terms such as athāla (authenticity), ta’ṣīl (rooting), ta’ṣīs (establishing), taḥqīq (investigation), and uṣūl al-kalimāt (origins of words)—alongside retaining the foreign term etymology, others translate it as ishtiqaq (derivation), as seen in the Arabic translation of Vendryes’ *Language*. However, this translation is imprecise and insufficient, as etymology encompasses more than morphological derivation, despite the latter being an integral component of etymological research in its broader sense. Historically, early etymological studies by Indians, Greeks, Latins, and Arabs relied heavily on derivational analysis, but as our later definitions will show, equating etymology with derivation is a reductive and inaccurate translation (El Wedghiri. 2021)

1.2. The Roots of the Concept

Etymology constitutes an essential tool in tracing the origins and development of words across time, enabling the identification of linguistic relationships and the evolution of semantic meanings across diverse contexts. In this regard, etymology plays a vital role in understanding terminology and delineating its historical and cultural dimensions, particularly when analyzing words that span multiple languages.

As a branch of linguistic studies, etymology focuses on determining the origins of words. The term emerged in the 14th century within Latin and Greek scholarship before spreading to French, English, and other languages. Etymological inquiry centers on analyzing words to uncover their origins and historical development. (Elsaid. 2023, p.14)

In modern linguistic studies, etymology encompasses several subfields:

Morphological etymology, which examines derivational structures; syntactic etymology, which explores the origins of sentence structures and components; and lexical etymology, which investigates the roots and semantic evolution of individual terms. (Elsaid. 2023)

According to the principles governing the evolution of natural languages (Arabic, English...etc), etymologizing words is often relatively straightforward in modern languages, whose historical timelines are well-documented, and whose written sources are readily accessible. Furthermore, some of these languages, such as Spanish, French, and Italian, directly evolved from well-attested parent language (Latin). In contrast, etymologizing words in ancient Arabic language proves more challenging due to the scarcity of sources documenting their pre-historical stages.

Etymology functions as a foundational method for determining the linguistic origins of terms, revealing connections between words in different languages. Its value lies in uncovering relationships among seemingly unrelated vocabulary items that, upon closer examination, share common linguistic roots. For example, many technical or scientific terms originated in particular civilizations before diffusing into other languages, reflecting the profound cultural interactions between nations. (Elsaid. 2023, p.15)

2. The Roots of Foreign Terms in the *Holy Quran*

The *Holy Quran* is an enduring linguistic and rhetorical miracle, distinguished by its unique style and eloquent expressions, which convey the loftiest meanings and the most precise legislative directives. Among the issues that have preoccupied scholars of Quranic sciences and linguistic studies is the presence of foreign terms within the Quranic text. This subject has sparked debate among scholars; some maintain that the Quran was revealed in pure Arabic language, while others acknowledge the presence of words of non-Arabic origin that had entered Arabic prior to the revelation, becoming an integral part of its linguistic fabric.

This section aims to shed some light on the roots of the foreign terms appearing in the Quran, tracing their linguistic origins, the pathways through which they entered Arabic and the extent of their integration into the Quranic linguistic system. The discussion draws on the views of exegetes and linguists to present a balanced perspective on how linguistic interaction between Arabs and other communities shaped the vocabulary of the Quran, without compromising its miraculous nature or its status as a clear Arabic text.

2.1. Definition of Foreign Terms in *The Quran*

Foreign terms are defined as words that were not originally part of the Arabic lexicon but were incorporated into it through cultural and commercial interactions between Arabs and other nations. The presence of such terms in the Quran has been the subject of intense scholarly debate. Some argue that Qur'an is a purely Arabic

book containing no foreign words, citing the verse: “*Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Quran*” (Yūsuf:2). Others contend that the inclusion of words of non-Arabic origin does not conflict with the Quran’s Arabic nature, as these words had already been assimilated into Arabic before the revelation, undergoing a process of Arabization and becoming part of the Arabic linguistic system.

Scholars distinguish between three categories of non-Arabic words in the Quranic text:

- Mu’arrab (Arabized): Foreign words that entered Arabic and underwent phonetic and morphological adjustments.
- Dakhīl (Borrowed): Words that entered Arabic with little to no modification.
- ‘Ajāmī (Foreign): Words that largely retain their original pronunciation and meaning.

