Ukrainian Translations of the Meanings of the Glorious Qur’ān: Problems and Prospects

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The present study is devoted to the analysis of the so far only partial translations of the meanings of the Glorious Qur’ān into the Ukrainian language. Special attention is paid to the features of Ukrainian, its historical perspective and its potential for representing the meaning and message of the Glorious Qur’ān. The results of this research would hopefully be of help for future translations. Despite the particularly close relation of this article to the problems of Ukrainian, some important principles of translation, based on traditional Islamic exegetic sources which are included in the study, may prove useful for the translators of the meanings of the Glorious Qur’ān into other European languages as well.

Introduction

The history of the European tradition of the study of Islam is so long-standing that it would amount to stating the obvious in writing now about such a problem as the history of a native language and its influence on the translation of the Glorious Qur’ān into this language. However, the development of the youngest European languages – such as Ukrainian – has given rise to some unusual problems which should be taken into consideration before undertaking translation. They do not concern the Glorious Qur’ān or Arabic only; these problems are more related to grammar, syntax, lexical tools and semiotic features of the language per se. Defining translation basically as “interpreting the meaning of a text in one language (the “source text”) and producing it in another language (the “target text”), we may explain it, in other words, as the “representation of the original text and its structure in terms of different thinking”1. The language if attributed of such thinking is a mental-based phenomenon which

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includes all aspects of cultural, social and even political contexts. The latter is particularly true of Ukrainian, a language with a long and complicated history. Being under the rule of other countries, Ukraine managed to establish, and successfully develop, an original culture with its own language. However, powerful Russian influence and long years of subjugation of the people of Ukraine made it virtually impossible to develop the Ukrainian language as an effective means of explication of cultural points in science and other important domains of social life. As a result, some spheres of the Ukrainian language have not been highly developed until now. Despite the vast vocabulary built from the folk language of 18th–20th centuries, the Ukrainian language has different structures, borrowed from other languages such as Old Slavonic, Latin, Polish and, especially, Russian.

One of these spheres is religious terminology, a prerequisite in the translation of the Glorious Qur’ān. This important point will form one of the subjects of analysis in this article. The in-depth study of language problems could well be seen as an issue of understanding because of its relation to such issues as reading one culture in terms of another by adequately interpreting the text (The Glorious Qur’ān). To put it in perspective such an undertaking should be preceded by an analysis of the so far only partial translations of the Glorious Qur’ān into Ukrainian, and, especially, by a short account of history of Islam Ukrainian soil. The main part of the analysis, nonetheless, is focused on the history and essence of Ukrainian.

The Ukrainian language and its development

Ukrainian is one of the Eastern Slavonic languages closely related to Belarusian, Polish and Russian. This language originated in the eighth or ninth century with its history stretching back to the Old-Slavonic language. Despite convincing evidence of the existence of

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1 A significant attempt to fill this gap has been done in the first half of 20th century during the independent Ukrainian state (1918-1921) and times of Sovietic "ukrainization" in Ukraine, when The Ukrainian Grammar ("Ukrains'kyi pravopys") was published (1929). Also some textbooks were published by the famous Ukrainian scholar Ivan Ohienko in the Western Ukrainian lands which were occupied by Poland. See: Rusanivs'kyi M. *Istorya Ukrains'koi literaturnoi movy* [The History of Ukrainian Literary Language], pp. 300-303, pp. 352-354 (Kyiv: ArTek, 2002).
Old Kyivan Rus’ scriptures before the mission of Kirill and Methody in the tenth century, the development of written language has been influenced and determined by the Byzantine Christian tradition. This language was similar to the Bulgarian and Macedonian dialects. Since the Middle Age, Old Slavonic has been transformed and even some sounds have been lost. The most representative sources for studying this language are Christian texts, as for example the translation of the Bible and other liturgical texts. It should be mentioned that manuscripts of these translations were changed depending on the interpretation. For example, before the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the majority of Greek religious terms from the Gospel were translated into the local language. Basic changes took place in a later period (15th and 16th centuries), when the then nascent “old Ukrainian literary language” was first officially used. The rise of the Ukrainian literature at that time was marked by the influence of the folk language. The latter differs from the written language. Despite this difference, the main grammar treatise of 18th century Slavonic language, written by Meletiy Smotryc’kyi (graduate of the famous Ostroh Academy and some other European universities), includes some kind of Ukrainian folk accentuation.

After 1654, the year of the Pact between Ukrainian kozaks lead by Bohdan Khmelnytsky, and the Russian Tsar, the left side of Ukraine was “mentally occupied” and a well-developed Russian written

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1 It should be noted that Kyivan Rus’ (bylad ar-rūs or ar-rūsiyyah mentioned by such Arabic historians as ibn Fadlān, ibn Miskawayh and ibn Ya‘qib, see: James E. Montgomery. Ibn Fadlān and the Russiyyah // Journal of Arabic and Islamic Studies, 3 (2000), pp. 1-25) should not be confused with Russia (before the XVI-XVII centuries it was named as Moskovia – “Moscow land”) that was situated in the northeast part of the great Slavic country with its centre in Kyiv.


3 Ohienko I. Istoriya Ukrain'skoi literaturnoi movy [The History of Ukrainian Literary Language], part II (Kyiv: Nasha Kul'tura i nauka, 2001).

4 Rusaniv’s’kyi M. Ibid, p. 16

5 Tkachenko O. Ukrain's'ka mova i movne zyttia svitu [Ukrainian Language and World Languages], p. 35 (Kyiv: Spalakh, 2004).


