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The Dilemma of the Translation Concept in Islamic Sources

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Keywords: traditional books (turath), quranic exegesis, arabic language, philosophy, academic rhetoric.

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The Dilemma of the Translation Concept in Islamic Sources

Solehah Yaacob[1]

Abstract- Epistemology is a theory of knowledge, especially with regards to its methods, validity, and scope; it is an investigation of what distinguishes that which needs to be justified as belief or opinion. In explaining the monotheistic law, the religious perspective looks at the Quranic epistemology as a theory of knowledge which is an absolutely primordial and ineluctable precept of the oneness of God as the prior premise. In explaining knowledge formation based on emergent, events the contemporary Islamic scholars have failed to incorporate substantively the Quranic methodology worldview in the form of epistemological analytics and its function. How to understand Quranic epistemology? The prerequisite is an understanding of the Arabic language, including syntax, morphology, rhetoric, and the ability to recite the Quran. Without these, Islamization of knowledge would regards as academic rhetoric. This research critically discusses issues on some blockages facing the Islamization agenda[1].

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I. Introduction

Epistemology is a theory of knowledge especially with regards to its methods, validity, and scope; it is an investigation of what distinguishes that which needs to be justified as the belief from opinion[2]. In explaining the monotheistic law, the religious perspective looks at the *tawhidi* epistemology as a theory of knowledge of the oneness of God. Which is to describe that the knowledge formation based on emergent situations are now interpretable by the *tawhidi* epistemology. However, contemporary Islamic scholars have failed to incorporate a substantive study of the *tawhidi* methodological worldview in the form of epistemological analytics and its function. Such as Faruqi in his *Tawhid* book leaving the book to speculate rather than provide the substantive analytics and foundational issues with applications which also promotes the Islamization of knowledge at the university level without demanding the Quranic epistemological originality to establish the Islamization of knowledge[3]. This epistemology – without a doubt – has created an Islamic culture and not Islamic knowledge. What is the difference between Islamization of knowledge and Islamization of culture? The Islamization deals with theory to propagate the concept while the Islamic culture is a model to be propagated. In other words, without a fundamental theory in the Islamization of knowledge, research on the theory is lacking, and it becomes an issue to be speculated. It is undeniable that it has the potential to produce a positive impact on society. However, this positive aspect becomes a nightmare when a superficial understanding of the Islamic culture and propagation leads to a misunderstanding of Islamic epistemologies.

II. The Problem of Translation Sources

The translation is a vital instrument to disseminate knowledge and serve as a platform in the academic world. The translated knowledge was transferred into different ways either via writing or verbal communication[4]. Both are recognized modes in the academic world. However, the ideal form of writing is in the form of `book`. Could you imagine how you would feel if the book you are reading supposedly to tell the truth contains concealed untruth or inadvertent error? The transfer of information from one form to another must be based on sincerity for the sake of promoting the truth. But, there will be an anxiety if a translator discussed the issue without having the ability in expressing ideas. Insufficient ability to transfer true knowledge to the next generations is disastrous and tragic resulting in half-cooked knowledge in the academic world. The role of translators is an important aspect in knowledge transfer. The traditional books in Islam or the Islamic sources were well written in Arabic classic. Unfortunately, very few scholars now days can directly refer and read the original from this kind of sources. The inability to draw information directly from Classic Arabic sources has dire consequences as the translation may not be consistent with the sources. This is not to deny the prominent role and contribution of translation sources in transferring the classical knowledge. Without the translation, many sources either in Arabic classic or standard or any other sources such

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[2] The New Oxford Dictionary of English, 1999, p.620.

[3] M.A.Choudry, *Tauhidi Epistemology and Its Implications, Economics, Finance, Sciences and Society*, UK: Cambridge School Publications, 2014, p.128.

[4] Solehah Yaacob, Linguistic Argumentation and Logic: An Alternative Method Approach in Arabic Grammar. Argument: Biannual Philosophical Journal, 3(2), 2013, pp. 409-410.

