

## A Translation Quality Assessment of the English

### Translation of the Hilali Epic

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#### Abstract

*The goal of this article is to assess the translation quality of the Hilali Epic by using Juliane House's Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) (1997). The study aims at discussing translation problems arising from the differences between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT) with reference to register, genre, and ideational and interpersonal meanings. It utilizes the Hilali Epic as an example of travel narratives. It discusses how the translator can reproduce the situational dimensions of the source text in the target text. The study also investigates how the cultural features of identity in the source text are rendered in the translation.*

**Key Words:** *Translation Quality, Context, Genre, ideational and interpersonal meanings*

#### 1. Introduction

Every literary genre has its own peculiar forms originating for very complex historical and cultural reasons. The Hilali Epic is an anonymous mediaeval saga which describes the migration of the Bani

Hilali Bedouin tribe from the Arabian Peninsula to North Africa in the tenth century. It is a folktale but in the form of oral performance. It reflects the social unit, the spirit of the ancestors, history, customs, beliefs and other aspects of Arab community life. The Hilali Epic is an oral narrative of sung improvised poetry. It is verbally performed by singers or performers in Upper Egypt. The Hilali Epic performer or singer uses many cultural variables to create images of the self and the other. He performs being Arab, and belonging to the Arab territories mentioned in the tales. Performance becomes a way of representing the past and the social reality itself. The Hilali Epic is narrated in Upper Egypt in four parts: birth, pioneers, westward migration, and orphans. An epic is, in the words of Bridget Connelly (1986: 225), “a saga of identity and, as such, a saga of alterity”; that is, by creating “us” the epic simultaneously creates alterity, a contrast to and distance from other groups. Unity is impossible without alterity. (Honko 1996: 21)

The Hilali epic is a saga of the unreal mixed with the documentary: legendary heroes and events in real places. It is based on imagination and takes into consideration facts on the ground. To many tellers and listeners, the stories related in the Hilali Epic – about the legendary hero Abu Zayd – tell the true history of the Arabs. Though the tales surely contain some considerable amount of legendary material, there is a good reason to believe that some of the material reflects historical events. Slyomovics (1987) argues that the Bani Hilal Bedouin Arab tribes depart their ancestral lands in the Arabian Peninsula to march westward towards North Africa. The fourteenth century historian Ibn Khaldun proposed an influential analysis to describe the Hilali’s North African incursions:

Sirat Bani Hilal ... chronicles the migrations of an Arab confederation of Bedouin tribes from the Arabian peninsula to Upper Egypt, across North Africa and the Sudan to Libya, Tunis, Algeria, and parts of the Lake Chad area during the tenth through twelfth centuries. Sub-clans of the tribe ... settled in these various regions. Their version of the history ... has been told and retold through the centuries and makes up the corpus of epic tales known as Sirat Bani Hilal. (Connelly and Massie 1989: 105)

It is commonly acknowledged that the epic is a literary form which carries the identity of the community (Beissinger et al 1999). The relationship between identity and translation has led to

arguments calling for the treatment of translation as a primarily cultural act. Identity lies at the heart of culture. Hence, the act of translating involves preserving the cultural identity of the original text. The translation of the Hilali Epic is responsible to a certain extent for the image that target readers construct of Arabic cultures. Accordingly, translators should produce faithful translations of the cultures they choose to introduce. Translators should investigate whether the historical context and culture of the source text has been rendered in the target culture and locate the challenges related to the target culture that could hinder or even resist the literary translation process from a cultural angle. The translation of the Hilali Epic should bring into focus the position of a source text within the intersecting networks of a culture in order to understand the significance of the text in its original culture, and to acknowledge the cultural factors that have determined such significance.

## **2. Significance and Scope of the Study**

The study is significant because many literary translations ignore the issue of identity. The Hilali Epic is a text which carries the identity of the Arab community. It is also significant as it attempts to prove the effectiveness of register analysis as a tool for Translation Quality Assessment (TQA). The study does not provide a comprehensive linguistic analysis of the Hilali Epic and its translation.