7 Grammatiki slavenskiya pravilnoe sintagma. Vilno, 1619.
language started to drive out Old Ukrainian literary language: “Russian and Polish had deep national roots when the Ukrainian written language did not.”¹ So, modernized Old Slavonic remained as the language of the Orthodox Church. The folk language became the language of religion only after the Reformation, when Protestantism came to Ukraine. Such conditions gave way to the Modern Ukrainian Literary Language; folk language was its main source. This language appeared in 18ᵗʰ and 19ᵗʰ centuries and was developed into classic Ukrainian literature by Ivan Kotliarevskyi (1769-1838), Grygorii Kvitka-Osnovianenko (1778-1843), Taras Shevchenko (1814-1861) and others. The corpus of Ukrainian literature formed a strong basis for Modern Ukrainian Literary Language and its development has continued up to this day. Despite suppression during the Soviet regime (1922-1991), Ukrainian written language flourished but its vocabulary changed. The only source of scientific terminology was Russian, while the language of the Orthodox Church was Russified at an earlier date, in 1720 by Peter I.

The results of three centuries of Russification policy still remain significant. Revival and development of the native language in Independent Ukraine are determined also by translation from other languages which represents a huge potential for the Ukrainian language and its lexicon.

**Islam in Ukraine**

Let us turn attention to the history of Ukrainian Islam and, particularly, its linguistic perspective. The translation of the Qur’an and also other Islamic texts from Arabic is not a mere translation activity. This process involves some kind of the usage of special sacred lexicon, recognized by Muslims as a strong system for life and beliefs. The relevant Ukrainian words should gradually take on “Islamic meanings” and this system of understanding should be open to other persons as a way of *daw‘ah*. Unfortunately, such a perception is hardly met in Ukrainian Islam. The following is a overview of the history of Islam in the region. This topic will help also in understanding some problems of translation.

According to historical data, the first Muslims came to the Crimean peninsula in 7ᵗʰ century, not so long after the victory of Islam in

¹ Tkachenko, O. Ibid, p. 38.
Arabia. Some evidence about the existence of Islam in the Ukrainian territory among the Alanian tribes could be traced back to the 8th century. They used to bury the dead according to the Islamic funeral practice. It is worth-mentioning here that Kyivan Rus' had close trade connections with the Islamic world and even the famous Kyivan ruler, Volodymyr the Great was interested in Islam. This is illustrated not only by the legend about “the choice of faith”, but also by the geography of trade routes. According to the historian, ibn Hordadbeg, merchants from Rus' would visit southern Caspian cities and go from this region even to Baghdad. There are several other examples of close connections between Rus' and the Islamic world.

Further expansion of Islam onto Ukrainian lands is closely connected with the history of Crimea. In 1262 the first mosque, on record, was built. Crimean Khanate was formed before the 14th century. This Islamic State established close relations with other parts of the Islamic world (for example, with Egypt, where Crimean scholars studied). According to historical data, the most widespread madhāhib were the schools of Imams ash-Shāfi‘ī and Abī Ḥanīfah. The basics of fiqh and other shāri‘ah sciences were studied in large Islamic indigenous schools. On this count the special role of “Solhat Academy” is worthy of mention. Tartars had their own language and also Turkish whereas Arabic as the language of the Qur’an, Sunnah and scientific research was widely used.

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1 According to legend, they were Companions of the Prophet (ﷺ), known here as Gazi Mansur and Malik Ashter: Jackubovych M. Islam w Ukraini [Islam in Ukraine] // Korotkiy Ilustrovanyi putivnyk dlia rozuminnia Islamu, p. 81. (Alexandria: CIMS, 2006).
The fourteenth century opened a new chapter of Islamic history in Ukraine. This era is characterized by the integration of Muslims into Ukrainian ethnic territory proper. In 1350, the Lithuanian kniaz (ruler) invited Tartar warriors to join his military force. The number of Tartars was so large that in 1591 their population was approximately 100,000 and they had near 400 mosques in Western Ukraine, Poland and Belarus. Tartars formed isolated communities near local castles. In this context we should note the cultural discourse of Ukrainian Tartars and pay special attention to the “kitabs” (from Turkish transliteration of Arabic word kitāb – “book”). These books were written in the Old Belarusian language, which is very similar to old Ukrainian literary language. The only difference lies in the Arabic script used in the language of kitabs. During the 15th and 16th centuries, authors used Arabic script and wrote taṣāfir with Qur’an translation into local languages. Tartars were assimilated and they forsook their language for Belarusian, Ukrainian and Polish. In such books some Arabic words were left untranslated, but transformed according to Slavic pronunciation (du'ā was changed to duaika, kāfir became a source for the Belarusian plural kafiry and adjective kafirski (arab. kufri) and so on). One of the most advanced studies of these books was carried out by the Belarusian scholar, J. Stankevich. These books and the proposed variants of translation served as a solid basis for the development of the Ukrainian translation of the Glorious Qur’ān. Yet there were two obstacles. First, not all books were studied and published. Secondly, modern Ukrainian is markedly different from the written language of 17th and 18th centuries. However, the vocabulary of kitabs could be used as comparative material for the

translation of Islamic Arabic texts into Ukrainian, Belarusian and Polish. Yet, there are some other possible sources besides these books for the translation of Arabic religious terms with purely Islamic meaning, which were understandable for the Ukrainian mind. Reference is to some early (15th century) partial translations of Abu Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī’s “Maqāṣid al-Falāṣifah”, known here as “Kyivs’ka logika” (“Kyivan Logic”) and the book “Sīr al-Aṣrār”, eventually ascribed to Aristotle. But these translations were indirectly done from Hebrew translations and not from Arabic originals.

It is hard to explain more definitely the language of Ukrainian Tartars who lived in Western Ukraine in the 19th century. According to some, the majority remained Muslims, but as for their language and some other important cultural elements, they were fully integrated into the local population. There is no data regarding the translation of the Glorious Qur’ān or āḥādīth into the Ukrainian language, or even of some attempts in this field.