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as Greek and Latin would not be able to reach the new generations. However, a translation must be at an acceptable level to be useful. The flaw in translation stems from the inability to make appropriate accommodation from the language used and the loyalty to the contents of the text. Language and content are two different issues. It could probably be that language used in the translation is excellent but, unfortunately, the content is unsatisfactory and unreliable exemplified by the translation of a book `*Sirah an-Nabawiyyah*` by Ibn Ishaq[5] into English by Alfred Guillaume on the topic `The life of Muhammad`[6]. The language used is excellent, but the translator has twisted the fact stating that such as in the first section so chosen as mentioned by Abdul Latif Tibawi[7] on 'The Beginning of Christianity in Najran,'[8] in the paragraph, ريمح كولم رخآ is translated as 'the last of Yamani Kings,' which in this context refers to Faymiyun, and not to both him and his admirer Salih, is translated as 'they buried him,'[9] which should be 'he buried him.' For the phrase ضعب يف ماشلا 'somewhere in Syria' but Professor Guillaume has translated 'through Syria'; for برعلا ضرأ ضعب he has translated 'the land of the Arabs', and for نم قرايس برعلا he has simply translated 'a caravan.'[10] In another section 'The Affair of the Bani Qaynuqa.'[11] The word 'affair' is used wrongly 'attack'[12] in the table of contents. Dr. Tibawi suggested the word *muḥāṣara* 'siege'; which is more accurate than 'attack'. The mistranslation also mentioned in quoting al-Zuhri,[13] the expression used by Ibn Ishaq is *za'ama al-Zuhri* معزو نب ديعس نع يرهزلا بيسملا which means in this context 'al-Zuhri said on the authority of Sa'id b. Musayyab.' However, Professor Guillaume translated 'al-Zuhri alleged as from Sa'id …'[14] he dogmatically states in footnote that 'the verb implies grave doubt as to the speaker's veracity.'[15]

Another case in point was the translation of a book written by *al-Anbari `al-Insof Fi Masa`ila al-Khilaf`*[16] by Gotham Weil into German[17]. There is a factual error in his introduction where his translation gave the impression that the basic idea in *`al-Insof Fi Masa`ila al-Khilaf`* stated that the Kufan School was not established by the Kufans. His evidence was that all the controversial issues among the grammarians especially between Kisaai, Fara`, Khalil and Sibawayh were traced to their famous teacher Yunus Bin Habib the Basran. His arguments on the evidence mentioned by al-Anbari in the book indicated that the Kufans followed the Basrans. In fact, he only mentioned not more than four times out of one hundreds twenty-one cases! In other cases, the critiques on the Arab genealogy were flawed. The Arabs can be divided into three major groups; namely the 'lost Arabs' (*al-'arab al-ba'idah*), second the 'true Arabs' (*al-'arab al-`aribah*), and third the Arabized Arabs (*al-'arab al-musta`rabah*). Evidence of these divisions are recorded in Ibn Ishaq's and Ibn Hisham's *Biography of the Prophet* (*al-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah)*[18] and Tabari's *History of the Communities and Kingdoms* (*Ta'rikh al-Umam wa al-Muluk*)[19]. Most of the evidence were narrated by prominent scholars, collectors, and biographers such as 'Abd al-Salam al-Jumahi[20], Ibn Nadim[21], Ibn Ishaq[22], Hassan bin Thabit[23] and etc. However, the Orientalist claims that other scholars such as 'Abd al-Salam al-Jumahi (a critic of early poetry) disagreed with Ibn Ishaq that poems by Ad and Thamud proved the existence of the Arabs as a people before the time of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s). The biographer Ibn Nadim considered the verses cited by Ibn Ishaq as fraudulent and not genuine[24]. It is a well-established fact that the corpus of ancient Arabic poetry had suffered a lot at the hands of forgers, plagiarists, misguided philologists, and dishonest narrators. For instance, a number of poems were falsely ascribed to Hassan bin Thabit, Prophet`s poet. In fact, early modern Western scholarship has studied the history of the Arab people prior to Islam, as evidenced by Caussin de Perceval's *Historie des Arabes avant l`Islamisme* (1848) which took its interested readers back to the forebears of the Muslim tribes in Arabia[25]. Another interesting work on Arab antiquity is Muller's *Realencyklopadie der Altertumswissenschaften* (1896). Even though the information contained therein has to be considered outdated, it remains a useful source for the study of the classical texts on Arabia[26]. An attempt at compiling a

