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ON HOMONYMOUS EXPRESSIONS IN THE QUR'AN: A CASE STUDY OF THE ENGLISH TRANSLATIONS OF THE TERM فساد (FASĀD)

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Abstract

Homonymy, as one of the two main sub-divisions of lexical ambiguity (Klepousniotou, 2002, p.1) presents a challenge in the translation process. Since Qur'anic discourse abounds with homonymic expressions (Abdul-Raof, 2001, p.90) whose meaning is derived from the context, the translators of the Qur'an should undertake a demanding task decoding the intended meanings.

The present study was an attempt to provide an overview of the main theoretical issues concerning homonymy, representing the seven different interpretations of the homonymous term فساد (fasād: corruption) in the Qur'an along with its equivalents in sixteen well-known English renderings. It also aimed at determining the extent of the translators' success in avoiding ambiguity. The results suggest that faced with the challenge of cultural and linguistic relativity, the translators fail to take account of the delicate meaning offshoots of the homonymous word *fasād* and its derivations.

Keywords: Homonymy, Semantics, Lexical Ambiguity, Primary Meaning, Qur'anic Discourse, Context.

1. Introduction

The first step toward the selection of appropriate equivalents of the source language (SL) text items in the process of translation is the 'decoding' stage (Karimi, 2006, p.1). Among the variety of problematic issues that a translator may face in fulfilling the stage of successful decoding are ambiguous lexical items which cover two or more pragmatic interpretations where only one has been intended. "Lexical ambiguity is not a homogeneous phenomenon, it is rather subdivided into two distinct types, namely homonymy and polysemy" (Klepousniotou, 2002, p.1). Homonymy, which is the focus of the present study, is thought to be one of the linguistic phenomena giving rise to misinterpretation of the source text. As far as Qur'anic discourse with its abundant homonymous expressions is concerned, the translator would undoubtedly face obstacles. One of these obstacles is observed in the translation of the word فساد (fasād: corruption) and its derivations. In his reference book *Semantic Aspects of the Holy Qur'an* (1960), Teflisi has proposed seven meanings for the homonymous term *fasād*. In the

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following sections, the concept of homonymy which causes seven types of ambiguity will be examined.

1.1. Homonymy: Translating Ambiguities

A simplified definition of homonymy would be *having the same name* (Schulze, 2001, p.2). It has been defined in a variety of more or less the same ways by different theorists. As an example, Fromkin (1988, p. 122) defines homonymy as "two or more words with identical phonological forms, but with different meanings." According to Yule, "the term homonymy is used when one form (word), written or spoken has two or more unrelated meanings. Homonyms are words which have quite separate meanings, but which have accidentally come to have exactly the same form." (1966, p.121).

According to Richards and Schmidt (2002, p.241) homonyms are "words which are written in the same way and sound alike but which have different meanings." The word *lie* as an example is homonymous and demonstrates the fact that some lexical items are potentially ambiguous, the interpretation of which depends on the context of use. As it was mentioned earlier, homonymy is a sub-division of lexical ambiguity, which itself, is a subcategory of the central concept of ambiguity.

1.2. Ambiguity

Ambiguity can be roughly defined as "openness to different interpretations; or an instance in which some use of language may be understood in diverse ways. Sometimes known as 'plurisignation' or 'multiple meaning'" (Baldick, 2008, p.10). Newmark (1988, p.218) asserts that ambiguity is "a stretch of SL text, normally a word or a syntactic structure, having apparently more than one meaning, in or in spite of its context." Ambiguity is a linguistic feature which has been divided into different types. One of the most well-known classifications of ambiguity is that of Newmark (1988, p. 218-220) who distinguishes seven types of ambiguity as follows:

a) Grammatical ambiguity occurs when a sentence is syntactically ambiguous within its context, that it must be poorly written. If the context is informative enough, it can be disambiguated. For example, in Persian sentence *اشمقاله که گفت دوستش به یعل (شده منتشر است) / Ali be dūstash goft kemaghāleash montashershodehast./*: *Ali told his friend that his article had been published.* the reference of the genitive pronoun *his* is ambiguous.

b) Lexical ambiguity is both more common and more difficult to clear up than grammatical ambiguity. Words may have several senses and the senses may be close to or remote (as in puns) from each other. Sometimes a word has two senses which are both equally effective (pragmatically and referentially) in the relevant stretch of language, e.g. the Persian term (*فرانسه آچار / Achar Farānse/*) may be interpreted literally as *spanner* and metaphorically as (*فی حر فن همه / hame fan harif/*): *versatile*.

