

A Critical Review of the Literature Regarding Evolution of English Translations of Quran by Orientalists

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Abstract:

Historical evolution of English translations of Holy Quran is a phenomenon which gradually emerged over centuries along with relevant literature (English Translations). The Orientalist movement has been the guiding light for Qur'anic Translations all over the world in several languages. The traces of this movement go back to the early days of Islam. There have been seven different complete Quran translations since 17th century by Non-Muslim Orientalists. An analysis of literature of original English Quran Translations and relevant history is carried out to highlight the circumstances of emergence and Evolution (Century wise) of Oriental English Translations of Quran. Our study unveils that all of these translations are mistaken, astray, full of errors and have been written with prejudice against Islamic teachings and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Most of these orientalist translators having (Christian) religious background tried their level best to raise doubts regarding revelation, compilation and preservation of Quran. The comparative analysis of the verses in this literature of English translations show that the hostility and prejudice of these English translators declined over the years and they have gradually learned to use reasoning and logic to defy Quran and teachings of Prophet Muhammad instead of using hate and enmity as a tool. The emergence and popularity of these English Oriental translators was completely supported by publishing companies and universities in the west and these were very famous in West. A few modern-day Quran translations also appeared on the horizon of field of Oriental studies; however, they continued the tradition of their ancestors regarding undermining the teachings of Quran intentionally or unintentionally with their clearly evident prejudice as they contribute to this body of literature.

Key Words: *Orientalism, Qur'ān, Oriental English Translations, Evolution, Prejudiced Surāh Arrangement*

Introduction:

The discrimination among humanity has always prevailed around the world and one of the huge underlying reasons for such discrimination is religion along with race, color, geography etc. The “orient” and “occident” are also two opposite terms which refers to this matter of discrimination. The Orientals may be considered having academic specialization in eastern civilization or they read, write or opine regarding eastern culture, history, society etc as narrated by Edward W. Said³. In

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³Edward W.Said, *Orientalism western conceptions of the Orient*, UK: Routledge and Kegan Paul: 1978

short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient as elaborated by E.W.Said. Similarly, Occident may be considered having specialization regarding western civilization⁴. The orientalism has always been focal point of literary warfare against Islamic history, culture, art and religion. This Jew-Christian enmity originated since the early days of Islam. The orientalist scholars prejudice against Islam can be observed from Thomas Right⁵ opinion that the birth of Muhammad (PBUH) right after two months of Attack on Makkah by “Abraha” is considered as bad omen for Christians as (Muhammad) was the greatest enemy of Christianity. Another Oriental scholar P.K Hitti⁶ believes that a never-ending enmity between Christians and Muslims was firstly started by Muhammad (PBUH) in shape of Battle of Mu'tta. Gibbon⁷believes that waging a war (Battle of Mu'tta) as a protest for murder of an envoy is not justified. Such has been the attitude of Oriental scholars towards Islam which are mostly of European decent and consider Orient (Eastern Civilization) inferior to Western culture.

Kirby⁸ elaborated that Muslim invasion on Jerusalem was the main reason for crusades which holds brutal accounts of several ware fares among Muslims and Christian. The radically motivated religious section of Christian society dominated the Christian civilization for centuries causing hatred and enmity among Christianity and other religions. This mindset later turned in to an organized movement called orientalism and prevailed more in west mostly European countries rather than eastern parts of the world where Islam penetrated successfully. ⁹This movement has to be initiated to complicate Islamic teachings as imposing war on Muslims couldn't produce intended outcomes. There are several motives and purposes behind emergence of Orientalist movement which include political, cultural, Imperialistic and academic elements.

The orientalist Opined that Qur'ān is not a divine message revealed upon Muhammad (PBUH) rather it was created and preached by him after being impressed by Jewish & Christian religious teachings¹⁰ to protect his nation from ignorance and idolatry. They have also raised questions upon compilation and preservation of Qur'ān and claimed that Qur'ān was not preserved or compiled in any shape during life of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Therefore the Qur'ān in its present shape have omissions and alterations in the Arabic text. The orientalist translators of Qur'ān have also

⁴ Ahmed Ismail Qatelo Occident

⁵ Wright, Thomas, Early Christianity, London, 1940, P:109.

⁶Hitti, P.K, History of the Arabs, London, Macmillan, 1968, P: 47,147

⁷ Gibbon, Edward, The Decline and fali of Roman Empire, New York, The modern Library edition Vol:ii, P:680

⁸ Kirby, Jesus or Christianity, New York, 1929, P:97.

⁹ Dr.Farhat Naseem Alvi, A Review of Book ”The Crises of Islam” by Barnad Lewis, Al-Adwa, Dec 2012, 27-37, p-295

¹⁰Rodwell ,M.A, EL KORAN; The Quran translated from the Arabic, The surahs arranged in cholonogical order with notes and index,Second Edition ,Bernard Quaritch, London, 1876, preface,p.11,12,14

objected on traditional Surāh arrangement and have suggested a ¹¹ chronological Surāh arrangement. The orientalist translations have been published for years in several European Languages including first of them being written by ¹²Peter the Venerable (Abbot of Clunny) in 1143 A.D in Latin Language. The Orientalist English translations of Holy Qur'ān began in 16th century which is continuing till date. There have been seven well recognized English translations of Holy Qur'ān over last five hundred years which have been widely published and accepted in Europe and west. These include Alexander Ross (1649), George Sales (1734), J.M Rodwell (1881), E.H Palmer (1880), Richard Bell (1939), A.J Arberry(1955), N.J Dawood (1956).

