

Chapter 7

Rethinking Quran Translation in light of Doha Historical Dictionary and Religious Communicative Theory: "To beat" or "not to beat" An-Nisa verse 34 as a Case Study

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Abstract

This study aims at rethinking the interpretation and translation of the word */wadribuhunna/* in An-Nisa (Women) verse 34. The question whether to "beat" or "not to beat" has been at the centre of a polemic debate. Our contribution to this debate relies on the role played by the Doha historical dictionary and Religious communicative theory in the interpretation and translation of the word. This study sets out not just from the classical and contemporary exegeses but also from the historical meaning of */wadribuhunna/* extracted from Doha historical dictionary. The research methodology adopted in this study is the qualitative approach which compares and examines the word meaning from the three above perspectives. The study has revealed that there are three approaches for the interpretation of */wadribuhunna/*. The classical approach is cultural, and the contemporary one is ideological. Ours, however, is lexicological because it gives much importance to the historical meaning of the word '*daraba*'.

Keywords: classical exegeses, contemporary exegeses, Doha historical dictionary, Quran translation, religious communicative theory

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1. Introduction

It has been a universally established fact among Muslims that the Holy Quran is the words of Allah delivered by His messenger Gabriel to His Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) for this latter to begin preaching to mankind the advent of the monotheistic religion of Islam with its new moral code of life against the ignorance, depravity and polytheism they had hitherto been steeped in. It is Allah final word for people at all times. Due to the universality in time and space of this sacred book divine truth, many translation scholars have continued to face up to the challenge of interpreting its meaning into the languages of non-Arabic speakers. Likewise, the Holy Quran Exegetes themselves found difficulties in interpreting the Quranic meaning within the language of revelation. Interpreting the Holy Quran is governed by a set of factors besides the Quran itself, such as the Sunnah, Shari'a, the Hadiths of the Prophet, Arabic culture, Arabic poetry, and, last but not least, the meaning of the ancient Arabic language.

The issue of Quran translation has been explored in our article entitled "Rethinking Quran Translation: towards a Religious Communicative Theory (RCT)" (2020). We have developed there an inclusive Quran translation theory as a framework for Quran translation equipped with all the essential elements to help translators preserve the Holy Book sacredness in a communicative religious translation.

Based on the RCT, the present study is devoted to scrutinising the exegesis of the word */waqribuuhunna / واقربوهن* in An-Nisaa (Women) verse 34. In both the exegeses of the verse and its translations, the word */waqribuuhunna/* arouses intense debate. Recent studies (Bakhtiar, 2007; El-Khatib, 2018; Oubiri, 2020; Afsaruddin, 2020) have argued for different meanings, including the literal one, which is 'to beat'. This study aims at reassessing the meaning of */waqribuuhunna/* in light of the Doha historical dictionary that we consider a reliable and trustworthy source. This reference will enable us to trace back the historical meaning of the word */qaraba/* and shed light, undoubtedly, on the exact meaning of the word from the time of the Quran's revelation.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Among the endless challenges of translating some of the Holy Quran words into other languages, there is evidently the problem of rendering the term */qaraba/* in An-Nisa verse 34, since its interpretation has been triggering a heated polemic among exegetes ever since Quran revelation.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

This study is an attempt to probe into the question whether */qaraba/* in An-Nisa verse 34 means 'to beat' or 'not to beat'. It will get inspiration from not only its interpretations by the classical and contemporary exegeses, but its range of meanings in different Arabic poetic and prosaic corpus as elicited by Doha historical dictionary from different historical contexts starting from the first Arab transcript five centuries before Al-Hijra up till the present day.

1.3. Rhetorical Question

The present study seeks to explore the following questions:

1. The extent to which Doha historical dictionary can help translators rethinking Quran Translation
2. The extent to which Doha historical dictionary can help exegetes reassessing Quran Meanings
3. The meaning of */waqribuuhunna/* in An-Nisa verse 34. Is it to 'beat' or 'not to beat'?

2. Literature Review

2.2. Importance of Historical Dictionaries

A dictionary is one of the first-hand sources for a language learner. There are different types of dictionaries. Each type is distinct and provides a particular linguistic service to its users. A historical dictionary not only provides the etymology of a given word, but also traces its semantic evolution along historical contexts. That is, the word senses are listed chronologically to show the development of its sense over time.

Historical dictionaries are distinct in that they "accurately contain the first and latest occurrences of each sense of the words"²³. The historical factor is paramount in the arrangement of entries to organize their different semantic layers chronologically from the earliest to the most up-to-date one. Additionally, a historical dictionary "supposedly contains more or less every word which was ever written in the period covered by it. Senses follow each other in order of their occurrence"²⁴.

²³Pejtes, Julia: *Making Historical Dictionaries with the Computer*, p 251.

²⁴p 249.

"The idea of creating historical dictionaries appeared during the second half of the 19th century following the appearance of the method of historical analysis²⁵. And according to some lexicographers, these types of dictionaries are "considered to be as language body which helps to understand the entire human heritage"²⁶.

Besides their account of the global human legacy in historical dictionaries, Laatar et al. (2019) have pointed to the probably more valuable, patriotic role they play when the scholars state that "in order to safeguard their languages, nations have resorted to the rooting of the language and the establishment of its history by means of historical dictionaries"²⁷. It is thus and so that nations develop their societies and give their culture a chance to spread.

