



**THE REVIEW OF THE WORDS *ADNA AL-ARD* AND *AL-‘ANKABUT* IN MALAY
TRANSLATION OF HOLY QURAN: ANALYSIS GUIDED BY SCIENCE-
ORIENTED EXEGESIS METHODOLOGY**

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ABSTRACT

Attempts to translate the meaning of the Holy Quran in Malay Archipelago began since the middle of 17th century. However, the translation is not always accurate. This research utilised the use of science-oriented exegesis (tafsir ‘ilmi) to help in producing better translation of meaning in Al-Quran. This article analyses two Malay translations of Holy Quran; Tafsir Pimpinan ar-Rahman and Tafsir Quran Karim guided by science-oriented exegesis (tafsir ‘ilmi) to find out whether the translation of meaning matches modern scientific facts. The findings reveal that there is limitation in the translation of the meaning for the word adna Al-Ard to “nearest place”, where the word actually has multiple meanings. For the interpretation of the mufassir and modern science fact, the suggested meaning for the word adna Al-Ard is supposed to be “the nearest place with the lowest altitude”. Similarly, the word al-‘ankabut was generally translated as a neutral-gender “spider” where it could specifically mean “female spider”. It is hoped that this paper will be useful to translators and Muslim in general in understanding the meaning of the Holy Quran.

Keywords: Translation methodology, *kawniyyat*, science-oriented exegesis, *tafsir ‘ilmi*, contemporary scientific fact

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The widespread of Islam amongst non-Arabs had led to the emergence of Quranic translation in various languages, which has become a necessity (Hanapi, 2003). Quranic translation is essential for two main reasons: firstly, to spread Islamic message to non-Muslims and to invite them to observe the Quranic messages. Secondly, to explain the signs that were sent down and to describe Allah SWT’s command to Muslims who communicate in other languages than Arabic. Without Quranic translation, it would be difficult to demonstrate an effective way to invite either Muslims or non-Muslims because the number of experts in authentic Quranic language today is small (Shaikh, 1999).

The question is, how accurate can the Quran be translated into a target language. According to debates among Arabic and ‘*Usl Al-Fiqh*’ experts, if Arabic is observed

semantically, it has two categories (Razak, 2004, p. 242). Firstly, meanings that are easy to understand literally - known as the original or primary meaning, in other words, *dilala asliyyah* (original sign) (Al-Shatibi, 1997). For instance, from Allah SWT's command: "O you who have believed, when you contract a debt for a specified term, write it down ..." (Quran, 2:282).

The expressions of 'Al-Tadayun' (contract), 'Kitabah' (writing), 'Al-Dayn' (debt), 'Katib' (writer) and 'Al-Ajal' (term) in the verse are comprehensible phrases from linguistic point of view without the necessities of deep investigation and they are sufficient to illustrate the meaning in its usage in Arabic (Razak, 2004, p. 242).

Secondly, meanings that require further enquiry and study to comprehend or for the purpose it was used. The semantic interpretation is beyond the literal interpretation or the additional meanings that accompany the first meaning. Moreover, they differ and there are a lot of interpretations on the meanings that suit the lexeme of context in terms of where it is located, who produced it and for what purpose it was expressed. This is known as the secondary meaning or second sign by some *ulama*. Al-Shatibi refers to it as *dilalah tabi'ah* (Al-Shatibi, 1997). For example, from Allah SWT's saying: "But they have attributed to Allah partners – the jinn, while He has created them." (Quran, 6:100)

The other meaning that has been classified into the secondary meaning or the second sign from this verse is: "Allah is not entitled to have associates, either the *jinn*s or other creatures". Other interpretations exist because of the sentence structure that precedes the word Allah, then *shuraka'* and after that followed by *Al-Jinn*. If the structure is modified, the interpretation will also change. It is observed that this type of meaning is not derived from the linguistic aspect, but rather an alternate meaning that matches a word position in a sentence (Razak, 2004).