## **3. Research Problems**

The research problem of this study is to provide an assessment of the translation of the Hilali Epic in terms of register, genre, and ideational and interpersonal meanings. The study tries to answer the question whether the translation has reproduced the situational dimensions of the source text and whether it can give new life to the identity and cultural dimensions of the source text. The study considers the following research questions:

- 1- Are the Hilali Epic and its translation fully equivalent in terms of register, genre, and ideational and interpersonal meanings?
- 2- Can identity features in the Hilali Epic be rendered in its translation?

## **4. Objectives of the Study:**

The main objectives of the study are:

- 1- to assess the translation of the Hilali Epic with reference to House' model, and;
- 2- to describe how the features of identity and culture in the Hilali Epic are rendered in its translation.

## **5- Data Collection and Methodology**

The data in the study are excerpts from the Arabic texts and English texts in *Sirat Bani Hilal Digital Archive* (2010) by Professor Dwight Reynolds of the University of California, Santa Barbara. The criterion for the selection of the excerpts is based on the differences in register or language varieties and situational meaning used in the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). The study starts by providing a theoretical framework defining register analysis, genre and ideational and interpersonal meanings. Then, it moves to the discussion of the differences between the ST and TT. The study is a comparative, descriptive-analytical one.

## **6. Theoretical Framework**

Many scholars attempted to provide assessments for translation quality. Among those scholars is Juliane House who introduced *A Model for Translation Quality Assessment* in 1977. She modified her model in 1997. Moreover, studies on Arabic oral narratives have received little attention. Martin Hartmann wrote his book *Die Beni-Hilal Geschichten* in 1899. It indicates that oral literature in Arabic is an entity distinct from written literature. Szymovics (1987) discusses the Hilali Epic as a performance. Reynolds (1995) discusses the ethnography of performance in Arabic oral epic tradition. A chapter in Reynolds (2006) is devoted to the Hilali Epic. Recently some poets have documented the events of the Hilali Epic and in 1998 UNESCO recognized it as a masterpiece of the oral and intangible cultural heritage of humanity, which keeps alive the memory of a place, a language and an oral tradition that has been passed on from one generation to another. From the translation perspective, Brisset (2000) and Berman (2000) discuss the process of translating identity.

The theoretical framework used in the study is Juliane House's Translation Quality Assessment (TQA) (1997). It focuses on the relationships between the ST and the TT. Equivalence is a main criterion in House's model. According to House, equivalence between the ST and the TT should be

an equivalence of function; that is, both the ST and the TT must have the same function. She points out that "a translation text should not only match its source text in function, but employ equivalent situational-dimensional means to achieve that function" (House 1997: 42). In fact, House's model is based on the Hallidayan functional theory of language which stresses the need for a look into the context in which a text is produced. Halliday (1978) introduced the term 'social semiotics' to propose that language cannot be separated from society. Halliday's functional theory of language points out that language and society are perceived as a whole (1978: 14), or as he puts it "A social reality (or a 'culture') is itself an edifice of meanings – a semiotic construct. In this perspective, language is one of the semiotic systems that constitute a culture" (1978: 2). This functional perspective of language is called the socio-semiotic theory of language (Halliday 1978: 108). Halliday utilizes factors such as 'text', 'situation' and 'register'.

House's model which is also based on the socio-semiotic approach to translation incorporates four factors in her translation assessment: 1. function, 2. genre, 3. register and 4- language/text (House 1997: 107-112). The socio-semiotic approach emphasizes the importance of context, both context of situation and context of culture, in reconstructing the meaning of a text. Translators need to transfer all the meanings of the ST, including contextual meaning. The function of a text consists of ideational and interpersonal meanings. These two types of meanings are part of the Hallidayan social semiotic point of view. Ideational meaning is the function of language through which language encodes the cultural experience and the individual's experience as a member in the culture (1978: 112). The concept of 'genre' seems to be of crucial importance in House's model.

