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Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,
Linguística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

Año 35, 2019, Especial N°

20

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

ISSN 1012-1537/ ISSNe: 2477-9385

Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



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Islamic Terminology: Translation and Context

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Abstract

Islamic texts such as The Glorious Quran, The Noble Prophetic Tradition, and the wealth of literatures written by Muslim scholars throughout the centuries, have been preserved in Arabic, their original language. Readers of Islamic literatures, written in non-Arabic languages, are not always certain that the translated Arabic terminologies have indeed kept their intended meanings. This challenge is also observed in the translated texts from Arabic to other languages. Pointing to this challenge does not make the Islamic non-Arabic texts useless; it simply makes them not fully reliable. Readers accordingly should always consult the Arabic texts and their correspondent contexts; otherwise their conclusion may very well be wrong. The reason for such challenge stems from the limitations of the non-Arabic languages compared to the Arabic language; its richness, grammar, and eloquence. Another reason for such challenge is that some Arabic terms were taken out of their intended contexts; something that led to distortion and corruption of the intended meaning. Readers often are left to reach the wrong understanding. In this paper, four Arabic terminologies were chosen from The Quran and analyzed within their original Arabic linguistic meaning, their Islamic definition, 'Istelah' and within the context of each term wherever it may appear. The benefit of such analysis is to provide the new reverts to Islam and those who teach Islam to non-Arab people, a frame of reference through which their comprehension of the text they read is in line with what the original Quranic context had intended the reader to grasp. Clarifying some of the misconceptions, about Islam, that have spread outside the Muslim World, and even within it, is another benefit of this work. The goal is to better understand Islam as a way of life, and to hopefully give a clearer opportunity for future generations to coexist peacefully.

Terminología Islámica: Traducción y Contexto

Resumen:

Los textos islámicos como El glorioso Corán, La tradición profética del Noble y la riqueza de la literatura escrita por eruditos musulmanes a lo largo de los siglos, se han conservado en árabe, su idioma original. Los lectores de la literatura islámica, escritos en idiomas no árabes, no siempre están seguros de que las terminologías árabes traducidas hayan mantenido sus significados. Este desafío también se observa en los textos traducidos del árabe a otros idiomas. Señalar este desafío no hace que los textos islámicos no árabes sean inútiles; simplemente los hace no completamente confiables. En consecuencia, los lectores siempre deben consultar los textos árabes y sus contextos correspondientes; de lo contrario, su conclusión bien podría estar equivocada. La razón de tal desafío proviene de las limitaciones de los idiomas no árabes en comparación con el idioma árabe; su riqueza, gramática y elocuencia. Otra razón para tal desafío es que algunos términos árabes fueron sacados de sus contextos previstos; algo que condujo a la distorsión y corrupción del significado pretendido. Los lectores a menudo se dejan llevar a un entendimiento equivocado. En este documento, se eligieron cuatro terminologías árabes del Corán y se analizaron dentro de su significado lingüístico árabe original, su definición islámica, “Istelah” y en el contexto de cada término donde sea que aparezca. El beneficio de dicho análisis es proporcionar las nuevas reversiones al Islam y a quienes enseñan el Islam a personas no árabes, un marco de referencia a través del cual su comprensión del texto que leen está en línea con lo que el contexto coránico original había pretendido para el lector. para captar. Aclarar algunos de los conceptos erróneos, sobre el Islam, que se han extendido fuera del mundo musulmán, e incluso dentro de él, es otro beneficio de este trabajo. El objetivo es comprender mejor el Islam como una forma de vida y, con suerte, brindar una oportunidad más clara para que las generaciones futuras coexistan pacíficamente.

Introduction:

The Quran, the word of Allah (sw), was revealed upon the heart of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) by the Angel Gabriel:

“Say, Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel - it is [none but] he who has brought the Qur’an down upon your heart, [O Muhammad], by permission of Allah, confirming that which was before it and as guidance and good tidings for the believers.” [2:97] (1)

“It took The Quran 23 years to be revealed; each section of it, small or large, was revealed according to the need of the Muslim community at the time. After each new revelation, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and His companions made sure to have comprehended it, memorized it, written it, and applied it in their daily lives. They learned The Quran and how to practice it at the same time.” (10)

Allah (sw) Had guaranteed the preservation of The Quran:

“Indeed, it is We who sent down the Qur'an and indeed, We will be its guardian.” [15:9] (1)

The last 1400 years, since The Quran was revealed, have proven such preservation; the word of Allah, and who is more truthful than the word of Allah?