This study provides century wise evolution of English translations of Quran in four sections and an insight regarding the circumstances of life of Oriental English Translators. It also includes critical review of translations contents/literature including author's motives for translating the Qur'ān. It also provides a comparative analysis of Surāh arrangements of all seven English translations of Qur'ān and explains reasons for these mistaken translations narrated by great Islamic scholars. The detailed review of introductions, preface and "To the reader" sections of these translations have also been discussed in the study to understand translator's view and motive for contributing Literature to this field of research.

Research Methodology:

This piece of research is based on the research technique of comparative and content analysis. The relevant literature content in form of articles, books, publications, and internet have been reviewed comprehensively. The main emphasis is on the ten Orientalists English translations that emerged over last four centuries. Their content has been thoroughly analyzed including;

- 1) The comparative arrangement of Quran Chapters (Surahs) and each author/translator's basis for changing the traditional Surah order
- 2) The Preface or Introduction/To the reader which gives us insight regarding author/translator's own thinking and motive for Quran Translation
- 3) The critical analysis of text of translation and highlighting errors in the light of some widely acceptable undisputed translations and other relevant literature of renowned scholars

Comparative Analysis of Oriental English Translations Literature (Surah Arrangement Content):

Following table depicts the review of literature content in terms of Surah Arrangement. This comparison table takes the seven out of ten oriental translations content as these are complete

¹¹Bell Richard, THE QURAN ,Translated with a critical re-arrangements of Surrahs ,T and T Clark ,Edinburgh ,1937,Vol.1, preface, P.v

¹² James Kritzeck, Peter the Venerable & Islam, Princeton University Press, New Jercy, America, 1964, Page.51-66

Quran translations with all the Surahs arranged in different orders. The other three translations are either of selective Surahs or the content is their own Quran instead of translation of the Original.

Comparison Table Percentage (Seven Translations)					
Arrangement with Surah Order		Arrangement in terms of Surah Indexing		Arrangement in terms of Surah with verse Count	
No of Translations with Traditional Order	No of Translations with Chronological Order	No of Translations with English/Mathematical Serial Numbering/Indexing	No of Translations with Roman Serial Numbering/Indexing	No of Translations with Surah Name with verse Count	No of Translations with Surah Name without verse Count
57.00%	43.00%	57.00%	43.00%	29.00%	71.00%
Four (4) Translations	Three (3) Translations	Four (4) Translations	Three (3) Translations	Two (2) Translations	Five (5) Translations

Following are the findings of this comparative analysis of Surah Content table of the literature (English Translations);

1-Surah Arrangement:

Most of these seven English translations presented above has traditional Surah order/arrangement except three of them. Rodwell and N.J Dawood arranged chronological order of Surahs and undermined the literary status of their translation themselves. N. J Dawood later realized his mistake and adopted traditional Surah order of QURan followed by all Muslims. He apologized regarding this issue in his 1990 edition of Quran translation. Further, Richard Bell used the word critical rearrangement of Surahs which meant the arrangement of Surahs remains the same as we can see in the table above. However, the order of the verses within Surahs was changed by Bell which he called critical rearrangement of Surahs.

2- Serial Numbering/Surah Indexing:

Bell, Palmer & Arberry used Roman style serial/index for Surah arrangement whereas the other four used English/mathematical numbers. However, it didn't have any effect on the translations or Surahs.

3-Surah Name with Verse Count:

George Sales and Alexander Ross produced verse count while arranging/indexing Surahs whereas others just mentioned Surah names. E H Palmer, however, provided place of revelation or writing of each Surah."

Analysis of Evolution of Oriental English Translations Literature (Translation Text and Translator's View):

Following is the detailed century wise analysis of History and evolution emergence of Oriental English Translations which started in seventeenth century in terms of text of translations and author's own view mentioned in his preface/introduction of the translation. The translations evolved over the course of four centuries so the analysis of contents of translation and life history of author of these English translations is segregated in four sections narrating the century wise evolution as is elaborated hereunder;

➤ The "SEVENTEENTH CENTURY" Translations

There is only one translation in the seventeenth century available in history which was done by Alexander Ross.

1-Alexander Ross (THE ALCORAN OF MAHOMET-1649)

- **Introduction of Translation/Book**

The first ever English translation of Qur'ān was produced by Alexander Ross in 1649. The book consists of one volume and 408 pages published in London, Anno Dom. It is not translated from Arabic directly but from the French translation of Qur'ān by Sieur Du Ryer which appeared in year 1647. Its title appears as "*The Alcoran of Mahomet, Translated out of Arabique into French by Sieur Du Ryer. And newly Englished for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into Turkish Vanities.*" The book contains messages for Christian¹³ and French readers at the preface including letters of praise for Sieur Du Ryer. It also includes an essay at the start with title "A Summary of Religion of Turks"

- **Introduction of Author & Motive for Translation of Qur'ān**

Alexander Ross enjoyed public fame being a historian, philosopher and man of letter. He served the Britain "King Charles-I" as diplomat and being chaplain of the King (religious designation). He was born in Aberdeen Scotland. His interest in Islam grew as soon as the diplomatic relation between Britain and Ottoman Empire prospered as later was the great Power. He tags Islam as "Turkish Religion". He travelled to Turkey many times for trade and diplomatic assignments. Ross did not have any ¹⁴formal education for Arabic language, therefore he translated The Alcoran from French to English language. His motive for producing this translation is to present actual and true picture of conspiracy of Islam against the west.

