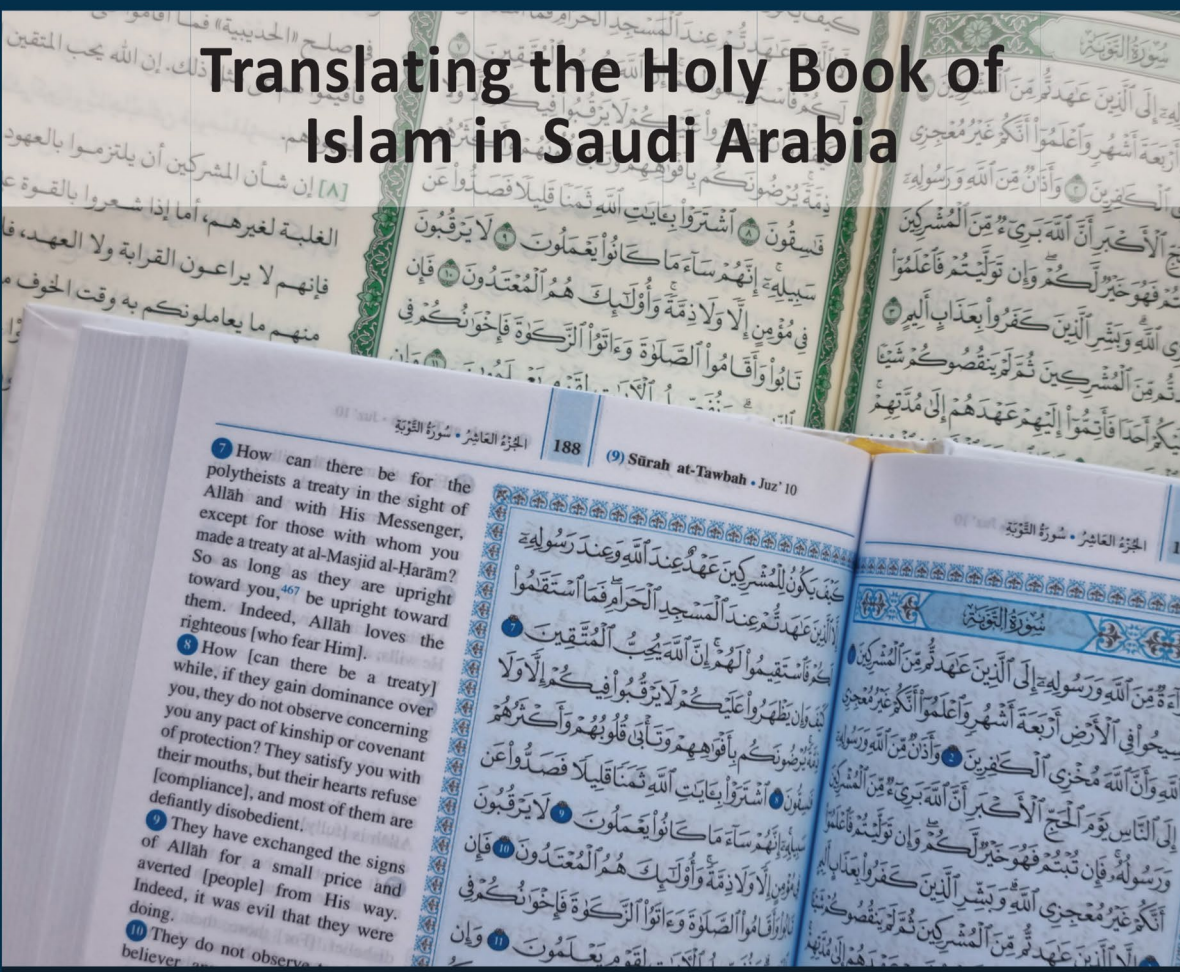
GLOBAL QUR'AN

The Kingdom and the Qur'an

Translating the Holy Book of Islam in Saudi Arabia



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3. The Hilālī-Khān Translation: The First Interpretation of the Qur'an in a Foreign Language by Saudi Scholars

It may be hard to believe, given the state involvement in the Qur'an-translation industry over several decades outlined in the previous chapter, but there exists only one Saudi-produced English translation of the Qur'an that can be considered entirely state-supported. The Hilālī-Khān translation, developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, has a complex history. Initially neglected in the first few decades after its publication, it was subsequently published on a massive scale and presented as an exemplar for other translations.[1] The work, known as 'Hilālī-Khān' because it was authored by Muḥammad Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī and Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān, two scholars working at the Islamic University of Madinah, is one of the most important sources to be addressed in this study. This translation has survived multiple revisions and editions and been subject to widespread and intensive critique, especially in recent times. For some readers it represents the most accurate interpretation of the text and holds a status similar to that of the King James Bible in many Protestant communities, while for others it exemplifies a conservative and fundamentalist 'Wahhabi' interpretation of the Qur'an that distorts God's word. Consequently, even after the introduction of many other translations to the market,

1 As of 2023, seventeen editions of the Hilālī-Khān translation are listed in WorldCat (the global catalogue of library holdings). The number rises to somewhere between twenty and thirty if we add reprints that are not given a unique ISBN.

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the Hilālī-Khān translation can be found in almost any Sunni mosque or Islamic centre in the West, including those that are not specifically Salafi-leaning. Moreover, the translation and *tafsīr* provided in 'Hilālī-Khān' has come to be a standard reference text for other translations of the Qur'an into a variety of languages. Beyond its lasting global impact, the 'Hilālī-Khān' merits special attention here because the history of this work and its textual development illuminates the evolution of views on Qur'an translation in Saudi Arabia. The original text has undergone three extensive revisions in Saudi hands, and the story of this translation answers how and why the state came to use Qur'an translation as a tool for global Salafi missionary activity. This chapter examines the target text but also the almost legendary personae of the translators who were behind it.

Al-Hilālī and His Legacy

Muḥammad Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī (1893–1987) was a Muslim activist, translator, scholar, and prolific writer. His background and context have been the subject of recent interest for English-language scholars: Umar Ryad has discussed al-Hilālī's experiences working for the Arabic-language section of Radio Berlin in Nazi Germany,[2] while another profound study, by Henri Lauzière, meanwhile, considers al-Hilālī's Islamic missionary vision and offers a valuable perspective on Muslim scholars' encounter with modern technologies in the mid-twentieth century.[3] Lauzière has also authored what is probably the only comprehensive biography of al-Hilālī, which discusses his contribution to the development of Salafi missionary activities.[4] The Hilālī-Khān translation itself has also received much attention, attracting reviews

2 Umar Riyad, 'A Salafi Student, Orientalist Scholarship, and Radio Berlin in Nazi Germany: Taqi al-Din al-Hilali and His Experiences in the West', in *Transnational Islam in Interwar Europe*, ed. by G. Nordbruch and U. Ryad (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 107–55. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137387042_6.

3 Henri Lauzière, 'Islamic Nationalism through the Airwaves: Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī's Encounter with Shortwave Radio 1937–39', *Die Welt des Islams*, 56.1 (2016), 6–33, https://doi.org/10.1163/15700607-00561p03.

4 Henri Lauzière, 'The Evolution of the Salafiyya in the Twentieth Century Through the Life and Thought of Taqi al-Din al-Hilali' (PhD dissertation, Georgetown University, 2008).

that range from the laudatory[5] to the critical[6] but also some neutral ones.[7] This is unsurprising because, as Stefan Wild rightly suggests, 'the Hilālī-Khān translation is the most widely disseminated Qur'an in Islamic bookstores and Sunni mosques throughout the English-speaking world'.[8] What remains almost completely unexplored, however, is the textual history of this translation and al-Hilālī's role in it. This is somewhat surprising because, as this study will show, the differences in the many versions produced since 1977 are appreciable.

Al-Hilālī authored a number of books in *tafsīr* studies, including the voluminous exegesis *Sabīl al-rashād fī hudā khayr al-ᶜabbād* [The Correct Path, Leading to the Happiness of the Servants [of God]] and a few commentaries on single suras.[9] From these, it is possible to glean his approach to the translation of the Qur'an into English in terms of his personal hermeneutical experience and methodology. One example is his monograph on modern Arabic linguistics called *Taqwīm al-lisānayn* [Correcting the Two Tongues] (1978).[10] In it, al-Hilālī challenges the application of Western semantics to Arabic as a sign of colonialism, utilising examples from George Sale's 1734 English translation of the Qur'an to demonstrate the loss of meaning that can occur in translation.[11] He had been interested in the representation of Islam in foreign languages since 1949, when he published an article 'Taᶜlīm al-lughāt' [The Study of Languages].[12] Although 'translating the Qur'an was, by all means,

5 For example, Abdul Raheem Kidwai, 'Review on Hilali's and Khan's *Noble Quran*', *Muslim World Book Review*, 15.3 (1995), 3–5.

6 For example, Zaidan Ali Jassem, '*The Noble Quran*: A Critical Evaluation of Al-Hilali and Khan's Translation', *International Journal of English and Education*, 3.2 (2014), 237–73.