**Early attempts to translate the Glorious Qur’ān into Ukrainian**

Perhaps Ukraine is the only large country in Europe that does not have, as yet, a complete translation of the meanings of the Glorious Qur’ān. Unlike Polish, Ukrainian was not widely used by the local Muslim minorities. However, some progress in Qur’ānic studies was made by Orientalists. Lviv was the most important centre of Orientalism in western Ukraine and the local university devoted efforts to Arabic studies. But the first translation of the Glorious Qur’ān was done indirectly from a European language and not from the original Arabic text. The author, a Ukrainian scientist Olexandr Abranchak-Lysynec’kyi, published it (using Latin, not Cyrillic script) in Lviv in 1913. However, after the first edition, this translation was not reprinted or revised. It is a very rare source now. A small part

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2 The first Polish Muslim translation of the Glorious Qur’an was published in 19th century (Warsaw, 1858). It was done by the Tartarian Jam Murza Buchacky.
3 See Kyriushko M. *Islam u konteksti nacional’nego vidrodzen’ia turkomovnykh narodiv* [Islam in the context of the Turks national revival] // Nacional’ne vidrodzen’ia i religiya, pp. 190-203 (Kyiv: Asociaciya “Ukraina”, 1995).
4 He worked on this translation along with his colleague V. Lezevych.
Ukrainian Qur’an Translations

Mykhailo Jackubovych

from this text was published by O. Dziuban and J. Polotniuk in an article about Arabic studies in Lviv. Likewise, the translation by Abranchak-Lysyneč’kiy is a very rare edition and was unavailable to the author of this article. Here we analyze the translation of sūrah al-Fātīḥah from this translation and point out some of the peculiarities of its language. An in-depth exploration of this work should, however, be preceded by an overview of the whole of translation.

At first, the translator recognizes basmalah as a separate part of Qur’ānic text and not as a first āyah of al-Fātīḥah as it is fixed in the present Cairo edition and traditional ‘Āṣim mode of Qur’ānic reading. Besides this, he divides the seventh āyah into two parts. It seems that the author used a translation based on the so-called “Critical Edition” of the Glorious Qur’ān by the German orientalist Gustav Flügel (Leipzig, 1834). In the first (i.e. second in the Cairo edition) āyah he refers to al-hamdū lillāhī as to “slava Allahovi” (“Glory to Allah”). But Ukrainian word “slava” is more appropriate to the Arabic subhāna (as in subhāna Allah), so the better variant is a “hvala” (i.e. “praise”). This latter variant is used in the partial translation of the meanings of the Glorious Qur’ān by Valerii Rybalkin, but in another modern partial translation (by J. Polotniuk) the noun “slava” still appears. Rabb al-ālamīn is translated by Abranchak-Lusyneč’kiy as “pan svitiv” (“Lord of the worlds”). The word “pan” refers to the rabb and it seems to be a polonised term. Polish influence may be found in the second (or third) āyah, in which the Arabic word mālik is translated as “Korol’” (“King”). The rendering of the third (or fourth) āyahs

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3 For example, as in the widely-used phrase “Praise be to Allah”
4 Koran. Doslizdennia, pereklad (Fragment) ta komentari V. S. Rybalkina [Qur’ān. Study, translation (partial) and comments by V. S. Rybalkin] (Kyiv: Stylos, 2002).
6 It could be illustrated by comparison with the Polish translation by Jozef Bielawski (Warszawa: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2007) in which the translator uses the Polish pan for the Arabic rabb.
7 For example, both the Polish translations use “król” (“King”) that is similar to
includes a descriptive meaning of the Arabic verb 'abada ("sluzhyty" – "to serve").

Notwithstanding the above mentioned instances of incongruency, which do not significantly change the true meaning of the text, the translation of sūrah al-Fāṭihah, by Abranchak-Lysynec’kyi, may be rated as appropriate. It has a dynamic style and was understandable to Ukrainian readers of the first half of the 20th century. Contemporary translations should employ a modernized language, and more importantly, be faithful to the Arabic text. Standard taḍżsīr should be used. However, the analysis of Abranchak-Lysynec’kyi’s translation would throw further light on the development of Ukrainian Islamic Studies.

Modern Ukrainian translations of the meanings of the Glorious Qur’ān

Another partial translation of the meanings of the Glorious Qur’ān is by the well-known Ukrainian Orientalist, Professor Yarema Polotniuk (b. 1935). This work, based on the Cairo edition of the Glorious Qur’ān¹, includes translated texts of Makkani sūrahs, numbered according to the original. Besides the actual translation, the work includes an introduction to the Qur’ān and the life of the Prophet (ﷺ) titled, A Sacred Book of Islam². Brief remarks with some explanations are also appended. These comments are devoted mainly to asbāb an-nuzūl (circumstantial settings of the revelation) on the authority of Muslim commentators. Among them only Zamakhsharī is mentioned by name; probably this absence of Arabic names may be on account of the Ukrainians' unfamiliarity with them. Besides, the comments include references to the works by the famous Orientalists: Agathangel, Kryms’kyi and Ignatii Krachkovskii³. It falls beyond the scope of this paper to provide a critical study of the whole of

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³ For example, his Russian translation of the meanings of the Glorious Qur’an, first published in Moscow at 1963 (with comments).
Polotniuk’s translation. However, we may bring into light some distinctive features of his work and draw some general conclusions.

As for the method of translation, it seems that Polotniuk used the “dynamic equivalence” translation method, which has been defined in translation studies as “the closes natural equivalent to the source language message.”¹ In this way, the translator tried to represent the “spirit of the Qur’ān”, developing a rhetorical structure of his work being adapted to the paradigm of Ukrainian thinking pattern. It may be illustrated by some examples of metaphors, idiom and usage in his translation as well as by some other devices. For instance, the translator employs the Ukrainian “Boh” (“God”) besides the traditional Islamic Allah². The possibility of using “God” beside Allah is under discussion among Orientalists as to this time³.