Attempts at creating historical dictionaries were numerous along history. The first ones are believed to have been made in Europe. Some scholars have noted that "the first attempt was with the German Historical dictionary in 1838. Then, some other endeavours occurred with the Dutch Historical dictionary in 1849 and the English Dictionary in 1849"²⁸.

The Arab world has witnessed a novice production of a historical dictionary at the hand of August Fischer in Egypt in 1935²⁹. However, The Arab Research Centre in Doha inaugurated in 2013 the first serious and fully-fledged attempt at the creation of such kind of dictionary. This attempt has lately culminated in the release of the first version of Doha Historical Dictionary.

2.3. Doha Historical Dictionary of the Arabic Language

Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic is an unprecedented, valuable and important contribution to the Arabic language in the Arab world. It was launched in 2013 by the Arabic Centre for Research and Political Studies in Qatar. It is the first Arabic dictionary with a "computerized text corpus"²⁹ to provide users with not only definitions but also the origin and etymology of Arabic words in different historical contexts in order to outline how they have developed over the last two millennia.

²⁵ Laatar Rim et al.: *A Framework for the Construction of a Historical Dictionary for Arabic*, p 279.

²⁶ p 278.

²⁷ p 277.

²⁸ p 279.

²⁹ p 281.

³⁰ Al-Kasimi, Ali Muhammad. *The History of Arabic Lexicography and Terminology*, p28.

The dictionary has availed itself of sources ranging from inscriptions as early as 500 AD, pre-Islamic poetry up till early classical and modern Arabic texts. It traces the evolution of a word meaning throughout history, providing pertinently and chronologically examples of its occurrences and alterations across different historical contexts. This feature of the dictionary has, undoubtedly, helped users to better understand the richness and heritage of the Arabic language.

The point of interest in this dictionary is its exhaustive presentation of all-inclusive information for each headword, including its root, part of speech, chronologically ordered sources, etymology and meanings, not to mention citations of the entry from the sources and its historical usage. The academic and innovative feat of compiling such type of advanced dictionary would not have been feasible without the relentless, colossal and meticulous academic teamwork of more than 300 Arab scholars day in, day out without fail. Their responsibility, along the course of this painstaking endeavour, consists in promoting the Arabic language and preserving its linguistic and cultural heritage. Qatar prince Shaikh Tamim b. Hamad Al-Thaanii has played a pivotal role in funding this glorious project. The first and second phases were completed (2018-2023), while the third phase is still in the making. The dictionary is available to users through a multi-service portal on (<http://www.dohadictionary.org>).

2.4. Quran Translation in the Light of the Religious Communicative Theory

Religious texts are so thorny that they require a theory which minds out their delicate specificities during translation process. The Religious Communicative Theory (RCT), for instance, sticks out as the new theoretical model which could take into consideration Quran translation aspects. It seeks to maintain the Holy Quran specificities, including its "religious meaning" and "pragmatic context" in the translation process. Its tactic is to compensate for any loss in meaning during Quran translation and provide translators with valuable guidelines to optimize the quality of Quran translation by means of a communicative channel with the target reader.

The RCT has been premised on the assumption that the Quran is miraculous and untranslatable since the properties of its divine language, such as structure, style, eloquence, literariness and poeticity, etc., cannot be kept in another language. It considers the Quran miraculous aspects as inherent in Arabic, the language of revelation, believing that they are unreachable in the target language (TL). Therefore,

the RCT orients translators toward translating Quran religious meaning holistically as a substance rather than as separate and often disparate structures or forms.

According to Zahid and Belghita (2020)¹¹, the assumption of Quran miraculous (QM) consists of four epistemological dogmas:

Quran translational miraculous dogma, for instance, is simply the inability of paraphrasing the SL Quranic text within Arabic, the language of its revelation, let alone rendering it into any other language. In other words, Quran translation cannot be a substitution for the original text. Instead, it is only a crude approximation that enables target readers to read and understand the Quran. In fact, Muslim translators are conscious of this dogma as in their attempt to reproduce the Quranic meaning, they resort to techniques such as footnotes, commentaries, addition, etc.

The linguistic dogma refers to Arabic, the language of revelation together with linguistic sciences like grammar, rhetoric, philology, and lexicology. These sciences are the tools that assist translators to understand fully and accurately the Quranic language and minimize the loss of the source meaning in the translated text.

In this respect, Doha historical dictionary stands out as the vital and unavoidable source for the deconstruction and reconstruction of the Quranic meaning, supporting Quran translators with the linguistic materials to understand the meaning of the Holy Quran in the language of revelation and convert it adequately to the target reader.

Shari'a dogma is another essential component of the RCT. It asserts that the translation of Quran should be rendered in the light of 'Shari'a sciences', namely */Usulu'ul-fiqh/* (Principles of Islamic jurisprudence), */sbaabu al-nuzul/* (Circumstances of Revelation), */ammaasikhu wa 'almansukhi/* (Abrogating and Abrogated), and */Tatafsir/* (exegesis), etc. In the aforementioned article, it has been concluded that Shari'a dogma covers the three major themes of the whole Quranic verses, namely */alSaqlida/* (belief), */alSibaadaat/* (Islamic observances), and */almu'aamalaat/* (interpersonal relations)¹². The verses with these subject matters cannot be understood in the language of revelation without referring to Shari'a sciences.

An accomplished translation of */wadribuhunna/* is not feasible theoretically and logically without the Shari'a critical interpretations of the Holy Quran for the purpose of understanding it in its native language and reconstructing it in the TT.