- **Study of Significant Features of Translation**

Alexander Ross translation was full of prejudice, discrimination & mistakes. He considers Islam a hearsay and conspiracy theory against Christianity. He addresses the supposed Christian readers

¹³ Ross, Alexander, THE ALCORAN OF MAHOMET, LONDON PRINTED, ANNO DOM. 1649, The Translator To The Christian Reader, P.A3, The French Epistle, To the Reader, P.A4

¹⁴ Nabil Matar, "Alexander Ross and First English Translation of Quran", Muslim World 88:1 (January 1998), 82 & 85.

¹⁵of his translation issuing them a fair warning regarding Threats imposed by spread of Islam. He also briefs the Christian reader that Alcoran has been translated in several languages but did not gain any popularity without the use of sword. He expressly mentions that Mahomet narrated one hundred twenty thousand sayings (Hadith) but only three thousands of them could be verified. ¹⁶ Further a true Christian will have no effect of the poisonous teachings of a fake religion like Islam. Mahomet created and wrote the book of Alcoran himself and also called it El-Forcan. The names of most of the chapters have been chosen from the starting lines of the Surāhs. The names of the Surāhs do not seem to have any relation even the verses in the Surāhs are not logically related. Muslims believes that Alcoran was created in heaven and it was revealed through prophet through angel (Gabriel),

Ross implies that Muslims believes in Ten Commandments of Moses, Friday is the sacred day for worship and Ramazan is Holy month for fasting. Their children are circumcised at the age of seven and eight when they can pronounce the words (La ilha illa allaha Mehemed rasoul allah but there is no mention of circumcision in Holy Coran. They provide logics that they observe teachings of Ibrahim for circumcision but law is recommended to them by Mahomet. Muslims don't believe in the theory of trinity. Turkey Muslims dance after the sounds of musical instruments and flutes when they make prayers. They believe that soul and body stay together in the grave till the Day of Judgment. Ross also includes two letters of dedication to Seiur du Ryer for his great moral character and services to the king .On the whole the translation of Alexander Ross is one of the worst English translations of Holy Qur'ān.

➤ **The “EIGHTEENTH CENTURY” Translations**

The 18th century translation include only one complete English translation authored by George Sales.

2- George Sales (The Koran -1734)

- **Introduction of Translation/Book**

The Second English translation of Qur'ān was appeared on the risen in 1734 by George sales. The book consists of one volume and total 695 pages in two sections of 187(preliminary discourse) and 508 (chapter of Surāhs) published in London by J. Wilcox. This Qur'ān translation of George sale was published again 1795, 1801 and several times afterwards. The full name of translation of Qur'ān is “The Koran, commonly called The Alcoran of Mohammed Translated into English immediately from the original Arabic; with Explanatory notes, taken from the most approved commentators to which is prefixed A Preliminary Discourse.

- **Introduction of Author& Motive for Translation**

¹⁵ Ross, Alexander, THE ALCORAN OF MAHOMET, LONDON PRINTED, ANNO DOM. 1649, The Translator To The Christian Reader, P.A3, The French Epistle, To the Reader, P.A2

¹⁶ Ibid,p.A2

George Sale was born in 1697, in Canterbury England. His father's name was Samuel Sale. In the begging years of his education, his attention was diverted towards Arabic language. It has been a famous theory about George Sale that he spent twenty five years of his life in Arab society and Arab countries. It has also been mentioned in a book called *Dictionnaire philosophique* (Arts, Alcoran, Aroot and Marot) which was written by Voltaire. According to the point of view of some Historians and writers Sale never went down of his country so he stay in Arab countries and society seems to be a disputed concept. Sale only live for 39 years so how is it possible that he lived 25 years in Arabs. Sale claimed that his source of knowledge and references was his personal library. But when a catalogue of his library was made no Arabic translation was found which could help him translating the Qur'an in English. In 1720, "The Society for Promotion of Christian knowledge" printed a new translation of Holy Qur'an which was used for Syrian Christian. For publishing this transcript of Koran Solomon Negri was invited for providing guidance in terms of compilation of this Koran. Sale developed acquaintance with Solomon Negri and started learning Arabic language from him. In 1726, "The Society for Promotion of Christian knowledge" appointed George Sale as an Analyst / critique due to his knowledge of Arabic language. Sale participated actively in the project of society. He not only served as editor, advisor and lawyer of the society but also helped preparing new translation of Qur'an while working for the society. Sale didn't leave practice as a lawyer. He had to face financial losses due to his hectic schedule for aforementioned society. Due to this reason, he was sometime found borrowing money for food from his friends. The main reason for fame of George is translation of Qur'an which was published in 1734.¹⁷ Sale died of severe fever in 1736. After 1844, life history of George Sale was also included in his translation which was written by¹⁸ Davenport. Advert Gibbon and Thomas Carlyle did not recognize Sale's translation as standardized and literary.¹⁹ It was one of the most famous translations of its time available in almost every library in west. The popularity of Sale's Koran was brought down after publication of translations of A J Arberry and N J Dawood by Oxford University Press and Penguin Classics. This translation of Sale was also published in several languages like by Theodore Arnold in German Language, Kalmakov in Russian and Litza in Belgian language.

