



Sacred Symbolism in Ziyarat Warith: An Analytical Study of Three English Translations

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Abstract

Ziyarat Warith (ZW) is rightly considered a landmark in the Islamic legacy; however, it has not yet received its deserved attention in translation into English. Attempting to fill a gap in the literature, the present study examines how sacred symbolism in ZW is translated into English. Based on Tillich's (2009) premise that symbols are an integral part of religious language, the inclusion of sacred symbolism in ZW is not accidental. Rather, it represents the archetype reflecting the Infallible Imam's status. Therefore, it poses serious challenges for translators because of its deep connotations. This study aspires to achieve a twofold objective; firstly, to highlight the significance of sacred symbols in ZW according to Perrine's (1992), secondly, to detect how these symbols have been transferred into English. For the purposes of the study, three different translations by Ansariyan (2005), Kazmi (2014) and Qarai (2019) are examined in terms of the adopted translation strategies. Five selected extracts from ZW represent the data of study. It is hypothesized that translators will use explication to further clarify the original text. Qualitative analysis of the data revealed that sacred symbolism is mostly lost in translation when translators literally approached ZW. It is concluded that the complex nature of sacred symbolism demands being engaged with Shiite interpretation and exegesis to make the proper choice of translation strategy.

Keywords: contextual symbols, explication, Imam Hussain (A.S.), religious translation, sacred symbolism, Ziyarat Warith



الرمزية المقدسة في زيارة وارث: دراسة تحليلية لثلاث ترجمات باللغة الانكليزية

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المستخلص:

لم تحظ زيارة وارث بما تستحقه من اهتمام في الترجمة إلى اللغة الإنكليزية على الرغم من كونها علامة فارقة في التراث الإسلامي. وفي محاولة لردم هذه الفجوة المعرفية، تنقضي هذه الدراسة كيفية ترجمة الرمزية المقدسة في زيارة وارث إلى اللغة الإنكليزية. وبحسب ما جاء به تبليش (٢٠٠٩) فإن الرموز جزء لا يتجزأ من اللغة الدينية، ولهذا فإن الغرض من توظيف الرمزية المقدسة في زيارة وارث لم يكن لأسباب جمالية، بل لأنها تمثل النموذج الأصلي الذي يعكس مقام الإمام المعصوم. وعليه، تمثل هذه الرموز تحدياً خطيراً بطريق المترجمين بسبب دلالاتها العميقة. تطمح هذه الدراسة إلى تحقيق هدفين. أولاً، تسليط الضوء على أهمية الرموز المقدسة في زيارة وارث بحسب ما جاء به بيرين (١٩٩٢). ثانياً، الكشف عن كيفية نقل هذه الرموز إلى اللغة الإنكليزية. ولأغراض الدراسة، جرت مقارنة وتحليل ثلاث ترجمات مختلفة لأنصارين (٢٠٠٥) وكاظمي (٢٠١٤) وقاراي (٢٠١٩) من زاوية استراتيجيات الترجمة المتبعة. وتمثل خمس مقتطفات مختارة من زيارة وارث بيانات الدراسة. تفترض الدراسة أن المترجمين سيلجأون لاستراتيجية الإيضاح لفك الغموض عن النص الأصل. وقد كشف التحليل النوعي للبيانات أن الرمزية المقدسة غالباً ما تضيع عندما يتبنى المترجمون خيار الترجمة الحرفية للزيارة. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أن الطابع المعقد الذي يميز الرمزية المقدسة يتطلب من المترجمين الركون إلى التأويلات والتفسيرات الشيعية عند اتخاذ القرار بشأن الخيار المناسب لاستراتيجية الترجمة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإمام الحسين (ع)، زيارة وارث، الرموز السياقية، الإستراتيجية التصريحية، الرمزية المقدسة، الترجمة الدينية

1. Introduction

Amongst the Twelfth Infallibles (A.S.), Imam Hussain “has received the highest and most varied types of ziarat-texts” (Fakhr-Rohani, 2012). He is the grandson of the Prophet (PBUH) who said about him, "Hussain is from me and I am from him, Allah loves whoever loves him." However, this did not prevent enemies from conspiring to deprive him of his right of the leadership of the Muslim community. He was brutally massacred, with his closest family members and companions, during the battle of Karbala on the tenth of Muharam (680 AD) when he refused to pledge allegiance to the corrupted Umayyad caliphate. Therefore, Muslims are recommended to recite ZW “to pay homage to Imam al-Husayn” (Fakhr-Rohani 2014: 233).