c) Pragmatic ambiguity is inevitably more common in written than in spoken language, since it arises when the tone or the emphasis in an SL sentence is not clear. For example, the emphasis of a word in a sentence such as '*I'm working here today*', can only be perceived, if at all, from its context, although using italics for one word would help.

d) Cultural ambiguity arises if the function or the substance of a cultural feature changes at a point of time and the term remains while the period background is not clear in the SL text. For instance, the Persian word (*آباد خراب / kharāb ābād/*): *ruined place* was used to refer to this mundane world in Persian poetry as in Hafiz or Khayyam poems, while in some Iranian recent writings it has changed to refer to a place where justice is dead.

e) Idiolectal ambiguity arises when people use some words in a sense that is peculiar to themselves, often because they have heard them used in many situations but have never looked them up in a dictionary, or because they feel a lexical gap in their language or thought and fill it with an inappropriate word.

f) Referential ambiguity: in a sense all ambiguity is referential, since it prompts two or more images of the reality the translator is trying to describe. A good example of referential ambiguity can be seen in the English word *cousin*, referring to one or more of a number of relatives.

g) Metaphorical ambiguity is the result of a metaphorical expression which prompts more than one meaning, of which only one is intended. The only option is to translate the most probable sense, and to put the less probable sense in a footnote if this sense is important. For example the Persian metaphorical expression (بـیـژمـرد کـلـم /golampazhmord/) can be interpreted as *My flower withered*. or *My beloved passed away*.

1.3 Translation of Ambiguity

Although ambiguity is an intrinsic phenomenon of natural language (Kiyavitskaya et al, 2008) and it could not be avoided in transferring the message from the SL text into the TL text, there has not been an applicable theoretical framework to show how a translator should deal with such a phenomenon in translation. Nevertheless, Newmark (1988) believes that most sentences comprise a deal of lexical and grammatical ambiguity and this ambiguity can be cleared up by the micro- and the macro context. Referential ambiguity must be retained and pointed out, if it can not be cleared up by the translator. Linguistic ambiguity may enrich the text when multiple meanings are intended, and the translator should attempt to reproduce it, but if unable to do so, only the closest approximation to the meaning intended by the SL writer is rendered.

2. Research Question

This study is an attempt to answer the following question:

To what extent have the translators been successful in selecting the appropriate equivalents of the homonymous term *fasād* in their renderings, given the views of authorized Muslim scholars' interpretations regarding the precise discursal meaning intended by different verses in which it occurs?

3. Methodology

3.1. Materials

The Materials of this research were derived from a) the verses of the holy Qur'an, b) the reference book, *Semantic Aspects of the Holy Qur'an* by Teflisi (1960), c) four renowned interpretations of the Qur'an—two Sunnite Arab interpretations and two Shiite Iranian ones—namely, *Tafsir Al-Jalalayn* (1505) by Al-Mahalli and Al-Suyuti, *Tafsir Al-Qurtubi* (1273) by Al-Qurtubi, *Tafsir Al-Mizan* (1892-1981) by Allamah Tabatabai and *Tafsir Nemoone* (1982) by Makarem Shirazi, and d) sixteen English translations of the Qur'an.

3.2. Data Collection

For collecting the required data, *the equivalents of the word fasād and its derivations with seven pragmatic meanings transferred by sixteen translators* were examined to discover the possible variations leading to inappropriate renderings.

3.3. Procedures

The following steps were taken to analyze the collected data:

1. The meaning variations of the word *fasād* and its derivations in the Qur'an were specified following Teflisi's commentary in his book *Semantic Aspects of the Holy Qur'an* (1960)
2. One verse from the original Arabic text was extracted for each variant meaning.

3. The explanations of five well-known interpreters of the Qur'an for the word *fasād* and its derivations were detected to locate the parallel interpretations of the Word of God among the six Qur'anic scholars (Teflisi, Al-Mahalli, Al-Suyuti, Al-Qurtubi, Allamah Tabatabai, and Makarem Shirazi)

4. The English equivalents of the seven different meanings derived from the word *fasād* and its derivations were located.

5. The meaning differences existing among the translators' renderings and authorized interpreters' explanations were detected.