Generally, scholars in the field of interpretation viewed that Al-Quran can only be translated based on the original or primary meaning. Furthermore, the translation process and understanding of the meaning are limited to the ability of human comprehension based on acknowledged methodologies such as the Arabic methodologies, hadith explanations and of which does not contradict with the Holy Quran itself (Razak, 2004). Meanwhile, the secondary meaning and the accompanist for Al-Quran is the evidence of 'i'jaz' Al-Quran and it is unattainable even by Arabic, what more other foreign languages (Muhammad, 2002, p. 871).

Commonly, translation can be characterized into two categories; '*tarjamah harfiyyat*' and '*tarjamah tafsiriyyat*' or '*ma'nawiyyat*' (Al-Qattan, 1997, p. 307). The consensus of the scholars prohibits Quranic translation based on *harfiyyat* because it is impossible to literally interpret it in terms of its high literary authenticity from the aspects of *uslub* and *nuzum*. Furthermore, it is categorized as an effort to modify or amend the Quran (Hanapi, 2003). On the other hand, the *tafsiriyyat* or *ma'nawiyyat* translations which emphasize on semantics and contexts have become permissible and are regarded as '*fard kifayat*' for the Ummah (Hanapi, 2003, p. 217). This is because Al-Quran is invaluable in terms of its *fasahah* and *balaghah*, the classified word structures, *uslub*, and the subtlety of meanings. All Quranic verses contain 'i'jaz' that cannot be translated by human (Hanapi, 2003, p. 21). Thus, Islamic law recognizes only literal interpretations and the most appropriate translation to be associated with Al-Quran is the "Translation of Meanings" that will be discussed in this paper.

2.0 AL-QURAN TRANSLATION IN THE MALAY ARCHIPELAGO

The idea of Quranic translation in the Nusantara emerged after Abdul Ra'uf Ali Al-Fansuri translated *Anwar Al-Tanzil wa Asrar Al-Ta'wil* by Al-Baydawi in the middle of 17th century. His effort was the pioneer or the milestone attained by Indonesian Muslim clerics in particular and the Malay Archipelago in general in the effort to translate the meaning of Al-Quran into Malay language (Abdul Rahman & Hanapi, 2009).

From there on, numerous Al-Quran translations were produced by using either *tarjamah harfiyyat* or *ma'nawiyat* in Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei, Patani and Singapura. This development shows that non-Arab communities require the translation of Quranic meaning as it aids comprehension of the Quranic teachings albeit temporarily (Hanapi, 2003).

3.0 PROBLEMS IN QURANIC TRANSLATION

Although Quranic translation activities had expanded in Malay Archipelago for a considerable time, there have been no guided methodologies or standard regulations that are followed and recognized in the translation practices (Razak, 2004). This had caused several problems within certain Quranic translations that had created confusions. Most of it was due to the lack of expert knowledge or weaknesses in Al-Quran's original language proficiency and content understanding. Among the noticeable problems are the missing of words that should be translated, the limited exact meanings of Arabic lexeme due to lack of knowledge, the discernment of only one of the meanings and others (Hanapi, 2003). These matters will affect both the credibility of Al-Quran as *Kalam* of Allah SWT and the trustworthiness of knowledge presented in Al-Quran. Although it is temporary in its character, Quranic translation is the platform to comprehend Al-Quran's content.

4.0 EFFORT IN IMPROVING QURANIC TRANSLATIONS

The issues emerged earlier have encouraged academics to outline some guidelines and methodologies in the process of the translating Al-Quran to avoid mistakes or weaknesses that would degrade Al-Quran's position as the premier source of teaching in Islam. Among the suggested methodology is the requirement to setup a board of committees consisting of experts in relevant fields such as subject-matter representatives, Arabic, translation, and '*tafsir*' authorities (Razak, 2004).

Other than that, the engagement of experts in the field of literature, history, geography, chemistry, biology, medicine, engineering, law and others is also a must. This is because Al-Quran does not only discuss matters on jurisdiction, but it encompasses diverse types of elements for all sorts of disciplines. Translating Al-Quran without the experts' views and knowledge will cause inaccurate translation because there is a phrase that says, "two heads are decidedly better than one".