7 For example, Mohammad Hawamdeh and Kais Kadhim, 'Parenthetical Cohesive Explicitness: A Linguistic Approach for a Modified Translation of the Quranic Text', *International Journal of Applied Linguistics & English Literature*, 4.5 (2015), 161–69, http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.4n.5p.161

8 Stephan Wild, 'Muslim Translators and Translations of the Qur'an into English', *Journal of Qur'anic Studies*, 17.3 (2015), 158–82 (p. 173), https://doi.org/10.3366/jqs.2015.0215

9 Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Sabīl al-rashād fī hudā khayr al-ᶜabbād*, 4 vols (Amman: al-Dār al-Athriyya, 2006).

10 By this expression, he meant both oral and written tongue [*al-lisān wa-l-qalām*].

11 Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *Taqwīm al-lisānayn* (Cairo: Maktabat al-Maᶜārif, 1978), p. 13.

12 Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *'Taᶜlīm al-lugāt: ḥukmuhu wa-fīᶜīdatahu'*, *Lisān al-dīn*, 3.10 (1949), 7–10 (p. 8).

a religiously risky venture' at the start of the 1970s[13], it was one that al-Hilālī had been contemplating for some time. It also fit well into the emerging translation movement in Saudi Arabia, which, as was shown in Chapter Two, had much in common with discussions that had been taking place on the issue of Qur'anic translatability in Egypt and Turkey. Where this 'venture' differed was in its orientation toward missionary activity and the promotion of 'true Islamic doctrine' [*al-ᶜaqīda al-ṣaḥīḥa*] in its Salafi understanding.

Many unanswered questions remain about what led al-Hilālī to the idea of translating the Qur'an and about the relevance of the Saudi milieu of the late 1960s and early 1970s on the realisation of this project. The translation was first printed in 1977 by a publisher based in the USA, and it was not reprinted in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia until the middle of the 1980s. Why was its promotion there delayed? The answer is complicated, but some clarity can be found in the story behind the first edition of the Hilālī-Khān and the individuals responsible (that is, not only its original translators but also those who revised and published the text). Key among these is its co-translator, Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān (1927–2021). Though often overshadowed in comparison to al-Hilālī, Khān took primary responsibility for all revisions, and even copyrights, after al-Hilālī's death in 1987. He was also very much involved in the edition published by the KFGQPC in 1997—one which led to a vast increase in the translation's popularity. The story behind the subsequent editions, how the translation was changed each time, is also an important one, given the status of the Hilālī-Khān as an exemplar for other translators of the Qur'an from both Salafi and non-Salafi backgrounds. When viewed from a broader perspective, these revisions reflect the dynamics of a specifically Saudi approach to missionary activity: intellectual, political, and especially religious trends can be seen at work in the text. The Saudi trajectory marks the emergence of a new type of hermeneutics in modern Qur'an translations.

The Background to the First Edition

In contrast to English-language sources, quite a lot of biographical material on Muḥammad Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī is available in

13 Lauzière, 'The Evolution of the Salafiyya', p. 357.

contemporary Arabic and Muslim sources[14]. Al-Hilālī himself published an autobiography, *al-Daʿwa ilā Allāh fī aqṭār mukhtalifa* [The Call to God in Various Regions], in 1971. This memoir recounts his various travels, with the last chapters covering the late 1960s, when the influential Saudi authority and later Mufti of the Kingdom ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Bāz invited him to teach at the Islamic University of Madinah (IUM) in 1968.15 It was here that al-Hilālī met Khān and undertook the work of translating the Qur'an into English.

Born in 1893 in Sijilmasa in Morocco, al-Hilālī later moved first to Algeria to pursue his studies, and then to Egypt. Influenced by such notable Muslim thinkers as Rashīd Riḍā (1865–1935) and Ḥasan al-Bannā (1906–1949), al-Hilālī was an active member of the anti-colonial movement. He escaped a death sentence in French Morocco by fleeing to India, where he learned English. Establishing strong ties with Middle Eastern scholarly networks and Arab political elites (above all, the royal family of Āl Saʿūd), al-Hilālī later used his ties with European Muslim leaders like Shākib Arslān to enrol at the University of Bonn (in 1936), where he obtained a doctorate in 1941 with a thesis on a section of al-Bīrūnī's 'India' on mineralogy.[16] His time in Germany and service as a translator for the Nazi-run Radio Berlin is well researched,[17] and his attitude towards the Nazi 'liberation' of the Muslim people colonised by British and French imperial powers seems to have aligned with the 'Pan-Islamist' thinking of the time. In his memoir at least, al-Hilālī disassociated himself from the Nazis when, in a meeting with the British Ambassador in Spain, he identified himself as merely a 'fighter against British colonialism' and no more.[18]

In 1959, al-Hilālī left a teaching position at the University of Baghdad to take up a similar role in his homeland. During his time at the Muhammad V University in Rabat, he became one of the most active proponents of Salafism in Morocco, providing religious instruction and

14 See www.alhilali.net/ for an informative website (in Arabic) dedicated to al-Hilālī.

15 Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa ilā Allāh fī aqṭār mukhtalifa* (al-Shārqa: Maktabat al-Ṣaḥāba, 2003), p. 214.

16 Taki Ed Din Al Hilali, *Die Einleitung zu al-Bīrūnīs Steinbuch. Mit Erläuterungen übersetzt*. Dissertation unter Aufsicht von Richard Hartmann und Hans Heinrich Schaeder. Mit einer Widmung an Herbert W. Duda (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1941).

17 See, for example, David Motadel, *Islam and Nazi Germany's War* (Cambridge—London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2014), pp. 94–95.

18 al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa ilā Allāh*, pp. 101–02

giving sermons in a number of mosques.[19] In the mid-1960s, however, he experienced quite a lot of opposition to his teachings from local scholarly circles in the cities of Fez and Meknes. Al-Hilālī's somewhat radical response was to accuse his opponents of 'being polytheists' for simply preventing him from teaching a classical Wahhābī source, *Kitāb al-Tawḥīd* [The Book of Oneness].[20] Perhaps because of this conflict, he seized the opportunity to work in Saudi Arabia when it was offered by Ibn Bāz (then vice-rector, and later rector of IUM) in 1968. Unfortunately, al-Hilālī's autobiography does not tell us anything significant about his time in Saudi Arabia, despite the fact that he lived there until he retired and returned to Morocco in 1974, at the age of eighty-one. We do know that he undertook teaching duties for the Department of the Mission and Basics of Religion [Kulliyat al-Daʿwa wa-Uṣūl al-Dīn] and was also an active author. For example, al-Hilālī frequently published articles on various issues in the IUM journal *Majallat al-jāmiʿa al-Islāmiyya*. The very first of these, which he wrote in 1968, was entitled 'al-Taqaddum wa-l-rajʿiyya' [Progress and Backwardness].21 In it, he discussed his negative perception of the West and its values, coming to the conclusion that nations do not 'progress' in a linear fashion and that the 'hegemony of the West' is not eternal. Al-Hilālī also praised Saudi Arabia for its social justice, security, and other advantages. Interestingly, he cites Nazi Germany as a second example of a secure country while pointing out that, in contrast to Hitler's regime, the state politics of the Saudi Kingdom are not derived from secular institutions but from its Qur'anic schools [*madrasas*].[22]

The first systematic moves to provide educational opportunities in the West to Saudi students had begun in the 1950s.[23] Nevertheless, the number of students travelling to Europe and America remained quite low until the end of the 1960s, especially those in conservative Islamic circles. Al-Hilālī's academic and religious experience of the West, therefore, was fairly unique. To the religious establishment in

19 Ibid., p. 205.
20 Ibid.
21 Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, 'al-Taqaddum wa-l-rajaʾiyya', *Majallat al-jāmiʿa al-Islāmiyya* 1.2 (1389/1969), (pp. 18–22).
22 Ibid., pp. 19–20.
23 In the US context, for example, the 'Saudi Arabian Cultural Mission to the US' was established in 1951. See 'SACM History', http://www.sacm.org/about/history

the context of the Islamic educational systems in Saudi Arabia, which were changing and adapting to modern times, he represented an opportunity: here was a scholar with experience of life in both the East and the West who would attest the validity of the Salafi interpretation of Islam. Al-Hilālī embraced the term, using it from at least the mid-1950s to describe himself and his fellow believers in various parts of the world. For example, in the first two editions of his Qur'an translation, he identifies himself with the phrase 'as for his belief, he is a Salafi'.[24] Al-Hilālī's persona as a 'Western-educated Salafi' was quite unusual for the time, and thus he was warmly welcomed in conservative Saudi circles whose members, like the aforementioned Shaykh Ibn Bāz, dreamed of a global call to Islam.

While al-Hilālī is nowadays well known in both the East and the West as a twentieth-century hero of the Salafi mission, his co-author, Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān (1927–2021), remains quite an enigmatic figure. No systematic biography of Khān has yet been written, but the popular Saudi publisher Darussalam has compiled a few details about his life.[25] This brief sketch informs readers that Khān was born into a family of Afghani refugees in the city of Qasur (now in Pakistan). After graduating from the University of Punjab (Lahore), and later the University of Wales in the UK, he moved to Saudi Arabia where he was employed as a respiratory specialist. He worked for the Ministry of Health and a couple of hospitals before moving to the IUM to be the head of the local medical clinic there in the early 1960s.