¹¹Zahid, A., & Belghita, N. (2020). *Re-thinking Quran Translation: Towards a Religious Communicative Theory*; p. 10.
¹²p. 12.

The cultural dogma denotes the Arabic culture that permeates the language of the Holy Book and cannot be understood except in Arabic, the language of revelation. Doha historical dictionary has an important role to play in this regard since it sheds light on the cultural aspect of the Quranic words in a chronological order.

The RCT is composed of religious and communicative maxims. The religious maxim concerns the Quranic verses typical of the themes of */alSaqlida/*, */alSibaadaat/*, and */almu'aamalaat/*. An incorrect translation of such verses misconceives and harms the religious meaning, and consequently affects the Islamic faith. The communicative maxim, on the other hand, tries to familiarize the target reader with the ST whenever necessary.

An-Nisa verse 34 belongs to the mundane category of */almu'aamalaat/*, where the Almighty teaches His creators how to behave on this earth. Our analysis of */wadribuhunna/* will opt for a Doha dictionary-based translation where both maxims are in play. The sense of the religious maxim */almu'aamalaat/* will survive somehow safe through the manoeuvre of the communicative maxim that sets a delicate balance between the sanctity of the religious and the target reader.

The three main translation strategies of the RCT are foreignization, conveyance */Sattabliigh/*, and domestication. The RCT considers foreignization as an adequate strategy to bring the target reader towards the ST in the translation of verses about */alSaqlida/* and */alSibaadaat/*. It aims at keeping intact the sacredness of the ST in the TT. Domestication, however, is a fruitful strategy that reconciles the target reader with the source text in all matters raised in the */almu'aamalaat/* verses that are common to both the source and target cultures. It tries to make the translated Quranic text comprehensible and acceptable to the target readership. Conveyance */Sattabliigh/*¹³, however, is a strategy that seeks to adjust the meaning of Quran translational miracles in a simple communicative way. It attempts to solve the untranslatability of some Quranic verses by producing a tangible and acceptable TT. All things considered, it seems that domestication will be adequate to perform a communicative translation of */wadribuhunna/* in the light of the RCT.

Nevertheless, the RCT has not yet set the relevant procedure for each strategy, even though it seems from the limited corpus in the article mentioned above that the RCT can opt for transliteration, literal translation, calque, borrowing, approximate translation and religious equivalence³⁴.

3. Methodology

3.1. Methodology of Research

Based on the nature of the problem and the research questions, the qualitative approach will be applied in the investigation of the meaning of */wadribuhunna/* in An-Nisa 34. Data will be collected from primary and secondary sources and analysed then so as to examine how the word is interpreted, translated, and defined. Finally, the study will compare and assess the achieved findings.

3.2. Data Collection

The word */daraba/* occurs fifty-eight times in the Holy Qur'an. It behaves as a verb in fifty-six verses and as a gerund in two verses. */Daraba/* in Arabic, as mentioned in the Doha historical dictionary, has various meanings, one of which is literally "to beat".

The data derives from primary and secondary sources. The primary source consists of the Holy Quran and the fifty Quranic exegeses (*Tafsir*) of the following four schools: Essential, Concise, Sunni, and Modern. The secondary source includes some selected translations and the Doha historical dictionary definitions of the word */daraba/* as they evolve through different historical contexts.

As per the translations of An-Nisa verse 34, different translations by both Muslim and non-Muslim English and French translators have been selected, among them: Pickthal (1930), Arberry (1955), Yusuf Ali (1987), Abdel Haleem (2005), Itani (2012), Hamidullah (1959), Masson (1967), Chiadmi (2004), Penot (2011), and Michon (2014).

The Quranic verse under investigation is verse 34 surah An-Nisa and runs as follows in Arabic with a transliterated version.

﴿لَا جُنَاحَ عَلَیْکُمْ عَلٰی اٰهْلِکُمْ فِی مَا کَتَبَ اللّٰهُ عَلَیْکُمْ فِی الذَّلٰتِ وَبِمَا تَقَرَّرْتُمْ فَاُولٰٓئِکُمْ قَالَتْ لَسْتُ بِمَخَافَتِ الْغَیْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللّٰهُ وَالَّذِیْ فَخَافُوْنَ لَشَرٌّ مِّنْ عَمَلِهِمْ وَالْخُزُوْۤءِ فِی الْمَمٰلِکِ وَالْغُیُوْبِ لَئِنْ اَسْئَلْتُمْ عَلٰی سَبِیْلِیْ اِنَّ اللّٰهَ کَانَ عَلِیْمًا کَبِیْرًا﴾

³⁴p. 23

(*La-junaaatu qawwasimuuna fialaa an-nisaa?ibimaa?afadala llaahu ba?dahum fialaa ba? jin wa bima?a?anfaqu min?om-waalkim Fas-?aalihaatu qaa-nitaatun haafi-?aatun lil-gbaybi bima?a?afida?allaahu. Wallaati takhaafuuna nushuu-zahunna fa-?izuhunna wahjuruhunna filma?ajji?i wadribuhunna. Fa?in?ata?akum fialaa tabghu? salayhinna sabiilaa: ?inna?allaaha kaana?aliyyan kabira?.*)

4. Discussion and Analysis

The above Quranic verse rolls out a road-map with recommendations for male wedded believers about how to approach their disobedient wife. The first step of this course is a verbal recall by means of counselling and reminding her of Allah rightful path. Should this measure fail with her, the road-map is open to further alternative actions, starting with forsaking her in her bed, which means "not having intercourse with her or snubbing her"³⁵. The ultimate penalty, should all actions fail, is permission only in extreme cases 'to beat' her.