6. The appropriate renderings in the sixteen translations were determined based on the five sources mentioned above to see how different the interpretations were from the translators' renderings.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

Based on the collected data, the following seven different meanings for the word *fasād* and its derivations in the Qur'an have been proposed by Teflisi (1960, p. 222-224):

1. المعاص (/al-ma'āsi/) = نافرمانی (/nā farmāni/) = insubordination
2. الهلاك (/al-halāk/) = کردن هلاک (/halākkardan/) = to perish
3. القحط (/al-qahat/) = خشکسال (= نایزم نبات ی کم و باران ی تنگ) (/khoshk sāli/) = famine, drought
4. القتل (/al-qatl/) = کشتن (/koshtan/) = killing
5. التخریب (/al-takhrīb/) = بربادی (/kharābkardan/) = destroying
6. السحر (al-sehr) = کردن جادو (/jādūkardan/) = bewitching
7. الفساد (al-fasād) = کردن تباه (/tabāhikardan/) = corruption

Below are the five Qur'an interpreters' explanations for each of the above different meanings and the researchers' elaboration on the selected English equivalents in the sixteen renderings respectively.

4.1. المعاص (/al-ma'āsi/) = نافرمانی (/nā farmāni/) = insubordination

The selected verse for this meaning is the 56th verse of chapter 7, the Surah, AL-'Araf (The Heights).

مکنید فساد آن اصلاح از پس زمین در : اصلاحها بعد الارض فی ولا تفسدوا

Transliteration: Wa-lA tufsidu fi-l-arziba' daislahiha

The commentaries proposed for the term *Fasād*, from which the word *Tufsidu* in the above verse was derived, are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Interpretations of the Term *Fasād* according to Five Authorized Qur'anic Scholars

Qur'anic scholars	Interpretations of the word <i>fasād</i>
1. Al-Mahalli, Al-Suyuti	idolatry and acts of disobedience
2. Al-Qurtubi	polytheism, killing and chaos
3. Allamah Tabatabai	disrupting public affairs and oppression
4. Makarem Shirazi	oppression or paganism or both

As shown in the table above, the interpretation put forward by Al-Mahalli, Al-Suyuti is the closest one to that of Teflisi in his reference book *Semantic Aspects of the Qur'an* (1960, p. 222). Given this meaning of insubordination or disobedience, the sixteen English translations of the verse under discussion were compared and contrasted. The English equivalents chosen have been underlined.

<u>Yusuf Ali</u>	Do <u>no mischief</u> on the earth, after it hath been set in order,
<u>Pickthal</u>	Work <u>not confusion</u> in the earth after the fair ordering (thereof).
<u>Arberry</u>	Do <u>not corruption</u> in the land, after it has been set right;
<u>Shakir</u>	And <u>do not make mischief</u> in the earth after its reformation,
<u>Sarwar</u>	Do <u>not destroy</u> the land after it has been well established but pray to God,
<u>Khalifa</u>	Do <u>not corrupt</u> the earth after it has been set straight,
<u>Hilali/Khan</u>	And <u>do not do mischief</u> on the earth, after it has been set in order,
<u>Saheeh Int.</u>	And <u>cause not corruption</u> upon the earth after its reformation.
<u>Malik</u>	Do <u>not create mischief</u> in the land after it has been set in order.
<u>Shabbir</u>	Hence, <u>do not spread corruption</u> on earth after it has been set in order.
<u>Maulana Ali</u>	And <u>make not mischief</u> in the earth after its reformation,
<u>Free Minds</u>	And <u>do not corrupt</u> the Earth after it has been made right;
<u>Qaribullah</u>	Do <u>not make mischief</u> in the earth after it has been put right.
<u>George Sale</u>	And <u>act not corruptly</u> in the earth, after its reformation;
<u>JM Rodwell</u>	And <u>commit not disorders</u> on the earth after it hath been well ordered;
<u>Asad</u>	Hence, <u>do not spread corruption</u> on earth after it has been so well ordered.

The English equivalents chosen for *Atufsidu* (do not insubordinate-2nd plural) and their frequency presented in Table 2 suggest that no translator has translated this word according to its intended meaning, i.e. disobedient to authority according to Teflisi, Al-Mahalli and Al-Suyuti.

Table 2: Frequency of Selected Equivalents

selected equivalences	mischief	confusion	corruption/ corrupt/ corruptly	destroy	disorders
frequency	6	1	7	1	1

4.2. الهلاك (/al-halāk/) = کردن هلاک (/halākkardan/) = to perish

The 71st verse of chapter 23, Surah Al-Mu'menoon (The Believers) was selected for the second meaning of the term *fasād* (al-halāk), meaning *perish*.