Based on the description of the issues, the authors sense the necessity to analyse the mistakes in Quranic translations in the Malay and Indonesian language (focusing on *kawniyyat* verses) based on *tafsir 'ilmi* to find out the most accurate translation of meanings which is in line with the present growth of knowledge and the advancement of technology. It is hoped that the improvement in translation will give better meaning for the words in the existing Malay language Quranic translations.

5.0 TAFSIR 'ILMI DEFINITION

'*Tafsir 'ilmi*' is a modern terminology originated from two words which are '*tafsir*' and '*'ilmi*' (Al-Shiddi, 2010, p. 6). Etymologically, *tafsir* is a derived word from the verb *fassara* which means explanation and description. While terminologically, the science of *tafsir* is a science that discusses what is meant by Allah SWT based on and within human capabilities and this science encompasses every matter that gives comprehension of meaning and explains what was meant (Al-Dhahabi, 2002).

Meanwhile, the word '*ilmi*' derives from the word '*ilm*' and functions as adjective for *tafsir*. Literally, '*ilm*' is a word synonymous with comprehension, knowledge and consistency (Al-Zarqani, 1995) while the antonym is ignorance (Al-Jurjani, 1985). However, it is a bit difficult to determine the definition of '*ilm*' terminologically because the word '*ilm*' is a comprehensive expression that refers to a firm faith that corresponds with the truth (Al-Jurjani, 1985). Hence, '*ilm*' comprises of all human knowledge without any limitation to it. Thus, the definition of '*ilm*' will be different from one field of research to another. What is it meant by '*ilm*' in this study is the experimental science of knowledge and anything that is related to it from the natural science encompasses in *Al-Kawn* (creation) such as physic, chemistry, geology, biology, oceanography, astronomy, and others.

Ulama had given different definitions to the phrases of *tafsir* and '*ilmi*'. Al-Dhahabi defines *tafsir 'ilmi* as *tafsir* that discusses scientific terminologies in accordance with Quranic examples and strives to identify various scientific and philosophical opinions based on the terminologies (Al-Dhahabi, 2002). According to Al-Khalidi (2008) *tafsir 'ilmi* is the science of Quranic verses translation that conforms with the modern sciences methodologies and explanation of scientific meaning of Quranic verses in line with the certainty and analysis of modern sciences.

There is also a definition of *tafsir 'ilmi* as the discovery of the meaning of Quranic verses to certify its truth towards the scientific theories related to creations (Al-Muslih & Al-Sawi, 2008). Another definition of *tafsir 'ilmi* is the usage of experimental knowledge in the effort of increasing the explanation of meaning of verses and broadening the connotation of those verses (Al-Shiddi, 2010).

Based on the definitions discussed, the authors summarize *tafsir 'ilmi* as science-oriented Quranic translation to explain the scientific meaning of Quranic verses especially the ones related to the subject of creation or *kawniyyat* verses that conforms with the methodologies of modern scientific analysis to recognize Quranic truth towards theories related to creations or *Al-Kawn*.

6.0 THE POSITION OF TAFSIR 'ILMI

Tafsir 'ilmi is categorized in '*Al-Tafsir bi Al-Ra'y*' and the meaning of '*Al-Ra'y*' in this context is '*Al-Ijtihad*' (Al-Shiddi, 2010, p. 40). *Al-Tafsir bi Al-Ra'y* is Quranic translation based on *ijtihad* after the translator had mastered Arabic from various aspects, complemented by knowledge of *Jahiliyyah* poems, *asbab Al-Nuzul*, *Al-Nasikh wa Al-Mansukh* and other essential requirements of a Quranic translator (Al-Dhahabi, 2002). The proponents of *tafsir 'ilmi* viewed it as part of *Al-Tafsir bi Al-Ra'y al-Mahmud* while the oppositions were in the opinion that the *tafsir* is from the category of *Al-Tafsir bi Al-Ra'y Al-Madhmum*.