- **Study of Significant Features of Translation**

The most important feature of Sale's translation was the prejudice against, Islam and Koran. He surpassed Peter the venerable in his enmity against Islam. It seems that Sale copied reference and

¹⁷ Russen-Scobell, *Dictionary of National Biography*, (Edited by Sidney Lee, Vol L, Palo Alto Public Library, The Macmillan Company London Smith Elder & Co. (1897), 179-181.

¹⁸ Davenport Adams, W.H., *A book about London, The Streets of London; an Alphabetic Index* P: 165, Adams, Henry and Company London. Bouverie Street E.C. (1890), 165.

¹⁹ Oliver Leaman, *The Quran: an encyclopedia*, Madison Avenue, New York, 10016, USA (2006), p. 668.

literature from his predecessor and copied them in his Koran translation.²⁰The Muslim scholars have made tremendous contributions in Islamic sciences around the world. The great Islamic Scholars²¹ Mohar Ali mentions while discussing Sales translation that sales repeated most of Marraci's mistakes in his book. Sales had Christian religious background and he wanted to prove Qur'ān as an inferior and purpose less book and Muhammad as author of Koran but not a prophet. Sales maintained traditional arrangement of Surāhs in Qur'ān instead of Chronological order. There are several reasons for his inferior translation which includes omissions, paraphrasing, lack of Arabic language knowledge and use of Christian religious terminologies in Qur'ān translation. Most of the references of Sales Qur'ān are copied from Marraci's latin translation. Sales committed English translation of Arabic terms for example while translating the verse Bismillah al Rehman al Raheem. He wrote the translation of verse as "In the Name of Most Merciful God". Here he omitted the translation of Arabic word (the most Beneficent). Similarly he translated the verse Alhamdulillah as "Praise be to God". Here he omitted the word "Al" and the correct translation should be "All praise be to God." George Sales divided his translation into two parts. He further divided first part into eight sections which includes history of Arabs, Christianity, Compilation of Qur'ān and its teachings etc. In other part he mentions Surāhs of Qur'ān and their arrangements. Sales claimed at the beginning of his translation in²² "To the reader section" that he is not ashamed of his translation as he wants to unveil the true face of Islam and Muhammad who was not a prophet but merely a legislator in Arab. According to Sales, a fresh translation is required because the previous translations are ignorant and unjust which will reduce Muhammad's influence and show true colors of Islam, so the masses may not be deceived any more. Sales further argues that Bishop Kidder have used certain principals for inviting people to Christianity and these must also be used for Mohammadians to protect them from Islamic teachings and bring them to Christianity. Sales doesn't have positive views about translation of Bibliander in Latin Language. He also discusses Johannes Andreas who was a Muslim Doctor and turned to Christianity. He translated Koran and several other Hadith books. Sales believes he must have done a great job being a convert but doesn't know whether his translations were ever published. Lewis Marcci's translation was the best in Sales point of view. Sales admits that he also took help of two books "Comments of Al-beidawi & Gospel of Barnabas" while producing his translation and tried to keep the his English Translation closer to Arabaic Text. Sales mentions that the prophet hood is only for Jesus Christ people like Saint Barnabas have made a great mistake when the termed Muhammad as Messiah or Prophet.

²⁰ Dr.Farhat Naseem Alvi, Rafi ud Din, Punjab Main Aloom Ul Quran wa Tafseer Ul Quran ky Makhtootaat ky Asloob wa Manhaj, Al-Qalam.24:2, Sheikh Zaid Islamic Center, Punjab University Lahore, December, 2019, p.1

²¹ M. Mohar Ali, The Quran and the orientalist, Norwich, UK, Jamiat Ihyaa al-Sunnah, (2004), pp.330-334

²² George SaleGent, The Koran commonly called the Alkoran of Mohammed,A preliminary discourse "To the Reader" in the Koran, London J. Wilcox 1734.

➤ The “NINETEENTH CENTURY” Translations

The nineteenth century English translations include two complete translations by “Edward Henry Palmer” and “Jorge Meadows Rodwell”.

3- Edward Henry Palmer (THE QUR’ĀN-1880)

- **Introduction of Translation/Book**

The Qur’ān of E.H Palmer was published in 1880 by Oxford Clarendon Press. This translation consists of two volumes. The first volume consists of 265 pages containing Surāhs from I to XVI and the second volume consists of 362 pages containing all the remaining Surāhs. Max Muller invited Palmer for this translation in his project “The Sacred Books of East” where several books were to be translated. This research work was published by Orxford Press and Palmer’s translation is included in its volume 6 and 9. R.A Nicholson wrote the Introduction of the book.

- **Introduction of Author& Motive for Translation of Qur’ān**

Palmer was born on 7th August, 1840 in Green Street, Cambridge. It was his father’s native town. His father died of pulmonary disease when Palmer was a little boy. His mother also died shortly after his father’s death. Cambridge was a town where many great scholars were born. Palmer inherited pulmonary disease from his father.²³ Palmer was a good student in school and he developed attention towards linguistics learning Latin and Romany language.²⁴ Afterwards Palmer went to London and started a job as a clerk in an institution called Underwood of Hill and Underwood of East Cheap. Palmer also learned French and Italian Languages. Palmer had the ability to overcome others mind through Mesmeric Trance. In 1859, Palmer had severe attack of pulmonary decease and doctors predicted life expectancy of few months. There was a herbalist in Sherrimigham, Cambridge who treated deceases with herbals. Palmer decided to seek his medical advice which proved very useful for his health. Palmer started poetry and acting in 1860. He wrote a drama (A volunteer in Difficulties) for Cambridge theatre in 1860. Palmer basically learned Arabic Language from Syed Abdullah who was sent by Indian Civil Service for training in Cambridge. Syed Abdullah Taught in Cambridge for twenty years and then went back to India. Geroge Skinner was another mentor of Palmer. Palmer also learned Urdu, Persian and Arabic and worked as a cataloguer in King’s college and Trinity College. Palmer also translated Poetry of Baha Ud Din Zuhair in English. Palmer also visited Egypt in 1882 reportedly for a secret mission where he was assassinated.