هآاسمان قطعآ كرددمی بیروی هآن هوسهای از حق آگر : فیهن ومن والارض السماوات لفسدت اهواءهم الحق اتبع ولو شدمی تباه هاستآن در كه هر و زمین و

Transliteration: Walawiittabaal^hquahw^Aahumlafasadati-ssamawatuwa-l- rzuwamanfihinna

The scholars' interpretations of *fasād*, from which the word *lafasadat* was derived, are mentioned in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Interpretations of the Term *Fasād* according to Five Authorized Qur'anic Scholars

Qur'anic scholars	Interpretations of the word <i>fasād</i>
1. Al-Mahalli, Al-Suyuti	to deviate from the observed order

2. Al-Qurtubi	to perish
3. AllamahTabatabai	to become unbalanced and perish
4. MakaremShirazi	to filled with chaos and perish

As one can see above, the two Shiite Iranian scholars have interpreted the term *fasād* as *perish* which is in agreement with Teflisi's interpretation.

<u>Yusuf Ali</u>	truly the heavens and the earth, and all beings therein would have been in <u>confusion and corruption!</u>
<u>Pickthal</u>	verily the heavens and the earth and whosoever is therein had been <u>corrupted.</u>
<u>Arberry</u>	the heavens and the earth and whosoever in them is had surely <u>corrupted.</u>
<u>Shakir</u>	surely the heavens and the earth and all those who are therein would have <u>perished.</u>
<u>Sarwar</u>	the heavens and the earth and all that is in them would have been <u>destroyed.</u>
<u>Khalifa</u>	there would be chaos in the heavens and the earth; everything in them would be <u>corrupted.</u>
<u>Hilali/Khan</u>	verily, the heavens and the earth, and whosoever is therein would have been <u>corrupted!</u>
<u>Saheeh Int.</u>	the heavens and the earth and whoever is in them would have been <u>ruined.</u>
<u>Malik</u>	the heavens, the earth and everything therein would have been <u>disrupted.</u>
<u>Shabbir</u>	verily the heavens and the earth and all beings therein would have fallen into <u>ruin.</u>
<u>MaulanaAli</u>	the heavens and the earth and all those who are therein would <u>perish.</u>
<u>Free Minds</u>	then the heavens and the Earth and all who are in them would have been <u>corrupted.</u>
<u>Qaribullah</u>	the heavens, the earth, and all who live in them would have surely been <u>corrupted.</u>
<u>George Sale</u>	verily the heavens and the earth, and whoever therein is, had been <u>corrupted.</u>
<u>JM Rodwell</u>	the heavens and the earth, and all that therein is, had surely come to <u>ruin.</u>
<u>Asad</u>	the heavens and the earth would surely have fallen into <u>ruin</u> , and all that lives in them [would long ago have <u>perished</u>]! [I.e., if the universe - and, especially, human life - had been as devoid of meaning and purpose as they imagine, nothing could have endured, and everything would have long since perished in chaos.]

Table 4: Frequency of Selected Equivalents

selected equivalences	confusion and corruption/ corrupted	perished/ perish	destroyed	ruined/ ruin	disrupted
frequency	8	2	1	4	1

Following Teflisi's, AllamahTabatabai's and MakaremShirazi's commentaries on this verse, only Shakir and Maulana Ali have chosen an appropriate equivalent.

4.3. القحط (/al-qahat/) = یخشکسال (/khoshk sāli/) = famine, drought

The 41st verse of chapter 30, Surah Al-Rum (The Romans) was selected for this meaning.

است شده نمودار دریا و خشکی در فساد: والبحر البر في الفساد ظهر

Transliteration: ZaharaalfasAdu fi-l-barriwa-l-bahr

Table 5 shows the scholars' commentary on the meaning of the term *fasād* in the verse under discussion.

Table 5: Interpretations of the Term *Fasād* according to Five Authorized Qur'anic Scholars

Qur'anic scholars	Interpretations of the word <i>fasād</i>
1. Al-Mahalli, Al-Suyuti	famine, drought
2. Al-Qurtubi	famine, drought
3. AllamahTabatabai	natural disasters such as earthquake, famine, drought, epidemics, wars

4. MakaremShirazi	corruption and filth
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As it is shown above, apart from MakaremShirazi who asserts that the meaning of the term should not be narrowed down to famine or drought, rather it includes a vast meaning of corruption and filth.