In this study, we have examined the fifty exegeses of the four aforementioned *Tafsir* schools: Essential, concise, Sunni and Modern. The purpose is to enumerate the meanings of */wadribuhunna/* in An-Nisa verse 34 and to discuss ultimately the paradox in */wadribuhunna/* between "to beat" or not "to beat".

4.1. Classical Exegeses Schools

It is worth mentioning that exegeses are essential to understand the Holy Quran. Ability to rehearse the Quran only does not imply the ability to fully comprehend or interpret its meaning. Expert Quran interpreters bear the responsibility to fulfil the tasks of comprehension and interpretation. They are skilled enough to unveil the sublime meaning of Quran perfectly enough for believers to not only establish civil rules for the management of the social relations between individuals, families and all members within their Muslim society but, more importantly, preach the true Islam to non-Muslim people.

Exegeses or Quran commentaries have evolved over time through a series of stages and schools. Scholars accomplished a formidable feat with their meticulous collection of the Quran exegeses during and after the period of revelation. Their compilation started during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (*PBUH*) and continued posthumously until the present day.

³⁵الطبري، أبو جعفر: تفسير الطبري جامع البيان عن تأويل القرآن، الجزء 4، ص 465

Over time, many exegeses schools appeared. As it appears in the fabulous specialized website about the Holy Quran exegeses, www.altafisir.com, the classical exegeses schools differ according to their respective trends of thought, and they fall into the following types: Essential Tafsirs, Sunni Tafsirs, Sunni Sufi Tafsirs, Sunni Salafi Tafsirs, Abridged Tafsirs, Ibadii Tafsirs, Modern Tafsirs, concise Tafsirs, Zaydi Tafsirs, and *Jafari Shi'ii* Tafsirs.

Four out of these exegetical schools will be our reference in the exploration of the meaning of *idharaba* in An-Nisa verse 34. They are picked up on the basis of the degree of their involvement with *Summa* and people of Muslim community (*Ahl Jama'at*), on one hand, and their intermediary position between extreme perspectives, on the other.

4.1.1 Essential School

It is known as the primordial school of 'Essential Tafsirs', and its collection has eight different exegeses, such as *Jaami' al-bayaan fi tafsiri al-Qur'an* by Al-Tabarii (d. 310/923), *Al-Kashshaf* by Al-Zamakhsharii (d. 538/1143), and *Mafatih al-Ghaybi* by Al-Raazzi (d. 606/1210).

The eight exegeses of Essential Tafsir School seem to share the same interpretation of *waḍribuhunna*. For instance, according to al-Tabarii (d. 310/923) and Ib-Kathir (d. 774 AH), the word is defined as 'not severe beating'³⁶. Similarly, although Al-Zamakhsharii (d. 538/1143) follows the same line of interpretation, he plays down the hard tone of beating since he advises that "it must be a beating without severity. It may not cause injury, nor break bones, and ... must avoid the face"³⁷. In other words, beating must not cause any physical harm or leave any bodily trace.

4.1.2 Sunni School

The thirty-three exegeses from the collection of the Sunni Tafsirs School have been checked. The outstanding ones among them are: *Tafsir al-Qur'an* by Ibn S'ad al-Salam (d. 660/1262), *Al-Kashf wa al-bayaan fi tafsiri al-Qur'an* by Al-Tha'labii (d. 427/1035), *Tafsir al-Nisaa* by al-Nasaa'ii (d. 303/915) and the most renowned *Zaad Al-Masir fi Silmi al-Tafsir* by Ibn al-Jawzii (d. 597/1201).

³⁶www.altafisir.com/Tafisir.asp

³⁷www.altafisir.com/Tafisir.asp

The probe into the thirty-three exegeses has found out that the word *waḍribuhunna* has different interpretations. Al-Khaazin (d. 725), one of the prominent pioneers of this school, for example, declares that the word *waḍribuhunna* in An-Nisa verse 34 alludes to "unharmful beating" like a gentle tap "with a tooth stick (*zasiwaak*) or something similar"³⁸. *Zas-Saawii* (d. 1241) and Rashid bn Ali Redaa (d. 1354), on the contrary, offer different interpretations for the word. The former says that "beating them is unfair", preferring "a rebuke for what they did"³⁹. The latter advocates the same opinion and advice but urges husbands to be lenient enough to abstain from beating their wives because "Good men do not beat women, even if it is permissible for them to do that"⁴⁰.

4.1.3 Concise School

This consists only of the four following exegeses: *al-Wajiz fi Tafsiri al-Kitabi al-Saziz* by Ali ibn Ahmad Waahidi (d. 468/1075), *Tadkirat al-Zariib fi Tafsiri al-Qur'an* by Ibn al-Jawzi (d. 597/1201), *Zan-Nahru al-Ma'arid mina al-Bahri al-Muhit* by Abu Hayyan al-Andalusii (d. 745/1344) and *Zassiraatu al-Mustaqim fi Tiyaani al-Qur'aani al-Karim* by ibn Ahmed al-Kaazaruunii (d. 923/1517).