“Allah - there is no deity except Him. He will surely assemble you for [account on] the Day of Resurrection, about which there is no doubt. And who is more truthful than Allah in statement.” [4:87] (1)

Further, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was instructed to explain The Quran to people:

“[We sent them] with clear proofs and written ordinances. And We revealed to you the message that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.” [16:44] (1)

The authentic sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) was part of what Allah (sw) had revealed to the Prophet in order to make clear to people what was revealed to them:

53:3 “Nor does he speak from [his own] inclination.” [53:3] (1)

- 53:4 “It is not but a revelation revealed.” [53:4] (1)

- 3:31

“Say, [O Muhammad], If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.” [3:31] (1)

- 3:32

“Say, Obey Allah and the Messenger.” But if they turn away - then indeed, Allah does not like the disbelievers.” [3:32] (1)

The Quran was revealed and preserved in the Arabic language. Allah (sw) Has reminded us that choosing Arabic to convey His word was to make it possible for people to comprehend it:

- 12:2

“Indeed, We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur'an that you might understand.” [12:2] (1)

- 41:44

“And if We had made it a non-Arabic Qur’an, they would have said, ‘Why are its verses not explained in detail [in our language]? Is it a foreign [recitation] and an Arab [messenger]?’ Say, It is, for those who believe, a guidance and cure. And those who do not believe - in their ears is deafness, and it is upon them blindness. Those are being called from a distant place.” [41:44] (1)

Allah (sw) had told us the attributes of this Book; there is no doubt about it and that it is a guidance to those conscious of Allah:

- 2:2

“This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah.” [2:2] (1) It guides to the best [in every aspect]:

- 17:9

“Indeed, this Qur’an guides to that which is most suitable and gives good tidings to the believers who do righteous deeds that they will have a great reward.” [17:9] (1)

The Quran even tells the people of the book that it relates to them most of what they dispute about; a clear invitation to them to read it and try to comprehend its content:

- 27:76

“Indeed, this Qur’an relates to the Children of Israel most of that over which they disagree.” [27:76] (1)

It has a challenge to all people to contemplate its content, clearly stating that had it been from other than Allah, we would have found a lot of discrepancies in it:

- 4:82

“Then do they not reflect upon the Qur’an? If it had been from [any] other than Allah, they would have found within it much contradiction.” [4:82] (1)

- 47:24

“Then do they not reflect upon the Qur’an, or are there locks upon [their] hearts?” [47:24] (1)

Yes, these locks are playing a major role in preventing many Muslims these days from understanding the word of Allah. These locks that we by our own making (sins) have caused our hearts to be harder and harder. Allah (sw) is calling upon us to free ourselves from these locks and show a level of seriousness toward the word of Allah.

The Quran was not written by a human. Human-authored books are not perfect because humans are not perfect. Allah is The Creator and He knows which way of life suits His creations:

- 67:14

“Does He who created not know, while He is the Subtle, the Acquainted?”
[67:14] (1)

Modern humanity has tried all ways of lives and ideologies, but they are yet to try the message of the Quran. They will haste to adopt it only when they realize that its content is perfect because the One who revealed it is The Wise, The Most Knowledgeable, The Independent.

Until such time, The Quran will continue to be attacked, naturally from orientalist and non-Muslims in general, but also from within the Muslim community.

The difficulty mastering the Arabic language is one reason that is playing in the hands of the Islamophobs. The methodology interpreting the Arabic text is another problem. The attempt to translate the text is a third challenge. The common denominator among these three factors is understanding the Quranic terms and concepts within their own intended contexts, after realizing whether such terms are used after their linguistic meanings or after their Islamic definitions.

Arabs until recently used to be fluent in Arabic and had no problem grasping the meaning directly, especially for those who were familiar with the text of The Quran. With the modern fast communication tools, people with destructive agendas started using these tools to attack the Arabic language, Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) and The Quran. (11, 12)

The Quran continues to be the sacred word of Allah, preserved, and complete. Variations in understanding its terminologies have proven to be a major challenge in this modern battle between truth and falsehood.