Khān's experience with translation began while he was at the IUM. In an interview with the university's journal in 1971,[26] he explained that he began translating the *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* in 1956 after having a dream in which he saw the Prophet. This vision was interpreted by Ibn Bāz, the rector of IUM, as signifying that the work would 'provide a benefit' to Islam.27 Khān's aim in translating the *Saḥīḥ*, he said, was

24 Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī and Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān, *Explanatory English Translation of the Holy Qur'an, by Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī, Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān* (Chicago: Kazi Publications, 1977), p. 7,

25 Dar-us-Salam Publications, 'Muhammad Muhsin Khan', https://dar-us-salam.com/authors/muhsin-khan.htm

26 'Liqāʾ ṣuḥufī maᶜa al-duktūr', *Majallat al-jāmiᶜa al-Islāmiyya*, 12 (1971), 4–6.

27 'Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan Passes Away', *Muslim Mirror*, https://muslimmirror.com/eng/dr-muhammad-muhsin-khan-passes-away/

to fulfil this prediction and make the Sunna [Islamic traditions and practices] accessible for all English speakers, '[so that] no one on the Day of Resurrection could say that message of the Prophet has not been delivered'. It was not until 1971, some twelve years later, that he was able to present his finished work to the General Secretary of the MWL, a number of scholars who were highly proficient in English, and his friend al-Hilālī. Khān's translation of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* was printed in Pakistan later that year, with the support of Muhammad Yusuf Sethi, the owner of Sethi Straw Board Mills Ltd (a paper mill based in the city of Ghakkar Mandi in Pakistan). The copyright belonged to the publisher, who covered all the expenses of printing.[28]

It seems odd that Khān makes no reference to his joint Qur'an translation project with al-Hilālī in a 1971 interview. As the preface to the first edition is dated 3 May 1972, the project must have been in progress at the time. Perhaps the initiative was deliberately kept under wraps until its completion and publication in 1977. Alternatively, Khān's role in this project may have been fairly minor; however, this is unlikely as al-Hilālī had no previous experience in translation and would have needed assistance. One way of identifying each scholar's contribution could be to determine which Qur'an translation(s) Khān used in his translation of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* (if any), as this contains many quotations from the Qur'an, and to compare this with the first edition of Hilālī-Khān.

One place to look for similarity is in the introduction to Khān's *Ṣaḥīḥ* translation, which contains a particularly high number of Qur'anic citations. For example, the first verse cited is Q. 29:65, which Khān translated as follows: 'And when they embark on the ships they invoke Allah, making their faith pure for him only but when He brings them safe to land, behold, they give a share of their worships to others'. In the first edition of Hilālī-Khān this verse is rendered nearly identically—the only difference is the use of 'safely' instead of 'safe'. The same, low level

28 al-Bukhārī, *al-Jāmiᶜ al-ṣaḥīḥ*, trans. by Muhammad Muhsin Khan (Ghakkhar: Sethi Straw Board Mills Ltd, 1971). In the interview, Khān mentions that the (then forthcoming) translation would consist of ten volumes, but it was finally published in nine.

of variation is seen in the next citation, Q. 11:15–16. Khān's *Ṣaḥīḥ Bukhārī* reads

> Whoever desires the life of the world and its glitter, to them We shall pay (the wages of) their deeds therein and they will have no diminution therein. They are those for whom there is nothing I in the Hereafter but Fire; vain are the deeds they did therein, and of no effect is that which they used to do.[29]

In the 1977 edition of the Qur'an translation, the addition 'in full' has been inserted after 'We shall pay', thereby interpreting the Arabic *nuwaffī ilayhim* more precisely.

All other verses cited by Khān in his translation of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* mostly correspond with those found in the first version of the Hilālī-Khān translation. The minor nature of the changes to both English and Arabic wording suggests that the former translation served as a kind of draft text that was corrected in the latter translation. Thus, it appears that Khān may well have already been working on his own translation of the Qur'an in the 1960s and already had some kind of draft at this point. If so, he may initiated the project, with the trained exegete al-Hilālī coming in as co-author to make corrections only after 1968, when the latter began working in Medina. This idea finds support in the words of Shaykh Yāsir Qāḍī, who wrote in the obituary for his teacher and, later, close friend Khān:

> Sh. Ibn Bāz assigned him Dr. Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī [...] Although Dr. Hilālī was more fluent in French and German than English, he knew enough English to help Dr. Muḥsin, and together they embarked on the translation of the Quran, after which Dr. Muḥsin continued onwards to translate the *Ṣaḥīḥ* on his own.[30]

From these indications, we can surmise that the primarily author of not only the first edition but also the more recent revised editions published since 1994 was Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān, with Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī playing only a secondary role.

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29 This translation seems to have been influenced by Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation of the Qur'an. The latter's popular edition of 1946, at least, renders these verses as follows: 'Those who desire the life of the present and its glitter,—to them We shall pay (the price of) their deeds therein,—without diminution'.

30 'Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan Passes Away'.

The First Edition

The very first edition of the Hilālī-Khān translation appeared in 1977 and was published far from Saudi Arabia, by a publisher and distributor of Islamic texts called Kazi Publications based in Chicago. The company, established in 1972[31] by the Pakistani immigrant Liaquat Ali, is the oldest Islamic publisher in North America.[32] By the end of the 1970s, Kazi Publications was already selling books that had been published in US and elsewhere, and it seems that the owner's Pakistani connections played a decisive role in the publication of the Hilālī-Khān translation. The text's first page says that the translation was produced courtesy of Sethi Straw Board Mills Company from Ghakkhar Mandi in Pakistan, the same company that financed the publication of Khān's translation of *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*. Using funds from Pakistan to publish the translation and distributing it through a Pakistani publisher in the US helped to establish the work with a global audience. It is worth noting, however, that this edition bears no official stamp of approval from any state or international institutions, including Saudi authorities. Their attention, in the year that the Hilālī-Khān translation first appeared, was focused on the MWL's reprinting of Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall's 1833 translation into English, *The Glorious Qur'an*.[33] This edition, which was published for gratis distribution by the United Nations office of the Muslim World League in New York, constitutes the first official Saudi effort to promote the translation of the Qur'an in the West. Important in relation to their subsequent efforts, this publication did not involve any exegetical intervention, as the text faithfully reproduces the first edition of Pickthall's translation—one based on an Ottoman lithography.

Turning back to the first edition of the Hilālī-Khān translation, its arrival on the scene, bearing the long title *Explanatory English Translation of the Meanings of the Holy Qur'an: A Summarised Version of Ibn Kathir,*

31 Mohamed Nimer, *The North American Muslim Resource Guide: Muslim Community Life* (London—New York: Taylor & Francis Ltd, 2002), p. 110.

32 David Lepeska, 'Islamic Publishing House Flourishes in US', *The National News*, https://www.thenationalnews.com/world/the-americas/islamic-publishing-house-flourishes-in-us-1.436788

33 Muhammad M. Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an. Text and Explanatory Translation by Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall* (Mecca: Muslim World League, 1977).

Supplemented by At-Tabari with Comments from Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī (*with the Arabic text*), does not seem to have made any immediate impact, and it did not gain a large readership. The edition soon became a bibliographical rarity as the number of copies printed and sold was extremely limited. According to the WorldCat database, the original Hilālī-Khān translation is available in only a few libraries nowadays; and the first review of it was not written until the 1990s (by which time, thoroughly revised versions were being published by popular global publishing companies). In this instantiation, the translation in no way competed with influential Muslim interpretations of the Qur'an, such a those by Abdullah Yusuf Ali or Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall.

Despite the initially tepid reception of the Hilālī-Khān translation, a second edition appeared the following year (1978), produced by another publisher and in a very different geographical context. This version was published by Hılâl Yayınları, which is located in Ankara, in Turkey. It is not immediately apparent why a Turkish publisher would opt to publish this translation, given that Turkey is not a logical market for an English Qur'an translation, or who its intended target audience was. Hılâl Yayınları ('Crescent Publications') was established in 1956 by Salih Özcan (1929–2015), a well-known Turkish religious and political leader, and a student of the famous theologian Badiuzzaman Said Nursi (1877–1960). Originally from the southern Turkish city of Akçakale (in Şanlıurfa province), Salih Özcan embarked on a political career, promoting Pan-Islamism in Turkey and beyond. He was involved in politics at a national level, and was an active supporter of Adnan Menderes, the Turkish prime minister between 1950 and 1960, and one of founders of the Democratic Party (DP). In the aftermath of the 1960 military coup and the subsequent execution of the prime minister, Salih Özcan had to leave the country for a few years until the political situation calmed down: he was able to return to Turkey in 1965, where he again became politically active.[34] During his extensive travels throughout the Arab world, he is reported to have met with Muhammad Hamidullah in Beirut, as well as to have had strong ties with well-known figures from the Muslim world such as Abul A'la Maududi and Muhammad Iqbal. He was the editor of two Turkish journals, *İslam Mecmuası* (1956–65) and

34 His biography is yet to be written, but for a brief outline, see Salih Özcan https://rinap.uskudar.edu.tr/uploads/site/6/content/files/salih-ozcan.pdf.