An examination of the four exegeses shows that the first two interprets the word *waḍribuhunna* in An-Nisa verse 34 just in the same way as the Essential school. They mitigate the cruelty of beating down to light punishment. Similarly, al-Kaazaruunii (d. 923) interprets it as a "non-extreme beating"⁴¹.

4.1.4 Modern School

The last school, Modern Tafsirs school, consists of five exegeses, among them: *Ranhu al-Mafaanii fi Tafsiri al-Qur'aani al-Sazim* by al-Zalusii (d. 1270/1854), *Zal-Wassitu fi Tafsiri al-Qur'aani al-Karim* by Tan'awii (d. 1431/2010), and *Zal-Tahriiru wa Zal-Tamwiru* written by Muhammad al-Tahir Ibn Yazshuur (d. 1394/1973).

All in all, the pioneering schools, the *Essential and concise* have all agree on the same interpretation of the word *waḍribuhunna* in An-Nisa verse 34. They have all opted for the meaning of "beating". For example, al-Zalusii (d. 1270) interprets the

³⁸www.altafisir.com/Tafisir.asp

³⁹www.altafisir.com/Tafisir.asp

⁴⁰www.altafisir.com/Tafisir.asp

⁴¹www.altafisir.com/Tafisir.asp

word as "not severe beating"⁴², and As-Shaṣraawii (d. 1418) as "any light beating that indicates dissatisfaction"⁴³. The latter, however, sets some "beating instructions" to indicate that the husband must not resort to a stick or any other instrument that may cause pain or harm. Finally, Ṭanṭaawii (d. 1431) favours "not severe beating, that is, not extreme or disgraceful beating"⁴⁴.

As a matter of fact, the debate among the four aforementioned classical exegetes schools concludes that the interpretation of the word */waḍribuhunna/* involves the following two meanings:

The first meaning of "to beat", most common among exegetes, is literal and is variously qualified as a "not severe", "harmless", "non-extreme", or "light" beating. All of which evoke the meaning of "soft and non-violent penalty". The exegetes have all the more pinpointed "how" and "where" to "beat", stating that a husband has to avoid beating his wife on her face, breaking her bones, or causing injuries on her body.

The second one is deemed to be just a denotation of "a rebuke". This sense looks upon "beating" women as unfair and disapproved (Makruh). Good Muslims never beat their wives, even if they are permissible to do so under the aforementioned Islamic law. In this respect, the Prophet (PBUH) was quoted to have said about the beaters of their wives that "These men are not the best among you"⁴⁵.

4.1.5. Contemporary Exegeses

By the turn of the twentieth century, other exegetes schools began to develop across the Muslim world. Their plentiful interpretations echo the fact that, because of the Quran convenience to every historical context, it has lived up to nowadays abundant with flexible meanings, terms and concepts for contemporary exegetes schools led by scholars, such as Hassan (1993), Ahmad Ali (1993), Wadud (1999), and Bakhtiar (2007).

The contemporary exegetes have assigned to word */waḍribuhunna/* the following four different denotations:

The first is "holding in confinement"⁴⁶. According to Hassan (1993), confinement for a longer period of time should be the last measure against rebellious women.

The second is "to go to bed with them (when they are willing)"⁴⁷. This interpretation does not match with Allah directive towards the husband to keep away from his wife in bed. Therefore, "how can the third step instruct that the husband go to bed with his discordant wife when he was ordered in the second step to abandon her bed? Is this not contradictory?"⁴⁸. In fact, the verb *(daraba/* can bear a sexual connotation in Arabic within other specific contexts, as it will appear later.

The third is "to scourge"⁴⁹. However, "the nature of the 'scourge' cannot be such as to create conjugal violence or a struggle between the couple because that is 'un-Islamic'"⁵⁰. According to the online Cambridge Dictionary, the verb 'scourge' refers to "to cause great suffering or a lot of trouble" or "to beat someone with a whip (= a piece of leather or rope fastened to a stick) as a punishment"⁵¹.

The last one, mentioned by Bakhtiar (2007), is "to go away from them/ and leave them"⁵². This interpretation has actually been sharply criticised and rejected by some religious and translators' scholars since it conflicts with As-Shari'a. For instance, one of these scholars has argued that

The context and the chronological order of the phrase */waḍribuhunna/* could not mean 'go away from them' because it implies repetition, the second step for solving the problem of a discordant women is to leave her bed, while the third step is for the husband to leave her again! The third step was meant to be an escalation of one's reaction, and therefore the other interpretation is illogical⁵³.

Our discussion of the contemporary exegetes has concluded that the following four meanings have been attached to the word */waḍribuhunna/*:

- to hold in confinement
- to go to bed with them
- to scourge
- to go away from them/ and leave them

⁴²Rifaat, Hassan: *Mode from Adam's Rib*, p 112.

⁴³Ali, Ahmed: *Al-Qur'an: A contemporary translation*, p 278.

⁴⁴EL-Khatib, Abdallah: *Lost in translation: The Ideological Effects of the Translator and the Interpreter on the Qur'anic Text*, p 8.

⁴⁵Wadud, Amma: *Qur'an and Women*, p 75.

⁴⁶p 75.

⁴⁷<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/scourging>

⁴⁸Bakhtiar, Laleh: *The Sublime Quran*, p 22.

⁴⁹EL-Khatib, Abdallah: *Lost in translation*, p 8.