Classical scholars approached this topic in various ways. Imām al-Suyūfī acknowledged the presence of foreign words in the Quran but emphasized that they had undergone Arabization, thereby fully integrating into the Arabic language. In contrast, other scholars argued that any term appearing in the Quran, even if its origin was non-Arabic, must be considered Arabic by virtue of its pronunciation and usage. This scholarly discourse underscores the necessity of studying foreign terms for a deeper understanding of Qur’an’s language and rhetorical style (Elsharbini. 2012)

2.2. The Importance of Studying the Roots of Foreign Terms in Understanding the Quranic Text

Investigating the roots of foreign terms in the Quran is crucial for achieving a precise understanding of its texts. Many of these words carry rich cultural and historical connotations linked to their original languages. For example, the term *sijjīl* in the verse “[He] pelted them with stones of hard clay.” (Al-Fīl: 4) is believed to have Persian origins, meaning —baked clay, which sheds light on the nature of the punishment inflicted upon the companions of the elephant. Additionally, several proper names—such as those of prophets and angels—are of Hebrew or Syriac origin, reflecting the depth of linguistic interaction between Arabic and other Semitic languages. (Elthebiti, 2012).

Examining these roots also reveals the historical relationships between Arabs and other peoples. The presence of Persian and Greek terms in the Quran, for instance, points to pre-Islamic trade, intellectual exchange, and cultural contact. Moreover, understanding the etymological roots of such words allows for more accurate interpretation of Quranic verses, as some terms may have developed new meanings in Arabic that differ from their original connotations. This etymological insight enables exegetes to provide interpretations that are both more precise and contextually grounded, thereby enhancing the understanding of the Quran’s theological, legal, and linguistic dimensions. (Elthebiti, 2012).

2.3. The Role of Etymology in Uncovering the Origins and Evolution of The Terms ‘*tūr* and *furqān*’

Etymology plays a fundamental role in tracing the origins and development of foreign terms in the Quran over time. This discipline investigates the historical trajectory of words, their transmission across languages, and the semantic and phonetic changes they have undergone. Applying etymological analysis to Quranic vocabulary enables scholars to trace a term from its source language to Arabic and understand how it evolved before becoming part of the Quranic text. (Abu Asi, 2005). For instance, the term *tūr* (mountain), used in the context of *Jabal Al-Ṭūr*, is thought by some researchers to derive from Syriac, where it simply means ‘mountain.’ Likewise, the word *furqān*, commonly understood in the Quran as ‘criterion between truth and falsehood,’ may have an Aramaic root connoting ‘deliverance’ or ‘salvation,’ highlighting a semantic shift in its Quranic usage.

Through etymology, we can also discern the extent to which Arabic absorbed foreign vocabulary from surrounding languages while maintaining its structural and rhetorical integrity. Moreover, this field helps differentiate between words Arabized prior to Islam and those adopted later while retaining their foreign forms. Such insights provide linguists and exegetes with a more nuanced understanding of Quranic terminology in its historical and cultural context, thereby enabling more accurate and comprehensive interpretation of the sacred text (Abu Asi, 2005).

3. Etymologizing Non-Arabic Quranic Terms in the Translation of Taqi Al-Din Al-Hilali and Mohammad Mohsin Khan

Translators of the Quran’s meanings face a dual challenge: First, to verify the non-Arabic origin of certain terms; and second, to render these terms into a foreign language while preserving their precise theological and legal implications. The translation of Al-Hilali, in collaboration with Dr. Mohammad Mohsin Khan, stands out for its meticulous linguistic and scholarly treatment of such terms. Rather than limiting themselves to literal renderings, they often provided interpretive translations supplemented by etymological notes in the footnotes, drawing upon classical exegesis, lexicons, and works on loanwords (*mu‘arrab* and *dakhīl*) in Arabic. (Abu Asi, 2005)

This section traces the key instances where Al-Hilali engaged with non-Arabic Quranic terms, examining his methodology in distinguishing these words from classical Arabic vocabulary, the extent of his adherence to the positions of Muslim linguists on loanwords, and his use of interpretive translation and marginal commentary to deal with such expressions.

3.1. A Brief Biography of Taqi Al-Din Al-Hilali

Taqi Al-Din Al-Hilali (1311AH/1893CE–1407 AH/1987/CE) was a Moroccan scholar, traveler, man of letters, linguist, and poet of Algerian descent. Born in the

rural region of Sijilmasa, Morocco, into a scholarly family, he memorized the Quran at the age of twelve and studied at al-Qarawiyyin University. He later pursued further education at al-Azhar in Cairo. Al-Hilali served as head of Arabic literature at the Nadwat al-‘Ulamā’ College in Lucknow, India, where he learned English and lived for three years. (Ibn Khumays, 2006)