Hilal (*1958–93*), both of which were deeply concerned with the issue of Islamic unity and were heavily critical of communism, materialism, and other 'anti-Islamic' ideologies. Notably, *İslam Mecmuası* also included 'Kur'an tercümeleri' ('Qur'an translations') within its publishing remit. The editorial committee listed in the first issue of *İslam Mecmuası* includes the names of such eminent personalities as Edige Mustafa Kirimal and Muhammad Hamidullah.[35] The first, a scholar of Polish Tatar origin born in Crimea, was the nephew of Jakub Szynkiewicz (1884–1966), the former mufti of Lithuania and translator of the Qur'an into Polish and English.[36] Muhammad Hamidullah (1908–2002), a renowned Indian-Muslim scholar of the twentieth century, is known for his translation of the Qur'an into French (already mentioned in the previous chapter), which Salih Özcan published through Hilâl Yayınları in 1973.[37] Later on, a number of European Muslims were added to *İslam Mecmuası*'s editorial committee, all of whom had a similar background in Qur'anic studies. For example, Hulusi Achmed Schmiede (1935–2010) was a German convert to Islam and the editor of a popular Qur'an translation into German (by Max Henning) that was later published by the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs in Germany (DITIB).[38]

Salih Özcan was also active internationally during the 1960s: he is reported to have been a founding member of the MWL, serving as a representative of Turkey, and acted as an agent and intermediary between Turkish and Saudi Arabian business circles.[39] Later, in 1984, Özcan became a shareholder in the Faisal Finance group, which is owned by Saudi businessmen, including members of the royal family.[40]

35 *İslam Dergisi*, 1 (1956), 1.

36 A Polish translation of selected verses was published in Sarajevo in 1935, while the English text was published later on, in the 1950s (again as a partial translation). See Mykhaylo Yakubovych, 'Nieznane tłumaczenie Koranu', *Przegląd Tatarski*, 1 (2023), 23–25.

37 Hamidullah, Muhammad, *Le Coran: Texte original en arabe et traduction française par M. Hamidullah* (Ankara: Hilal Yayinlari; Beyrouth: Salih Ozcan, 1973).

38 For one of the first editions published by the DITIB (Türkisch-Islamische Union der Anstalt für Religion e.V), see Max Henning, *Der Gnadenreiche Koran* (Ankara: DITIB, 1991).

39 Behlul Ozkan, 'Cold War Era Relations Between West Germany and Turkish Political Islam', in *Islam, Populism and Regime Change in Turkey: Making and Re-making the AKP*, ed. by M. Hakan Yavuz and Ahmet Erdi Öztürk (London—New York: Routledge, 2020), pp. 31–54.

40 *The Edinburgh Companion to Shariʿah Governance in Islamic Finance*, ed. by Syed Nazim Ali, Wijdan Tariq, and Bahnaz Al Quradaghi (Edinburgh: Edinburgh

He had a longstanding concern with the fate of Muslims living under communist rule, and one of his closest friends and supporters was a Turkish industrialist and businessman called Sabri Ülker (1920–2012), whose family escaped from Soviet Crimea in 1929.[41] And, in addition to all this, Özcan continued to propagate the legacy of his teacher, Said Nursi, through association with the Hizmet Vakfı religious foundation (established in 1973 in Istanbul).

The question remains, his personal interest in the propagation of Islam and the promotion of Islamic unity in different languages aside, why did Özcan become interested in the Hilāli-Khān translation specifically? The answer becomes clearer when one considers Özcan's connections with Saudi religious circles. Although it appears that neither al-Hilālī nor Khān was personally associated with either of Özcan's journals, two of al-Hilālī's articles dated to 1972[42] and 1977[43]—a period coinciding with the peak of al-Hilālī's popularity as a global Islamic scholar—appeared in translation in other Turkish periodicals.

Özcan's Hilâl Yayınları edition bears two titles: in English, it was called *Explanatory Translation of the Meaning of the Holy Qur'an in English* and, in Arabic, *Tarjamat maʿānī al-Qurʾān al-karīm li-Ibn Kathīr* [sic]. The work was published as a single volume in 1978, with a print run of 10,000 copies. The confusing Arabic title (literally, 'Translation of the Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an by Ibn Kathīr') is probably based on the English subtitle ('A Summarised Version by Ibn Kathīr, Supplemented *by* al-Tabri [sic], with Comments from Sahih-al-Bukhari'). This edition includes the Arabic text of the Qur'an on one page, and the English text on the facing page. Özcan chose to include an Arabic text that follows the standard Ḥafṣ reading—one popular among followers of Said Nursi, who is said to be the first Islamic scholar to explore this 'wonder' of the

University Press, 2020), p. 333.

41 'Asım ve Sabri Ülker kardeşlerin 43 yıllık ortaklığını, yönetimdeki uyuşmazlık bitiriyor', http://sabriulkerinhayathikayesi.com/hikaye/asim-ve-sabri-ulker-kardeslerin-43-yillik-ortakligini-yonetimdeki-uyusmazlik-bitiriyor

42 On 'Christian missionary' and Orientalists' activities, see Muhammed Takıyüddin el-Hilâlî, 'Misyoner ve Müsteşriklerin İslam Düşmanlığı', *İslamʿın İlk Emri Oku*, 10.120 (1972), 16; part two is published in *İslamʿın İlk Emri Oku*, 11.12 (1972), 12.

43 The article was published in the official TDRA periodical and discusses Christian beliefs. See Muhammed Takıyüddin el-Hilâlî, 'Hz. İsaʿnın İnsan Olduğuna ve İlahlıkla İlgisinin Bulunmadığına Dair İncilʿden Kesin Deliller', *Diyanet İlmi Dergi Yazı*, 16.2 (1977), 101–16.

Qur'anic text.[44] The Ḥafṣ edition has been distributed under copyright by Hizmet Vakfı in Turkey and beyond since 1974, and the company is still actively printing Said Nursi's books and translations in a number of languages. From a contemporary perspective, Özcan's choice of texts is somewhat paradoxical: he pairs a specifically Salafi translation alongside the Arabic text used by Said Nursi's school, which follows the Sunni-Hanafi tradition. However, at the time it was printed, at the end of the 1970s, Islamic missionary activity was not yet so affected by intra-Islamic divisions as it is today.

The Turkish edition acknowledges the involvement of Sethi Straw Board Mills Ltd. and, for the first time, the IUM. It includes a letter, signed by the university's General Secretary, ᶜUmar Muḥammad Fulāta, that confirms the affiliation of both translators with the university. Moreover, it asserts that al-Hilālī and Khān are known for their 'correct religious doctrine' and that their work is 'much needed for the Muslim world'. However, it essentially says nothing about the text of the translation itself. Thus, the question of whether this or that translation is 'good enough' remains completely unanswered. This reflects a continuing trend in the introductions of Qur'an translations published by the KFGQPC and other Saudi institutions, according to which there is never any attempt to establish the merits of a given translation, it is simply described as a 'sincere effort for the sake of Allah' to convey the true meanings of the Qur'an, or rather, of course, 'the interpretation of the meanings'. The letter included in the Turkish edition of the Hilālī-Khān translation is dated to 10/4/1398 AH, which corresponds to 19 March 1978; given that the translation was published in May 1978, according to its copyright page, it looks as if the letter was prepared specifically for this print run. Its introduction, which was written by a group of Muslims scholars from Saudi Arabia's IUM (F. ᶜAbd al-Raḥīm, M. Amīn al-Maṣrī, and Muḥī ad-Dīn al-ᶜAẓmī, the latter two of whom are graduates from UK universities), notes the limits inherent to any translation while making quite an interesting observation about the target text:

> Again, if the book is reprehended for not being written in a high and advanced style of English, as it occurs, in modern contemporary English

44 See, for example, their illustrated booklet: Bedîüzzaman Said Nursî, *Tevafukat i-Kuraniye Dair*, https://hizmetvakfi.org/ekitap/TEVAFUK-kitapcigi.pdf

> Literature, there, it is only from its advantages. The reader's intention is to enjoy himself by understanding the meaning of the Book, and not to enjoy himself through an English style.[45]

It also includes some words in praise of al-Hilālī, telling readers that 'he qualified for his Doctorate in Germany, which is renowned for its being strict in everything [...] as for the Belief, he is a Salafi (traditional follower of the way of the Prophet)'.