[5] See Ibn Ishaq, *al- Sirah an-Nabawiyah, edit. Ahmad Farid al-Mazidi, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah,* 2004.
[6] Alfred Guillame, *The life of Muhammad*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
[7] http://icraa.org/the-life-of-muhammad-a-critique-of-guillaumes-english-translation/
[8] Alfred Guillame, *The life of Muhammad*, pp. 14-16.
[9] Ibid, p.15.
[10] Ibid, pp.15-16.
[11] Ibid, pp. 363-364.
[12] http://icraa.org/the-life-of-muhammad-a-critique-of-guillaumes-english-translation/
[13] Alfred Guillame, *The life of Muhammad*, p. 183.
[14] Ibid, p. 183.
[15] Ibid, p. 183 in footnote no. 4.
[16] See the introduction of *al-Insof Fi Masaila al-Khilaf* by al-Anbari, 2002.
[17] The first translation of *al-Insof Fi Masa`ila al-Khilaf`* into Germany Leiden Publisher 1913. See Introduction in *al-Insof Fi Masa`ila al-Khilaf*, p, 11. Also see Shawqi Daif, al-Madaris an-Nahwiyyah, pp.155-159.
[18] See Ibn Hisham's *Biography of the Prophet (al-Sirah an-Nabawiyah)* Ibn Hisham, 1996. *al-Sirah an-Nabawiyah,* edit. Umar Abd Salam Tadmor, Beirut: Darul al-Kitab al-Arabi.
[19] See At-Tabari, *Tarikh al-Umam wa al- Muluk,* Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, 1979.
[20] See 'Abd al-Salam al-Jumahi, *Ùabaqét as-ShuÑara'*, edit. Al-Lujnah al-Jami`yah, Beirut: Dar an-Nahdah al-Arabiyah, 1968.
[21] See Ibn Nadim, *Al-Fihrist*. Tunis: Dar al- al-Ma`arif, 1994.
[22] See Ibn Ishaq, *al-Sirah an-Nabawiyah,* edit. Ahmad Farid al-Mazidi, Beirut: Dar al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyah, 2004.
[23] See Hassan bin Thabit, Hassan Thabit, *Diwan Hassan Thabit, edit. Wailid `Urfat, Beirut: Dar as-Salir,* 1974.
[24] Solehah Yaacob, The Origin of Arab: A Critical Evaluation of The Sources, Vol 58, no 2, 2014, p. 95.
[25] Jan Retso, *The Arabs in Antiquity*, London: Routledge Curzon, 2003, p.105.
[26] Ibid, p.107.

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complete survey of Arabs before Islam was written by D.O`Leary (1927) which is noteworthy for its inclusion of the city cultures which existed in ancient Yemen [27]. Montgomery (1934) wrote his history of Arabia from an exclusive Old Testamentary viewpoint[28]. Unfortunately, the study of pre-Islamic Arabia conducted by West scholars has suffered much from the point of its desired objectivity as it was done within such a narrow framework. This situation had occurred because the orientalist had researched well in the field but they were not detached from their needs and intentions. Regrettably, it did not fully reflect the Muslim World.

III. The Major Sources in Islam

The collection of Islamic sources under subject classification was scrutinized by Muhammad Ujaj al-Khatib [29]. These collections and divisions could be considered as the most pristine knowledge from its fundamental sources: Qur`an, Tafsir, Qur`anic Sciences and Qur`anic Studies, Hadith and its Sciences, Biography of the Prophet, Theology and Schools, Jurisprudence, Principles of jurisprudence and history of legislation, Islamic history and translations, Civilization of Islam, Current issues in Muslim World, Arabic Language and Linguistic, University Publication on Islamic studies, Dictionaries of countries (معاجم البلدان) and Bio-Bibliographical References. From these branches of Islamic sciences divisions, we found a massive source covering various angles of knowledge in different perspectives and outlooks. From these viewpoints, millions of books either printed or electronic sources have been produced. It is undeniable that the sources are monumental. The west has to accept that much of the vast knowledge of World Civilization owes its origin from the brilliance and unrelenting efforts of Muslim Scholars. The sources indicate that the titles are not only of single books but in a lot of cases the volumes are enormous. Islamic sciences stand as one of the major references to world knowledge. However, without some excellent strategies in mastering Arabic, the sources in the Islamic sciences would not emerge in its full stature and work produced by the Muslim World would be undervalued.

IV. The Relationship Between Islamization of Knowledge and the Major Islamic Sources

The greatest task confronting the Muslim Ummah is to establish the Islamic curriculum. The present dualism in Muslim education is marked by bifurcation into Islamic and secular system. Both of these systems must be integrated with the philosophy from established Islamic sources providing as the main platform. The Islamic institution comprises elementary, secondary, college, and universities must focus on *Tawhid* by introducing the Quranic way of life without ignoring the contemporary subjects. The notion that Islamic schools merely serve for the teaching of memorization of *Qur'an* and teaching religious subjects such as Hadith, Fiqh, Tawhid, etc is a misconception that should be corrected. Hence, the stereotyped style of teaching in religious studies should be modified creatively. To uphold a more refined system, the contemporary study of Islamic civilization is a vital project[30].