Secondly, the translator sometimes departs from the original opting for a more artistic and aesthetic structure, rabb al-ālamin is translated as “Gospod’ vsiogo suschogo” (“The God of all existent”)⁴, innakum lafi qawl-in mukhtalif⁵ as “voistynu, vy marnuiete chas na superechky ta suieslivia” (“you waste the time for controversy and foolish words”), inna l-muttaqāna fi jannāt-in as “bogoboiazlyvi rozkoshuvatymut’ u rais’kyh kushchah” (“The God-conscious will enjoy the gardens of Paradise”). The most striking rendition appears in the translation of the sūrat al-Balad: the first two āyahs (lā uqsimu bi-hādhā l-balad, wa anta ḥillun bi-hādhā l-balad) are translated as “Neklianusia Ya tsym mistom! Bo ty, proroche, tut bezzakhysnyi” (“I do not swear by this town! Because you are helpless here, O, Prophet!”). Constraints of space forbid us from drawing attention to all such rhetorical figures which are loosely translated, even at the expense of changing the literal sense of the Glorious Qur’ān, and loading it

² The names of the Prophets (peace be upon them), however, appear as they are in Muslim tradition.
⁴ It should be noted that in another place (Sūrat at-Takwīr, 81:29) rabb al-ālamin is translated by Polotniuk as “Volodar svitiv” (“The Owner of the Worlds”).
⁵ Sūrat adh-Dhāriyāt, 51:8
with a Biblical style. Let us mention some peculiarities of the language of Polotniuk’s translation.

It seems that the translator tried to utilize all possible devices available to the Ukrainian language to facilitate the understanding process for the local readers of the Qur’ān. He used a wide base of expressions, and some of them are rare in the Ukrainian literature and even close to the spoken variant (for instance, “provozvistnyk” (nadhīr), “zanapastvy” (ahlak), “zbyvaie na manivtsi” (yudīllī Llahu man yashā’), “zamiry” (haida) etc.). For example, the noun zamir (pl. zamiry (“intentions”)) could be replaced by more widespread variant namiry or zadumy¹ or even replaced by another word. In Polotniuk’s translation some Ukrainian words are different, depending on the context of the Arabic original, so one lafiţ could be rendered through two or more Ukrainian variants. But in Islamic Studies research (for example, when quotation from the translation of the meanings of the Glorious Qur’ān is necessary) such “dynamic style” of translation is not appropriate in Qur’ān translation because it jeopardizes the meaning of the āyah. Despite such peculiarities, Polotniuk’s translation should be appreciated for its style and artistic structure, successfully adapted to the Ukrainian language. However, some of his vocabulary appears as non-representative in the context of modern Ukrainian language; some words seem to be connected with the spoken and even dialectal variants because of their rare usage. It should also be noted that Polotniuk tends to use some archaisms². Anyway, every translation should be more anchored in the Arabic Qur’ān, rather than in the translator’s own comments or local cultural context. The original text should be represented in terms of another culture, but every āyah should preserve the original meaning. Such attempt has been made in the academic, though partial translation of the Ukrainian Arabist, Valerii Rybalkin (b. 1952)³. This translation was published in 2002 and approved for


² The Polish translator, J. Bielawsky faced similar problems in Polish and wrote that he opposed archaism. See: Koran. Z Arabskiego przelozyl i komentarzhem opatrzyl Josef Bielawski [Qu’ran. Translation from Arabic and comments by Joseph Bielawski], p. 831 (Warszawa: Panstwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 2007).

Ukrainian Qur’an Translations

Mykhailo Jackubovych

publishing by the Science Council of Ukrainian Institute of Eastern Studies. This edition includes a long list of classical Islamic sources (lexicons and tafsir) as well as scientific textbooks. The translation is based on the original Arabic text and the first five surahs are translated (al-Fatiha to an-Nisa’) along with comments. The history of Qur’an codification, general overview of the surah, brief information about the development of Islam and special review of exegetical works form part of the extensive preface.

A large portion of this work is devoted to traditional commentaries as a powerful source of understanding the Qur’anic text. The translation is full of interpolations, mostly from the tafsir of al-Jalayn that may be branded as the main source for translator’s explanatory notes. Generally, the method of translation is very similar to the one in the Russian translation by M.-N. Osmanov. For example, identical language constructions are used: khairu al-makhrin (al-Imran 3:54) is translated as “naidoskonalishyi iz khytruniv” (“the perfect from the planners”) the same as in Osmanov’s translation. The whole work is illustrative of the Russian Orientalist tradition. For instance, Rybalkin often quotes Russian Arabists: M.-N. Osmanov, I. Krachkovski and M. Piotrovski. He also uses some Russian words in his explanation as comparative variants for the Ukrainian translation of the Arabic original.

The translator’s comments concern mostly the linguistic aspect of the Glorious Qur’an and also offer some historical explanations. Some parallels between the Qur’an and Bible are noted. The translator has retained the form “Allah” and the Qur’anic names of the Prophets (peace be upon them). We should also mention some variants in the translation of recurrent expressions in the Qur’an, such as inna (“Verily”), ahl al-Kitab (“People of the Book”), al-muttaqin (“God-conscious”), âkhira (“The Hereafter”) and derivatives of the verb nazala (“To send down”) are translated by Rybalkin in a special way. Inna is