<u>Yusuf Ali</u>	<u>Mischief</u> has appeared on land and sea
<u>Pickthal</u>	<u>Corruption</u> doth appear on land and sea
<u>Arberry</u>	<u>Corruption</u> has appeared in the land and sea
<u>Shakir</u>	<u>Corruption</u> has appeared in the land and the sea
<u>Sarwar</u>	<u>Evil</u> has spread over the land and the sea
<u>Khalifa</u>	<u>Disasters</u> have spread throughout the land and sea
<u>Hilali/Khan</u>	<u>Evil</u> (sins and disobedience of Allah, etc.)has appeared on land and sea
<u>Saheeh Int.</u>	<u>Corruption</u> has appeared throughout the land and sea
<u>Malik</u>	<u>Mischief</u> (war between Roman and Persian empires) has appeared in the land and the sea
<u>Shabbir</u>	<u>Rampant corruption and disorder</u> have appeared in the land and in the sea
<u>Maulana Ali</u>	<u>Corruption</u> has appeared in the land and the sea
<u>Free Minds</u>	<u>Pollution</u> has appeared in the land and the sea
<u>Qaribullah</u>	<u>Corruption</u> has appeared on land and sea.
<u>George Sale</u>	<u>Corruption</u> hath appeared by land and by sea,
<u>JM Rodwell</u>	<u>Destruction</u> hath appeared by land and by sea
<u>Asad</u>	[Since they have become oblivious of God,] <u>corruption</u> has appeared on land and in the sea

Table 6: Frequency of Selected Equivalents

selected equivalences	mischief	corruption	evil	disasters	rampant corruption and disorders	pollution	destruction
frequency	2	8	2	1	1	1	1

According to Teflisi, Al-Mahalli, Al-Suyuti. Al-Qurtubi and Allamah Tabatabai, the word *al-fasād* refers to *famine or drought* in this verse. Here, only the translation by Khalifa seems to be fairly appropriate, since famine is considered as a disaster.

4.4. القتل (/al-qatl/) = كشتن (/koshtan/) = killing

We would look into the 94th verse of chapter 18, the Surah of Al-Kahf (The Cave), as an instance for this meaning.

کنند یم فساد نیزم در سخت ماجوج و اجوجی: الأَرْضِ فِي مُفْسِدُونَ وَمَأْجُوجَ يَأْجُوجَ إِنَّ

Transliteration: innaya/joojawama/joojamufsiduna fee al-ardi

In the following table, the scholarly interpretations of the word *fasād*, from which the word *mufsidun* was derived, are presented.

Table 7: Interpretations of the Term *Fasād* according to Five Authorized Qur'anic Scholars

Qur'anic scholars	Interpretations of the word <i>fasād</i>
1. Al-Mahalli, Al-Suyuti	plundering and oppression
2. Al-Qurtubi	killing
3. Allamah Tabatabai	crime

4. MakaremShirazi	corruption
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As shown above, only the Al-Qurtubi's interpretation is in line with Teflisi's remarks.

<u>Yusuf Ali</u>	the Gog and Magog (People) <u>do great mischief</u> on earth:
<u>Pickthal</u>	Lo! Gog and Magogare <u>spoiling</u> the land.
<u>Arberry</u>	behold, Gog and Magogare <u>doing corruption</u> in the earth;
<u>Shakir</u>	surely Gog and Magog <u>make mischief</u> in the land.
<u>Sarwar</u>	Gog and Magogare <u>ravaging</u> this land.
<u>Khalifa</u>	Gog and Magogare <u>corruptors</u> of the earth.
<u>Hilali/Khan</u>	Verily! Yajooj and Majooj (Gog and Magog) <u>are doing great mischief</u> in the land.
<u>Saheeh Int.</u>	indeed Gog and Magogare [<u>great</u>] <u>corrupters</u> in the land.
<u>Malik</u>	People of Gog and Magog <u>ravage</u> this land;
<u>Shabbir</u>	Behold, Gog and Magogare <u>spoiling</u> this land. <u>They keep attacking and commit bloody crimes.</u>
<u>Maulana Ali</u>	Gog and Magog <u>do mischief</u> in the land.
<u>Free Minds</u>	Gog and Magogare <u>destroyers</u> of the land,
<u>Qaribullah</u>	'Look, Gog and Magogare <u>corrupting</u> the earth.
<u>George Sale</u>	verily Gog and Magog <u>waste</u> the land;
<u>JM Rodwell</u>	verily, Gog and Magog <u>waste</u> this land;
<u>Asad</u>	Behold, Gog and Magogare <u>spoiling</u> this land.