In this paper, four Quranic concepts were analyzed; mainly the Sallat (roughly translated as the prayer,) Al-Imaan and Al-Kufr Al_Ihssaan) and Al-Jihad (.) With each concept, the linguistic meaning is analyzed, the Islamic definition is given and how the context each term appears in affects the final comprehension of the text. Many more Quranic terminologies may be analyzed, but the four that are considered here represent a spectrum of Quranic topics, the Salaat represents the Ebadaat (the worships), the Iman and Kufr represent the Faith (Aqeeda,) Al-Ihssaan represents the social dimension of the message of the Quran, while Al-Jihad represents a concept that affects every aspect of a Muslim's life in peace and at war. The impact of the variations in understanding the terminologies was also given and analyzed.

Assalaat (ةالصلا)

Linguistically, Assalaat means the duaa (:) the supplication. This meaning appears in the Quran in many places:

- 9:103

“Take, [O, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase and invoke [Allah ‘s blessings] upon them. Indeed, your invocations are reassurance for them. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing.” [9:103] (1)

This translation is taken from Sahih Translation (1;) it uses “invocation of Alla’s blessings” as a translation for Salaat. (1) Other translators use similar words, though not identical, but all reflect the linguistic meaning of the Salaat. You may see for example: “...and pray on their behalf. Verily your prayers are a source of security for them.....”(2) “..and invoke Allah for them, your invocations are a source of security....”(3) “..and pray for them; for your prayer will give them comfort...”(4.) “...and pray for them, thy prayer is indeed a source of tranquility for them...”(5,) “... and pray for them, surely your prayers bring peace to them...”(6,) “... and bless them, Truly thy blessings are a comfort for them...”(7.) Verses 2:157 and 33:56, among others, also reflect this linguistic meaning of salaat.(1)

On the other hand, the Islamic definition, ‘Istelah’) of the word salaat is the “designated structured worship that a Muslim is obligated to perform five times a day. Each salaat starts with Takbeer) and ends with Tasleem It also involves bowing down prostration Quranic recitations, invoking blessings, and prayers” (16) “Performing these five daily salaats is the second pillar of Islam.” (8)

As one may notice here; this Islamic definition of salaat in this specified form includes, but not wholly equals to, the linguistic meaning of it. “Translating Salaat into prayer or duaa comes under ‘naming the part while the whole is meant;’ something acceptable to appear in Arabic texts. Example of this is: Al-Haj is called Arafa () though standing on Arafa is only one pillar of the journey of Al-Haj.” (13)

This meaning of salaat appears in the Quran even more frequently than the linguistic meaning, and “every time the word salaat is mentioned, Muslims immediately think of this particular elaborate structured form of worship; not of the linguistic one.” (16) Further; “whenever such meaning is praised, we notice that the action of the salaat is preceded by the verb *ما أقام*, or one of its derivatives. This verb is translated into establish or perform:” (17)

- 4:162

“But those firm in knowledge among them and the believers believe in what has been revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what was revealed before you. And the establishers of prayer [especially] and the givers of zakah and the believers in Allah and the Last Day - those We will give a great reward.” [4:162.] (1)

- 2:110

“And establish prayer and give zakah, and whatever good you put forward for yourselves - you will find it with Allah. Indeed, Allah of what you do, is Seeing.” [2:110.] (1)

2:277

“Indeed, those who believe and do righteous deeds and establish prayer and give zakah will have their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve.” [2:277.] (1)

The verb perform is sometimes used instead of the verb establish (3.) On the other hand, when the verb أقام does not precede the word salaah, the context then reflects a negative attribution.

“And what prevents their expenditures from being accepted from them but that they have disbelieved in Allah and in His Messenger and that they come not to prayer except while they are lazy and that they do not spend except while they are unwilling.” [9:54.] (1)

“And their prayer at the House was not except whistling and handclapping. So taste the punishment for what you disbelieved.” [8:35.] (1)

The use of the verb أقام clearly reflects that the salaah is meant to be performed with specified movements, duaa, and recitation; not only duaa. Therefore, the translation of the word salaah into prayer is not accurate. It in fact creates some confusion especially for non-Muslims, new converts to Islam, and even for some new generations of Muslims who have melted in non-Muslim societies, yet they still call themselves Muslims. Putting things into perspective, the word prayer reflects the salaah minus the ritual aspect of it. It reduces salaah into duaa; something a Muslim may engage in outside the salaah. The word salaah as it is Islamically defined does not have a specified term that may correspond to in the English language. Translators therefore use the closest to it which is prayer; they have no other choice. Readers therefore need to consult an Islamic source where the correct explanation of the Arabic term الصلاة is given.