Despite being highly significant, WZ has been neglected and received scant attention in English. Moreover, Warith-oriented literature in English has not been included in the major English dictionaries such as Oxford English or Waite’s Concise Oxford English Dictionary (Morrow, 2014). Additionally, translations of Imam Hussain’s Ziyarat texts seems to be “a recent phenomenon” unlike the Quranic translations into English (Morrow 2014: 245).

As far as translation is concerned, one may affirm that it has long been considered an effective means to disseminate religious truths, beliefs and spiritual teachings of sacred texts. Additionally, it has been used to teach converts the basics of religion (Elewa, 2014). For this reason, it must mirror these texts as accurately as possible in order to avoid misinterpretation. This is because these texts, according to Dickins, Hervey, and Higgins (2002:178), imply a spiritual world which is not “fictive, but has its own external realities and truths.” Translators of such texts must try at all costs to preserve meaning because the target readers (henceforth TRs) consider their translation as "immutable truths" (Silva 2009: 46).

Additionally, Long (2005: 73) argues that translation plays a vital role in the survival of any text, it becomes even more important when the text depends for its status on “its ancient authority, as most holy texts do.” Robinson (2000: 103-107), therefore, asks: “can or should religious texts be translated? How, when, for whom, and with what safeguards or controls should religious texts be translated? Is a translated religious text still sacred, or is it a mere ‘copy’ of the sacred text? All these questions necessitate that translators tackle such texts in a way guaranteeing that their translation will “correspond to the SL” (Bassnett 1980: 23). Such a view strives to achieve sameness through translation that becomes a process of meaning production between two different languages. In our case, the languages involved in this process are very different to the extent that sameness cannot be achieved as

far as Arabic religious texts are concerned (Dickins et al, 2017). These texts, therefore, pose various problems which are further aggravated when they are symbolically constructed.

Tektigul et al. (2023) confirm that symbolism in religious texts takes non-literal forms which are saturated with meanings. Problems, therefore, may arise because symbolism “consists of more than the meanings of the symbols and the combinations of symbols; it is essentially a code in operation, or, in other words, a code functioning for a specific purpose or purposes” (Nida 1964/2003: 120). Accordingly, the choice of ZW in English translation for research is not accidental. A close scrutiny of ZW reveals that it is more than just a sacred text. It belongs to a genre that might be called *Ziyarat literature*, which appeared in the wake of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (Morrow, 2014). Furthermore, *Ziyarat literature* is a special type of texts laden with sacred symbols conveying varied suggestive and hidden meanings. Given that these symbols are deeply rooted in the Shiite legacy, they pose different problems in translation, especially when juxtaposed with sacredness. This is because “the sacred occurs outside language” (Kamboureli, 1986: 52). Curiously enough, no comprehensive study of ZW is found in English even though this genre combines “all the features of great world classics” (Fakhr-Rohani 2014: 243). For this reason there is a decisive need for conducting the present study. There is another motive behind this study. The growing number of Muslims in English-speaking countries has been accompanied by “increased demand for authoritative English versions of religious texts” (Hassan 2016: 118), thus, examining the translation of this *Ziyarat* into English has become more important.

Building on the premise that religious texts are reader-oriented (Elewa, 2014), this study considers three English translations of ZW as a case study. It seeks to examine how translators transfer sacred symbolism which is deeply embedded in its fabric. Thus, the main aims of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the translation strategy adopted by translators of ZW.
2. To highlight the significance of explication for the TRs comprehensibility.

It follows, then, the present study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. Which translation strategy is adopted by translators of ZW?
2. Finding out whether or not the available translations need any further explication.

Given the highly symbolic nature of ZW, and considering the necessity of

the proper transfer of its sacred symbols, it is hypothesized that translators will use explication as a translation strategy to further clarify the original text and preserve its meaning.

In this regard, the significance of the present study lies in the fact that it tackles an unexploited area about the translation of a sacred text which is invaluable to Muslim English readers. By revealing how sacred symbols function within the fabric of this Ziyarat, translators and students of translation will get some insights into the solemn and sublime meanings embedded in it. Furthermore, analyzing its three translations will offer researchers new directions to address related problems of transferring sacred symbols through translation. Hopefully, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of this Ziyarat in English, as well as serving as a foundation for further studies on it.

2. Theoretical Framework

The present study is conducted within the theoretical framework suggested by Perrine (1992). In his theory, symbols are a type of the figurative language which are twelve in number, namely: simile, metaphor, personification, apostrophe, synecdoche, metonymy, allegory, paradox, hyperbole, understatement, irony and symbol. Figurative language is recommended by Perrine (as cited in Tisgam, 2014) for four reasons. First, it supplies readers with the imaginative pleasure that can be derived from literary works. Second, it vitalizes language by fusing it with additional imagery that makes the abstract concrete. Third, it adds more emotions to the informative statements. Fourth, it is a rhetorical means for saying much in brief.