A text genre is a type of written or spoken discourse. Texts are classified into genres on the basis of the social function of the text. In this model register analysis is an important tool for Translation Quality Assessment. A register is a language variety which is based on language use (Halliday and Hassan 1985:41). It is 'a semantic concept' (1985: 38). House subsumes the categories of register analysis under the Hallidayan concepts of field, tenor and mode (House 1977: 45). Each text is an individual text embedded in unique situation. In order to characterize the function of a text, it is

necessary to refer to the context of situation. The qualitative judgment of a translation in House's model consists of a statement of the relative match of the ideational and interpersonal functional components of the textual function.

## **7. Analysis**

The analysis of the data is meant to recognize whether the ST and the TT have the same text function. It consists of ideational and interpersonal meanings. Then, the study will investigate the concepts of genre and register in both the ST and the TT.

### **7.1 Ideational and Interpersonal Meanings**

The first type of meaning; i.e., ideational meaning is the function of language through which language encodes culture and identity. Awareness of cultural identity is reflected in the strategies used by the translator to reproduce the cultural atmosphere of the Hilali Epic. Dickens et al (2002: 29) introduces a scale between two extremes: exoticism and cultural transplantation. They explain that any degree of cultural transposition ranges between source-culture bias (exoticism) and target-culture bias (normalizing or naturalizing). These two extremes are called foreignization and domestication by Venuti (1995). Venuti argues that translation strategies can “permit a foreign text that seems aesthetically inferior and politically reactionary at home to carry opposite valences abroad” (1998: 87). Translation strategies can fulfill the need of the target audience to become aware of the power of translation to shape identities. Identification of target linguistic/cultural/narrative (or other) preference in discourse construction can fruitfully be achieved through the strategy of domestication. Venuti (1995, 1996 and 1998) claims that the English translation tradition is to strive for a normalizing and naturalizing effect through, for instance, the explicitation tendency, intended to make things clearer for a target audience. Here translation is instrumental in shaping domestic attitudes towards foreign identities, specific ethnicities, races or nationalities. Some translators choose to adhere to the norms of the target cultures during the literary translation process and suppress the source culture. This may be distorting the identity of the source culture in target versions. The idea is that authentic, rather than translated material is the identity carrier.

The translator of the Hilali Epic uses foreignization to balance the needs of the target audience with the demands of the source culture identity. Here he tried hard to retain the flavor of exoticism and oriental quaintness and naiveté of the Hilali Epic. The conflict between two cultures can result in assorted forms of misunderstanding. Therefore, the translator had to accompany his translation with extra historical background about the culture of the source text in order to situate the target culture readers within the culture of the source text. There is no naturalizing, de-historicizing effect in the translation as the translator has retained the Oriental atmosphere. However, the Hilali Epic has not been satisfactorily translated into English because it lost its cultural background.

Bassnett (1980: 22) discusses the literary translation process and argues that exact reproduction is impossible, since the worlds in which the original text and its translations are produced are inevitably different worlds. Edward Sapir (1956: 69) claims that "language is a guide to social reality" and adds that "No two languages are ever sufficiently similar to be considered as representing the same social reality. The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached. "

Bassnett states that, in accordance with Jakobson, "the translation is only an adequate *interpretation* of an alien code unit and equivalence is impossible" (Bassnett 1980: 23). Lefevere explains that since language is the expression of a culture, many of the words in a language are inextricably bound up with that culture and therefore very hard to transfer in their totality to another language (Lefevere 1992: 17).