The introduction generally discusses the approach taken in the translation: here we have Muslims scholars with Western academic accreditation, which likely indicates a hope that the translation will be accepted by Western readers, while, because they are also Muslims, the doctrinal aspect of the work prevails over its literary value. Of the three authors of the IUM introduction (who presumably were among the first readers of the translation), one, F. ᶜAbd al-Raḥīm, went on to be one of the most active figures in the field, later becoming the head of the KFGQPC's translation unit. The others were active in religious education. Muḥammad Amīn al-Maṣrī (1914–1977), who had already passed away before the second edition of the translation appeared in print, was a Syrian scholar who graduated first from al-Azhar, and later from Cambridge (he defended a PhD on the Sunna corpus in 1959), and who moved to Saudi Arabia in the 1960s, where he remained until his death.[46] Al-Maṣrī was a student of Ḥasan al-Bannā, the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, and a proponent of Islamic revivalist ideas who insisted on the necessity of lessons on *jihād* in Muslim educational programs. He published a few books, including a *tafsīr* on selected suras.[47] The third co-author, Muḥyī al-Dīn al-ᶜAẓmī, was originally from Egypt and joined the IUM after attaining degrees in English from Aberdeen University in the UK and the American University in Cairo. Although his biography is elusive, he was active in translation and editing until the mid-1990s.[48]

45 al-Hilālī and Khān *Explanatory English Translation* (1978), p. iii.
46 Muḥammad Ḥāmid al-Nāṣir, *Ullamāʾ al-Shām fī qarn al-ᶜashrīn* (Kuwait: Dār al-Maᶜālī, [n. d.]), p. 193.
47 Muḥammad Amīn al-Miṣrī, *Min hudā Sūrat al-Anfāl* (Kuwait: Dār al-Arqam, [n. d.]).
48 *Pillars of Islam: Shahadah & Salah* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1995).

The Turkish edition of the text, like the first Kazi edition and the KFGQPC edition mentioned above, also contained prefatory matter, presumably composed by al-Hilālī, that emphasised the preeminent status of the Arabic language in Islam. Its discussion of the translatorial approach taken generally focuses on four main topics: the 'attributes of Allah' (Q. 20:5 is specifically mentioned in this context), 'correction of serious mistakes which the previous translators have committed', the use of two *tafsīr*s, those of al-Ṭabarī and Ibn Kathīr, and, finally, the use of 'modern' (as opposed to 'archaic') English. This seems to be the first Muslim translation into English that deliberately sets out to use modern language rather than using an archaic style that was mostly inspired by the King James Bible translation, with its use of 'thou', 'hath', etc.

All four topics were quite innovative for the time: the prioritising of doctrinal topics, the polemical dialogue with other translations, the use of modern style, and the active commitment to Ibn Kathīr's commentary, an emerging exegetical trend in late twentieth-century Muslim hermeneutics. Finally, al-Hilālī mentions in his introduction an anti-Soviet Uzbek fighter he met years ago in Afghanistan. This man used only Arabic, on the basis that it was the language of the Qur'an, and prohibited his family members from talking in Russian, designating it 'the language of the enemy'. Al-Hilālī seems to have borrowed this quotation from the autobiographical book *al-Daʿwa ilā Allāh*.[49] The anecdote reads like a pious disclaimer that urges Muslims to pursue the study of Arabic as the language of Qur'an, and it reiterates the truism that no translation can substitute for the original text. What is particularly interesting is the article on the rules of *jihād* which is included as an appendix (in both Arabic and English), published under the name 'The Call to Jihad (Fighting for Allah's Cause) in the Holy Qur'an'.[50] This appears to be drawn from a book by ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ḥāmid, and constitutes the text of a lecture delivered in the headquarters of the MWL on 5 June 1971, and subsequently published as a small booklet.[51] The author, ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ḥāmid, was a well-known Saudi scholar who once served as imam of the Great Mosque of Mecca. A Saudi scholar from the older generations,

49 al-Hilālī, *al-Daʿwa*, p. 190.
50 al-Hilālī and Khān, *Explanatory English Translation* (1978), pp. 607–32.
51 ʿAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad Ibn Ḥāmid, *al-Jihād fī al-Qurʾān wa-l-Sunna* (Qasim-Burayda: Dār al-Bukhārī, [n. d.]).

ᶜAbd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. Ḥāmid generally does not go into any political discussions in his treatise on *jihād*, instead addressing the idea as a prerequisite of Muslim revivalism (that is, talking about 'enemies of Islam' but not specifying who they are in any detail). This fits in with the general atmosphere of the Muslim world in the 1970s, as it experienced the rise of various Islamic movements and the growth of ideology that opposed leftist thought such as Soviet-inspired socialism. The mention of 'foreign oppressors' in the introduction, along with the inclusion of a treatise on *jihād* contextualises this Qur'an translation as one intended to promote Islamism: later, in the 1980s, during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, these references come across as describing current events in the Cold War era.

The third and last imprint of this edition appeared a few years later, in 1985, this time sponsored by al-Hilālī and Khān's great friend, the late Shaykh Ibn Bāz, who held the position of Director General (al-Rāᶜīs al-ᶜĀmm) of the Boards of Academic Studies, Fatwa, Islamic Call, and Guidance (Idārāt al-Buḥūth al-ᶜIlmiyya wa-l-Iftāʾ wa-Daᶜwa wa-l-Irshād) at the time. In a letter included at the beginning of the edition, dated to 21 Dhū-l-Qaᶜda 1404/18 August 1984), Ibn Bāz confirmed that this translation of the Qur'an, and also some books on Sunna, by both scholars are 'correct' [*tarjamatan saḥīḥatan*] and thus cannot be denied distribution inside the KSA.[52] This edition was published by the Saudi Office of the Director General, and the man holding its most senior position, Maktab al-Raʾīs al-ᶜĀmm, is credited as publisher. The initial print run was limited. This was the first and last appearance of the Hilālī-Khān translation in its original, unedited form in Saudi Arabia. Nevertheless, Ibn Bāz's offical seal of approval set in motion its long journey from this first Saudi edition to the later, much revised, editions produced by Darussalam and the KFGQPC.

The Second, Revised Edition(s): from Darussalam to the KFGQPC

In 1994, Darussalam Publishing House in Riyadh published its first edition of the Hilāli-Khān translation. Darussalam had been set up in 1986 and quickly established a good international distribution network,

52 al-Hilālī and Khān, *Explanatory English Translation* (1985).

from the UAE to South Africa. The owner, Abdul Malik Mujāhid, was interested in promoting translations of Islamic literature to meet the growing market for *daʿwa* books, which had been fuelled in no small part by the generous investments in this field by many state and private institutions within the Kingdom. At the very end of the 1970s, the Saudis had become involved in the anti-Soviet campaign in Afghanistan, while during the 1980s the longstanding campaign to promote the Saudi perspective on Islam and the Islamic creed had already reached the peak of its development.[53] The KFGQPC was already a pioneer in the field of Qur'an printing (as will be discussed in the next chapter), and their activities effectively provided official sanction for other publishers to do so as well. The flourishing of Qur'an printers, coupled with the growing demand for English Qur'an translations, inspired Darussalam to prepare its own edition of Hilālī-Khān.

Darussalam published a new edition in 1994. It was notable for the inclusion of a new introduction by Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān (al-Hilālī had passed away seven years earlier) in which he refers to new corrections made to the text and commentary and prohibits the publishing of 'all previous editions'. Nothing more specific is said on the nature of the revisions that had been implemented in this version. However, the second version of the edition (published in 1996) is more informative: first, readers are told that the Arabic text used for the bilingual edition is taken from *Muṣḥaf al-Madīna al-nabawiyya* (the KFGQPC 1985 edition of the Arabic Qur'an) and that some corrections have been made to improve the English. Perhaps the most obvious change is the inclusion of a third column of text alongside the Arabic text and English translation, which provides a transcription of the Qur'anic verses into romanised Arabic. With this new edition, it seems that Darussalam was trying to promote the whole work as a practically oriented and comprehensive text that could be used by non-Arabic-speaking Muslims living in the West and beyond.

The preface, by the General Manager of Darussalam, ʿAbd al-Malik Mujāhid, identifies the revision committee as consisting of two people: Dr Abdul Ahad from Aligarh Islamic University in India, and one

53 Mohd Faizal Musa, 'The Riyal and Ringgit of Petro-Islam: Investing Salafism in Education', in *Islam in Southeast Asia: Negotiating Modernity*, ed. by Norshahril Saat (Singapore: ISEAS Publishing, 2018), pp. 63–88.

Mohammad Monavar. There are also some new appendices—a glossary of Qur'anic terms, for example. It appears that most of the revisions were undertaken by Khān himself as the only copyright owner of the text. A later version of this edition, printed in 1997, includes a few more names in the acknowledgments, but the role of these individuals in the editing process is not entirely clear; it may be that they undertook final proofreading, for example.[54]

Although the introductions to both the 1994 and 1996 versions of this second edition (each of which has been republished more than ten times) are silent on the specific corrections implemented, it is clear from even a cursory look at the text that quite extensive changes were made. First of all, the English translations of 1977 and 1978 are almost completely free from the inclusion of Arabic glosses, that is, hardly any transliterated Arabic words are inserted in brackets in the text. Consider, for example, Q. 2:43. In the 1977/1978 edition, this verse reads as follows:

> And offer the prayer perfectly and give the obligatory charity (Zakat) and submit yourselves with obedience to Allah (with Muhammad a.s.) as the Muslims have done (i.e., embrace Islam, worshipping none but Allah alone and doing good with the only intention of seeking Allah's Pleasure).

Yet, in the 1996 Darussalam edition, we have the following amended translation instead:

> And perform Aṣ-Ṣalāt (Iqāmat-aṣ-Ṣalāt), and give Zakāt, and bow down (or submit yourselves with obedience to Allāh) along with Ar-Rākiᶜūn.