For Perrine (1992), a symbol is an object that implies, stands for, represents, or suggests a concept, a course of action, or an idea. It is used to convey significant ideas and beliefs. In other words, a symbol is an effective means of communication. It works across language and culture to evoke non-textual connotations. Additionally, it entails two intertwined meanings at the same time; literal (direct) and figurative (indirect), which is laden with hidden connotations that makes it a means of creative imagination.

A symbol can be found in i) words representing feelings, ideas values and have social meanings, ii) acts which can be intentional and deliberate, and iii) objects representing something valuable such as the crescent, the cross or a piece of cloth named flag (Charon, as cited in Musa 2013:72).

According to Fueter (1984: 321), words in a given context can function either as signs or as symbols. He gives the following examples to show the difference between the two:

1. "My friend took my hand."

2. "Jesus took my hand."

He shows that the word "hand" in the first example is a sign because it can be sensed, while in the second example it is a symbol, because Jesus "cannot take my physical hand." He cites these examples to reveal the importance of this issue in the translation of sacred texts.

Given that symbols "convey a more complex range of readings", besides their literal or denotative meanings (*Morrow* 2011: 3), it is revealed that ZW employs symbols to display multiple connotations not only denotative meanings. Thus, it seems essential to know the types of symbols to better understand symbolism. For Fredrick and Marvin (as cited in *Sharma* 1991: 7-8), there are two types of symbols; minor and major. The former has only situational value as it is used narrowly to shed some light on specific aspect of a work. As for the latter, it is highly significant for the entire work. The major type is also distinguished from the minor in that it suggest a definite meaning. It also "permeates the whole work and imparts order to both form and the content of it" (as cited in *Sharma* 1991: 8).

Abrams (2005: 320) also presents two types of symbols; conventional and private. The former refers to the symbols that signify a familiar meaning and has specific denotation, such as the symbol of water in the Islamic culture, which is taken as the symbol of life. The latter are the symbols whose meaning is created by their writers. They share some features. They are not familiar to the readers because they are used within a network of signification, they can be inferred from the context in which they appear, they may differ from one culture to another, they are pertinent to the writer's perspective and, thus, have different meanings depending on the context. Accordingly, they will be henceforth referred to as contextual symbols.

Noteworthy, symbols achieve different functions. For *Perrine* (1992), they act as a means to convey a deeper meaning, to support a theme, or to fuse the work with more richness. From a psychological point of view, the function of symbol is to explicate "something vague, unknown, or hidden from us" (*Jung*, 1964: 21). From the theological and religious perspective, the main function of symbols is not only to point to something other than themselves, but also to open up "a level of reality for which non-symbolic speaking is inadequate" (*Tillich* 1959, 56). Thus, the functions of symbols can be summarized as follows:

- To better present complex ideas of concepts,
- To write ideas more creatively,

- To allow readers to deeply think about the work propositions, and
- To tackle controversial ideas subtly than openly.

Against this background, it seems urgent now to give a working definition of the symbol given that the term “symbol”, according to Sharma (1991: 2), is interdisciplinary, complex and, thus, “cannot be defined.” For the purposes of this study, it is defined as “an object, place, or incident representing some abstract idea or situation” (Quinn 2006: 408). As for the sacred symbol, it is defined by Tillich (1959, 5) as that which reflects holiness because it expresses “an object that by its very nature transcends everything in the world that is split into subjectivity and objectivity.”

Concerning sacred symbolism, it is a language which does not transfer meaning directly. Rather, it necessitates a thorough understanding in order to be interpreted. More specifically, it needs a spiritual insight in order to move the sacred level of the text to the profane one. Sacred symbolism in this study is the act of representing language by symbols to express spiritual or religious ideas. It plays a significant role to help receptors understand otherwise a very complex concept. It is essentially the act of taking something that is usually concrete and associating it with a symbol to give it a new significance.

Form an Islamic perspective, Corbin (1986) argues that symbols represent the hidden (*bātin*) aspect of Allah’s Names. So, each symbol reflects a specific meaning connected to a name and attribute of Allah. For Gasimova (2015, 120) this symbolism can be explained by the Islamic epistemology, “which divides knowledge into *zāhir* (exterior) and *bātin* (interior).” These terms can be represented by other binaries such as the external and internal boundaries of an image which correspond to the terms *ṣūra* and *ma’nā* (Gasimova, 2015).