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1 According to the text on the subtitle page.
2 Ibid, pp. 3-97.
3 See, for example, the second edition, reprinted without changes in Iran: Koran / Perevod i kommentarii M.N. O. Osmanova [The Qur’an / Translation and comments by M.-N. O. Osmanov] (Qum: Ansariyan Publications, 1421/2000). Osmanov’s translation was the first Russian translation in which traditional Islamic commentaries were widely used.
4 See Koran, p. 105, fn. 43.
rendered as “dostemenno” (“Really”, “truly”). Such variants have their origin in the folk language of 19th century besides the more widespread religious word “voistynu” (or “istynno”), used in the Church as well as in literary language, derived from the Old Slavonic root “istyna” (“The Truth”; the closest Arabic word is al-ḥaqīq). The expression ahl al-Kitāb is overloaded with interpolation and, as a result, is translated as “liudy [Sviatogo] Pys’ma” (“People of the [Holy] Scripture”). So, such interpolation ([Holy]) appear throughout the whole text of this partial translation. The noun “pys’mo” also means “script” and a similar variant “pysannia” is used, for example, in reference to ecclesiastic texts. It should be noted that at other places Rybalkin translates kitāb as a “Knyga”, i.e. “Book”². Also at the beginning of sūrat al-Baqarah (2:2) the translator employs the word “blagochestieyi” (“Pious”) for the Arabic al-muttaq Čān. It seems to be that the more appropriate variant is “bogoboyazyvi” (“God-conscious”) because of its literal meaning and it being equivalent to the root ta-qa-ya (“to fear”, “to be mindful of”)³. Such features may be also found in some parts of Osmanov’s Russian translation⁴. Some peculiarities are also present in the usage of the word “ākhirah”. It is referred to as “pryideshnie”⁵(“that will come”) and “inshe”⁶ (“other”).

The absence of the exact equivalent of the noun nazzala in Ukrainian is compelling translators to use some similar variants as “posylaty” (“to send”) that has been used by Rybalkin in his translation of al-Baqarah, 2:4, and at some other places⁷. Also he uses derivatives of the verb “zvodyty”⁸ (an-Nisā’, 4:153).

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¹ This variant is used by J. Polontiuk.
² For example, in sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:2.
⁴ See, for example, sūrat az-Zumar, 39:33. But at some other places (as in al-Baqarah, 2:177) he uses proper “bogoboyaznennye” for “muttaqān”, reserving “blagochestie” (“piety”) for the Arabic word “barr”.
⁵ al-Imrān, 3:56
⁷ To my mind, it is better to use “vidylyty” or “zislaty” (“zislane” (“sent” as passive form) as an equivalent to Arabic tānṣīl). This variant has a religious meaning and could be translated into English as “to send down [from God]”.
⁸ It means “to shift down” but could be very hard to interpret in the sense of Revelation from God.
An important side of translation is “al-asma' al-ḥusnā”, i.e. the Most Beautiful Names of Allah Almighty. It is an old European tradition to use a prefix “All-” in the translation of such names (“All-compassionate”, “All-Merciful”, etc.). But this could prove to be confusing. Is it possible to translate al-‘Afīw and al-Ghafīr as “All-Forgiving”, while it is clearly stated in the Qur’ān that Allah does not forgive polytheism? Anyways, the translation of al-‘Afīw and al-Ghafīr as “All-Forgiving” underscores the importance of repentance (tawbah).

Also we should note here some glaring mistakes in Rybalkin’s comments on the text. For example, his footnote on verse 29 of sūrah al-Baqarah (in which the seven heavens are mentioned) carries the following explanation: “The Muslim theory of the seven heavens is connected with Ptolemaeus’ theory of the seven spheres”. It might be thought from this allusion that Ptolemaeus influenced the Qur’ānic text by his scientific theory, which is not the historical truth. Generally, this “academic” translation by Rybalkin stands out as a very fundamental work not only in its use of traditional sources, but also in view of its attention to the text of the Glorious Qur’ān. Despite betraying a marked influence of the Russian tradition of translating and even using some Russified words, this translation is closer to the original than the translation by Polotniuk. However, the vocabulary of the translation is not consistent and several variants are used in the same context. Some variants seem to be very much out of place and not suitable for the translation of the Sacred Text.

It should be noted also that in some way the two modern Ukrainian

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1 As Rybalkin does in an-Nisā’, 4:149, 152.
3 As it has been noted by commentators. See, for example, “Mafīth al-Ghaib” by al-Fakhr ar-Rāzī, Vol, 10, pp. 128-130 (Beirut: Dār al-Fikr, 1401/1981).
5 This issue is not the object of our present research, but, by way of proving the fallacy of the translator’s assumption in passing, it should be noted that the idea about the seven heavens (seven spheres) was known in the East since the old times of Mesopotamia. See: Klymysyn, Ivan. Astronomy: Vchina i segodnia [Astronomy: Yesterday and Today ], pp. 15-16 (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1977).
6 Some expressions like “plestry intergy”, “priyty do tiamy”, “obgorka”, “nakyvity piatamy” etc. are over simplified and reduce the original meanings to the common folk speech.
translations by Y. Polotniuk and V. Rybalkin are products of the system of Orientalist Ukrainian Islamic Studies. It is commonly known that the long years of Soviet occupation adversely affected some fields of academic research in Ukraine. But Arabic and Islamic Studies continued to develop and we may mention some specialists in this field such as O. Kovalevsky from Kharkiv. The scientific research of his time was mainly devoted to history and philology. Now Islamic Studies in Ukraine are limited to linguistics and special departments of the universities are mainly oriented to language, financial and law studies. As a result, great attention is paid to Eastern languages studies, while history especially, the history of religion, culture and philosophy are neglected subjects of local Islamic Studies. So, the published partial translations of the Glorious Qur’ān are mainly restricted to language aspects of analysis, whereas this field should at best be a tool of understanding.