Salaah is not unique in such difficulty; terminologies such as Zakat, Hajj, Saum, Jihad, Imaan, Kufir, and many more; need elaborate clarification before the reader of the translated text may draw his or her conclusion. The English Language is simply limited in this respect and cannot accommo-

date a direct word-to-word translation of some of these Islamic terms. Other languages have similar limitations. Understanding the context where these terms appear is also essential to draw our conclusion.

Al-Imaan (إيمان) and Al-Kufr (كفر)

Linguistically, Al-Imaan has two meanings; one is Attasdeeq () believing in:

“They said, ‘O our father, indeed we went racing each other and left Joseph with our possessions, and a wolf ate him. But you would not believe us, even if we were truthful.’” [12:17] (1)

The other linguistic meaning is Attameen () giving security:

“Who has fed them, [saving them] from hunger and made them safe, [saving them] from fear.” [106:4] (1)

Islamically, “Al-Imaan is uttering by the tongue, believing in the heart, and acting upon it by the limbs. Al-Imaan has six pillars: Believing in Allah, His Angels, His Books, His Messengers, The Hereafter, and the Qadar from Allah. The one who fully fulfills this definition is called Mumin () a believer.” (9)

On the other hand, Al-Kufr, according to the language is the covering, hiding, or concealing. The farmer in the Arabic language is a kafir:

“Know that the life of this world is but amusement and diversion and adornment and boasting to one another and competition in increase of wealth and children - like the example of a rain whose [resulting] plant growth pleases the tillers; then it dries and you see it turned yellow; then it becomes [scattered] debris. And in the Hereafter is severe punishment and forgiveness from Allah and approval. And what is the worldly life except the enjoyment of delusion.” [57:20] (1)

The English word cover corresponds to the Arabic word kafar (كفر). (18)

The meaning of al-Kufr in the Islamic context is derived from its linguistic meaning. Al-Kufr is opposite to Al-Imaan; and al-Kafir is the one who conceals the truth about The Creator, denies His existence, unthankful of His bounties, or the one who violates one or more of the pillars of Al-Imaan mentioned above. (19)

Some people have confused their understanding of Al-Iman and Al-Kufr; example of which the claim that in order to achieve salvation, it is enough to believe in Allah, and it is not necessary to believe in Muhammad (pbuh) as a prophet; or to believe in Allah, believe in Muhammad (pbuh) as a prophet, but it is not necessary to follow what Muhammad (pbuh) had brought from Allah. Again, translation and taking the Arabic text out of its context are the reason behind such confusion. Here are few examples

of Al-Iman, Al-Kufr, and how the Quranic text is clear about the contrast between them:

“And whoever desires other than Islam as religion - never will it be accepted from him, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.” [3:85] (1)

“They say, Be Jews or Christians [so] you will be guided. Say, Rather, [we follow] the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth, and he was not of the polytheists.” [2:135] (1)

“Say, [O believers], We have believed in Allah and what has been revealed to us and what has been revealed to Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the Descendants and what was given to Moses and Jesus and what was given to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [in submission] to Him.” [2:136] (1)

“So if they believe in the same as you believe in, then they have been [rightly] guided; but if they turn away, they are only in dissension, and Allah will be sufficient for you against them. And He is the Hearing, the Knowing.” [2:137] (1)

“Indeed, those who disbelieve in Allah and His messengers and wish to discriminate between Allah and His messengers and say, “We believe in some and disbelieve in others,” and wish to adopt a way in between.” [4:150] (1)

“Those are the disbelievers, truly. And We have prepared for the disbelievers a humiliating punishment.” [4:151] (1)

“But they who believe in Allah and His messengers and do not discriminate between any of them - to those He is going to give their rewards. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful.” [4:152] (1)