⁴²www.altafstr.com/Tafsiir.asp

⁴³www.altafstr.com/Tafsiir.asp

⁴⁴www.altafstr.com/Tafsiir.asp

⁴⁵*Sunan Abi Dawud: Regarding Hitting Women, Hadith 2146, Sahih.*

4.2. The Interpretation and Translation of /wadribuhunna/ with Reference to the Light of Doha Historical Dictionary and the RCT Respectively

4.2.1. Interpretation of /wadribuhunna/

The sense of the word /wadribuhunna/, as it appears, remains inaccurate in the verse and at the guess of each exegetic school. Except for one advocate of its meaning as "to rebuke", all the remaining classical exegetes have attributed to it the meaning of "to beat". The contemporary exegetes, however, have put forward a variety of meanings for the word, such as "to beat", "to hold in confinement", "to go to bed with them", and "to jilt them in bed".

Discipline of a wife conventionally used to be a common issue in conjugal life in all civilizations and religions. In the pre-Islamic era, for example, atrocious disciplines against women, such burial alive and flogging, were widespread generally in the Arabian Peninsula. After the prophet's Hijra to Al-Medina, the matrimonial discipline of wives emerged as an issue with the intermarriage between natives of Mecca "Al-Muhajiruuna" and Al-Madina "Al-Fansaar" since the people of Al-Medina were not in the habit of flogging their wives. The prophet (PBUH) let know his stance on this issue with his appeal to forbid beating women⁵⁴, enjoining to "never beat God's handmaidens"⁵⁵. Above all, the prophet (PBUH) has never beaten his wives.

Concerning "rebuking" as one of /wadribuhunna/ denotations, it is worthwhile mentioning that there is no contextual or lexicographical hint in the Quran that shows that the word /wadribuhunna/ can express the meaning of "to rebuke". In the opinion of Ibn Qutayba (d. 276 AH /889), sometimes the imperative form of the verb in Arabic can have a rhetorical function contextually. In its Quranic context, rather than being suggestive of 'to beat' /wadribuhunna/, therefore, is an imperative form to "threaten" as a punitive form against recalcitrant wives.

With respect to the meaning "to go to bed with them" as an alternative semantic layer of /wadribuhunna/, it cannot fit in with the animalistic context where 'daraba' is used to express animals' mating act, such as in ⁵⁶ ضرب الفحل الفلحة. The Quran context of /wadribuhunna/ is human.

As to the suggested meaning of "hold in confinement", none of the Arabic dictionaries, including Doha historical dictionary, has construed 'daraba' as such.

Among the contemporary interpretations of /wadribuhunna/ is "to go away from them". The sense of 'taking a physical distance from them' implies the Arabic word /wadribuhunna/. Given what has been said, /wadribuhunna/ and /wadribuhunna/ seem to be a synonym, which is never listed in any Arabic dictionary.

Doha historical dictionary has cited twenty-five contextually distinct meanings for the verb /daraba/, two of which are convenient for the interpretation of /wadribuhunna/ in An-Nisa verse 34. The first one, as in the sense of "obliging someone to implement something" ⁵⁷ الوجبة، والزعة بتفديده، dates back to 50 before Al-Hijra. The second one, as in "to neglect someone and to underestimate him" ⁵⁸ رضى به ايضا تلقى اهناء واكتفرا له، dates back to 57 after Al-Hijra.

Given the first meaning, the implication in An-Nisa verse 34 will be "to oblige them to implement the marital rights". After reprimanding and abandoning her in the marital bed are to no avail, the ultimatum is to oblige her to undo her (Nushuz). An-Nisa verse 35. The verse,

(وَإِنْ عَلِمَ احْتِاقُ بَيْنَهُمَا لِأَحْوَابِهِمَا فَكَفَىٰ لِمَنْ يَتَذَكَّرْهُ لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ عِزًّا ذِكْرًا)

Underpins this interpretation in that representatives from their respective families should be nominated to deliberate the issue and close the misunderstanding if there is a fear of a breach in the couple.

The second meaning, "neglect and underestimate", sounds a logical interpretation. In Arabic, the word /Naashiz/ refers to a "disobedient"⁵⁹ and snobbish woman who conducts herself with arrogance towards her husband. A good disciplinary penalty for such a haughty wife after advising and abandoning her in bed is to "neglect and underestimate, which is an act outside the marital bed". Neglect can be considered as a psychological discipline which is more harmful than physical (beating).

4.2.2. Translation of /wadribuhunna/

The paragraphs below are devoted to the translation of /wadribuhunna/ in light of the RCT components.

⁵⁴الطبري، محمد: فتنية نقيب المرأة بتطهيره، ص 120 تصوف.
⁵⁵ ابن كثير: تفسير القرآن العظيم، الجزء 1، ص 504.

⁵⁶ <https://www.dohadictionary.org/dictionary/> ضرب

⁵⁷ <https://www.dohadictionary.org/dictionary/> ضرب

⁵⁸ <https://www.dohadictionary.org/dictionary/> ضرب

⁵⁹ <http://www.dohadictionary.org/dictionary/> فتن

4.2.2.1. Quran Translational Miraculous Dogma

Undeniably, the Quran is a miracle text that is inimitable and beyond human faculty to reproduce. There is a widespread and enduring truth among exegetes and scholars that: "each time one returns to the Arabic text, he finds new meanings and fresh ways of interpreting it"⁶⁰. It is a compelling and reforming Book for every time and place. Indeed, this feature is one of the miraculous aspects of this Holy Book, which until today raises many polemical debates on understanding and interpreting its words. All translation approaches towards this sacred Book so far, for instance, are mere attempts to deliver the meanings of the Holy Quran. They are meant to make the target language reader capable of understanding what s/he is reading. Thus, our suggested translation of */wadribuuhunna/* in An-Nisa verse 34 is an attempt among many others that aim to interpret Allah's words to mankind.