Understanding the Qur’ān through its Ukrainian translation

As has been demonstrated, one of the main problems of the translation process is the possibility, or otherwise, to use some Ukrainian words in the religious parlance. The Ukrainian lexicon may be divided into two parts: the passive domain of the language, not in common practice, and the active domain, widely used in all forms of speech (i.e. daily, official, religious etc.). But the last form (religious language) is rooted in the passive domain (Old Slavonic and old Ukrainian languages). Nowadays common words are used in religious practice. This fact may be demonstrated by drawing on a brief analysis of religious texts in Ukrainian\textsuperscript{1}. Besides, the number of direct translations from Arabic into Ukrainian is very small and no distinctive tradition of translation has been fully-fledged till now\textsuperscript{2}. These problems should be discussed in more detail, they might be summarized as follows\textsuperscript{3}:

\textsuperscript{1} Not only in Islamic texts, of which the majority are written in Russian (or translated into it), but also in the liturgy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church (Kyiv Patriarchate) and Protestant literature. As for Islamic classical sources, besides the Qur’ān, there is only one text devoted to Sunnah translated into Ukrainian (by the author of this article): Sorok hadisiv an-Nawawi [An-Nawawi’s Forty Hadiths] // Translation, introduction and comments by Mykhailo Jackubovych (Alexandria: CIMS, 2006).

\textsuperscript{2} We should note also the absence of Arabic-Ukrainian dictionaries. None has been compiled as yet.

\textsuperscript{3} Based on the diagram from Larson, Mildred L. Meaning-based translation: A guide to cross-language equivalence, p. 4 (Lanham, MD: University Press of America and Summer Institute of Linguistics, 1998).
1) Text to be translated (The Glorious Qur’an): the starting point of translation.

2) Discover the Meaning (studying language, shari‘ah laws, using dictionaries, tafsīr, other translations etc.)\(^1\).

3) Meaning (the middle point of the translation process and it should proceed from a correct understanding of the Text).

4) Re-present the meaning (using dictionaries of the target language\(^2\), constructing the meanings of the Text according to Ukrainian linguistic frame of mind, using special language devices for correctly representing the text, unifying of the vocabulary, etc.).

5) Translation (text of the translation with interpolations/comments, necessary prefaces, introductions etc.).

The first three stages are common to all translators, who work on the translation of the meanings of the Glorious Qur’an. The translator’s work is similar to the work of the muqaddir (exegete); but the translation (ḥarfiyah as well as tafsīriyah, literal and interpretational, respectively) should not be confused with ṭafsīr, as has been explained by adh-Dhahabī in his work\(^3\). The next two stages are no less important. A successful representation of the meanings by means of Ukrainian\(^4\) should be the final result of the translator’s work. It will be judged not just by critical reviewers, but also by average readers, both Muslim and non-Muslim, who are unable to read and understand the original Arabic text. Now, we should describe the three important problems of understanding related to the Ukrainian translation and make an attempt to provide their solutions.

One of the main topics which should be noted in translation, in our case the Ukrainian translation of the Qur’an, is the vocabulary of translation. It could be based on a more Russifised or Polonized tradition, or, on the other hand, could refer to old Church lexicon or to the modern Ukrainian language. The Glorious Qur’an has its own,

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\(^1\) Especially, the translator should follow the authentic, mainstream opinion of the true Islamic creed and prefer these views on such topics as ḥikm al-Qur’an, al-asma’ wa as-sifāt, among others.

\(^2\) Ukrainian in this case.


\(^4\) Or any other language.
well-developed lexicon, which should be studied in the proper contexts before actual translating begins. The main purposes of corresponding Ukrainian vocabulary could be determined as follows:

1) to provide correct ma'āni of the Text.
2) To ensure correct understanding of the Text by the reader.
3) To attempt to exercise emotional and rational influence on the reader, somehow analogous to the influence of original.

Based on the discussion above we propose that the vocabulary of the translation should be Modern Ukrainian Literary Language and the translator should avoid rare, archaic words and dialectal variants, Rusifised and Polonized variants. However some borrowed words may be used. For example, as-ṣamaad in sīrat al-Ikhlas (112:2) could be translated as "Samodostatnu" ("Self-sufficient"), despite its modernity, and this translation will be really adequate for the meaning of the word and the correct comments on it. The same holds true of words attributed to folk language. As a powerful source and even for the purpose of understanding, this kind of language should be used in the translation of meanings of the Glorious Qur'ān only in a limited way, where it may be impossible to simplify the text by it. If a literal translation of some part of the Qur'ān is not acceptable, despite its “dependence on prior cultural knowledge”, a functional translation could transform the text in a very “local” way, which would make the text compatible with the local cultural language. But if “local culture” words of translation correspond to Arabic words, such translation should be recognized as adequate. It can be illustrated by the translation of the treatment yā-hunai-ya from sūrah Luqmān (31:15-16). This expression could be rendered into Ukrainian simply by the use of a vocative case of the noun “syn” (“a son”): “Synu!”.

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1 According to the Qur'ān as one of the sources of sharī'ah.
2 Tafṣīr at-Tabari, Vol. 24, pp. 730-737 (Al-Qāhirah: Dar Hajjar, 1422/2001). Also the meaning “Eternal” (dā'īm) is possible.
3 It should be kept in mind that the Ukrainian classical literature of the 19th century was mostly devoted to folk topics and this lexicon was the basis of the literary language. Even modern folk Ukrainian and literary languages are very closely connected.
4 Ad-Dhahabi, ibid, p. 20.
widely used in the Ukrainian literature; however, it is better to display here the Arabic interjection َيَا and also pronoun "ٰئِ", which demonstrates a close relation between Luqman and his son. So, it should be translated as "O, synu mii!" ("O, my son!"). This translation is correct and understandable for Ukrainian readers despite its literal nature; also this variant has a special rhetorical message and retains the spirit of the language of the Glorious Qur'ān.