Throughout history, translators have had to contend with the fact that the target language is deficient when it comes to translating the source text into that language. Such deficiencies can be clearly identified as, for example, lexical or morpho-syntactic deficiencies or as problems of polysemy. More often, however, the deficiency in the receiving code has to do with the relation between signs and their users, a relation that reflects such things as individuality, social position, and geographical origin of the speakers ... (Brisset 2000: 343-344)

As Antoine Berman (2000: 284) puts it, translation is a "trial of the foreign". The target-oriented translation is considered an "act of reclaiming, of recentering of the identity, a reterritorializing operation" (Brisset 2000: 346). The goal of such translation is to supplant foreign forms of expression,

which are viewed as alienating. To do away with forms of identity means to get rid of the other. The first person plural, “us”, embodies in-group affiliation and, implicitly, creates a distinction with respect to 'them'. Close association between “us” and “them” is dangerous, harmful, and therefore to be deplored. Berman (2000) considers this type of translation an utter alienation. Therefore, it is strongly advised to replace it with de-centered translation, that is, translation that is faithful to the source language and culture. What Berman advocates is faithfulness to the very structure of the source language, to its *forma mentis*, at the expense of the target language.

The English translation of the Hilali Epic in 2010 by Professor Dwight Reynolds of the University of California, Santa Barbara manages to some extent to give exposure to the Arabic language and culture through the use of lexical and morpho-syntactic features from the source text. However, some Anglicization has taken place, as in the case of the translation of "النبي أول الأولين", literally "the prophet was the pioneer of the first people", into "the prophet was the most saintly of the saintly". However, the difficulty of translating the Hilali Epic does not lie only in reproducing the source cultural identity but also in rendering the genre features of the Epic.

The translator uses oft-repeated formulae and epithets imported from the ST. The cultural foreignness in the TT falls into the category of deliberate exoticism, and the resultant ‘otherness’ may be one of the TT's attractions. Notice the image of the eye in the following excerpt:

(1)

إسمع ما قال القاضى فايد وما نشد مطروفة ولا يألف النوم حالها

Listen now to what the Qadi Fayid said and what he sang!

"[My eye] aches and sleep frequents it not in this state

(2)

هنينا بعين تنعس الليل كاملا                      تبات مستريحة ما عليها ولا بها

Happy is the eye which sleeps the whole night through,

It passes the night in comfort, no blame is upon it.

The translator explains in the footnote that the eye is 'a symbol of deep-felt emotions similar to western images of the heart and soul.' Another cultural formula is the image of the moon in the Arabic tradition.

(3)

وكشف وجهه

[واحد: لقوه اسمر! - ضحك]

لقوه زى ليلة ٢٩ أو ٣١

Then [Azqal] uncovered his face . . .

[Voice: He found him dark! -- Laughter]

. . . and found him like the night of the 29th or 31th . . .

The translator explains in his footnotes that "the Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar, thus the 29th-31st nights of the month are those that have no moon and are pitch black" (p. 14, Episode One).

Cultural borrowing is the second strategy used by Professor Reynolds to support exoticism. The translator transfers ST expressions verbatim into the TT, so that foreign elements are introduced in the TT. An example of cultural borrowing would be the rendering of the cultural term "ذكر" by transliteration:

(4)

خدوا الشيخ وعزموه جملة ثلاثة ليالى      من كل ليلة يا أجويد الذكر صايح

They took in the shaykh and invited him for three full days,

And each night, O Nobles, the *dhikr* [Sufi ritual] rang out.

The transliteration of the word "ذكر" would be incomprehensible to the TT audience. It can only be comprehensible to a specialized limited audience. An exegetic translation would be clearer, e.g. 'Sufi ritual'. To appeal to a wide audience, the translator resorts to various strategies such as adding a glossary or using footnotes or using exegetic translation. Footnotes were successful in translating the word "الشفاعة".

(5)

أنا عيد من يعشق جمال محمد      طه الذى طلب الشفاعة ونالها

I am the servant of all who adore the beauty of Muhammad,

Taha, who requested [the power of] intercession and obtained it.

The translator provides the following footnote to help the TT reader understand the Islamic concept.