- **Study of significant features of translation**

Palmer’s translation includes “introduction” section of the book where he elaborated detailed history of Arab before and after the birth of Mohammad (PBUH). He is of the view that it is

²³ Sir Wallter Besant, The life and achievements of Edward Henery Palmer, E.P.Dutton& Company 1883, p.3-7 or Henry Ward Beecher The Christian union J.B.ford& Company 1883, vol,28P,P.164

²⁴ Sir Wallter Besant, The life and achievements of Edward Henery Palmer, E.P.Dutton& Company 1883, p.9

necessary to understand the circumstances of Arab during birth and the life time of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH). Palmer also wrote that Mohammad was clearly influenced by Jewish and Christian believes and same thought process was translated in shape of Koran. Although Muhammad was a great leader, politician and legislator, however he was an imposture. Palmer refers to “Surāh Ikhlas” as Unity and elaborates that in the verses of Unity, Muhammad rejects the Concept of Trinity in Christianity. Similarly he believes that arrangement of Surāhs of Qur'ān is not compiled by Muhammad himself and Koran was not in written form when Muhammad died. A.R Nichlson elaborated that the Qur'ān Translation of Palmer is full of mistakes.²⁵Nykl and²⁶Ghulam Sarwar analyzed a lot of mistakes in Palmer's translation and elaborated that this is the worst translation of Qur'ān in History. He pointed out that there are countless mistakes related to Arabic terms “wa” and “fa” in his translation. The translation is full of omissions and paraphrasing. Being full of mistakes, this worst translation of Qur'ān must be read with great care.

4- John Meadows Rodwell (THE KORAN-1881)

- **Introduction of Translation/Book**

The Koran of Rodwell was published in 1881. The complete name is “The Koran translated from Arabic, The Surāhs arranged in Chronological Order with notes and index” published by William and Norgate, 20-South Fredrick Street, Edinburgh. It consists of one volume containing 659 pages. He dedicated his Koran to Sir William Martin kt, DCL who was Rtd. Chief Justice of New Zealand. The translation of Rodwell became very famous in the west and was published more than fifty times.

- **Introduction of Author& Motive for Translation of Qur'ān**

J.M Rodwell was born in year 1808 and studied at the University of Cambridge. He worked at St.Ethelberga University as rector. The main reason for translating the Qur'ān for Rodwell is his oriental thinking of following the mission of undermining Islam as a religion.He died in the year 1900.

- **Study of significant features of translation**

The most important feature of Rodwell's Qur'ān Translation is that he arranged the Surāhs in Chronological order of revelation under the influence of Theodore Noldeke and Gustav Veil. Rodwell have tried to prove that chronological arrangement of Surāh is better than the traditional arrangement. Ghulam Sarwar elaborates that Traditional arrangement of Surāh has been agreed upon and logical arrangement advised by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) but Rodwel made a clumsy

²⁵ A.R,NYKL, “Notes on Palmers The Quran”Journal of the American oriental society,56(1936)P.77-84 (Alois Richard Nykl,1911-1958 and Reynold Alleyne Nicholson 1868-1945 was an eminent English orientlist)

²⁶ Ghulam Serwar , “A review of the previous translation of the holy Quran” in his translation of the Holy Quran,Karachi,Pakistan,National book Foundation,1973, P xxviii,xxix,xxxiii and xxxv

effort regarding arranging of Surāhs in a chronological order. ²⁷Surāh “Alaq” has been placed at number one in place of Surāh “Fateha”. ²⁸Mohar Ali believes that Rodwell changed arrangement of Surāhs for two reasons. Firstly, he wanted to create misconceptions about Islam that it is an amalgamation of Judaism and Christianity. Secondly, the Qur’ān was authored by Muhammad (PBUH) himself. Rodwell believes that “Zaid Bin Thabit” had no specific principals for arranging Suras of Qur’ān. He placed longer Surāhs at the start and shorter Surāhs at the end except for first Surāh. He states that after the death of Prophet Muhammad, Abu-Bakar Managed to compile the Qur’ān through Zaid Bin Thabit collecting the verses written on leaves of Palm/date leaves, tablets of white stones and Breasts of Men. The disputes started rising among Arabs regarding text of Qur’ān so the Othman(Usman) during his caliphate set up a committee of twelve men under supervision of Zaid bin Thabit for compilation and preservation of Qur’ān in a standard format and send it across the kingdom to all provinces. Rodwell believes that Zaid made huge mistakes while compiling of Koran and arranging Surāhs. He believes that his translation will help people across the world to understand the true meanings of Qur’ān.

➤ **The “TWENTIETH CENTURY” Translations”**

The twentieth century is marks the rapid developments in the field of English translations of Holy Quran. There are three different translations that have been produced in twentieth century which includes Richard Bell, Arthur Aberry and N.J Dawood.