Subsequently, he taught Arabic literature at the University of Bonn in Germany, where he earned his doctorate. Al-Hilali left behind a rich scholarly legacy, including works such as *Taqwīm al-Lisānayn* (Correction of the Two Tongues), *Rihla min al-Zubayr ilā Jenev* (A Journey from al-Zubayr to Geneva), *al-Ṣadīqāt al-Thalāth* (a novel), *Tārīkh al-Lughā al-Sāmiyya* (History of the Semitic Language), *al-Ṭabaqāt ‘inda al-‘Arab*, and *Madaniyyat al-‘Arab fī al-Andalus* (a translation from English). He also founded the journal *Lisān al-Dīn* and composed a poetry collection titled *Faḍl al-Kabīr al-Muta‘ālī: Dīwān Shi’r Muḥammad Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī*. Al-Hilali passed away at his home in Casablanca, Morocco, on 25 Shawwal 1407 AH / 22 June 1987 CE, and his funeral was attended by numerous scholars, intellectuals, and public figures. (Ibn Khumays, 2006)

3.2. A Brief Biography of Mohammad Mohsin Khan

Dr. Mohammad Mohsin Khan (d. 2021) was a prominent Pakistani translator of the Quran and Islamic sciences into English. He studied medicine in Karachi and later moved to Saudi Arabia, where he served as the director of the Islamic University Hospital in Madinah before dedicating himself to translating and authoring Islamic works. He gained global recognition for his collaboration with Al-Hilali on *The Noble Quran: English Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*, a project overseen by the King Fahd Complex for Printing the Holy Quran in Madinah. This translation is widely used in the Muslim world for its clarity, interpretive approach, and reliance on authoritative sources such as Ibn Kathīr’s exegesis and Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī in footnotes and commentary. (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996, pp. iii-vi.)

Dr. Khan also co-translated *Summarized Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* and rendered *Ḥiṣn al-Muslim* (Fortress of the Muslim) into English. His style was characterized by simplicity and precision, prioritizing faithful transmission of Islamic concepts—particularly in matters of creed and worship—to non-Arabic readers. His work has been endorsed by Islamic centers across Europe and America and praised by the Council of Senior Scholars and the Permanent Committee for Scholarly Research and Ifta in Saudi Arabia. (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996, pp. iii-vi.)

3.3. Al-Hilali and Khan’s Differentiation Between Arabized and Original Terms

Al-Hilali, in collaboration with Khan, gave special attention to the issue of non-Arabic words in Qur’an, employing a methodical linguistic approach to non-Arabic words in Qur’an, employing a methodical linguistic approach to distinguish

between purely Arabic, borrowed (*dakhīl*), and Arabized (*mu'arrab*) vocabulary. His analysis combined textual understanding with a broad knowledge of Semitic and ancient languages.

3.3.1. Reliance on Early Scholars to Establish Loanword Origins

Their differentiation was not an innovation but grounded in earlier scholarship, particularly al-Suyūṭī's *al-Muzhir*, which lists non-Arabic word such as *istabraq* (brocade), *sijjīl* (baked clay), and *tūr* (mountain). Al-Hilali relied on these sources to provide linguistic origins in his translation. (El Soyouti, 1998)

3.3.2. Identification of Hebrew Proper Names

The translators treated Hebrew-origin proper names such as 'Ibrāhīm', 'Ishāq', 'Ya'qūb', and 'Mūsā' as non-Arabic terms preserved in the Quranic text. They retained these names in their original form in English but provided explanatory footnotes on their historical and linguistic backgrounds, such as: "*Moses – A prophet of Allah, who led the Israelites out of Egypt.*" (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996, p51). For example, in the verse "[He] pelted them with stones of hard clay (*sijjīl*)" (Al-Fīl: 4), they rendered *sijjīl* as: "*stones of baked clay (Sijjīl – a Persian word)*" and added in the footnote: "*This word is of Persian origin meaning baked or hard clay.*" (Op cit. p.843)

Similarly, in "*And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance.*" (Al-Raḥmān:9), they translated *al-qistās* as: "*the balance (Al-Qistās – a Roman or Greek loanword)*", noting its derivation from the Greek *zestos*, as previously observed by Ibn Jinnī. (Ibn Jinnī, 1999, p.351)

Unlike other translators who overlooked etymological distinctions, Al-Hilali and Khan were deliberate in clarifying foreign origins to prevent misinterpretation. For instance, they translated *tūr* as: "*Mount Tur (a non-Arabic name)*" explaining its Syriac or Hebrew roots and its association with the biblical Mount Sinai (Op cit., p.168). They also retained terms like 'Pharaoh,' 'Haman',' and —Qarun,'" explaining in the footnotes—e.g., for *Hāmān*—that it is a Quranic figure unrelated to the Haman in Book of Esther, thereby preserving its distinct Qur'anic significance. (Op cit. p239)