As far as the translation of sacred texts is concerned, some scholars stress the significance of preserving their meaning by confirming that they are untranslatable. For Benjamin (as cited in Hassan 2016: 118), this untranslatability is caused by the fact that “the meaning and the letter cannot be dissociated.” Shackle (as cited in Long, 2005:12) considers “context rather than content” as being the main reason behind untranslatability of the sacred text.

Moreover, such texts are very sensitive because they demand being well-versed in linguistic and cultural knowledge with a high degree of precision in order to avoid any case of misinterpretation. Accordingly, Williams and Chesterman (2002:12) alerts translators to avoid the tension that might arise between what is being deemed a sacred text “in which every word is holy”

and the text that is used for missionizing. In our case, translators must be cautious against the tension that may arise between the sacredness of ST which represents the words of the Infallible Imam, and the human element in the TT as reproduced by the translator. Larsen (2001: 43), on other hand, gives another condition for translating such texts, namely, they must be done by qualified translators. As for Long (2005), he confirms the significance giving priority to clarity over authenticity when translating such texts.

Regarding explicitation, this concept was first introduced by Vinay and Darbelnet, who defined it as “a stylistic translation technique which consists of making explicit in the target language what remains implicit in the source language because it is apparent from either the context or the situation” (Vinay and Darbelnet, 1958/1995, p. 342). Explicitation has taken its way to Translation Studies after the pioneering work of Blum-Kulka (2000), first appeared in 1986. For her, explicitation is unavoidable as being a translation universal resulting in translation shifts in the TT. It is adopted as a translation strategy that leads to interpreting the ST more explicitly by adding various elements to the TT. The additions found in the TT are called “explicitations” (Blum-Kulka, 2000, p. 304). It is considered by Saldanha (2008) a conscious strategy to bridge cultural and linguistic gaps when the setting of the two languages concerned is different and, thus, improve the comprehensibility of the ST.

2.1 Related Works

Despite the enormous attention given to Arabic and Islamic works, translation from Arabic is still lagging behind. This is explained by Carbonell (as cited in Faiq 2004: 5) as being the result of “a meaning system of inextricable complexity that is reflected, developed and recorded in the multifarious act of writing.” Thus, great religious works have lost their cultural and spiritual significance when translated literally.

After an extensive internet search of different databases; both print and digital, it was revealed that ZW is written in different versions; i.e., *Warith Ziyarat*, *Ziyarah*, *Ziyāra Wārith*, *Ziyarat E Warisa*, *Ziyarat-e-Warisa*, *Waris*, *Ziyarat-e-Waris*, *Ziyarat Waritha*, and *Ziyarah of Al-Warith*. Additionally, no research on ZW is found in English translation even though hundreds of researchers and scholars have dedicated their time and effort to translating different religious texts. The search did not lead to any study, thesis, or paper published in authentic journals dealing with ZW, or its sacred symbolism more specifically. As a result, the novelty of this study lies in the fact that by tackling an underexplored phenomenon, it contributes to the body of knowledge by highlighting a sacred Arabic masterpiece which is rarely researched. Accordingly, this is the first study on ZW in English.

3. The Analytical Part

3.1 Methodology of the Study

The data of this study is the Arabic text of ZW. It is one of the most famous Ziyarats of Imam Hussain (A.S.) originally narrated by Imam al-Sadiq (A.S.) and trustworthily reported as an authentic *Isnad* by Ibn Quluwayh (died in 368 AH) in his book *Kamil al-Ziyarat* (2014: 621). According to Shojaei (2019), this Ziyarat is based on reliable and authentic chains of transmission. It should be made clear that Hare (2014: 531) confirms the difficulty of “characterizing what is sacred.” However, Kessler (2012:100) defines sacred texts as being those understood by their adherents to be “books and words and letters that represent divine presences on earth as representative of God’s enduring relationship with His holy peoples.” So, WZ is recognized as a sacred text given the Infallible Imams are the “leaders and spiritual guides to the Ummah” in all respects of life (Tabataba’i, 2007: 191).

It is pertinent at this point to note that the concept of *Imamate* plays a central role in the Shi’ite doctrine. Imam's infallibility lies at the centre of this doctrine, which distinguishes Imam from the rest of humanity. Following from this, Imam is “the person on whose shoulders lies the responsibility for the guidance of a community through Divine Command” (Tabataba’i, as cited in Musa 2013: 68). It is by virtue of this principle that what the infallible Imam says is considered sacred since he is guided by Allah. As such, ZW is considered a sacred text.