5- Richard Bell (THE Qur’ān-1926)

• **Introduction of Translation/Book**

The English translation of Richard Bell was published in 1926. It consisted of two volumes and it was published by T&T Clarke, 38- George Street Edinburgh, UK. The first volume consisted of 335 pages was published in year 1937 and the second volume consisted of 354 pages was published in 1939. First edition includes 24 Surāhs and it has three sections called Preface, Bibliography & Surāhs. The second edition consists of Surāhs from 24 to 114. Surāhs have been arranged in usual order however their text has been rearranged to abolish confusion. The divisions within text have been marked by spacing where seemed appropriate to author (Bell). The full name of the translation is “The Qur’ān Translated with Critical Rearrangement of Surāhs”.

• **Introduction of Author & Motive for Translation of Qur’ān**

The full name of author of this translation is Richard Bell B.D, D.D. He was born in Scotland. He completed his education from England and Germany. He also taught as a lecturer at Edinburg University. He also has been a minister in a rural area of Scotland called Wamphory. He completed his doctorate in religious studies i.e, Islam and Christianity. He taught at University of

²⁷ J.M. Rodwell, The Koran, Translated from the Arabic, the Suras arranged in chronological order with notes. London, Williams and Norgate, 1861, p:1

²⁸ Mohar Ali , Mohammed , T he Quran and the Orientalist , An Examination of their main theories and assumption ,p.339

Edinburg for a long time and he was famous as a scholar and researcher. He also wrote another famous book named “The Origin of Islam in its Christian Environment (London, FrankCass, 1926). Arthur Jeffery explains that Bell suggest different methods for rearrangement for Surāhs. ²⁹Jeffery further elaborates that bell has advised how Muhammad maneuvered and used Christian and Jewish religious beliefs to create verses of Qur'ān.

- **Study of significant features of translation**

Bell translated Qur'ān with great deal of prejudice and enmity. His translation included all the features of being an oriental translation conspired to misrepresent Islam. Bell believed that Qur'ān was written by Muhammad himself. ³⁰He was also of the view that Surāh arrangement of Qur'ān needs to be rearranged as these Surāhs are not complete rather the pieces have been joined together to shape each Surāh. One of the Bells fellow Orientalist Alfred Guillaume believes that Bell's translation is worst in the history and I would never like to refer it anywhere. The displacement of verses in Surāhs on the basis of few incidents seems strange and Bell must have lost his mind while rearranging the Surāhs. Bell used the word “Critical arrangement of Surāhs” instead of “Chronological arrangement of Surāh” as he changed order of verses in a Surāh and didn't change the Surāh order. John E Merril elaborates that Bell has attempted to arrange Surāhs in accordance with the important events of Muhammad's Life. He divides important events of Muhammad's life in three periods while arranging Surāhs. First period is called “Signs” the second period is called “Qur'ān” and the third period is called “Book Period”. Bell's translation became famous due to this baseless rearrangement of Text of Surāhs but it was not much appreciated. Only seven editions of this translation were issued during last sixty years. The numbering of verses is that of Flugel.

6- Arthur John Arberry (The Koran Interpreted-1955

- **Introduction of Translation/Book**

The English Qur'ān translation of Arthur John Arberry was firstly published in 1955. It consisted of two volumes and it was published by Allen & Unwin Ltd. The first volume contains 350 pages and Surāhs from I to XX. The second volume contains pages 367 and has Surāhs from XXI to CXIV. Afterwards it was published by Oxford University in 1964 and 1983 in World's Classic. The book consists of 670 pages.

- **Introduction of Author& Motive for Translation of Qur'ān**

Arthur John Arberry was a British orientalist who was born in Portsmouth on 12th May 1905. He took admission in Cambridge University in 1924 on the basis of scholarship. He learned Arabic and Persian here. Afterwards he visited Syeria and Labanon. He was appointed as Head of Department in Cairo University in 1932. He returned to London in 1939 when the second world war begun. Meanwhile he also gave his services as Editor in Ruzgar-e-Now. At the end of Second

²⁹ Arthur jaffery, Review on interoduction to the Quran, Muslim World 44:3-4(1954),255

³⁰ Bell Richard, THE QURAN , Translated with a critical rearrangements of Surrachs , T and T Clark ,Edinburgh ,1937, Vol. 1

World War in 1944, he started working in London University in department of Oriental and African studies. After two years of service, he was transferred to Arabic Department in the University.³¹ Arberry won many accolades during his career. He was awarded Nishan-e-Danish by Shah of Iran in 1964. He was also awarded honorary degree by University of Malta in 1963. A similar degree was also awarded to him by University of Damascus and Academy of Arabic Languages which are situated in Cairo. His total number of books is 90 and he almost wrote same number of articles. He did several translations and he also worked on Modern Islam and Umer Khayam. According to his thinking, he translated the Qur'ān as he believed a better translation with appropriate choice of words in English is the need of hour.

- **Study of significant features of translation**

A J Arberry wrote the English translation of Qur'ān but it was better than his predecessors. Although he has made a few mistakes which are beyond understanding as he was a scholar in Arabic. ³² Arberry mentions in the introduction of his translation that Qur'ān is a great amalgamation of poem and pros. It's one of the greatest book in the history of humanity. Zaid Bin Thabit couldn't do justice with its compilation and turned it into a clumsy patchwork. He further elaborates " I believe it to be rather of the very nature of the book itself." Arberry maintained the traditional Surāh arrangement in his translation. He also produced a critical overview of translations of his predecessors in his translation's introduction. Mohar Ali believes that there are several omissions and mistranslations in Arberry's work. So reader must be very careful while reading this translation as it can create misconceptions.