6.1 The Ruling on *Tafsir 'Ilmi*

The position of *tafsir 'ilmi* as *Al-Tafsir bi Al-Ra'y* is the main factor that led to differences among scholars of Islam pertaining to the rules of performing Quranic *tafsir* according to scientific orientation. This is because there are two categories of *Al-Tafsir bi Al-Ra'y* which are *Al-Mahmud* (praiseworthy) and *Al-Madhmum* (blameworthy). Generally, these scholars can be classified into two groups (Ahmad, 2009).

6.1.1 First Group:

Those who disputed Quranic translation from scientific point of view. This group was led by one of the prominent Islamic thinkers, Al-Imam Abu Ishaq Al-Shatibi Ibrahim bin Musa Al-Lakhmi Al-Gharnati (d.790H). Contemporary ulama who support this view are Al-Shaykh Amin Al-Khuli and Al-Shaykh Mahmud Shaltut, the former Shaykh Al-Azhar.

They argue that Quranic miracle is permanent while science will always change according to situation, time, and researcher. It is this characteristic of science that prohibits the Quranic translation from using this method. This is among the arguments presented by the opposition of *tafsir 'ilmi*.

6.1.2 Second Group:

Those who viewed that it is permissible for Al-Quran to be translated from scientific point of view. They were led by prominent *sufi* such as Al-Imam Al-Ghazzali, Al-Imam Al-Razi, Al-Shaykh Muhammad Rashid Rida, Mustafa Sadiq Al-Rafi'i and many others. They stated several arguments, amongst which Allah SWT's saying in *Surah Qaf* (50), Verse 6: "*Have they not looked at the heaven above them – how We structured it and adorned it and [how] it has no rifts?*"

This verse clearly stated that Allah SWT encourages human to understand how the sky was invented and there is no way to discover the answer except through scientific research. Thus, scientific explanation is needed to clarify the verse from scientific point of view.

In this context, the authors consider that the argument given by the opposition of *tafsir 'ilmi* is too general while those who quote permissibility in this matter place certain standards such as only scientific facts can be used in performing *tafsir* on Quranic verses, not just theory or hypothesis. The authors believe that *tafsir 'ilmi* is a necessity in the translation of Al-Quran, in line with contemporary technology and knowledge advancement.

7.0 THE STANDARD IN *TAFSIR 'ILMI*

Those who claimed that scientific Quranic translation is permissible reckon several basic requirements as follow (Ahmad, 2009, pp. 51-52).

7.1 First: Al-Quran is a book of guidance.

Verily the Holy Quran is a book that provides guidance for humans so that they will return to Allah SWT to accept and perform their main duty as the caliph on earth.

7.2 Second: Consider extremism and negligence.

There should not be excessiveness in research of *kawniyyat* verses while at the same time neglecting the positive aspects that are available in this world granted by Allah SWT to fulfil human necessities.

7.3 Third: Al-Quran's approach is flexible.

Quranic approach is flexible in presenting its verses and it can accommodate various suitable translations.

7.4 Fourth: Scientific facts are evidence-based.

Assumptions and scientific theories that have not reached the level of scientific facts must be avoided.

7.5 Fifth: Consideration of the meaning of a verse is not based solely on one fact.

Sometimes a scientific fact attributed to a verse is only one of the possible meanings to the verse.

7.6 Sixth: It is impossible for Quranic and scientific fact to contradict each other.

Contradiction between Quranic and scientific facts should not happen as both come from one source.

7.7 Seventh: It must follow Quranic methodologies in the search of knowledge.

One should understand that everything depends on its timing. Thus, it is said that the best translator of Al-Quran is time.

8.0 ANALYSIS OF MALAY AND INDONESIAN QURAN TRANSLATION BASED ON TAFSIR 'ILMI METHODOLOGY

This paper focuses on two works of translation commonly used by the Malay Archipelago communities especially in Malaysia and Indonesia which are *Tafsir Pimpinan ar-Rahman* and *Tafsir Quran Karim*. The introduction for both translations are as follow:

8.1 Tafsir Pimpinan ar-Rahman: Sheikh Abdullah Basmeih

A translation of Al-Quran that is commonly used by majority of Malaysians is *Tafsir Pimpinan ar-Rahman*. Its full title is *Tafsir Pimpinan Ar-Rahman Kepada Pengertian al-Quran*, authored by Sheikh Abdullah Basmeih bin Sheikh Muhammad Basmeih (Hasan, 2009). This work was first published by the Islamic Affairs Department at the Prime Minister's Department in 1970/1390AH (Hanapi, 2003).