As the study follows a qualitative approach, three selected English translations have been chosen to examine how sacred symbolism in ZW is translated into English. These translations have been done by Ansariyn (2005), Kazmi (2014), and Qarai (2019). Analysis, therefore, is done within two levels. After selecting the representative extracts from ZW showing instances of sacred symbolism according to Perrine (1992), the first level focused on the proper interpretation of each symbol according to Kashani (2004). The second level involved comparing each extract with its three English counterparts. These levels are designed to examine how sacred symbolism is translated, and to identify translation strategy and instances of explicitation according to Blum-Kulka’s (2000) insights that explicitation is a translation strategy that leads to the interpretation of the ST more explicitly by adding various elements to the TT.

The aim behind choosing these translations is to compare them with the ST to detect any shifts between them. Comparisons are not meant to pass judgment on the translators’ renderings. Rather, it is to examine their choices in order to highlight “the different status of the two texts” (Bassnett, as cited in Kuhiwczak and Littau 2007: 19). For further clarity, comparisons are

offered in tables, and the selected extracts are numbered for easiness of reference.

Noteworthy, the focus of analysis will be on a limited number of extracts; five only since the scope of the present study does not allow for an elaborate analysis of this Ziyarat. To get a proper interpretation of the selected extracts, the researcher consulted some authentic Arabic primary references of commentary, notably Kashani's *Jinnat il-Hawadith fi Sharh Ziyarat Warith* (2004). The data analysis could not have been done without the help of this book. Furthermore, analysis is limited to the contextual type of symbols suggested by Abrams (2005) as it is more problematic in translation. Only the optional explicitations were taken into consideration because obligatory explicitations are dictated by the syntactic and semantic differences between English and Arabic; hence, it is expected that fourth-year-student translators can identify these differences and insert explicit elements where necessary to avoid producing texts that are ungrammatical. Optional explicitations, however, 'are of interest since they involve such linguistic items which are not found on the linguistic surface of the ST, and it is therefore not self-evident that they should be found in the TT' (Dimitrova 2003:22).

3.2 Data Analysis

Based on what is mentioned in the previous section, this study examines three English translations of sacred symbolism in ZW.

Extract 1:

The ST in Arabic	
يا تَارَ اللّٰه وابْنُ تَارِه والوَتَرِ المَوْتُوْرَ (Qummi 2019: 561).	
English Translations	
TT1	O he whose blood-claimer is Allah, He is the blood-claimer of your father also, as those who persecuted you, your relatives and friends have not been punished for the crimes (Ansariyan 2005: 597)
TT2	O' Tharullah and the Son of His Thar wal Water al Mutoor . (Kazmi 2014: 247)
TT3	O slain one whose avenger is Allah, son of him whose avenger is Allah, and retribution for whose unavenged blood is sought (Qarai 2019: 1178)

In this extract, some contextual symbols are used. Kashani (2004: 105-106) interpret the symbol "تَارَ اللّٰه" as meaning that Allah will take vengeance on Imam Hussain's enemies. For Shojaei (2019: 18), "تَارَ اللّٰه" is used as the

'*Blood of God.*' He states that this phrase is "only a symbol. God does not possess blood or a body. He is greater than to become limited to a corporeal existence. This statement only signifies the fact that the ability to avenge the blood of Imam Husayn belongs to God." As for "الْوَتَرُ الْمَوْتُورُ," it is interpreted as the one who is killed but his blood has not been avenged, and whom he is a stranger to the homelands with no supporter or helper.

By taking translation into consideration, it is possible to state that understanding the ST meaning is the first challenge faces any translator. Even though the extract above may seem understandable, comparing its different versions in English attests a wide scope for discrepancy among translators than correspondence. As far as explicitation is concerned, it is possible to note that Ansariyan and Qarai transferred meaning with obvious attempts to insert some lexical items in the TT. Such an addition is considered an example of explicitation.

As for Kazmi, he distorted these symbols by using the strategy of transliteration. This translation strategy does not result in comprehensibility for the TR. It could be argued that the TR may find it odd. Accordingly, many translation scholars refuse to consider transliteration as a proper strategy as it replaces the ST letters by TT letters. In the extract above, it causes a noticeable translation loss of the sacred symbolism as it failed to produce a comprehensible translation. For Dickins et al. (2017: 36), this strategy conveys "exotic atmosphere."

Extract 2:

The ST in Arabic	
أَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ كُنْتَ نُورًا فِي الْأَصْلَابِ الشَّامِخَةِ وَالْأَرْحَامِ الْمُطَهَّرَةِ (Qummi 2019: 561).	
English Translations	
TT1	I bear witness that, verily, you were a light in the sublime loins and purified wombs (Ansariyan 2005: 599)
TT2	You were a noor from Your Forefathers and the wombs of the Purified Mothers (Kazmi 2014: 327)
TT3	I testify that you were a light borne within the backs and breastbones of illustrious fathers and wombs of chaste mothers (Qarai 2019: 1178).