7- Nessim Joseph Dawood (The Koran-1956)

- **Introduction of Translation/Book**

The English Qur'ān translation of N.J Dawood was firstly published in 1956. It consisted of one volume and it was published by Penguin Classics. It consists of 427 pages. This translation of Dawood was published five times in 1956, 1959, 1966, 1968, 1974 with chronological arrangement of Surāhs. Afterwards this arrangement was changed in editions published in 1990, 1993, 1994, 1995,1997. This translation was lastly published in year May 2014. In the edition of 1990, the publisher and the author admitted that the chronological arrangement was a mistake and misunderstanding which has been corrected now. This edition consisted of 456 pages. The author also claims that 34 years of his experience is involved regarding translation of Holy Qur'ān since the translation of 1956. This translation was published simultaneously in America and Canada in 1956. There are 70 editions of this translation already published. It is a very famous translation and is found in almost two thousand libraries in west.

³¹ Persian Poems, An Anthology of Verse Translation, Arberry, Arthur John, Yassavoli Publications Tehran, Iran, 2005, P:229

³² Arberry A.J., The Koran interpreted, oxford university press UK,1964 ,Introduction p:ix

- **Introduction of Author& Motive for Translation of Qur'ān**

N.J Dawood was born in Iraq on 27th August, 1927.³³ He was an Iraqi translator. His claim to fame was his Qur'ān Translation. His original name on his identity card was Nessim Joseph David. He was born in an Iraqi Jewish Family living in Baghdad. When he applied for passport his name changed from David to Dawood. N.J Dawood was well-versed with both Arabic and English Languages. He won Iraq Government State Scholarship and went to England for higher studies. He learned Arabic and English Literature in University of London England. He produced many English translations of Arabic books and most famous of them are Muqqadama Ibn Khildoon and The Koran. Surprisingly, Dawood completed his translation at an early age of 29 years and it was readily accepted by Penguin's Classics.³⁴ Dawood started working as a journalist after completion of his education in 1949. The founder of Penguin books invited N.J Dawood in 1954 for translation of selected folk stories and the name of the book was "Thousand and one Nights." The founder members of Penguin Classics Lane and E.V Rieu decided to produce a new translation according to modern times. They invited Dawood for this purpose and the translation of Dawood then was published in 1956.

Dawood died 26th November 2014.

- **Study of Significant Features of Translation**

The translation of Qur'ān written by Dawood was also written with the intention of misrepresenting Islam. N.J Dawood firstly try to rearrange Surāh order showing prejudice against Islam. After wards he accepted traditional arrangement of Surāh in his 1990 edition. In Dawood's view, the translation of Qur'ān is a work in progress and it always keep on changing as the language change. A great Islamic Scholar "Zia-Ud-Din Sardar opined that the translations of published in 1956 and in 1990 are not much different. Only he replaced word God with Allah now. Further he wrote about Qur'ān as great book in 1990 edition whereas earlier he wrote it as Prophetic Book in 1956 edition.³⁵ However, he admitted that traditional Surāh arrangement was correct and he also changed this in his 1990 translation. The translation of a few verses have been updated in 1990 edition of Dawood's translation but there are verses which still have old translation of year 1956 and has not been corrected. Penguin announces that they have sold ten thousand copies of Dawood's translation but it is shamefull as this translation still has several grievous mistakes. Dawood highlights that Islam and Muhammad believe in violence and wars and

³³ Dawood, N.J, IBN KHALDUN, An interdiction to history, Princeton University Press. 1967,

³⁴ Abdullah Yousaf Ali Memorial Lecture by M.A. Sharif International Institute of advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia Kuala Lumpur, P.20, 2008,

³⁵ M.A Sharif, Searching for solace a biography of Abdullah Yousaf Ali, Islamic book Trust, Kuala Lumpur, 1994, P-VII, (Yousaf Ali is best known for his monumental translation and commentary on the Quran, first published in 1934 and subsequently printed for sale and free distribution on an precedential scale. The voluminous "Yousaf Ali is a standard reference in the English speaking Muslim world, perhaps the most widely circulated work of twenty century Islamic Scholarship P:VII.)

Muhammad was impressed by Jewish and Christian religious beliefs. The statement “The Koran provides the rules of conduct fundamental to Arab way of life,” which shows that Qur’ān is only meant for Arab and not the whole world is still mentioned at the end of Dawood’s translation. The important events of Muhammad’s life are also mentioned in the translation.

8- A Twenty First Century Translation of Qur’ān (Alan Jones-2007)

After discussing the seven most famous and widely accepted English translations in the history of Oriental English Translations, There was a gap of few years as true intentions and prejudice behind these Oriental translations have been unveiled.³⁶ However the importance of this scripture is undeniable.³⁷ Quran is a complete sode of conduct and guiding light for followers.³⁸ Afterwards in twenty first century, a new oriental translation in modern times has been produced by Alan Jones and published in year 2007. The translation is called “The Qur’ān” and it was published by Gibb Memorial Trust, Cambridge. Alan Jones has been a teacher in Islamic Studies Department at Oxford University for last forty years. His translation is also full of prejudice and misrepresentation against Islam. He starts the translation with Arab History and life of Muhammad (PBUH).³⁹ He raise doubts in authenticity and validity of Surāhs of Qur’ān and events of life of Muhammad. He elaborates that the only purpose of Islam is to wage war and fight against Non-Muslims. Similarly like his predecessors, he states that Qur’ān is an amalgamation of Jewish and Christian teachings. He also wrote two books and one of them is “Early Arabic Poetry and Arabic through the Qur’ān”. This book consists of 296 pages and has forty lessons each including an exercise.