Later editions make the text more complicated. They not only use Arabic words to retranslate (or reinterpret) the basic Qur'anic vocabulary, but they also add explanations in brackets, thereby erasing the line between translation and commentary. To give another example, both the 1977 and 1978 versions of the first edition translate Q. 24:36 as follows:

> In houses which Allah has ordered to be raised, to be cleaned, and to be honoured, in them His Name is glorified in the mornings and in the evenings.

54 Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī and Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān, *The Noble Qur'an, tr. by Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī and Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān* (Riyadh: Darussalam, 1997), p. 7.

Darussalam's second edition from 1994 again introduces many changes to the target text:

> In houses (mosques) which Allâh has ordered to be raised (to be cleaned, and to be honoured), in them His Name is remembered [i.e., Adhan, Iqamah, Salât (prayers), invocations, recitation of the Qurᶜân etc.]. Therein glorify Him (Allah) in the mornings and in the afternoons or the evenings.

Here we see the insertion of comments explaining that the verse refers to only Islamic religious practices, while this is not so apparent in the earlier edition (for example, 'houses' is used for the original Arabic *buyūt* without adding that, in the context, this word actually refers to mosques).

The first edition also contains traces of scientific exegesis of the Qur'an, which was quite a popular trend in the Muslim world during the 1970s. One instance is its rendition of Q. 41:9. The first edition provides 'Do you verily disbelieve in Him Who created the earth in two Days (Periods)?', translating the Arabic word *yawmayn* literally as 'two days' but adding the gloss 'Periods'. Darussalam's second edition removes the word 'Periods', thus reducing the meaning of the verse to a literal one. This choice reflects a particular ideological stance, as modern Salafi hermeneutics considers any interpretation of the Qur'an in the light of contemporary science to be objectionable pseudo-rationalism.

Such ideological differences are even more visible in the respective translations of the word *al-burūj* from the phrase *wa-l-samāʾi dhāti-l-burūj* in Q. 85:1. Both versions of the first edition render this 'By the heaven holding the Zodiacal Signs of the Stars', while the later Darussalam edition simply provides 'By the heaven holding the big stars'. The reading of *al-burūj* as *al-nujūm al-ᶜaẓẓām* ('the big stars') can be traced back to Ibn Kathīr, but it seems that his opinion was not taken into account in the first edition but became influential in the second. From this we can see that the Darussalam editors intervened and proposed a 'more orthodox' (at least in terms of Salafi hermeneutics) reading of the text.

Probably the most illustrative case is that of Q. 1:7, *ṣirāṭa-lladhīna anᶜamta ᶜalayhim ghayri-l-maghḍūbi ᶜalayhim wa-lā al-ḍāllīn* ['the Path of those You have blessed, those who earned Your Anger, and not those who went astray'], specifically in terms of who is meant by 'those who earned Your Anger' (*maghḍūbi ᶜalayhim*) and 'those who went

astray' (*ḍallīn*). In many classical *tafsīr*s, from al-Ṭabarī to al-Jalālayn, it is common to interpret this as referring to Jews and Christians based on information given in *ḥadīth*s and, in the 1977/1978 translations, the groups mentioned are glossed accordingly:

> [...] not (the way) of those who earn Your anger (such as, Jews) not those who go astray (such as the Christians).

However, in both the Darussalam 1994 and 1996 editions, the translation has changed:

> The way of those on whom You have bestowed Your Grace, not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger, not of those who went astray.

The initial interpretation of the verse, which includes mention of Jews and Christians reappears in both a later Darussalam edition of 1997 and the first KFGQPC edition published in 1997. However, later editions (2013, 2019, and onwards), revert back and render this verse in a more neutral way, amending the translation to:

> [...] not (the way) of those who earned Your Anger (i.e., those who knew the Truth, but did not follow it) nor of those who went astray (i.e., those who did not follow the Truth out of ignorance and error).

Thus, we see some quite interesting dynamics at work in the translation of this verse: 'Jews and Christians' are mentioned in the first edition of 1977 and 1978, and then erased in 1994 and 1996, only to appear once more in 1997 and, finally, disappear again in the newest editions published since 2013. The reason behind these shifts can be attributed to the fact that Darussalam was selling its translations in the West and considered this interpretation a bit controversial, while the KFGQPC came to this perspective only a few years ago.

Stylistic Changes

In general, Darussalam's editorial changes rendered the translation more 'explanatory', especially in the core text and the selections from *tafsīr* added in the footnotes. A very good illustration can be seen if one compares changes in the translation of Q. 5:5. Both the 1977 and 1978 versions of the first edition translate this verse as follows:

> This day are made lawful to you (all) good things. The food (slaughtered cattle, eatable animals etc.) of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) is lawful to you and yours is lawful to them. (Lawful to you in marriage) are chaste women from the believers and chaste women from those who were given the Scripture before your time when you have given their due dowers (Mahr), desiring chastity (i.e., taking them in legal wedlock) not committing illegal sexual intercourse, nor taking them as girl-friends. And who-so-ever rejects Faith, then fruitless is his work; and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers.

In contrast, the second, 1994, edition reads it in a completely different way. The Darussalam editors specify what the 'good things' mentioned in the verse actually are and what 'faith' really is, interpreting the last term according to a standard Salafi exegetical perspective:

> Made lawful to you this day are At-Tayyibât [all kinds of Halâl (lawful) foods, which Allâh has made lawful (meat of slaughtered eatable animals, milk products, fats, vegetables and fruits)]. The food (slaughtered cattle, eatable animals) of the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians) is lawful to you and yours is lawful to them. (Lawful to you in marriage) are chaste women from the believers and chaste women from those who were given the Scripture (Jews and Christians) before your time when you have given their due Mahr (bridal-money given by the husband to his wife at the time of marriage), desiring chastity (i.e., taking them in legal wedlock) not committing illegal sexual intercourse, nor taking them as girl-friends. And whosoever disbelieves in Faith [i.e., in the Oneness of Allâh and in all the other Articles of Faith i.e., His (Allâh's) Angels, His Holy Books, His Messengers, the Day of Resurrection and Al-Qadar (Divine Preordainments)], then fruitless is his work; and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers.

It is not surprising that major theological issues were treated in different ways. For Q. 20:5 in the 1977/1978 edition presents the reader with the following wording:

> The Beneficent (Allah) arose over the (mighty) Throne.

The 1994 edition, meanwhile, provides:

> The Most Gracious (Allâh) rose over (Istawâ) the (Mighty) Throne (in a manner that suits His Majesty).

Darussalam also erased any kind of Christian vocabulary that had been used the previous editions. For instance, for Q. 2:138, the 1997/1998 edition gives:

> (Our Religion is) the Baptism of Allah and Who can baptise better than Allah? And we are His worshippers.

While, in the 1994 edition, this has been replaced with:

> [Our Ṣibghah (religion) is] the Ṣibghah (Religion) of Allāh (Islām) and which Ṣibghah (religion) can be better than Allāh's? And we are His worshippers. [*Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr*].

This case illustrates how deep the changes are. The Darussalam editors did not consider usage of the word 'Baptism', referring to the Christian practice, to be appropriate in association with the word *ṣibgha*, especially as it is interpreted here. *Ṣibgha* was earlier translated, literally, as 'hue', 'colour'; however, in this version, it is glossed to suggest that 'religion' is its real meaning. So, once again, Ibn Kathīr's interpretation is asserted here over the literal meaning of the verse.

The Third Edition: The KFGQPC Edition

A third edition of the Hilālī-Khān translation was published by KFGQPC in 1997 under the title *The Noble Qur'an: Translation of the Meanings and Commentary*.[55] Why did the KFGQPC wait so long to publish their version of the Hilālī-Khān translation, some twenty years after it was first printed, given that it was the first complete Salafi/Saudi-authored English translation of the Qur'an? As discussed in Chapter Two, in the early 1960s, the newly established Saudi-based MWL had been interested in supporting Muhammad Asad's translation, although they later completely disavowed his work after the first nine suras were published in 1964 in Geneva. And, as it will be shown in the next chapter, Chapter Four, in the years between 1985 and 1997, the KFGQPC also prepared at least two editions of the popular Abdullah Yusuf Ali translation, each time making some minor and major revisions. Thus, Saudi-based religious publishers were clearly interested in producing English Qur'an

55 Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī and Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān, *The Noble Qur'an: Translation of the Meanings and Commentary* (Medina: KFGQPC, 1997).

translations. There are two possible answers to the question of why it took so long for a Saudi-backed edition of the Hilālī-Khān translation to be produced: first of all, the work was likely neglected in Saudi Arabia because the KFGQPC, which was only founded in 1984, was trying to establish itself. It made more sense for them to republish a translation that was already well known and which would thus be more likely to find a wider readership. The second possibility is that the Saudis regarded the existing Hilālī-Khān translation as simply not 'good' enough to promote at a global level. A comparison of the earlier and later editions (that is, the 1994 Darussalam edition and the 1997 KFGQPC edition) reveals quite a significant number of differences. The KFGQPC amended both the text and commentary to a conspicuous extent.