The Islamic Institution should be well preserved and prepared for micro teaching of blue print on Kitab Turath (traditional books) without ignoring the modern system that could be merged. How to prepare for the best teaching of Kitab Turat`s blue print? The understanding of `term of epistemology` must be focused on derivation of the term itself. There must be a major consideration with regard to persistent changing of morpho system in the sentence of Islamic sources. It must be regarded as an important aspect to look into. The great Islamic scholars not only having the general principles of knowledge as their benchmark but the ability to expand the ideas via critical thinking supported by their strong of Islamic identity. The morpho could not be separated from syntax. Both of the language concepts has to be merged together to become one. The inner process of critical thinking involves all faculty of the mind such as brain, vein, brocas`s area, wernick`s area, axon, dendrite, filaments, synapse, and etc. The cognition is processed through the inborn rules hypothesize through the representation of the world in the mind by serial processing of abstract and fixed symbols [31]. Chomsky believes that this process presupposes the inborn existence of mind through the cognitive process which has been influenced by the surroundings [32]. The brain contains thousands of neurons connected in parallel which inter neural nets. Each neuron is constituted of a body and two kinds of filaments responsible for the net formation; they are the axioms which are electrical transmitters connecting a neuron body to synapse and other neurons[33]. When an axon reaches a dendrite, there is a space in which chemical reactions are processed. Synapse reactions are responsible for learning. As a result of the above case, the synthesis of philosophical grammar and structural linguistics which introduced by mentalist begin

[27] Ibid, p.106.
[28] Ibid, p. 106.
[29] Muhammad Ujaj al-Khatib, *Lamahat Fi al-Maktabati wa al-Bahsi wa al-Masadir,* 1969, pp. 123-364.
[30] Al Faruqi, Islamization of Knowledge, IIIT 1982, p. 11.
[31] Marcelino Poersch, *A new paradigm for learning language: Connectionist Artificial Inteligence*, Linguagem & Ensino, Vol. 8, No. 1, 2005 (161-183)pp. 165-168.
[32] Solehah Yaacob, *Mentalist vs Behaviorist: Chomsky`s Linguistic Theory*, GJAT, Vol. 6, Issue 1, ISSN: 2016, (pp. 7-9).
[33] ma.ultranet/Biologypages/neurons.html.

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to refute the behavioral sciences which are not `sciences of mind` which avoiding the metaphysics issues but only `discovery the procedures` apparently. Language is the `mirror of mind` which construct the data with innate property[34]. The intellectual process of connection with the subject and predicate, either direct or indirect, has to deal with the phrase structure arrangement of Immediate Constituents (IC) so called the concept of cohesion by al-Jurjānī [35] (1960), the concept is relying on meaning construction understanding as to the determining factor in the quality of a text to a linguist dimension by considering it not in isolation but always as realized within a coherent text composition or cohesive unit, so he defines this principle in purely linguistic terms[36], as mentioned: "The purpose of cohesive speech is not the sequence of words, but the meaning significance has to be harmonized as what the mind supposes it to be" [37]. Then, let us analyze some Quranic verses in Arabic NOT the translation; the example is *māliki yawmi-ddīn* 'The Only Owner and the Only Ruling Judge of the Day of Recompense' [38]. Three of the recitations save the structure of the word *mālik* 'owner', and determine the semantic changes according to the difference between the syntactical governors. The first recitation is in the genitive case as a qualificative of the majesty noun *Allāh* 'God' in a previous verse [39], so it is pronounced *māliki* as a governee of the particle of genitive *li* 'to' which is the governor of the majesty noun *Allāh* because grammarians say: "The governor of the qualificative is the governor of the qualified"[40], thus, the meaning, in this case, is to qualify God as The Only Owner and the Only Ruling Judge of the Day of Recompense, and the governor is oral. Another recitation is in the nominative case *māliku* as a predicate of an eliminated primate, so the governor here is moral i.e., the meaning of primacy, as a popular syntactical opinion among grammarians[41], and the meaning is to inform that God is The Only Owner and the Only Ruling Judge of the Day of Recompense. The pronounced *mālika* in the accusative case is the third recitation. The word *mālik* in this case, is a called, and its governor is oral; it is the eliminated particle of calling *yā*, thus, the speech in this case relates to the next verse[42] to give the meaning of calling God to tell that He Alone we worship, and He Alone we ask for help for each and everything[43].