➤ Partial Translations (Selected Surahs) and Fake Quran

After elaborating on the century wise evolution of English translations of Quran, this study also provides a brief over view of a partial Quran translation and a fake Quran.

9- Translation of Selected Surāhs of Qur’ān (Thomas Cleary-1993):

Thomas Cleary translated thirty nine Surhas of Qur’ān which may be deemed as partial translation. It was published in year 1993 by Harper Collins Publications, 195-Broadway, New York, NY10007. It consists of two hundred and three pages excluding introduction and contents. This translation is like a breath of fresh air among the Oriental English translations.⁴⁰ Cleary mentions Qur’ān as one of the greatest message in human history and elaborates that it is equally beneficial for west and east. The prejudiced translations of Qur’ān have only cause damaged to the people of

³⁶ Dr.Farhat Naseem Alvi, Maqssod Ahmed, Hafiz Abdul Salam Bhattwi ka tarjumai Quran, Aik Tajziati Mutalia, Al-Adwa,33-50, Sheikh Zyed Islamic Center, University of Punjab,Lahore, p.1.

³⁷ Dr.Farhat Naseem Alvi, AbdulGhafoor, Mutala serat ki Fard aur mashara ki Tarbiat Saazi ma Ahmiat, Al-adwa, 26-35, June 2011, Sheikh Zaid Islamic Center, Lahore, Punjab University Islamic Center, p.93

³⁸ Professor Akthar Ul Wasih, Mustashreeqeen Aur Angraizi Tarajum e Quran, Professor Abdul Qudwai Ky Mazamin, Naveed Hafeez Press Lahore P.22

³⁹ Alon jones . The Quran translated into English., Gibb Memorial Trust,2007

⁴⁰ Thomas Cleary, “The Essential Koran” “The Heart of Islam” an Introductory selection of reading from the Quran. Harper Collins Publishors, New York, p.VII.

west as they have been deprived from teachings of this very book called Qur'ān. He believes in Prophet Muhammad and Qur'ān. The selection of Surāhs that has been translated by him have been chosen under the theory of six aims of Qur'ān defined by Al-Ghazali.

10- The True Furqan (AL-Furqan-Ul-Haq, Anees Shroosh-1999):

The true Furqan is a fake Qur'ān. The author Anees Shroosh believed that Muslims couldn't understand the message of Qur'ān truly so his own Qur'ān will clear the confusion. The Qur'ān was published in 1999 by Wine Press Publishing. This book consists of 360 pages and was published under project Omega 2001. It is a book that reveals the Muslim as well as Christian religious teachings as the very second chapter of the book discusses concept of "Trinity". The author assumes the names of Al-Saffee and Al-Mahdee for this book.⁴¹ He believes that this book will give Muslims a sigh of relief finally. Dr. Ray Register who is Christian missionary believes that this book will improve Muslim attitude towards Christianity. The Muslim scholars at University of Tehran believe that the author has tried to create something like Qur'ān but further disappointed by producing this cheap piece of literature.

Conclusion:

The Qur'ān has always been a target of attacks by a prejudiced segment of Orientalist but they couldn't prove one word wrong in this Holy Book. One of an organized movement in this regard has been Orientalism who tried to repeatedly undermine Qur'ān and Islam. Since the book is a message of Allah, therefore not a single mistake will be found in the Qur'ān till the Day of Judgment. The evolution and content analysis of seven English complete translations as elaborated in this study have depicted immense prejudice and enmity towards Islam. They did not only deprived west from the great teachings of Qur'ān but also misrepresented an immortal code of conduct like Islam which could have been beneficial for their societies as described by Thomas Cleary. The century wise evolution of Quran shows changes both in features of translation and skills/knowledge of the author grown over the course of five centuries. The knowledge of Arabic language and literary standard of translators improved over the course of centuries also causing reduction in hatred and mistranslation. However, logic replaced denial in the later centuries and mistranslations/prejudice was supported by this logic and reasoning. We have observed while making comparison of arrangement of Surāhs in these Qur'ān Translations that only one out of seven oriental translators changed the traditional arrangement of Surāhs but he dismantled his own translation and it became an example of poor literary work.

Oriental scholars among themselves have also criticized the content of each other's translations. The translators like N.J Dawood finally admitted the authenticity of traditional arrangement of Surāhs and apologized for changing the traditional order. The objection raised against compilation and preservation of Qur'ān or events and history of life of Muhamamd(PBUH) were all in vain.

⁴¹ The True Furqan, Almehti Alsaafi, The Wine Press Publishing 2001, Surah Bismillah, P.A

Further, the Oriental translators had all the resources and support of leading publishing companies and Universities in West. The Oriental mindset even tried to create fake Qur'ān like "The true Furqan" which was an amalgamation of Islamic and Christian holy scriptures but couldn't succeed. The Islam is still the fastest growing religion and The Qur'ān is most widely read book across the world. Since Allah has narrated in Qur'ān that He will protect His message, so these campaigns for misrepresenting Qur'ān will never be successful till the final existence of this material and mortal world.