The first KFGQPC edition of 1997 follows the typical pattern of other imprints, with the English text located in verse-by-verse format facing the Arabic original. An introduction to the volume says that the translation has been revised by a committee comprised of four scholars: Fazal Elahi Zahir, Amin al-Din Abu Bakr, Wajīh ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, and V. ʿAbd al-Raḥīm. The last of these figures was known in local circles in Medina as Abu-l-Tarjamāt ['the father of translations'] and has been the head of the Translation Center at the KFGQPC since 1994. He seems to have undertaken much of the work on this translation, including its strategic planning. The other named members of the committee were, respectively, a Pakistani religious scholar who is a graduate of Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, a Nigerian *daʿwa* activist and imam,[56] and a professor of linguistics at King Abdulaziz University (later dean of the Faculty of Arts at the Imam Muhammad bin Saud University, who was also a producer and interpreter for the BBC Arabic Service).[57] Thus, we can see that three of the four scholars comprising the team were affiliated with Saudi academic circles, with quite a wide background of international research experience.

Overall, this edition does not differ much from Darussalam's 1996 edition: one can find only few minor changes (for example, the phrase

56 For more on Amin al-Din Abu Bakr, see A. I. Lawal, 'Sheikh Aminuddeen Abubakar: A Scholar per excellent', *The Pen*, 2.8 (1987), 7.

57 'Dr Wajih Abderrahman, Major Linguistics Scholar Passes Away', *Muslim World Journal*, https://www.muslimworldjournal.com/dr-wajih-abderrahman-major-linguistics-scholar-passes-away/

'Glory is to You' is changed to 'Glory be to you' in Q. 2:32). Other changes include moving some of the explanations included by Darussalam as commentary into the core text of the translation: for instance, for Q. 2:275 the Darussalam edition has: 'Those who eat Riba will not stand [...]', while the KFGQPC adds in an explanatory gloss: 'Those who eat Riba (usury) will not stand [...]'. Dots, commas, and hyphens were added or removed, and some small changes were made to the division of sentences. As all subsequent copies and editions include a similarly minor level of minor amendment, it seems that the Darussalam edition and the first KFGQPC edition of 1997 mark the peak of the textual development of this translation.

What is noteworthy about this edition is how additional materials were used to make this translation something a bit more than simply an interpretation. In the case of the first edition of 1977, the only actual addition to the translation itself was the inclusion of Ibn Ḥāmid's letter on *jihād* in the Qur'an; in comparison, the Darussalam editions included appendices with much more additional material. As well as a glossary and list of prostration places in the Qur'an, the 1997 edition includes the same treatise on 'The Call to Jihād', a comparison of Jesus and Muhammad in the Bible and the Qur'an (written by al-Hilālī himself), and a chapter explaining God's reasons for sending prophets and messengers to humanity, along with a fairly standard Salafi outline of the concepts of *tawḥīd* ('monotheism'), *shahāda* ('confession of faith'), *shirk* ('polytheism'), and *nifāq* ('hypocrisy'). KFGQPC edition replicates all of this, with the exclusion of the text on *jihād*, but some of the later American editions (including Darussalam's 2003 version) omit almost all of these complementary texts. In some ways, this reflects recent developments in the Salafi tradition: whereas, in the late 1970s and 1980s, the idea of military *jihād* may not have been perceived in the West as completely unacceptable (due primarily to support for anti-Soviet Islamic movements), in the 1990s and, especially, the first decade of this century, much has changed. It is thus no coincidence that al-Hilālī mentions the anti-Soviet Uzbek in his original introduction, nor that this reference has been removed in more recent editions. The exclusion of the supplementary material from the later editions reflects the fact that the translation has been undergoing a process of de-politicisation, lest it be too controversial for the post-9/11 world.

Warmly accepted by many readers and critically evaluated by others, the Hilālī-Khān translation eventually played quite an important role in the rise of Salafi exegetics among a non-Arab readership, and even more so in promoting the extensive use of traditional *tafsīr* in translation. The first edition of 1977/1978 was eventually republished at least twice: once in Pakistan in 1989–92 (by the Lahore branch of Kazi Publications, in nine volumes) and once in India (Delhi: Maktaba Dar-Ul-Qur'an, 1993). The second and third editions have only ever been published in Saudi Arabia by Darussalam and the KFGQPC, with the exception of one, now rare version published in Istanbul. Printed by the Hilal publishing house, the text is almost completely taken from the 1994 Darussalam edition, while the publisher claims to be the successor of the now inactive older Hilal Yayınları publishing house that published the 1978 version of the first edition.[58] Thus, the textual history of the translation can be generally summarised as follows:

First edition
Chicago, 1977
Ankara, 1978
Lahore, 1989–1992
New Delhi, 1993

Second edition
Riyadh, since 1994
Istanbul, 2018

Third edition
Medina, since 1997

Currently, the only two editions being printed are those published by Darussalam and the KFGQPC (which distributes it gratis). However, dozens of translations based on these two later imprints can be found on almost all global Islamic websites, such as Quran.com and QuranEnc.

58 Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī and Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān, *Interpretation of The Meaning of The Noble Quran* (Istanbul: Hilal Yayınları, 2018). Interestingly, the cover also contains the text of the permission from Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān to publish this text. Since the text is very similar to the Darussalam 1994 edition (with only a few differences), it is not clear who actually edited it. It may have been Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān himself, as in case of the Darussalam edition (for which he confirmed the changes), or someone working on behalf of the Turkish publisher using the previous revisions as a basis for his or her own.

Many of the problems inherent to the Hilālī-Khān translation, such as obvious internal inconsistences in the use of language, have not been completely resolved in the latest editions, as most of the editorial changes implemented were concerned with doctrinal aspects and Islamic legal meanings (which is why the second and third editions are full of Arabisms, in contrast to the first). The later editions also depend less on Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation than the first edition, which includes many unacknowledged borrowings.[59] Compare, for example, the translation of Q. 2:232–233 provided in Yusuf Ali's translation (first edition, 1934) and in the Hilālī-Khān 1977–1978 edition:

Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934)[60]

232. When ye divorce women and they fulfil the term of their (`Iddat) do not prevent them from marrying their (former) husbands if they mutually agree on equitable terms. This instruction is for all amongst you who believe in God and the Last Day. That is (the course making for) most virtue and purity amongst you and God knows and ye know not. 233. The mothers shall give suck to their offspring for two whole years if the father desires to complete the term. But he shall bear the cost of their food and clothing on equitable terms. No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child nor father on account of his child. An heir shall be chargeable in the same way if they both decide on weaning by mutual consent and after due consultation there is no blame on them. If ye decide on a foster-mother for your offspring there is no blame on you provided ye pay (the mother) what ye offered on equitable terms. But fear God and know that God sees well what ye do.

Hilālī-Khān (1977/1978)

232. And when you have divorced women and they have fulfilled the term of their prescribed period, do not prevent them from marrying their (former) husbands, if they mutually agree on reasonable basis. This (instruction) is an admonition for him among you who believes in Allah and the Last Day. That is more virtuous and purer for you. Allah knows and you know not. 233. The mother shall give suck to their offspring for the two whole years (that is) for those parents who desire to complete the term of sucking, but the father of the child shall bear the cost of the

59 Jassem, 'The Noble Quran', p. 268.

60 Taken from the original first edition: A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an. An Interpretation in English, with the Original Arabic Text in Parallel Columns, a Running Rhythmic Commentary in English, and Full Explanatory Notes, by Allamah Abdullah Yusuf ʿAli* (Lahore: Shaikh Muhammad Ashraf, 1934).

> mother's food and clothing on reasonable basis. No soul shall have a burden laid on it greater than it can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child, nor father on account of his child. And on the father's heir is incumbent the like of that (which was the incumbent on the father). If they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation there is no blame on them. And if you decide on a foster-mother for your offspring, there is no blame on you, provided you pay (the mother) what you agreed (to give her) on reasonable basis. And fear Allah and known that Allah is All-Seer of what you do.

Comparison between the treatment of this passage in the 1977/1978 edition of Hilālī-Khān and the later 1996 and 1997 edition reveals a few changes (indicated below in italics) that make the text less dependent on Yusuf Ali's translation:

> 232. And when you have divorced women and they have fulfilled the term of their prescribed period, do not prevent them from marrying their (former) husbands, if they mutually agree on reasonable basis. This (instruction) is an admonition for him among you who believes in Allâh and the Last Day. That is more virtuous and purer for you. Allâh knows and you know not. 233. The mothers shall give suck to their children for two whole years, (that is) for those (parents) who desire to complete the term of suckling, but the father of the child shall bear the cost of the mother's food and clothing on a reasonable basis. No *person* shall have a burden laid on him greater than he can bear. No mother shall be treated unfairly on account of her child, nor father on account of his child. And on the (father's) heir is incumbent the like of that (which was incumbent on the father). If they both decide on weaning, by mutual consent, and after due consultation, there is no sin on them. And if you decide on a *foster suckling-mother for your children, there is no sin* on you, provided you pay (the mother) what you agreed (to give her) on reasonable basis. And fear Allâh and know that Allâh is All-Seer of what you do.

Although at least half of the passage completely coincides in terms of both grammar and vocabulary, the later edition of Hilālī-Khān explains a key term in a different way, changing 'foster-mother' to 'foster suckling-mother'.