Above, the governees examples are nouns, but in the second example, the governee is verb, as mentioned in verse: *lillāhi mā fissamāwāti wa mā fil'ardi wa'in tubdō mā fī anfusikum aw tukhfōhu yuhāsibkum bihillāhu fayaghfiru liman yashāᶜu wa yuᶜathibu man yashāᶜu wallahu alā kulli shaᶜin Qadīr* 'To God belongs all that is in the Heavens and all that is on the earth, and whether you disclose what is in your own selves or conceal it, God will call you to account for it. Then He forgives whom He wills and punishes whom He wills, and God can do all things'[44]. There are three recitations of both of the two verbs: *yaghfir* 'forgives' and *yuᶜathib* 'punishes', with attention to the second verb *yuᶜathib* is attracted to the first verb *yaghfir*, so the governor of the first verb is the governor of the second verb in each recitation. The famous recitation is by nominating the two verbs, the verb *yaghfiru* is nominated for the meaning of resumption, and the governor is moral; it is the denudation of accusative and apocopative particles. Semantically, this nominative recitation means that the forgiveness and punishment are not parts of the accounting by God, i.e., forgiveness, punishment, and accounting are different acts of God. Also the accusative recitation *yaghfira* gives the meaning of nominative recitation, but here the governor of the first verb is oral, it is the eliminated particle of accusative *an*. The third recitation is the apocopate case *yaghfir* as governees of the particle of conditional *in*, because it is attracted to the answer of the condition *yuhāsib* 'accounts', so the governor here is oral, and semantically, the meaning is that the forgiveness and punishment are parts of the accounting by God, i.e. the forgiveness and punishment are the accounting of God[45].

The above explicitly demonstrates that syntax influences the relation between the words of a given phrase, and this explanation is specifically focused on analysing the function of case endings in a sentence in Arabic. Without strong grounding in syntax, morphology and semantic the philosophy of linguistic could not elaborate on the intricacies involved and the interpretation would only be in the form of `general principle of the knowledge`. And we notice that relying on this kind of surface interpretation without the benefit of deep structure analysis would result in generalization

[34] Solehah Yaacob, Alternative Paradigm For Language Acquisition, publication in Open Journal of Modern Linguistics, Scientific Research Publication, 4(3), 2014a, pp. 1-2.
[35] Al-Jurjani, A. Q., Dalail al-I`jaz. S. M. R. Redha (Ed.). Maktabah Muḥammad Ali Subaiḥ wa Awladuhu, Egypt, Cairo, 1960, p. 256.
[36] Veerstegh, K., Landmarks in Linguistic Thought 111. Routledge, England, London, 1997, p. 119.
[37] Al-Jurjani, A. Q., Dalail al-I`jaz, pp. 49-50.
[38] Al-Fātiha 4.
[39] Al-Fātiha 2: *Al-hamdu lillahi rabbil ᶜālamīn* 'All the praises and thanks be to God The Lord of al-ᶜālamīn: mankind, jinn and all the exists'.
[40] Ibn Al- Anbari. *Al-Insaf fī Masāᶜil Al-Khilāf,* Jawda Mabrōk & Ramadan Abduttawāb (eds.), Cairo: Library of
Al-Khānjī, 2002, Vol. 1, p. 44.
[41] Ibid, p.40.

[42] Al-Fātiha 5: *Iyyāka naᶜbudu wa iyyāka nastaᶜīnu* 'You Alone we worship, and You Alone we ask for help for each and everything'.
[43] Al-Khatīb, Abdullatīf, *MuᶜjamAal-Qirāʾāt*, edn. 1. Damascus: Saᶜduddīn Press, 2002, Vo;. 1,
pp. 9-13.
[44] Al-Baqarah 284.
[45] Al-Khatīb, Abdullatīf, Vol. 1, pp. 429-430.

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that would pose as serious impediment to the Islamization of knowledge enterprise.

V. Conclusion

This study may be seen as a revisiting to reveal a perspective in understanding the *Usul* or the blue print behind the origin of philosophy of knowledge. This kind of investigation or discovery demands abidance to a number of principles constituting the essence of Islam and providing a link between theory and method. We are of the conviction that without mastering Arabic the Islamic sources of knowledge would not be fully deployed as in order to transcend to its pristine essence systematic, appropriate and accurate knowledge disciplines are required. Thus, towards instilling the vision of Islam firmly blue print researches of Islamic Civilization is compulsory as drawing the essence of knowledge from the glorious and enormous Islamic sources requires serious efforts, zeal and sincerity.

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