4.2.2.2. Linguistic Dogma

It underlines the importance of Doha historical dictionary, which is a vital source of the historical meanings of Arabic words, especially those believed to be the closest to the original context of */wadribuuhunna/*, such as "to oblige someone to do something" and "to neglect and underestimate someone".

4.3.2.3. Shari'a Dogma

In terms of this dogma, An-Nisa verse 34 falls into */almu'amaalaat/* (interpersonal relations) type of verses. That is, it preaches matrimonial code of disciplinary actions for a husband to observe in his treatment of his 'Naashiz' wife, starting with the lenient up to the severe measures. The punishment cited in the Holy Book as */wadribuuhunna/* has been literally interpreted by classical exegetes as "to beat", but with some additional aspects to moderate the act of beating. According to Sunnah, however, the prophet (PBUH) has never 'beaten' any of His wives, and Aishah is reported to have said: "the prophet never beat any of his servants or wives, and his hand never hit anything"⁶¹. Hence, the utmost evidence that "beating" is not recommended and is disapproved.

⁶⁰ Abdul-Raof, Husain: *Quran Translation: Discourse, Texture, and Exegesis*, p. 39.

⁶¹ *Sunan Ibn Majah: Kitab Al-Nikah*, 73, *Hafth* 1984, *Sahih*.

4.2.2.4. Cultural Dogma

In the pre-Islamic era, called otherwise the days of ignorance, women were denied any status or rights in society. The custom, then, was that women were worthless. A baby born as a girl in a family is immediately condemned to burial alive. Beating or flogging women at that time was a widespread cultural phenomenon. With the advent of Islam, however, the status of women changed, and women started to gain more rights and dignity. Among the atrocious customs that Islam banned are beating women and burying them live. The ban was instituted gradually for believers to accept and embrace it. It was hard, though, for men at that time to completely change some traditions and conventions deeply rooted in their minds.

When Islam came, Allah explicitly commanded men to treat women with *Al-Ma'ruf*, "وعاشرون بالمعروف", that is, with the kindness that pertains to the customs, usual practices associated with the particular society, culture and circumstances of the time. Culturally speaking, the word */wadribuuhunna/* was interpreted in light of the culture, norms and conventions in the society of that time.

4.2.2.5. Communicative Maxim

This is the adequate maxim to be adopted in An-Nisa verse 34 in order to translate the meaning of */wadribuuhunna/*. It aims at conveying its meaning in an acceptable and comprehensible way. An-Nisa verse 34 belongs to */almu'amaalaat/* (interpersonal relations) category, and the most adequate maxim to render this kind of verse is the communicative one because it can bridge the gap between the target reader and the verse intended meaning.

4.3.2.6. Translation Strategy

A close scrutiny of */wadribuuhunna/* translations reveals that all translators, except two, have adopted foreignization strategy using literal translation as a procedure. This adopted strategy has created a mistranslation and prompted a polemic debate among Quran Arabic and non-Arabic readers. This mistranslation has left the impression that Islam is a religion of violence against women, which is not the case.

Chiadmi and Penot, the two remaining translators, have translated the word */wadribuuhunna/* differently. They have adopted domestication as a translation strategy to avoid the literal meaning of "to beat". Although, the word "corrigez-les" as a translation of */wadribuuhunna/* is alien to the lexicological meaning in Arabic

dictionary, it seems a smart decision that can be consistent with any type of punishment. (see Table 7.1)

Table 7. 1 Translations of '*waqribuuhunna*' in English and French

| Translator's name | Marmaduke Pickthall | Arthur Arberry | Yusuf Ali | Abdel Haleem | Total Imani |
|---------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| English translation | scourge them ⁶² | beat them ⁶³ | Beat them (lightly) ⁶⁴ | hit them ⁶⁵ | strike them ⁶⁶ |
| Translator's name | Denise Masson | Muhammad Hamidullah | Mohammed Chishti | AbdAllah Penot | Jean Louis Michon |
| French translation | frappez-les ⁶⁷ | battiez-les ⁶⁸ | corrigez-les ⁶⁹ | corrigez-les ⁷⁰ | frappez-les ⁷¹ |

Most translators render *waqribuuhunna* with the literal meaning of 'to beat' to express the physical punishment against rebellious women (*Naashiz*). In fact, according to the RCT and with reference to Doha historical dictionary as a vital source in linguistic dogma, the word *waqribuuhunna*, however, can be interpreted as "to oblige someone to do something" or "to neglect someone", both of which are the meanings of *daraba* at the time.

According to the RCT, *waqribuuhunna* should be domesticated by means of a lexicological meaning in order to establish a successful and acceptable communicative act. The meaning of *waqribuuhunna* should be translated in such a way that preserves the miraculous nature of the Quranic word within its Quran structure. In the time of revelation, when customs and culture allowed the husband "to beat" his wife, the word *daraba* has been interpreted culturally to signify the physical act of punishing. Nowadays, contemporary interpreters have provided some ideological meanings such as 'to go away from them', 'to avoid them', which are not grounded culturally nor lexicologically.