In Islamic tradition, the Prophet Muhammad, on his "Night Journey" [isra'] to Jerusalem and his "Ascension" [mi`raj] up through the Seven Heavens, asked and received the right to intercede with God on behalf of the nascent Islamic community. His first act of intercession was to have the number of daily prayers that God wished to require of all Muslims reduced from fifty to five. (p.5, Episode One)

The potential of the translator's interfering with identity formation and value rendition in a target version is quite obvious in the translation of the Hilali Epic. Adjusting identities and values in the target text facilitates recognition of culturally and ideologically compatible values and allows equivalent effects and impact on target audiences. Gender identity shifts, for instance, may be traced in the target version. The relocation and domestication intention is manifested in the translator's rendering of the word "ذكرى" as "heir".

(6)

مالي كثير يا رجالى من غير ذكرى      مال بلا ذكرى بعد العمر رباح

My wealth is great, O men, but [I am] without an heir;

Wealth without an heir after a lifetime disappears.

The translation "heir" does not reflect the masculine dimension in the Arabic culture attitude towards the heir because the term 'ذكرى' only denotes males.

The second type of meaning; i.e., interpersonal meaning shows the relationship between performer and the audience. This is "the component through which the speaker intrudes himself into the context of situation, both expressing his own attitudes and judgments and seeking to influence the attitudes and behavior of others" (Halliday 1978: 112).

The behavior of the participants is constrained by social semiotic systems which operate through messages about their identity and relationships. Interpersonal meaning denotes the social roles and relationships of participants in the Hilali Epic, i.e. the performer and the audience. The audience respond positively with sincere expressions such as 'true' or 'Allah' which reflect their interaction with the performance.

## 7.2 Genre: Oral Narrative

A serious shortcoming in the translation of the Hilali Epic could emerge when there is a genre shift. The Hilali Epic is translated into English by Professor Reynolds as a narrative and not as an epic. An epic is different from a narrative: "Without social approval and even enthusiasm registered by at least some group, it becomes difficult to place a narrative in the category of epic" (Honko 1996: 22).

Epics have a unique relationship with the community in which they are performed: they are "our story," and stand apart from other songs and stories because of community identification with them. As presentations of regularized world views, oral epics make a statement that other folk genres cannot. (Wadley 1991:220- 21)

The epic audience should constitute a "community of truth" and the epic is as Honko calls it "a song of truth", reflecting communal history, values and aspirations coming from the past and reaching into the future.

a "community of truth," a group that takes the epic more seriously than others and derives its social origin, rank, legitimation of certain rights and duties or morals from the contents and teachings of the narrative. This may mean, among other things, that one and the same narrative constitutes an epic for one community but something else for another. (Honko 1996: 23)

The Hilali Epic is oral by nature. Anthropologists and historians conceptualize orality as the medium of expression and discourse of non-literate cultures. The audience of the Hilali epic is aware that it holds a people together and helps build a strong sense of identity.

Oral narrative discourse begins to receive attention and support because it serves as a vehicle to express identity.

Tradition would thus look like a store, only some parts of which are in use at any given time. The other parts are simply waiting to be activated, stored in the library of the human mind, always in danger of passing into oblivion because of the lack of use, lack of function. (Honko 1996: 19)

When translated as a written narrative, it loses its context, mode and tenor. The translation by Professor Reynolds is written and intended to be read but the source text is communicated orally in front of audience. Differences can even be seen in the tenor of the translation as it denotes the social roles and relationships of participants in the Hilali Epic, i.e. the performer and the audience. His translation of the Hilali Epic does not express the same atmosphere of the original. An epic has its

own audience who relate the narrative to the life and culture of their community. The Hilali Epic is translated by Professor Reynolds as a narrative but not as an Epic. An epic is a genre with special features. An epic achieves its value through three genre and cultural variables, viz., poetic language, aurality and orality. These cultural variables are points of weaknesses in his translation of the Hilali Epic. First, the rhyme is not rendered in his English translation of the Hilali Epic.

Second, aurality means audience response. The Hilali Epic is performed in Egypt for two purposes; a source of entertainment and a carrier of identity. In Egypt it is an epic tradition, whereas American audiences do not perceive it to be a true story or a story specifically identified with their community.