It is important here to stress that these Quranic texts, and many more, though give us a clear description about who is a Mumin and who is a Kafir, they in no way give a license to Muslims to mistreat non-Muslims or vice versa. There is no correlation between the word kafir and a license to mistreat him or her. Muslims and non-Muslims have lived and peacefully coexisted since the very early Muslim community. In fact, the Quran stresses on the peaceful coexistence among Muslims and people of different beliefs: (20)

“Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes - from being righteous toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.” [60:8] (1)

Allah The Almighty Had honored all children of Adam, regardless of their belief, their skin color, or their other attributes:

“And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them of the good things and preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference.” [17:70] (1)

Further, Allah The Almighty had warned those who talk on behalf of Allah something they have no knowledge of:

“Say, My Lord has only forbidden immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed - and sin, and oppression without right, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down authority, and that you say about Allah that which you do not know.” [7:33] (1)

Confusing these two terms, al-Kufr and al-Imaan, gives very wrong messages; to Muslims and non-Muslims alike. If following the message Muhammad (pbuh) had brought from Allah is not part of al-Imaan, then Muslims will find no need to do dawa (to call for the path of Allah.) The efforts of the companions of the Prophet (pbuh) and of those countless of Muslims who came after them will also go in vein! This is absolutely and totally unrealistic; it in fact goes against how Muslims throughout their 1400 years history have understood and practiced. Even the Arabic language, in which The Quran was revealed, would not accommodate such confusion. Non-Muslims on the other hand would be content with what they have and find no need to be receptive to the message of The Quran.

Al-Ihssaan (انصاحاً)

Linguistically, Al-Ihssaan is the protection or shielding. (13)

“They will not fight you all except within fortified cities or from behind walls. Their violence among themselves is severe. You think they are together, but their hearts are diverse. That is because they are a people who do not reason.” [59:14] (1)

It also means saving: - 12:48

“Then will come after that seven difficult [years] which will consume what you saved for them, except a little from which you will store.” [12:48] (1)

In the Islamic context, Al-Ihssaan carries the meaning the context dictates. It could mean guarding the chastity:

“And [the example of] Mary, the daughter of ‘Imran, who guarded her chastity, so We blew into [her garment] through Our angel, and she believed in the words of her Lord and His scriptures and was of the devoutly obedient.” [66:12] (1)

Al-Muhssanaat () could mean the married women, the free unmarried women, the chaste unfree women, the married unfree women, and the free unmarried women. The following verses include all of these meanings:

“And [also prohibited to you are all] married women except those your right hands possess. [This is] the decree of Allah upon you. And lawful to you are [all others] beyond these, [provided] that you seek them [in marriage] with [gifts from] your property, desiring chastity, not unlawful sexual intercourse. So for whatever you enjoy [of marriage] from them, give them their due compensation as an obligation. And there is no blame upon you for what you mutually agree to beyond the obligation. Indeed, Allah is ever Knowing and Wise.” [4:24] (1)

“And whoever among you cannot [find] the means to marry free, believing women, then [he may marry] from those whom your right hands possess of believing slave girls. And Allah is most knowing about your faith. You [believers] are of one another. So marry them with the permission of their people and give them their due compensation according to what is acceptable. [They should be] chaste, neither [of] those who commit unlawful intercourse randomly nor those who take [secret] lovers. But once they are sheltered in marriage, if they should commit adultery, then for them is half the punishment for free [unmarried] women. This [allowance] is for him among you who fears sin, but to be patient is better for you. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.” [4:25] (1)

As mentioned above, each meaning of () is dictated by the context it appears in. This of course further dictates the interpretation of what the text means, and then the Fiqh ruling should follow.

For example, one may ask: How did we decide that the last word of () that appears in verse 4:25 mean to be free [unmarried] women? If we read the whole verse, we see that the punishment commanded by Allah for those married unfree women who commit adultery is to be half of the punishment of () deserve. If we decide that those () are the free married women whose punishments when they commit adultery is stoning to death, then we would have a problem answering the question: what is half of stoning to death? This does not make too much sense; as death cannot be divided. Then the only way that fits the context is to understand that this word () means the free unmarried women. This category, if commit adultery, deserve one hundred lashes, something that can be divided and accordingly the text is clearly understood and the Fiqh ruling is easily drawn.