Table 8: Frequency of Selected Equivalents

selected equivalences	great mischief/ mischief	spoiling	corruption/ corrupters	ravaging/ ravage	destroyers	waste
frequency	4	3	4	2	1	2

Thus, no translator has directly referred to the act of killing intended in this verse according to Teflisi and Al-Qurtubi. However, the translation by Shabbir who has added the extra explanatory sentence *keep attacking and commit bloody crimes*, indicating the attack and the bloody crimes, seems to be a measure in rendering the intended pragmatic interpretation.

4.5. بىالتخرى (/al-takhrīb/) = كردن خراب (/kharābkardan/) = destroying

The selected verse for this meaning is the 34thverse of chapter 27, the Surah, Al-Naml (The Ant).

گردانندمى تباه را آن درآيند شهرى به چون پادشاهان گفست {ملكه}: أفسدوها قريته دخلوا إذا الملوك إن قالت

Transliteration: Qalat inn-a-lmulukaizadakhaluqaryatanafsaduha

Table 9 below shows the scholars' commentary on the meaning of the term *fasād* in the verse under discussion.

Table 9: Interpretations of the Term *Fasād* according to Five Authorized Qur'anic Scholars

Qur'anic scholars	Interpretations of the word <i>fasād</i>
1. Al-Mahalli, Al-Suyuti	ruin with destruction
2. Al-Qurtubi	destroying
3. Allamah Tabatabai	destroying, firing
4. Makarem Shirazi	corrupting and destroying

As shown above, all suggested interpretations by the five authorized scholars are in line with Teflisi's remarks.

<u>Literal</u>	She said: "That truly the kings if they entered a village/urban city they <u>corrupted</u> it."
<u>Yusuf Ali</u>	She said: "Kings, when they enter a country, <u>despoil</u> it."
<u>Pickthal</u>	She said: Lo! Kings, when they enter a township, <u>ruin</u> it."
<u>Arberry</u>	She said, "Kings, when they enter a city, <u>disorder</u> it."
<u>Shakir</u>	She said: Surely the kings, when they enter a town, <u>ruin</u> it."
<u>Sarwar</u>	She said, "When Kings enter a town they <u>destroy</u> it."
<u>Khalifa</u>	She said, "The kings <u>corrupt</u> any land they invade."
<u>Hilali/Khan</u>	She said: "Verily! Kings, when they enter a town (country), they <u>despoil</u> it."
<u>Saheeh Int.</u>	She said, Indeed kings when they enter a city, they <u>ruin</u> it."
<u>Malik</u>	The queen said: "When the kings invade a town, they <u>ruin</u> it."
<u>Shabbir</u>	She said, "Behold, when kings invade a town, they <u>ruin</u> it."
<u>Maulana Ali</u>	She said: "Surely the kings, when they enter a town, <u>ruin</u> it."
<u>Free Minds</u>	She said: "When the kings enter a town they <u>destroy</u> it."
<u>Qaribullah</u>	She said: "When kings enter a village, they <u>ruin</u> it."
<u>George Sale</u>	She said, verily kings, when they enter a city by force, <u>waste</u> the same."
<u>IM Rodwell</u>	She said, "Kings when they enter a city <u>spoil</u> it."
<u>Asad</u>	Said she: "Verily, whenever kings enter a country they <u>corrupt</u> it."

Table 10: Frequency of Selected Equivalents

selected equivalences	corrupted/ corrupt	despoil	ruin	disorder	destroy	waste	spoil
frequency	3	1	7	1	2	1	1

Following the five interpreters' commentaries on this verse, only the translators of the Free Minds website and Sarwar have selected an appropriate equivalent. Albeit, the word *ruin* chosen by seven of the translators suggests approximately a similar meaning.

4.6. السحر (al-sehr) = جادو كردن (/jādūkardan/) = bewitching

The verse that we examined for this meaning is the 81st verse of chapter 10, the Surah of Yunus (Jonah).