In the production of this work, its author had referred to some other books as guidance. The books consisted of Arabic, Malay and Indonesian Quranic commentaries, books of *Hadith*, Malay and Arabic dictionaries (Abdullah Basmeih, 2002). Generally, there were three main steps carried out by Sheikh Abdullah Basmeih while translating the Al-Quran; writing an introduction that explained the summary of a *Surah* (chapter), translating all the verses using *tarjamah ma'nawiyah* and interpreting some of the Quranic verses that required further clarification. He referred to *kitab-kitab muktabar* and then interpreted the Quranic verses in his own style of translation without being guided by any translator (Hasan, 2009). Yet, only certain verses were given further explanation and description while the rest were translation of the verses. Hence, the researcher categorized this work as a translation of the meaning of Al-Quran.

8.2 Tafsir Quran Karim: Mahmud Yunus

In Indonesia, among the famous Quranic translation is *Tafsir Quran Karim* by Mahmud Bin Yunus. Although at a glance, it is almost like a typical translation of the Al-Quran, it is in fact

a work of simple Malay *tafsir* written in *Rumi*. It was *published* for the first time on 21st of *Rabi'ul Awal* 1357AH (May 21, 1938) (Ahmad, 2012).

The author has his own methodology and approaches in conducting *tafsir* of the Quranic verses. He still applied the methodology of *tafsir* of other *mufassir* in interpreting the Quranic verses. This shows that he did not depend solely on his own understanding, but also followed the *manhaj* of *mufassir* in his interpretation of Quranic verses (Ahmad, 2012). The translation also provided conclusion of the whole Quranic verses in the forms of *mawdu'i* (topic-based) that gives an easy guideline for the reader to review and search for related Quranic verses on a particular topic. Not only the topics were stated but the name of *Surah*, number of verse and pages as reference for the respective verse were also enclosed (Ahmad, 2012).

Although the work is a simple *tafsir*, the authors were disposed to say that it is a translation of the meaning of Al-Quran that provided interpretation on certain places in the Quran.

The following examples will highlight the mistakes that had occurred in both translations and a thorough discussion will be dedicated in analysing the mistakes based on *tafsir 'ilmi* methodology. The authors will then propose better meanings.

EXAMPLE 1:

In Surah Al-Rum, verse 3, Allah says: "In a land close by; but they, [even] after [this] defeat of theirs, will soon be victorious".

The translation on the meaning if this verse is referred to both translations:

- a) *Tafsir Pimpinan al-Rahman*: Sheikh Abdullah Basmeih
 "Di **negeri yang dekat sekali**; dan mereka sesudah kekalahannya itu akan mengalahkan lawannya." (Abdullah Basmeih, 2002, p. 1054)
- b) *Tafsir Quran Karim*: Mahmud Yunus
 "(Yang letaknya) **dekat negeri** (Arab), sedangkan mereka sesudah kalah itu akan menang." (Yunus, 1998, p. 594)

The phrase being discussed in this verse is *adna Al-Ard*. The author found that the translation of meanings given is almost similar; "state that is near/very near". This is interesting because the word *adna* has multiple meanings. The issue here is whether the meaning of "nearest place" fits the overall context of the verse?

It is interesting to note that Al-Quran does not use the word *aqraba* which means "the nearest", but the word *adna* were chosen even though it has been widely used to mean many things. This finding has encouraged the authors to study the meaning of the *ayah* as it is directly related to the creation process of the earth.