⁶²Pickthall, Muhammed Marmaduke: *The Holy Qur-aan*, p 92.

⁶³Arberry, Arthur: *The Holy Quran*, p 37.

⁶⁴Yusuf Ali, Abdullah: *The Holy Qur'an: Text, Translation & Commentary*, p 220.

⁶⁵Abdel Haleem: *The Qur'an*, p. 54.

⁶⁶Imani, Total: *Quran: English Translation*, p 29.

⁶⁷Masson, Denise: *Le Coran, Clair Easy to Read Modern English Pure*, p 99.

⁶⁸Hamidullah, Muhammad: *Le Saint Coran*, p 90.

⁶⁹Chishti, Mohammed: *Le Noble Coran*, p 62.

⁷⁰Penot, AbdAllah: *Le Coran*, p 84.

⁷¹<https://www.altaf.fr/ViewTranslations.asp?Display=yes&SoraNo=4&Ayah=34&toAyah=34&Langue=3&LangueID=2&TranslationBook=1>

Based on the lexicological meaning of *daraba* extracted from Doha historical dictionary, the translation of *waqribuuhunna* could be such as:

"And those you fear *Nashiz*, admonish them, and abandon them in their beds, and neglect them. Then if they obey you, seek not a way against them".

Our suggested translation of *waqribuuhunna* is based on the meaning provided by Doha historical dictionary. It harmonizes with the measures stated in the verse 34: advise her first, then abandon her in the marital bed, and neglect her in the daily life ultimately. The feeling of neglect makes her lonely, sad, depressed and unimportant. For human beings, particularly women, this psychological punishment is harder and more severe than the physical one.

To conclude, it is worth mentioning that classical exegeses have interpreted the verse according to the cultural atmosphere of that time. Their approach is cultural. Today, a new exegesis school has appeared, believing in equality between genders. It adopts an ideological approach and interprets the verse differently, calling for women rights and equality between genders. Our suggested interpretation and translation is based on the RCT and Doha historical dictionary, and we can consider our approach as lexicological.

Conclusion

Doha historical dictionary is of great importance to Quran translators as it offers translators accurate and adequate word meanings with their usage in contexts. It is a reliable source that could afford Quran translators a profound knowledge of old Arabic, including the Quranic language and a solid background in Arab culture. Indeed, many dictionaries and studies have listed several meanings of *daraba*, but no one ever mentioned that the word has 25 meanings. So, for Quran translators, Doha historical dictionary is an added value in interpreting Quran meanings. It will, undoubtedly, help them rethink their word choice before deciding which meaning can convey the intended meaning.

Doha historical dictionary can be a beneficial assessment source for new Quran exegetes as it will allow them to trace the evolution of a word meaning throughout history and provide chronological historical examples in contexts. This will, undoubtedly, help exegetes to choose the suitable word meaning interpretation that can go along with Arabic language and culture development.

The meaning of *wa'dribuhunna* in An-Nisa verse 34 does not mean "to beat" as a physical punishment. Instead, it means "neglect", which holds a psychological punishment.

Recommendations

The study recommends the followings:

1. Translators should have solid linguistic backgrounds, especially in Arabic, the language of the Quran. Therefore, it is highly recommended to rely on Doha historical dictionary as a reliable and trustworthy linguistic source that can provide translators with the meaning of Arabic words and cultural heritage.
2. Translators should also translate the Quranic verses in light of the RCT because it is a theory that provides translators with the necessary tools and components of Quran translation, including linguistic, Shari'a, culture and so forth.
3. Contemporary exegetes must avoid translations and interpretations with ideological intentions and limit their interpretations and translations within the Holy Quran itself.

Appendix I: Transliteration Symbols
Consonants

| Arabic Consonants | Transcription symbol | Arabic Consonants | Transcription symbol |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| أ | /ʔ/ | هـ | /h/ |
| ب | /b/ | ط | /t/ |
| ت | /t/ | ظ | /z/ |
| ث | /th/ | ع | /ʕ/ |
| ج | /j/ | غ | /gʕ/ |
| ح | /h/ | ف | /f/ |
| خ | /kh/ | ق | /q/ |
| د | /d/ | ك | /k/ |
| ذ | /dh/ | ل | /l/ |
| ر | /r/ | م | /m/ |
| ز | /z/ | ن | /n/ |
| س | /s/ | و | /w/ |
| ش | /sh/ | ي | /y/ |
| ص | /ʕ/ | | |

Vowels

| Short Vowels | Long Vowels |
|--------------|-------------|
| a | aa |
| u | uu |
| i | ii |

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Translation is the process of converting spoken or written content from one language to another. It involves the careful consideration of language structure, cultural context, and meaning in order to produce an accurate and natural-sounding translation. Compilation of bilingual dictionaries, on the other hand, involves gathering and organizing vocabulary from two different languages in a comprehensive and accessible way. This process requires a deep understanding of both languages and the ability to identify and translate subtle nuances and idiomatic expressions. Bilingual dictionaries are an essential tool for language learners, translators, and professionals working in international contexts. They enable effective communication across languages and facilitate the transfer of information, ideas, and knowledge. The process of compiling a bilingual dictionary is a challenging but rewarding task that requires expertise in both languages, as well as a thorough understanding of the principles of lexicography.



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Transformations of Meaning and Investments in the Field of Applied Linguistics: The Doha Historical Dictionary of Arabic Language as a Case

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