كندمى ان الله لا يصلح عمل المفسدين: خدا كار مفسدان را تايدن

Transliteration: innaAllaha la yuslihuAamalaalmufsidin

Table 11: Interpretations of the Term *Fasād* according to Five Authorized Qur'anic Scholars

Qur'anic scholars	Interpretations of the word <i>fasād</i>
1. Al-Mahalli, Al-Suyuti	corruption
2. Al-Qurtubi	bewitching
3. Allamah Tabatabai	corruption
4. Makarem Shirazi	corruption

<u>Yusuf Ali</u>	for Allah prospereth not the work of <u>those who make mischief</u> .
<u>Pickthal</u>	Lo! Allah upholdeth not the work of <u>mischief-makers</u> .
<u>Arberry</u>	God sets not right the work of those <u>who do corruption</u> .
<u>Shakir</u>	surely Allah does not make the work of <u>mischief-makers</u> to thrive.

- Sarwar He will not make the deeds of the corrupt people righteous.
- Khalifa God does not support the transgressors' work.
- Hilali/Khan Allah will surely make it of no effect. Verily, Allah does not set right the work of Al-Mufsidoon (the evil-doers, corrupts, etc.).
- Saheeh Int. Allah will expose its worthlessness. Indeed, Allah does not amend the work of corrupters.
- Malik for Allah does not promote the work of mischief makers.
- Shabbir Allah's Laws annihilate the political and social systems that promote corruption, disorder and bloody feuds.
- Maulana Ali Surely Allah will make it naught. Surely Allah allows not the work of mischief-makers to thrive.
- Free Minds God does not set right the work of the corrupters.
- Qaribullah Surely, Allah will render it as nothing. Allah does not put right the work of the corrupt.
- George Sale for God prospereth not the work of the wicked doers.
- JM Rodwell God prospereth not the work of the evildoers.
- Asad verily, God will bring to nought! Verily, God does not further the works of spreaders of corruption.

The translators have used a variety of English words to transfer the meaning of *afalmufsidin*. Yet, none has taken the sense of *bewitching* into consideration, except Sale who has done a rather close translation by including the word *wicked* in his translation.

Table 12: Frequency of Selected Equivalents

selected equivalences	mischief/ mischief-makers	corruption/ corrupt people/ corruptors	the transgressors	Al-mufsidoon	wicked doers	evildoers
frequency	5	6	1	1	1	1

4.7. الفساد (al-fasād) = کردن ی‌تباہ (/tabāhikardan/) = corruption

In this part the 205th verse of chapter 2, the Surah of Al-Bagharah (The Cow) has been selected for comparing the chosen English equivalents of the word *Fasād*.

كوشش [یابد ریاستی یا] برگردد چون و: والنسل الحرث ويهلك فيها ليفسد الارض في سعي تولى واذا
سازد نابود را نسل و کشت و نماید فساد زمین در که کندمی

Transliteration: Wa-izatawallasaA fi-al-arziliyufsidafihawayuhlika-l-harthawannas

Table 13: Interpretations of the Term *Fasād* according to Five Authorized Qur'anic Scholars

Qur'anic scholars	Interpretations of the word <i>fasād</i>
1. Al-Mahalli, Al-Suyuti	corruption
2. Al-Qurtubi	corruption
3. Allamah Tabatabai	corruption
4. Makarem Shirazi	corruption

- Yusuf Ali to spread mischief through the earth and destroy crops and cattle.
- Pickthal to make mischief therein and to destroy the crops and the cattle;
- Arberry to do corruption there and to destroy the tillage and the stock;
- Shakir that he may cause mischief in it and destroy the tilth and the stock,
- Sarwar they quickly commit evil in the land, destroying the farms and people.

Khalifa heroams the earth corruptingly, destroying properties and lives.
 Hilali/Khan to make mischief therein and to destroy the crops and the cattle, and Allah likes not mischief.
 Saheeh Int. to cause corruption therein and destroy crops and animals.
 Malik towardscausing mischief in the land, destroying crops and cattle.
 Shabbir theycreate corruption in the earth. Their rule results in destruction of the produce of land and labor and the damage done by them affects generations.
 Maulana Ali to cause mischief in it and destroy tilth and offspring;
 Free Minds to corrupt the Earth and destroy its crops, and people's lineage.
 Qaribullah to corrupt there and destroy crops and cattle.