A faithful translation of the Arabic lexical items (mufradāt) into Ukrainian should be recognized as another basic issue. For example, some problems arise while translating such terms as َامَرَ, َبَارَاه, َبَوَيْنَاه, َدَلِلَاه, ِذِيْكَر, ِفَذِلَكَ, َحَانِئَف, َإِخْلَاص, َنَبِيَّ, َقيِّمَ, َشِيْرك, etc. It is also very hard to represent in Ukrainian some derivatives of the verbs such as َمَعْنَى (passive participle). Also, it should be noted, that in Modern Ukrainian great attention is paid to the "mylozvuchnist’" (phonetic improvement of the sentence). For example, an Arabic text with many pronouns (-كَعَم, -هوُم, -هُث etc.) could seem a very overloaded structure in Ukrainian. This is because of the distance between the verbs and pronouns in Ukrainian as in other European languages. Especially, the changes of contexts could be represented by the changes of translation of such words. Mufradāt from syntactic structures of the first Makki sūrahs (for example, vows at the beginning of al-Būrūj, at-Ţāriq, al-Fajr, ash-Shams, al-Layl, ad-iswa, and other sūrahs from the 30th juz’) should be translated not by transmitting simple meanings but also the rhetorical, emotional effect should be maintained as much as possible.

The next important issue is contextual translation and its close connection with ِعِلْمٍ ِعَتْفِس (exegesis). We may assume that Islamic exegetic tradition developed some special theories of interpretation and established a connection between such elements of language as ِلَفْظ, ِمَعْنَى, ِعَلْمَة, ِدَلِل, ِمَدِلَل, etc. Some of these theories could be very useful for the methodology of translation. A good example of this research could be illustrated by the theory, developed by Shaikh al-Islam ibn Taymiyah (1263-1328AH) and displayed in his ِعَتْفِس ِعَلْفِس َكَبِيرٍ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Dār al-Fatāwā al-Taqīy َشاَخِعُ al-Majāz2. Ibn Taymiyah perceives written speech as a continuous chain of ِلَفْظ which are pointing (تَدْعُلُل) to

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1 Ibn Taymiyah, ِعَتْفِس ِعَلْفِس َكَبِيرٍ, Vol. 1-7 (Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-‘Ilniyyah, W.D.);
some meaning (ma'na). "A word has a meaning only in meaningful contexts". So, "a simple word does not mean anything, if it is not connected with speaker’s conditions (ahwāl) and whose habit (adah) [of the speech] are known". Even so-called “universals of language” (for example, “sky”, “ground”, “cold”, “warm”) are changing, depending on “time, place and condition”. Abstracting from the issue of majāz in the Qur’ān, we may assume that ibn Taymiyah’s theory is devoted to the general and special reconstruction of meanings. In general, his arguments could be used against a literal translation of some Qur’ānic āyāhs. We may also relate the above mentioned ādah (“habit”) to the Ukrainian language, and if the translator uses structures that are really unusual for Ukrainian speakers, his work will be against a “habit”. For example, a literal translation of the ninth āyah from sūrat ad-Dukhān will appear as “but they play in doubt” in English and “Ale zh vony graiut’sia v sumnivakh” in Ukrainian. But it will be unclear for the Ukrainian speaker. How is it possible “to play in doubts” and why “doubts” have anything to do with “play”? So, the structure of translation should be changed. Moreover, the primary meaning of the āyah must be presented. Anyway, context-free translation will have no meaning; some explanations should be included into the comments or interpolations, but the translator should not confuse the Text with comments on it. A Text has its own boundaries (quyuḍ) which determine meanings and it is not feasible to determine a lafẓ with an absolute, universal sense.

Translation and the principles of tafsīr

‘Ilm at-tafsīr is a science, based, to great extent, on tradition (naqīl) and language studies (‘ulūm al-lugah). It has its own rules closely connected with the other traditional sciences (such as fiqih, for example). The methods of ‘ilm at-tafsīr are mainly used as instruments for

1 Ibid, p. 250.
2 Ibid, p. 269.
3 Ibid, p. 228.
4 This term is often translated as “metaphore” but its meaning is wider.
The first among the general principles of *tafsīr* is: “Every general meaning should be recognized as general before a particular meaning is to be found”\(^1\). This principle should be reflected in translation. For example, short vows from the first Makkā *sūrah*\(^2\) should be translated in a general way. It could be illustrated by *al-mūriyāt* from the second āyah of *sūrah* al-‘Ādīyāt. This word could be interpreted in different ways, so the translator should not off for specifying the meaning by using such a widely used rendition as “horses”\(^3\). Alternatively, he may include his explanations or interpolations or separate comments (as the Ukrainian translator Rybalkin did), citing the source of comments.

The second principle is: “Import is related to the general purpose of a word and not to a particular reason of revelation”. This principle is devoted to *asbāb at-tanzīl* (Reason of revelation). The rule of generality of Qur’ānic meanings is to be noted. Additionally, it could be explained by the tradition quoted in *tafsīr* at-Ṭabarî: “An āyah which has been revealed in relation to some particular person, should become general (‘āmm) after it”\(^4\). As it has been shown earlier, some translators explain the meaning of an āyah by describing the reasons of revelation. However, it should be mentioned in comments (or a preface to comments) that this condition was only a reason (*sabab*) for the āyah, but not its purpose (*ghāyah*), because the Qur’ān as a Sacred Book is open to all mankind\(^5\).

The third and fourth principles are closely related to *al-qirā‘āt* (modes of Qur’ānic reading) and say that “different qirā‘āt extend the number of meanings” and “the meaning differs according to the spelling (*rasm:*...
graphic form) of the word (kalimah). Some modern translations are based on the Cairo edition of the Glorious Qur'an and the Ukrainian translation is not an exception. Some differences in qirā‘āt do not change the meaning (as for translation), but some variants could influence the translation. But if a translator choses for his work the Cairo edition, he should follow the proposed variants and also use some sound (ṣaḥīḥ) traditions for a deeper understanding of qirā‘āt. His comments must not be filled with the different readings because of two reasons:

1) These differences are interesting only to specialists.
2) The difference of qirā‘āt could leave a false impression on the reader’s mind that the Qur‘ān has differences and a faithful version has been lost in history.