It should be possible to posit that the moment a wandering narrative is seized and converted into a song of truth for a particular group, an adaptation of tradition must take place. The story must be fitted to both the physical environment and the mental tradition-morphology of the group. It must be able to reflect local ideals, dominant values, socioeconomic structures, and social rank prevalent among the core audience (cf. Honko 1993:52) (Honko 1996: 24).

Various genres are likely to foreground specific sets of linguistic patterns which may differ cross-culturally and, thus, examination of translated data should be genre-specific. For instance, one dimension in which the Hilali Epic differs from other epics is that it should elicit an immediate response from an audience and therefore the target version should display –inter alia– readily recognizable, preferred patterns of linguistic behavior for immediate response to be ensured. The notion of dialogue and reciprocity between the performer and the audience is very important in the Hilali Epic.

Third, orality means the role played by the performer. The epic performance changes from a performer to another. The nature of the epic is cumulative: "Its boundaries will change with every new person entering the group or passing away" (Honko 1996: 19). This can be seen in the performer's improvisation or spontaneous adaptation. The epic is a set of episodes. The episode contains themes and sub-themes. Although the themes lead naturally from one to another, the performer embeds sub-themes which are not parts of the epic into the structure of the episodes. When the performer narrates the theme of Rizq's proposal to Sharifa the High-born, he uses the sub-theme of the good pride:

(7)

ولا ناخذ البيضة على بياض خدها وإن مالت البيضة ابوه تعيب رجالها

واحد: صح!

ولاناخذ السمراء على كثر مالها إن خس مالك تروح تعابرك بمالها

الجميع: ضحك

ولاناخذ الرعاء ولا بنت دنية مطهومة بالعيد ولانقرب آلهما

ولاناخذ اللي تلحس القدر بيدها

الجميع: ضحك

إن جاء يومين الشح تعدو بعيالها

الجميع: ضحك

ماناخذ إلا الأميرة المنسبة

واحد: الله

We'll not take the fair maid for the fairness of her cheek,

If the fair one goes astray her menfolk are blamed.

[Voice: True!]

We'll not take the dark maid for the greatness of her wealth,

If your wealth decreases she'll blame you for her loss.

[Laughter]

We'll not take the foolish maid or the daughter of a miser,

Flustered on the feastday, we won't join families with her.

We'll not take one who scrapes ["licks"] the pot with her hand,

[Laughter]

If a few days of want come she'll vie with her own children [for the food]!

[Laughter]

We shall only take the high-born princess,

[Voice: Allah!]

The arbitrariness of these sub-themes is part of the performer's improvisation. This sort of improvisation is difficult to translate. Improvisation ranges from the inclusion of sub-themes to linguistic innovation such as lexicalization and syntactic markedness.

### 7.3 Register

Using register analysis as a tool in translation assessment means that an equivalent speech event should be replaced in the translation. Lexical innovation in the source text can be seen in the coinage of plural the performer uses to match the rhyme of the epic. Examples of these plural words include:

ST	TT
التلايل	Hills
الرحايل	Migration
أصايل	Noble men
ذلايل	Vassal
بطايل	Worthless men
الجمايل	Good deeds
الندايل	Despicable men

This ST register or language variety is lost in the translation. Another feature of the performer's linguistic innovation is the vernacular words. A vernacular language, which is local, cannot be reproduced in the TT or cannot be re-territorialized. It is spoken spontaneously and less for communicating than for communing. A vernacular feature is a reflection of ethnic or social identity.

A linguistic community appears to be a sort of huge market in which words, expressions and messages circulate as commodities. We may ask ourselves what rules govern the circulation of words, expressions and messages, beginning with the values according to which they are consumed and exchanged. (Rossi-Landi, 1983:87)

The use of the vernacular language is a sign of cultural identity in the Hilali Epic. Examples can be seen in the following words:

ST	TT
قعد	Sat
انجعص	Put on airs
ما امدحش	I do not praise
مطارح	Spaces
ولايا	Womenfolk

عشمان	Hoping
رايحين	Go
جايين	Come

The colloquial demonstrative pronouns "دا" and "دول" are used in the source text instead of the formal pronouns "هذا" and "هؤلاء". The translator's English choices do not match the vernacular Arabic.