The story does not end here; some, in order to present Islam as not so harsh, interpret the term (تانص حملا) to refer to the free married women

and since the verse of stoning does not appear in the Quran, and in order for the punishment to be divided, we have to conclude that there is no stoning to death in Islam and that the punishment in Surat Annoor, one hundred lashes, is applied for both free married and free unmarried women. And accordingly, half of this would be the punishment of the unfree married adulterer women. Following this path, they have in effect closed their eyes on the practice of the Prophet (pbuh) and his companions after him when they applied the punishment of stoning, though very rarely. This is not the method Muslim scholars should use to extract the Islamic rulings.

Examining the word () in Surat Al-Maeda gives us yet another point of discussion:

“This day [all] good foods have been made lawful, and the food of those who were given the Scripture is lawful for you and your food is lawful for them. And [lawful in marriage are] chaste women from among the believers and chaste women from among those who were given the Scripture before you, when you have given them their due compensation, desiring chastity, not unlawful sexual intercourse or taking [secret] lovers. And whoever denies the faith - his work has become worthless, and he, in the Hereafter, will be among the losers.” [5:5] (1)

Both words () that appear in this verse mean the free unmarried chaste women. This is a condition that The Almighty Allah Has put on Muslim men when they intend to marry; she should be unmarried and chaste. The verse further explains what chaste means: “not unlawful sexual intercourse or taking [secret] lovers.”

Some Muslim men who live in a society the majority of which is from the people of the book, do not always abide by this condition. Some in fact take those ladies as secret lovers before they propose to marry them. The duration may last for years. This violation sometimes carries with it its social and marital consequences, which are often times not very pleasant. This of course is besides the fact that the Muslim man has in fact violated the command of Allah; something he needs to answer for in the day of judgment. Many of them live in guilt for the rest of their lives.

Al-Jihad

Linguistically, Al-Jihad, means to exert the maximum effort, via saying or acting. (13, 14)

The Islamic meaning of Al-jihad is taken from the linguistic meaning: to exert the maximum effort fighting the enemy in the path of Allah, using one's self, wealth, or tongue. (13, 14)

“Go forth, whether light or heavy, and strive with your wealth and your lives in the cause of Allah. That is better for you, if you only knew.” [9:41] (1)

The concept of Jihad is much wider than fighting. Using the Quran for example to do the Jihad; i.e. use the arguments in the Quran to convince them with its truth:

“So do not obey the disbelievers, and strive against them with the Qur’an a great striving.” [25:52] (1)

“The command to do Jihad could be fulfilled via the heart by having the desire and determination to do it, It could be done by calling others to the religion of Islam, educating others about Islam, offering a positive opinion, and by the actual fight. Considering all factors involved, a Muslim may choose one or more of these kinds of Jihad he or she is able to do.” (14)

Jihad is practiced against one’s own self by compelling it to stay along the straight path of Allah, away from sins and corruption. It could be against the Satan who always tries to deviate us from that path. It could also be fulfilled by spending one’s wealth and energy along the path of Allah, and, if necessary, by fighting along the path of Allah to remove aggression, oppression, and defend Islamic values and systems.

However, examining the books of Fiqh, one finds that Muslim scholars had in fact treated the concept of Jihad in the physical fighting. (14) The Quranic texts clearly show that the concept of Jihad is much wider than mere fighting.

Orientalists and lately Western media have started a vicious campaign against Islam as a religion. One front in such campaign is that of Al-Jihad, where they tried to create a direct correlation between Jihad and violence and even with terrorism. The teachings of Islam have a comprehensive set of morals at time of peace and during conflicts. In fact, Allah (sw) described sending the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) as a Rahma (Mercy) to all creations:

“And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.” [21:107] (1)

How can a man with such attribute be harming innocents or making mischief in the land? He (pbuh) used to instruct his departing army to not cut a tree, kill a bird, or disturb a monk. While at war, Islam prohibits its followers from harming any non-combatant; neither are they allowed to harm or destroy any infrastructures, harming the environment or livestock. Such moral system is governed by many texts in the Quran and the traditions of

Prophet Muhammad (pbuh.)

“Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors.” [2:190] (1)

This verse clearly states that Muslims should fight those who fight them but are not allowed to transgress; something manifests justice and a stand against oppression. Consulting other verses in the Quran in the same subject, one sees that Justice has been the reason why Allah (sw) had sent Messengers and descended His Books:

“We have already sent Our messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice. And We sent down iron, wherein is great military might and benefits for the people, and so that Allah may make evident those who support Him and His messengers unseen. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might.” [57:25] (1)

After The Almighty Allah related to us the story of the two children of Adam when one of them had killed his own brother, He, the Almighty, made it a law for us human, that killing one innocent soul is like killing the whole humanity:

“Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely. And our messengers had certainly come to them with clear proofs. Then indeed many of them, [even] after that, throughout the land, were transgressors.” [5:32] (1)

Out of ignorance, some Muslims have unfortunately contributed to the misconception about Jihad. (14, 15) Those who are in charge of extracting the Islamic rulings () should follow the right methodology of interpreting () the Quran; know the topic of abrogation (,) know the occasions of revelation (,) besides mastering Arabic and having the fear of Allah in all affairs.

The concept of Jihad in Islam is a Nobel one, where no oppression, transgression, violence or terrorism are allowed. Jihad is at the top of the Islamic value system. It goes into every aspect of a Muslim’s life, from waking up very early for Fajr prayer, to feeding one’s children, teaching others, to defending the Islamic value system using wealth, tongue, and even fighting along the path of Allah. Islam is a way of life that Allah The Creator Himself Had chosen for humanity; it deserves to have a mechanism to protect it; Jihad is such mechanism.

Conclusion:

Four Quranic terminologies were chosen and analyzed. The Salaat represents the Ebadaat (worship.) It is clear that the English language does not have a one-to-one translation to the word salaat. The word prayer is the closest to salaat. However, such translation reflects only the linguistic meaning of salaat (supplication) and totally ignores the Islamic (ritual) aspects of it. New reverts to Islaam and many young Muslims who were raised in the west need to be continuously reminded to take salaat seriously with all its aspects as it was commanded by The Creator and delivered to us by Prophet Muhammad (pbuh.)

Al-Imaan () and Al-Kufr () are very hot topics lately, not because of the language difficulty, but due to the methodology being followed to interpret the Quranic text. These two terms represent the Aqeeda (the belief.) The very first attempt to interpret the Quranic text is to consult other Quranic texts in the same topic and try to reach a solid understanding. There are other steps to take if this is not sufficient. But for these two terms, one may find countless of Quranic verses explaining them, without leaving any doubt whatsoever. Belief and disbelief are addressed in the Quran in the most elaborate way. Consequences of the work of those who had followed the "pick and choose" approach from the Quran, have been very dangerous; in terms of including into the circle of Al-Imaan some who are clearly not entitled to be there. Practically, they are saying there was no need to what the Quran had brought to us. This message to non-Muslims is to stay where you are: We are right, but you too are right. To the new generations of Muslims, it is: feel free to look somewhere else if you find some burden following the dos and don'ts that come with Islam. With few decades, this approach shall, God forbid, demolish the whole house of Islam. However, the message of Islam belongs to Allah, who Had promised to protect; our role is to be part of such protection; it is a duty, but an honor before that.

Al-Ihssaan () represents the social dimension of the message of The Quran. The variations in understanding this term is not due to the translation, neither is it due to a wide distance between the Islamic definition of it and its linguistic definition. They are in fact due to the variations in the contexts the term appears in. Without careful analysis, one can easily fall into error and eventually ends at the wrong understanding. Two very dangerous consequences are shown here, one ends with rejecting a punishment that has been considered as one of the Hudood (نودج) while the other had led to a major sin being committed by closing one's eyes on the term that clearly represent a condition for marrying a lady from among the people of the book.

Al-Jihad () is a Quranic concept that goes into every aspect of Muslims' lives, while at peace and during war. The misconception about Jihad restricts it to fighting, violence and even terrorism. The reason behind such misconception is mainly taking the related Quranic verses out of their contexts. The Muslim community while the Quran was being revealed had gone through peace and war, and Quranic verses reflect that. Sitting in an office 1400 years later trying to pass judgement against those verses regardless of their historical contexts is not a just approach, neither is it a scientific one. Muslim scholars who follow the right methodology are and have been able to put every verse about Jihad in its right context. The battle of misconception is continuing, and our role is to continue educating people about the right understanding of the Quranic text.

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**UNIVERSIDAD
DEL ZULIA**

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Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

Año 35, N° 20, (2019)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.

Maracaibo - Venezuela

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