The next principle is devoted to the context of the Text (siyāq al-Qur‘ān). It is generally known that the best kind of tafsīr is a tafsīr of one part of the Qur‘ān by other parts of Qur‘ān (i.e. tafsīr Qur‘ān bi-l Qur‘ān). For example, there are a lot of demonstratives such as alladhi‘n, allatī and kinds of pronouns (-kum, -hum). Sometimes it is not clear from one āyah as to who is the referent of the pronoun. So the translator and muḥāfīz should study the previous, following or similar verses to identify it. Also, translation may include some kind of indication next to the verb qāla (“he said”) in order to the name the speaker.

One of the principles is attributed to the problem of language. According to the old methods of ʿilm al-tafsīr, used by as-salaf as-sāliḥ (the rightly-guided predecessors), translators should explore the meaning of the “external meanings” (az-zāhir) of the words and be very careful about so-called “hidden meanings” which are unknown in language and tradition (naql). This problem is well-known in the context of the interpretation of muqatta‘āt (disjointed letters). Arabic language does not provide the meaning of such expressions as “Kāf Hā Ya ‘Ain Šād” from the nineteenth sūrah, as Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī said. If there is no sound tradition for such texts, the translator

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1 Following the Ḥafṣ‘an-ʿĀṣm mode of reading.
should avoid interpreting them without remarks about the subjectivity of these comments and their rationalistic nature (tafsir bi-r-ra’i).

Another important principles is the priority of sharad meaning over the literal (lughawi) meaning. But the last kind of interpretation could be also possible if the context allows.

It could be illustrated by referring to the verb sallā used in some ayahs. For example, in al-Baqarah, 2:3 the noun salāh used in the sense of the five prescribed prayers1, when in at-Tawbah, 9:103 the verb salla is used in a general sense and means “to supplicate”. This rule should be followed in the translation of the Glorious Qur’an and it should refer to the meaningful contexts (al-qarah' in al-ma’nawiyah) mentioned earlier with reference to ibn Taymiyah’s linguistic views.

Conclusion

The Glorious Qur’an is untranslatable as such. It is obvious not only because of the many problems that arise during translating, but also by the clear, inimitable text of the Qur’an as it is. However, this explanation is more appropriate for an introduction than a conclusion of our present study. Keeping this fact in mind, translators should understand the true meanings of the aya and to re-state them in their own language. In this way some priorities and perspectives may be introduced to the method of translation. Despite restricting the main topic of this article to the Ukrainian language, some points are of benefit to the translators of the Glorious Qur’an into other European language as well.

Our analysis of the published partial Ukrainian translations of meanings of the Glorious Qur’an allows us to explore some difficulties and possible solutions for future translations. We may summarize these findings as follows:

1) The meanings of the Glorious Qur’an should be translated into the Modern Ukrainian Literary Language, which is still developing. Translation should be free from dialectal expressions, and the Russifised or Polonised alternative words. This issue is also related to the commonly used structures of folk language. However, the vocabulary of Old Ukrainian (15th-18th centuries) could be used as a reference2 source along with Belarusian kitabs and more recent Polish,

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2 For the deeper understanding of the contexts of some Ukrainian words.
Russian, Bulgarian and Macedonian translations of the meanings of the Glorious Qur’ān.

2) Ukrainian translation\(^1\) of the meanings of the Glorious Qur’ān should attempt, as much as possible, to preserve the effect of the original, described by the Qur’ān itself\(^2\) as much as possible in translation without altering the primary meaning. Perhaps a vaguely resemblant stage could be reached by the use of rhetorical effects. However, this dynamic perspective of translation also has its limits set within the text of the original language, and meanings within the context of Islamic law.

3) The translator may preserve literary meanings of Arabic text in Ukrainian forms of expression, if these meanings are correctly understood by readers. We suppose that the text of translation may include some interpolations\(^3\), but it is better to limit them. Excessive use of interpolations may be misinterpreted by the reader and may create a false impression about the clarity of the Glorious Text. The translator should be very careful how he goes about this.

4) In every stage of the translation, the translator should think of his readers. Probably this may appear as a given to some scholars, but the general overview of Ukrainian translations calls to greater attention this important issue. Adequacy and correctness of translation should result in the correctness of understanding.

“It is impossible for the translator to be ignorant of the two languages – the language from which translation takes place and the language which will be used in translation”\(^4\). These seemingly simple words of ibn Taymiyah could be used as the basis for the recent studies of the Glorious Qur’ān translation, which will be devoted not only to Arabic language studies, but also to the study of the local languages and its potential to represent the Final Scripture – the Glorious Qur’ān.

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\(^1\) Like any other translation.  
\(^2\) For instance  ār-Rā’idah, 5:83 and az-Zumar, 39:23.  
\(^3\) Separated from the body of the translation by some kind of signs (brackets, etc.).  
References

The Glorious Qur‘ān:

Works in English:

Works in Arabic:
17. Tafsīr al-Imām al-Jalālīn (Dimashq: Dār ibn Kathīr, w. d.).

**Works in Polish:**


**Works in Ukrainian:**


34. Rusaniv’skyi M. *Istorya Ukrains’koi literaturnoi movy [The History of Ukrainian Literary Language]* (Kyiv: ArTek, 2002).


**Works in Belarusian:**


40. Nesciarovich V. Kitaby – Unikal’na ja zjava u bielaruskai move [Kitabs. An uncial phenomenon in Belarusian language].


**Works in Russian:**