Another good example can be seen in Q. 100:1–7. The comparison looks like this:

> **Abdullah Yusuf Ali (1934)**
>
> 1. By the (Steeds) That run, with panting (breath), 2. And strike sparks of fire, 3. And push home the charge In the morning, 4. And raise

the dust In clouds the while, 5. And penetrate forthwith Into the midst (of the foe) En masse;— 6. Truly Man is, To his Lord, Ungrateful; 7. And to that (fact) He bears witness (By his deeds).

Hilālī-Khān (1977/1978)

1. By the (steeds) that run, with panting (breath), 2 Striking sparks of fire (by their hooves). 3 And scouring to the raid at dawn. 4. And raise the dust in clouds the while. 5. And penetrating forthwith as one into the midst (of the foe). 6. Verily, man is ungrateful to his Lord. 7. And to that he bears witness (by his deeds).

Hilālī-Khān (1996/1997)

1. By the (steeds) that run, with panting. 2 Striking sparks of fire (by their hooves). 3 And scouring to the raid at dawn. 4. And raise the dust in clouds the while. 5. And penetrating forthwith as one into the midst (of the foe). 6. Verily, man (*disbeliever*) is ungrateful to his Lord. 7. And to that he bears witness (by his deeds).

As we can see, the verses are almost identical, the only differences being that the latest editions omit '(breath)' and add an explanatory insertion that the man who is ungrateful to his Lord is a 'disbeliever'. The Hilālī-Khān translation was at least partially influenced by Yusuf Ali's interpretation, insofar as some parts of the verses are replicated almost word for word. However, a more thorough comparison suggests that al-Hilālī and Khān were doing their best to introduce a new literary style to the translation, one that was far removed from the old-fashioned English used in previous translations. We can clearly see this at work in the translators' respective renditions of Q. 2:252:

Yusuf Ali (1934)

These are the Signs of God; We rehearse them to thee in truth: verily Thou art one of the apostles.

Yusuf Ali (1989 revision)

These are the Signs of Allah, we rehearse them To thee in truth: verily Thou art one of the Messengers.

Hilālī-Khān (1977/1978)

These are the Verses of Allah, We recite unto you (O Muhammad) with truth, and truly you are one of the apostles.

Hilālī-Khān (1996/1997)

These are the Verses of Allah, We recite unto you (O Muhammad) in truth, and surely you are one of the Messengers (of Allah).

It is easy to note a kind of textual development here: on the one hand, the translation from the first edition of Hilālī-Khān sounds much more modern than that of Yusuf Ali; still, it has the adjective 'truly' and uses the rather Biblical term 'apostles' (*rusul*); the later edition of Yusuf Ali changes this to 'Messengers', and the Darussalam revision of Hilālī-Khān replicates this.

The Hilālī-Khān Translation in Contemporary Islamic Discourse

The Hilālī-Khān translation is still used as a main reference by many English-speaking Salafi Muslims (and those in the mainstream Sunni community). Its wide distribution and its extensive use of *tafsīr* sources marked a very important turn in Qur'an translation movements. However, although it has its supporters, many Muslim scholars have spoken out against the translation over the last few decades, and their objections have really challenged the popularity of this work. One of the more critical reviews, by Khaleel Mohammed, suggests that this translation reads 'more like a supremacist Muslim, anti-Semitic, anti-Christian polemic than a rendition of the Islamic scripture',[61] while, in contrast, another suggests that it conveys 'true Islamic teaching'.[62] Due in no small part to such criticism, and the appearance of new translations, the Hilālī-Khān translation is unlikely to retain the predominance it had ten or twenty years ago. Most of the negative reviews it has received seem to be related to the rendition of Q. 1:7, specifically in terms of its mention of Jews and Christians, since, as Stefan Wild notes,[63] this is the only English translation of the Qur'an to promote this reading.

Looking at the recent publishing history of this translation, it seems that Darussalam continues to reprint the 1996 edition and sell it widely (new reprints came at least five time in 2000, 2003, 2007, 2011, and 2017), as do the KFGQPC (with their 2019 edition). The latest version of the KFGQPC edition also contains a new introduction. This document, 'A General Introduction to the Glorious Qur'an', articulates a somewhat

61 Khaleel Mohammed, 'Assessing English Translations of the Qur'an', *Middle East Quarterly*, 12.2 (2005), 58–71.
62 Kidwai, 'Review'.
63 Wild, 'Muslim Translators'.

surprising statement on the so-called 'scientific miracles of the Qur'an', given the contemporary Salafi exegetical stance on this issue:

> Numerous scholars of physics, astronomy, biology, and medicine, etc. are astonished by the information contained in the Glorious Qurʾān relating to scientific facts [...] This led to a number of them embracing Islam, for they realised that what is mentioned in the Glorious Qurʾān is impossible to be the words of a human being.[64]

In line with the usual perspective that 'the translation of the meanings of the Glorious Qurʾān cannot be called the Qurʾān', the introduction asserts that 'it is imperative that the requirements laid down by scholars for explaining the meanings of the Glorious Qurʾān are met in it'. It is clear that the basis for this view on the 'permissibility' of translation is Ibn Taymiyya, since it goes on to refer directly to his *Majmūᶜ al-fatāwa*, after stating that:

> Despite the difficulty of translating the Glorious Qur'an however, scholars have reiterated the necessity of conveying the Glorious Qur'an and its message to all the nations of the world, whatever their languages may be. This cannot be realised except by way of translation.

The introduction then levels some quite harsh criticism against other translations:

> Unfortunately, this is what some Orientalists and some so-called Muslims, who hold wrong beliefs which seek to destroy the values of the great religion of Islam, and to harm its correct beliefs, and its noble sharīʿah laws have done in their translations.[65]

It is hard to come to any conclusion about who exactly the phrase 'so-called Muslims' is aimed at—Ahmadi communities? reformists?—but obviously this declaration is an attempt to contextualise this translation as the 'real Muslim endeavour' intended to replace or correct all possible 'distortions', generally fitting into the monovocal view of Saudi-Salafi hermeneutics of the Qur'an. Many of the problematic issues that were inherited from the very first editions also remain unsolved in

64 Taqī al-Dīn al-Hilālī and Muḥammad Muḥsin Khān, *The Noble Qur'an: Translation of the Meanings and Commentary* (Medina: King Fahd Glorious Qur'an Printing Complex, 2019), pp. 16–18.

65 al-Hilālī and Khān, *The Noble Qur'an* (2019), p. 19.

the new version of the translation. To give one example, sometimes the Qur'anic expression *fī sabīli-llāh* is translated as 'in the Cause of Allah' (as in Q. 2:195, 'And spend in the Cause of Allāh') but at other times as 'in the Way of Allah' (as in Q. 2:218, 'and have striven hard in the Way of Allāh'). This discrepancy indicates that the overall editorial strategy applied to the translation during its revision(s) was concerned with changing readings that did not accord with Salafi theological and other ideas on an ad hoc basis, rather than implementing any kind of systematic revision.

As Henri Lauzière remarks, when evaluating this translation in terms of its 'Wahhabi/Salafi' leanings 'one cannot but conclude that the chief Wahhabi scholars of Saudi Arabia demanded the translation to conform to their own views rather than al-Hilālī's'.[66] Likewise, one should always remember the textual history of this work: its earliest version was much more dependent on al-Hilālī's and, to an even greater extent, Khān's personal exegetical efforts; later institutional editions did their best to revise it into a really 'exemplary' Salafi hermeneutical work. A good example of this process at work can be seen in the treatment of the issue of face-covering for women. Lauzière argues that al-Hilālī personally was not a supporter of the *niqāb* (that is, the practice of covering the face) but that, due to the demands of Wahhabi scholars, the later editions of the translation were amended to advocate the practice.[67] Accordingly, in their respective renditions of Q. 24:31, the 1977/1978 first edition uses the wording: 'and tell the believing women [...] to draw their veils over their necks and bosoms', while all of the Darussalam/KFGQPC editions read as follows: 'tell the believing women [...] to draw their veils all over *juyūbihinna* (i.e., their bodies, faces, necks and bosoms)'. Here, this justification of wearing *niqāb*, a Saudi practice promoted by many Salafi scholars on the global level, is a later insertion made by the publishers.

Can we finally conclude that the Hilālī-Khān is one of the most important contemporary works in English in terms of the representation of the Salafi reading of the Qur'an? Perhaps the answer is both yes and no at the same time. Of course, many of the verses are translated and interpreted in accordance with contemporary Salafi hermeneutics, and the reading is based mostly on the views expressed in Ibn Kathīr's *tafsīr*.

66 Henri Lauzière, 'The Evolution of the Salafiyya', p. 358.
67 Ibid.

On the other hand, many of the verses are rendered in a way that is no different to the predominant Sunni mainstream interpretation. This means that the translation still has a place in the wider, non-Salafi, English-speaking world, even though it has recently been overtaken by newer projects such as the Saheeh International translation, which has been in print since 1997. What also keeps the Hilālī-Khān translation relevant is its wide use of classical Muslim commentaries (including many references to *hadīth*), and it can be justly said that al-Hilālī and Khān were really innovative in this regard. The numerous interpolations that appear in the newer editions, drawn from exegetical traditions, have only strengthened the translation's reputation among many readers as 'promoting the Qur'an as Muslims understand it'.