George Sale to destroy that which is sown, and springeth up:

JM Rodwell to enact disorders therein, and layeth waste the fields and flocks:

Asad spreading corruption and destroying [man's] tilth and progeny:

Table 14: Frequency of Selected Equivalents

selected equivalences	mischief	corruption/ roams corruptingly/ corrupt	evil	destroy	disorders
frequency	6	7	1	1	1

As can be seen above, Arberry, Saheeb, Asad, Qaribullah and the translation by the Free Minds website have used the words *corruption and corrupt* which are the same as the intended meaning in the original text as suggested by the five Qur'anic scholars. The other English equivalents i.e. *mischief, disorders, destroy and evil* seem to be appropriate meanings.

4.8. Concluding Remarks

The analysis and discussion above revealed the fact that approximately all the translators of theselected sixteen translations were incognizantof the delicate differences of meanings of the word *fasād* and its derivations in their renderingsof the seven chosen verses. A comprehensive tabulation of various renderings is presented in Table 15 below.

Table15: Equivalents of the Seven Different Meanings of the Qur'anic Term Fasād and its Derivations in Sixteen English Translations

	insubordination to perishfamine		killling	corruption	bewitching	
tr 1	do not mischief	confusion and corruption	mischief	do great mischief	to spread mischief	those who make mischief
tr 2	work not confusion	corrupted	corruption	are spoiling	to make mischief	mischief-makers
tr 3	do not corruption	corrupted	corruption	are doing corruption	to do corruption	who do corruption
tr 4	do not make mischief	perished	corruption	make mischief	cause mischief	mischief-makers
tr 5	do not destroy	destroyed	evil	are ravaging	commit evil	the corrupt people
tr 6	do not corrupt	corrupted	disasters	are corruptors	roams the earth corruptingly	the transgressors'
tr 7	do not do mischief	corrupted	evil (sins and disobedience of Allah, etc.)	are doing great mischief	to make mischief	Al-Mufsidoon (the evil-doers, corrupts, etc.)
tr 8	cause not corruption	ruined	corruption	are (great) corrupters	to cause corruption	corrupters
tr 9	do not create mischief	disrupted	mischief (war between Roman and Persian empires)	ravage	causing mischief	mischief makers

tr 10	do not spread corruption	ruin	rampant corruption and disorders	arespoiling/ They keep attacking and commit bloody crimes.	create corruption	annihilate the political and social systems that promote corruption, disorder and bloody feuds
tr 11	make not mischief	perish	corruption	do mischief	to cause mischief	mischief makers
tr 12	do not corrupt	corrupted	pollution	are destroyers	to corrupt	corrupters
tr 13	do not make mischief	corrupted	corruption	are corrupting	to corrupt	corrupt
tr 14	act not corruptly	corrupted	corruption	waste	to destroy	wicked doers
tr 15	commit disorders	ruin	destruction	waste	to enact disorders	evildoers
tr 16	do not spread corruption	ruin	corruption	are spoiling	spreading corruption	spreaders of corruption

The results shown in Table 15 above and Table 16 below, however, do not mean that the translators have mistranslated the term *fasād*, rather, they have rendered the primary sense of the term, i.e. the first and immediate sense suggested by the word *fasād*, without having attended to contextual clues. In other words, they have ignored the secondary senses of the homonymous term *fasād* which best fit the context in which they occur.

Table 16: Frequency of Correct Equivalents Used in each Translation

tr1	o
tr2	o
tr3	1
tr4	1
tr5	o
tr6	o
tr7	o
tr8	1
tr9	o
tr10	o
tr11	1
tr12	1
tr13	1
tr14	o
tr15	o
tr16	1
tr1	o
tr2	o

Ambiguity resulting from homonymous terms of the source text may be conscious or unconscious. This binds the translator to a twofold responsibility. On the other hand, it is the translator's job to reproduce and retain the intended ambiguity in the translated text. Unconscious ambiguity, on the other hand, has to be clarified and disambiguated according to situational or linguistic context. In such cases, the translator's job is to sacrifice the less important meaning or, according to Newmark (1988), "appending the less likely meaning if there is the slightest possibility of it being the correct one" (Vahid and Zamani, 2009, p. 78). The ambiguity in religious texts arises from the nature of these texts which are subject to their contexts within the community, rather than their semantic contexts for their understanding (Shackle 2005). In fact, the ambiguity imposed on the translator in rendering sacred texts is

different from what is resulted from non-sacred texts translation, in that the former is a matter of both 'contexts of culture', e.g. cultural associations of the Qur'anic expressions in the present research, and 'different interpretations' by various scholars.

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