A close examination of the extract above shows that it has an example of sacred symbolism. For Perrine (1992), the context in which a particular

symbol is used determines the possible meaning of a particular symbol. The light in this extract is a symbol of Prophetic purity which has a strong symbolic connection with the divine light. It tells us about the supreme status of Imam Hussain as being the paradigm of the purest origin and ancestors. Kashani (2004: 136-138) asserts that the use of the symbol, نُور, in this extract indicates Imam's status that every believer must acknowledge, namely, being created as a light from the light of Allah, as is said in the Ziyarat Jamia Kabira

خَلَقَكُمْ اللَّهُ أَنْوَاراً فَجَعَلَكُمْ بَعْرَ شِهِ مُحْدِقِينَ

Allah created you as lights and made you surround His throne.

The second part of the extract, according to Kashani (2004: 139), indicates that the fathers and mothers of the Infallible Imams (A.S.) are never polytheists, nor their lineage is stained immorality.

The translation analysis of this extract reveals that no sign of explicitation is found in Ansariyan and Qarai's translation as they have, they approached the ST literally. As for Kazmi, he uses the strategies of literal transference and transliteration to convey the symbolic meaning of the word نُور as 'noor.' This rendition makes this symbol very hard to understand since literal translation is considered by translation scholars as the worst type of translation. Lefevere (1992:102) asserts that literal translation "does not find mercy in our eyes, not because they are against the law of translation (as an act of communication) but simply because two languages are never identical in their vocabulary."

Extract 3:

The ST in Arabic	
لَمْ تَنْجَسْكَ الْجَاهِلِيَّةُ بِأَنْجَاسِهَا وَ لَمْ تُلْبَسْكَ مِنْ مُدْلَهَمَاتِ ثِيَابِهَا (Qummi 2019: 561).	
English Translations	
TT1	The impurities of ignorance did not even touch you, nor could its soiled and dirty bearing ever smear you (Ansariyan 2005: 599)
TT2	The ignorance of the ignorant did not touch You (Kazmi 2014: 72).
TT3	The filth of the Age of pagan ignorance did not touch you, nor its defilements affected you (Qarai 2019: 1178)

In the extract above, the use of symbolism is vital as evident from the

intricate word choice. For Perrine (1992) it is necessary to focus on the characters of symbols because they are invented by the author for a purpose, namely, to lend them a special significance to support their intention. Silverstein (as cited in Fakhr-Rohani 2014: 228) defines **الجاهلية** as “the pre-Islamic period of *Jahiliyyah*, the Age of Ignorance, which is still generally “used as a byword for ungodliness and immortality.” According to Kashani (2004: 141-143), the word (**تَجَسَّكَ**) means that Imam is not influenced by the immorality of disbelief and the impurities of sins of the Age of Ignorance. Additionally, this extract symbolically exhibits a suggestive meaning as it uses the word (**تَلَبَّسَكَ**), meaning that the Almighty Allah endowed him all the heavenly morals and divine attributes, so ignorance did not touch him.

As far as translation is concerned, any attempt of explication is not found in the TTs. It is evident that translators are not be very sensitive to the symbolic connotations of this extract as they all rendered it literally. Their renditions do not maintain its spiritual essence and caused misinterpretation. Furthermore, they risked obliterating the sacredness of the symbols by focusing on the outward meaning instead of the inward meaning, i.e., what lies beyond the literal.

Extract 4:

The ST in Arabic	
وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّكَ مِنْ دَعَائِمِ الدِّينِ، وَأَرْكَانِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ (Qummi 2019: 561).	
English Translations	
TT1	I bear witness that, verily, you are the mainstay of the religion, and the supporter of the faithful ones (Ansariyan 2005: 599)
TT2	You are the Pillars of the Religion and the Foundations of the Earth (Kazmi 2014: 73) .
TT3	I testify that you are one of the pillars of God's religion and the mainstays of the faithful (Qarai 2019: 1179)

The sacred symbolism in this extract is represented by the phrase **دَعَائِمِ الدِّينِ، وَأَرْكَانِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ**. To probe the intended meaning of this phrase from the lexical perspective, it is found that it refers the pillar on which a house stands. Symbolically, it refers to the significance of Imam as being just like the pillar for the *house* of religion. From Kashani's (2004: 145) perspective, the extract means that religion is not complete only through the presence of

Imam, and faith is not achieved except through the love of the Prophet and His progeny.