Let us look at the background of the *ayah*. Rome and Persia were two great nations with good diplomatic relationship between them as early as the fifth century. However, the first war between the two started in 420M due to the reluctance of Theodosius II to return the Christians who seek refuge to Persia because of the cruelty during the reign of his empire. At the same time, the Persians were proven to be unwilling to return the Roman gold miners who had worked for them; they were also claimed to have robbed Roman business merchandises (Greatrex, 1993). The war continued for hundreds of years until 613M when "Rome was heavily defeated and it lost Jerusalem" (Treadgold, 1997, p. 289).

It was told that the Muslims would be happy if the Romans defeated the Persians because the people of Rome were considered as the people of the book while the Persians were non-believers who prayed to statues. When Rome was defeated, Persians celebrated their achievement. However, Allah SWT mentioned that Persians would be defeated a few years later (Al-Mawardi, n.d.) even though realistically it would be impossible for Rome to even endure, what more winning it back. The *ayah* was revealed around 620M, almost seven years after the heavy defeat.

Abu Bakr, the man who trusted all things said by Prophet Muhammad SAW, had bet on four camels—this was before betting was illegal in Islam—with the *Musyrikin* for the duration of seven years with the hope that the Romans would in return be able to defeat the Persians. However, the seven years passed by without any development causing the Muslims to be under tremendous pressure because of the situation. The matter was brought up to the Prophet and he came up with a question: “What is the meaning of *bid‘a* that you understand?” They replied: “Less than ten”. Then the Prophet said: “Increase your bet and add two more years”. Before the end of the two-year period, a group came to inform the triumph of Rome against the Persians (Ibn Kathir, 2000).

To gather their strength, the Roman Emperor Heraclius instructed that the gold and silver kept in churches be melted and changed to money to finance the military expansion. Even the bronze statues and decorations were not spared to achieve the goal. After getting the much-needed financial supply, “Heraclius turned his sight to reorganizing the war battalion” (Treadgold, 1997, p. 293).

In December 627M, almost seven years after the *ayah* was revealed, “Heraclius managed to defeat the Persian army in a great battle that occurred near Nineveh that was located at a low altitude district in Palestine close to the Dead Sea” (Treadgold, 1997, p. 298). This event confirmed the prophecy in Al-Quran that claimed that Rome would be able to defeat Persians in a few years’ time even when the idea was considered illogical from the beginning.

The *mufasir* were in dispute in determining the meaning of the verse *al-Ard* and they were divided into two opinions; Al-Nuqqash said that it refers to the Persian area while the *ulama* concluded that it referred to the Roman region. Meanwhile, there are four popular opinions in determining the close area to Rome (Al-Mawardi, n.d.):

- 1) The border of Syria according to Ibn ‘Abbas.
- 2) Arab peninsular, the Roman area closest to Persia according to Mujahid.
- 3) Jordan and Palestine as told by Al-Saddi.
- 4) Azri‘at Syria according to Yahya bin Salam.

One thing clear is the translation by *mufassir* on the word *adna* with the meaning of *aqraba* which is “the nearest” even though they disagreed on determining the exact area of location as mentioned earlier.

The researchers then looked at the word from language perspective. The word *adna* is *ism tafdil* to the root word *dana* and has been mentioned eleven times in different parts of Al-Quran (Surah Al-Baqarah: 61) with different meanings. Among them are:

- 1) *Al-Aqrab* (nearer) is the opposite of *Al-Aqsa* (farther). Allah SWT says:
And was at a distance of two bows’ length or (even) nearer, (Quran, 53:9)

2) *Al-Aqall* (lesser) is the opposite of *Al-Akthar* (more). Allah SWT saying:

Have you not seen that Allah knows whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth? There is no Najwa (secret counsel) of three, but He is their fourth (with His Knowledge, while He Himself is over the Throne, over the seventh heaven), nor of five but He is their sixth (with His Knowledge), not of less than that or more, but He is with them (with His Knowledge) wheresoever they may be; And afterwards on the Day of Resurrection, He will inform them of what they did. Verily, Allâh is the All-Knower of everything. (Quran, 58:7)

3) *Al-Asghar* (smaller) in contrast of *Al-Akbar* (bigger). Allah SWT saying:

And verily, We will make them taste of the near torment (i.e. the torment in the life of this world, i.e. disasters, calamities, etc.) prior to the supreme torment (in the Hereafter), in order that they may (repent and) return (i.e. accept Islam). (Quran, 32:21)

The word *adna* in Quran offers multiple meanings based on the context of verses and not restricted to the meaning of *Al-Aqrab* (nearer). All the three meanings (nearer, smaller and lesser) revealed that the verse *adna* was used to symbolize something in a smaller quantity or minimum amount. Therefore, the researcher is interested to study this matter from a wider scope in its use in verse 3 of *Surah Al-Rum*. Next the researcher refers to the geological facts since it has direct connection to the earth geographical condition.