Archaic words are sometimes used such as the plurals "غلمان" and "أجاويد". They are translated as the informal "tykes" and the formal "nobles". Other words are used in the source text such as "فى العصر", "والأوان", "القوم", and "ديوان". The translator uses words such as "thee" to reflect the Arabic archaisms. This variety of lexical choice enriches the mosaic of the epic portrait.

In addition to the vernacular language, the referential language of a community is tied to its cultural, oral, and written traditions. Place names which are part of referential language are often associated with a system of meanings for those who share a common history and common beliefs and tradition. Due to differing world views, place names possess different meanings to various ethnic groups. In other words, place names represent socially constructed systems of meanings. To their audience in Upper Egypt, place names in the Hilali epic embody the bonds that they develop with these places through ancestral residence in the past. Place names develop a layered and deep sense of place and place attachment (Spencer 2008: 241-259).

Place names are used to give shape to images of identity. The Hilali heroes are legendary but some particular realities emerge through places and place names. A 'place' is normally inhabited by a specific ethnic group, so identities are connected to places. In Egypt today, many families have traced their ancestry back to the Arab families who emigrated from the Arab Peninsula after the Islamic Conquest. Talking about place names, Basso writes:

Because of their inseparable connection to specific localities, place names may be used to summon forth an enormous range of mental and emotional associations – associations of time and space of history and events, of persons and social activities, of oneself and stages in one's life (1988: 103).

The focus on the use of place names in the Hilali epic in this article is in accordance with Schiffrin's (1996) argument, which differentiates between the linguistic reference in the textual world (place names as noun phrases and pronouns) and the social reality (place names as they refer to real places). Place names in discourse can connect intimate details of experience to broader social and spatial relations (Wiles et al. 2005). Place names as referential language have been and continue to be an important element of identity politics.

One of the ways in which the Hilali epic is maintained in the collective memory of people in Egypt is that its audience identify themselves with reference to the geographical places where the story takes place. The extended geographical location from the Arabian Peninsula to North Africa in the Hilali epic becomes a crucial marker of identity. To its audience in Egypt, the Hilali epic stands as a reminder not only of Arab folk history, customs and beliefs, but of a bond of common ancestry between proximate peoples. The importance of place names in the Hilali epic is paramount because they refer to Arab history, Arab social relations and Arab political relations. The use of these Arab place names helps establish and support a collective understanding and enactment of the important action of celebrating ancestry. Therefore, place names can be considered to be important features of ethnic identity. Examples of place names in the Hilali Epic are Egypt, Najd, the Levant, the Sinai peninsula, Tunisia the Green, Iraq, the Sudan, Morocco, Mecca, Tiafa and Jerusalem.

## **8. Conclusion**

The main finding of the study is that the Hilali Epic and its translation by Professor Reynolds are not fully equivalent in terms of ideational and interpersonal meanings. There is also a genre shift in the translation. Changes introduced in the translation can dislocate the text from its intended genre and thus distort the communicative value of the ST. The TT does not achieve persuasive effect on the TT audience. The translator of the Hilali Epic tries to convey the cultural image of the Arabic tradition by retaining features of the source culture in the TT; he does not naturalize the text according to the TL and its cultural setting. However, there are still features of the original's cultural identity missing in the translation of the Hilali Epic. The study shows how Arab identity which is emergent in the

Hilali Epic performance cannot be re-territorialized or reproduced in a different cultural community. The ST and the TT do not have the same register. Finally, the translation of the Hilali Epic fails to achieve equivalence of function.

### **Main source**

Sirat Banī Hilāl (Digital Archive). Dwight Reynolds, the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Available on-line: [www.siratbanihilal.ucsb.edu/](http://www.siratbanihilal.ucsb.edu/)

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### **Abbreviations**

- ST source text  
 TT target text  
 TQA Translation Quality Assessment