To gain insights into the choices made by the three translators, it is possible to note that they transferred meaning without any attempt of explicitation given that the literal strategy of translation is used. Based on Brisling's (1976:1) proposition that translators must transfer the effect of the original not form, and that translation is "the transfer of thoughts and ideas from one language (source) to another (target)," it could be argued that these renditions do render the intended meaning. Additionally, by preserving the structure and the style of the original, these renditions might potentially threaten to undermine sacred symbolism inherent in the ST. Consequently, they require deeper thinking from the TR to understand its symbolic load.

Extract 5:

The ST in Arabic	
وَأَشْهَدُ أَنَّ الْإِمَامَةَ مِنْ وَلَدِكَ كَلِمَةُ التَّقْوَى، وَأَعْلَامُ الْهُدَى، وَالْغُرُورَةُ الْوُثْقَى، وَالْحُجَّةُ عَلَى أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا، (Qummi 2019: 561).	
English Translations	
TT1	I bear witness that the Imams, in your progeny, are the words of piety, the safe handle of Islam, and the decisive argument for the humankind. (Ansariyan 2005: 600-601)
TT2	I testify that You are the word of piety (kalamatul taqwa) the firmest handle and the Hujjat (proof) (doors of guidance), and Hujjat (proof) upon the creation of Allah (Kazmi 2014: 465)
TT3	I testify that the Imams of your progeny are the paragons of Godfearing, the standards of guidance, the firm handle of Allah and His testaments to the people of the world (Qarai 2019: 1179)

The extract above displays a plethora of sacred symbols. Therefore, a combination of literal and symbolic suggestions is intertwined in the extract. كَلِمَةُ التَّقْوَى is interpreted by Kashani (2004: 155) as meaning faith. He bases his interpretation on the fact that the Infallible Imams (A.S.) are the manifestation of faith, as mentioned in Ziyarat Jamia Kabira: (وَيُمَوِّلَاتُكُمْ تَمَّتْ) (الْكَلِمَةُ، وَعَظُمَتِ النِّعْمَةُ). As for (الأعلام) in Arabic, it means the mountains by which paths are marked and on top of which fire is lit to guide the astray. Kashani (2004: 157-159) interprets the phrase (أَعْلَامُ الْهُدَى) as meaning that

Imams (A.S.) are the signs of guidance for believers because they guide them to the righteous path, more specifically, to worshipping the Almighty Allah. (الْعُرْوَةُ الْوُثْقَى) is literally interpreted by Kashani (2004: 158-159) as meaning the firm handle with which one holds something strongly, and symbolically as signifying Imam Hussain (A.S.) because he holds the believers together in order not go astray, or be detached from the mercy of the Almighty Allah. So, it means being truly submissive to the will of Allah to consider Imam the leader of Ummah. Kashani (2004: 160-161) literally interprets (وَالْحُجَّةُ عَلَى أَهْلِ الدُّنْيَا) as meaning the proof, and it is often used for those whose words and actions must be followed, and symbolically as referring to Imam Hussain (A.S.) who is nominated by the Almighty Allah to be the example to be followed by humanity.

Analyzing the three translations of this extract reveals that Arabic symbols in this extract have rich shades of meaning that go beyond their outward meaning. They necessitate being connotatively conveyed, not just denotatively. Translators are not prone to adopt the explication of the ST despite its peculiarities. By adopting the literal choice of translation, translators have created a serious misconception. This might be explained by Long's (2005) view that translators of sacred texts adopt literalness to in order not to be engaged with the idea of change through translation. Thus, renditions like "safe handle of Islam, and the decisive argument for the humankind" (Ansariyan), "the firmest handle, doors of guidance" (Kazmi), and "the firm handle" (Qarai) distorts the sacred symbols which are laden with significant truths.

Furthermore, given that Perrine (1992) asserts the necessity of focusing on the characters of symbols because they are invented by the author for a purpose, translators' renditions do not create a more informative TT for the TRs. By adopting literal translation, the original sacred symbolism is no longer found in their versions. Noteworthy, Faiq (2004) emphasizes that translators must have a deep understanding of both Arabic and English cultures to effectively bridge the gap between the two languages. So, the three translations are not only different in their wording of the same symbol, but their renditions express a different meaning.

Consequently, one may ask: are these texts sacred only in the ST? Do they preserve their sacredness when translated into another language? Hare (2014) confirms that it is a complex question to answer.