Modern discovery confirms the Dead Sea lake area is considered the lowest area on the surface of the earth (Lowest Places on Earth, 2015). The lake was located along the tectonic plate boundary between the African Plate and the Arabian Plate. The earth surface level of that area was recorded as 413 meters below sea level and the sea surface in the area reached 413 meters under the sea level and the deepest level can go up to 750 meters under the sea surface, making it the deepest lake ever.

Based on these facts, it can be said that the word *adna* in the context of the verse that refers to the surface of the earth could also be translated to *Al-Asfal/Al-Akhfad* (the lowest) other than “the nearest”. This matter was highlighted by scholars who studied *i’jaz ‘ilmi*, but it was denied by some quarters. The reason given was that the word *adna* in Arabic has no meaning that suggests *Al-Asfal/Al-Akhfad* (the lowest).

Due to that, the attention was shifted to the use of the word in hadith. It was discovered that there was a hadith that applied the word by suggesting this meaning *Al-Asfal* (the lowest) versus *Al-A’la* (the highest). The hadith goes:

Moses asked his Lord: Who amongst the inhabitants of Paradise is the lowest to rank? He (Allah) said: The person who would be admitted into Paradise last of all among those deserving of Paradise who are admitted to it. I would be said to him: Enter Paradise. He would say: O my Lord! how (should I enter) while the people have settled in their apartments and taken the shares (portions)? It would be said to him: Would you be pleased if there be for you like the kingdom of a king amongst the kings of the world? He would say: I am pleased my Lord. He (Allah) would say: For you is that, and like that, and like that, and like that, and that. He would say at the fifth (point): I am well pleased. My Lord. He (Allah) would say: It is for you and, ten times

like it, and for you is what yourself desires and your eye enjoys. He would say: I am well pleased, my Lord. He (Moses) said: (Which is) the highest of their (inhabitants of Paradise) ranks? He (Allah) said: They are those whom I choose. I establish their honor with My own hand and then set a seal over it (and they would be blessed with Bounties) which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human mind has perceived: and this is substantiated by the Book of Allah, Exalted and Great:" So no soul knows what delight of the eye is hidden for them; a reward for what they did.

(Sahih Muslim, The Book of Faith, Chapter: The Lowest Of The Ranks In Paradise)

It clearly shows that the verse *adna* was also used to denote the hierarchy or order of the lowest rank. Thus, the translation of *adna Al-Ard* is not limited to the meaning of *Al-Aqgrab* only.

Dr. Zarghlul Al-Najjar did remind those who claimed the meaning of *adna Al-Ard* to be either nearest place to Paris, Arabic country, end of Sham, the country Sham, ‘Antakiyah, Dimashq, Bayt Al-Maqdis or others to reconsider the matter. This is due to the boundaries of both empires intersect with each other from one direction and with the Arab countries from another direction. Thus, it is illogical to say that *adna Al-Ard* in that verse is near to Persian or Arab countries only. Inaccuracy will occur if it is said that the lake was the nearest place to the Arab countries, when in fact it is a part of the Arabian Peninsula (Al-Najjar, 2007).

The conclusion that can be made is the Dead Sea in Jordan covers an area of land of low altitude and this is the site that witnessed the battle of the Roman army who defeated the Persians as predicted in Al-Quran. At the same time, the area was also near to the places mentioned by the *mufassir*.