Their approach drew on linguistic authorities such as Ibn Duraid, Ibn Fāris, and al-Jawālīqī (*al-Mu'arrab min al-Kalām al-A'jamī*), enabling precise differentiation between pre-Islamic and Islamic borrowings and purely Arabic words. (Jawaliqi, 1969)

3.3.3. Linking Etymology to Exegetical Context

For al-Hilali and Khan, identifying a word's foreign origin was not a purely linguistic exercise; they integrated this knowledge into their exegetical work. For example, when translating *al-yamm* as "river or sea," they clarified that it was of

Coptic or Hebrew origin, referring specifically to the Nile in the context of Moses' story. (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996)

They also distinguished between naturalized loanword like *kitāb* (book) or *qalam* (pen), which had become deeply integrated into Arabic, and less familiar or specialized terms requiring explanation, a distinction inspired by Ibn Jinnī's methodology on assimilation through *usage* versus *assimilation* through linguistic adaptation. (Ibn Jinnī. 1999, p.255) Ultimately, their attention to etymology served a higher theological purpose: accurately conveying Qur'an's intended meanings to English readers without distortion or reductionism.

3.4. Use of Interpretive Translation with Etymological Grounding Instead of Literal Rendering

One of the salient features of Al-Hilali and Khan's translation is their preference for interpretive over literal translation—an approach driven by their recognition of the Quran's theological and linguistic complexity, especially regarding doctrinal and legal terms with no precise equivalents in English. This method was complemented by a rigorous etymological framework, which provided insight into the historical and linguistic backgrounds of Quranic terms, enhancing the translation's lexicographic value.

3.4.1. Interpretive Translation as a Principle

Al-Hilali and Khan maintained that the Quran, as a divine and miraculous text, cannot be translated word-for-word without compromising its meaning. Therefore, they restricted their work to conveying the *meanings* of the Quran, focusing on semantic intent rather than lexical form. They adopted interpretive translation (*tafsīrī*) to communicate the overall sense and theological purpose of each verse, often adding clarifying footnotes. For instance, in translating “*Guide us to the straight path*” (Al-Fātiḥa: 6), they wrote: “*Guide us to the Straight Way –i.e., Islam, monotheism, and the way of the Prophet.*” with a footnote explaining that the *straight path* refers to —the true religion of Allah encompassing creed and law.” . (Al-Hilali and Khan, 1996, p.5)

3.4.2. Interpretation Accompanying Translation

Al-Hilali and Khan frequently supplemented their translations with concise footnotes explaining complex Quranic terms, such as *ribā* (usury), *zakāh* (alms), *taqwā* (piety), and *nifāq* (hypocrisy). These notes drew on classical exegetical sources (e.g., Ibn Kathīr, al-Ṭabarī) and linguistic authorities (e.g., Al-Jawālīqī, Ibn Jinnī) to provide both a semantic and etymological grounding for each term. For example, the word *sijjīl* in “[He] pelted them with stones of hard clay” (Al-Fīl: 4) was translated as: “*stones of baked clay (Sijjīl – a Persian word meaning*

hard clay or baked bricks)." Here, the translation combines interpretive meaning (*baked clay*) with etymological annotation (*Persian origin*), merging semantic and lexical insight in a single rendering. (Op cit., p.843)

4. CONCLUSION

The study found that etymology is essential in examining non-Arabic words in *The Quran*, as it clarifies their linguistic origins and illuminates their cultural and historical backgrounds, thereby enhancing the accuracy of their interpretation in both Quranic and historical contexts. Analysis of the Hilali–Khan translation revealed an interpretive-etymological method that combines linguistic precision with theological clarity, often preserving certain Quranic terms in Arabic while explaining them in footnotes. This approach ensures the preservation of the Quranic identity of these expressions while maintaining accessibility for non-Arabic readers. The research also established that non-Arabic Quranic terms derive their semantic richness from their integration into Arabic prior to and during the revelation, reflecting diverse linguistic origins such as Persian, Hebrew, Syriac, and Greek. These terms contribute significant cultural, historical, and theological depth to the Quranic discourse, reinforcing its engagement with a broader human heritage while retaining its distinct Arabic character.

Overall, the research shows that non-Arabic Quranic terms are distinguished by their multilayered semantic depth, stemming from their foreign linguistic origins (Persian, Hebrew, Syriac, Greek, etc.) and their integration into the Arabic linguistic system before and during the Quranic revelation. These terms enrich the Quranic discourse with cultural, historical, and theological dimensions, reflecting the Quran's engagement with a wider human heritage while maintaining its clear Arabic identity. Thus, such terms serve not only as linguistic borrowings but as vehicles for profound conceptual meanings, crucial for a comprehensive understanding of the Quranic message.

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