3.3 Findings and Discussions

Starting from the first research question which concerned with the identification of the translation strategy adopted by translators of ZW, the findings of the analysis have revealed that the three translators have

employed literalness as the dominant strategy. This has been evident from the tendency to replicate the ST in the TT. Noteworthy, literalness needs not be understood as being word for word translation. Rather, it is what corresponds her to Nida's (1964) formal equivalence in which the focus is on the form and content of the ST. According to Nida (1964: 159), formal equivalence demands that "the message in the receptor language should match as closely as possible the different elements in the source language." This strategy, according to Hatim (1997), preserves the surface features of the message, and stays close to the ST. Even though it is mostly adopted in religious translations, literalness is not preferable in this contexts when sacred symbolism is an integral part of ZW.

Following from this, the symbolic meaning of the original text has been misconceived, and then mistranslated, by the translators as the literal translation is the dominant strategy. This finding may have to do with the translators' standpoint towards the ST as being a sacred text. By analyzing their choices, it is evident that their translations are ST-oriented not TT-oriented as they did not take the TRs comprehensibility into consideration.

In response to the second research question, the analysis has shown that translators of ZW have been very close to the ST in their attempts to transfer sacred symbolism from Arabic into English that no explicitation attempts are found, even though the ST needs further clarification to achieve comprehensibility to an alien TR. This is evidenced by the fact that translation shifts have been rare in the three translations except for extract one. Missing explicitations in the English versions of ZW have created a detached text from the original in a manner that affected its symbolic load.

On the other hand, since ZW is a sacred text peculiar to the SL context, this study has hypothesized that translators will tend to be more explicit in the TT than what is originally found in the ST in order to achieve comprehensibility for the TRs (Blum-Kulka 2000). However, the findings suggest that this hypothesis is not verified as long as the ST is transferred without major attempts of explicitation. This finding can be assigned to the nature of ZW itself which is of highly sacredness. Following from this translator kept very close to the ST to avoid any sign of intervention. Therefore, translators' choices resulted in an unfamiliar text for the TR. Furthermore, the ST symbolism which is considered an integral part of the religious texture of ZW, according to Tillich (2009), is almost missing in the TT in a way that risks the sacredness of the original text for TT readership.

4. Conclusion

It must be acknowledged at this point that this study has been conducted under huge pressure of lack of authentic and reliable references in English regarding ZW. The researcher has to consult various sources in Islamic and Western theology, Shiite studies, books of exegeses, books of commentary, etc., in order to establish a proper understanding of this Ziyarat.

Inspired by Tillich's (2009) proposition that symbols are an integral part of religious language, this study has shed light on how sacred symbolism in ZW has been translated in three English versions. The implications of the transfer of ZW into English are elaborated throughout this study. One implication is that despite the significant role played by the three translators in rendering WZ into English, sacred symbolism in ZW was translated for the TRs literally. In other words, literal translation was the dominant strategy in the resulting translations. Almost all translators show a tendency to use this strategy with some differences. The tendency to use literal translation is improper as the ST is highly sacred and sensitive. It is possible to argue that the main reason behind their literalness is their desire to keep the sanctity of the ST intact.

Another implication is that explicitation is not adopted by translators as a translation strategy to bridge gaps between two different languages and, thus, prevents incomprehensibility for the TRs although there are very few instances of explicitation. Translators' choices result in certain shifts which can be explained as being the result of misinterpretation of the ST's sacred symbolism. Nevertheless, the religious discourse of this Ziyarat sustains some sacred symbols.

The third implication is that translators resort to transliteration when they lack any equivalence for some symbols. This translation strategy could cause confusion for the TRs as it sounds odd in the TT.

The last implication is that ZW is a sacred religious text which cannot be translated or interpreted in isolation from the Shiite legacy in which it appeared. So, the translation of sacred symbolism in ZW constitutes a real challenge to translators given that it establishes itself as a reflection of the divinely relationship between the Creator and Imam. Thus, its words go beyond the worldly experiences even though they seem as if they belong to human reality. Therefore, translators must be well-versed in doctrinal issues in order not to misinterpret, and then, mistranslate it.

To conclude, it is possible to state that this study can contribute to the field of translation by highlighting how sacred symbols dispersed through ZW are not simply used to beautify the text or provoke an emotional reaction. Instead, they are purposely used to convey "the Truth in religious language or representation" (Chande 2004: 79). By using sacred symbols to reveal the supreme status of Imam Hussain (A.S.), it has been demonstrated that ZW

is a great religious text that never fails to fascinate readers all over the world. So, a joint effort is badly needed to study, research and translate it. To make a real progress in this respect, “we must work with one another, for one another, like members of one body, like soldiers of one army, guided by common principles, striving after common purposes, and sustained by common sympathies” (Müller, as cited in Molendijk 2023: 52).

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