Therefore, the authors decided to combine both meanings for the word *adna Al-Ard* because both have their own justification. The authors suggested that the meaning for the word *adna Al-Ard* is supposed to be “the nearest place with low altitude” and it should be provided with appropriate explanation for both meanings. The choice of the word *adna Al-Ard* in the verse above was a miracle of Al-Quran because the word provides flexible meaning based on the context it appears.

EXAMPLE 2:

Allah SWT said in verse 41, Surah al-‘Ankabut:

The parable of those who take protectors other than Allah is that of the spider, who builds (to itself) a house; but truly the flimsiest of houses is the spider's house;- if they but knew.

The translation of the meaning of the verse is referred to both translations:

- a) *Tafsir Pimpinan al-Rahman*: Sheikh Abdullah Basmeih
 “Misal bandingan orang-orang yang menjadikan benda-benda yang lain dari Allah sebagai pelindung-pelindung (yang diharapkan pertolongannya) adalah seperti labah-labah Yang membuat sarang (untuk menjadi tempat perlindungannya); padahal sesungguhnya sarang-sarang yang paling reput ialah sarang labah-labah, kalaulah mereka orang-orang yang berpengetahuan.”

b) *Tafsir Qur'an Karim*: Mahmud Yunus

“Umpama orang2 yang mengambil wali2, selain dari pada Allah, adalah seperti labah2 yang memperbuat rumah. Sesungguhnya selemah-lemah rumah ialah rumah labah2, jika mereka mengetahui.”

The word that is discussed in this verse is “Al-‘*Ankabut*”. It is observed that both translations give the same translation which is “spider” (*labah-labah*). This matter has also sparked the same discussion as the former; whether the spider is a male or female because spider is an insect with gender specification.

Through *Lisan al-‘Arab* under the entry of ‘*ankaba*’, “Al-‘*Ankabut*” is a small slither animal that hangs in the air, at the river edge, through small and thin nets. The word “Al-‘*Ankabut*” is in the form of *muannath* (a feminine category) and usually is a noun for singular *muannath*. The plural noun or *jama*’ for “Al-‘*Ankabut*” is “Al-‘*Anakib*” (Ibn Manzur, n.d.). The designation of *Surah* in the form of *mufrad* (singular) Al-‘*Ankabut* shows that this animal is individual in its characteristic with exception of mating session and during incubating their eggs. This subject is in contrast with the previous *Surah* which are: *Surah al-Naml* and *al-Nahl* that entitled with plural utterance indicating their collective life (Al-Najjar, 2007).

The next phrase is “*ittakhadhat baytan*” that apply the feminine form clearly indicates that the spider that builds the nest is female spider. The question arises; does only female spider build the nest? Within *arachnid* literary, it is generally accepted that female adult spider build the usual species nest while male adult spider does not build any nest other than its attempt to enchant and create sperm. This shows that all spiders create silk and the possession of silk glandular in the abdomen is “one of the typical *arachnid* characteristics of *Araneare*” (Kumar & Gareth, 2007, p. 342).

On the surface, al-Qur’an contradicts the scientific fact. In reality, Al-Qur’an states these matters based on the norm that regulate the scenario of spider nest-making whereby the female spider is the prominent one that builds the nest. This is due to the ability of male spider to catch its victim without using any nest. There are also some that hitch on female spider nest and eat the attached victim in the net. However, this seldom happen because male spider does not consume any food as adult (Andrea & Robert, 1985).

It can be concluded that the word Al-‘*Ankabut* in the particular verse is the female spider and it is inadequate if its translation is just “spider”. Hence, the authors suggest the translation to be “female spider” as the female spider usually build nest compared to the male spider.

9.0 CONCLUSION

In a nutshell, *tafsir ‘ilmi* should be used as a guide in the translation of the *kawniyyat* verses especially in Malay language. The translation work should always be opened for re-evaluation and new interpretation so that the meaning would be in line with the current development of knowledge and technology advancement. The limitation in the translation of the meaning will indirectly eliminate the miracle found within Al-Quran as *Kalamullah* which is eternal until the day of Judgement. The effort to preserve the purity and unveil the miracle of Al-Quran should be made by every Muslim.

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