

The Nordic Translations of "Sūrat al-Qāri'a":
A Skopos Theory Perspective.

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<p>This thesis will aim to answer at least the following questions: How is the Sūrat al-Qāri'a (Q 101) rendered in the Nordic translations of the Qur'ān? What are the similarities and differences between different translation? In what ways do the different translations relate to the source text? What aspects of the source text are prioritized by the translators?</p> <p>These questions are approached from the perspective of Translation Theory. The problem of equivalence is discussed in relation to the work of Eugene Nida in his Towards a Science of Translation (1964). I will argue that translating cannot be separated from hermeneutics, since "every translation is at the same time an interpretation" as Hans-Georg Gadamer has stated. The problem of hermeneutics and Translation Theory is discussed from the hermeneutical perspective of Hans-Georg Gadamer especially as developed in his monograph Truth and Method (1960). The Skopos Theory formulated by Katharina Reiß and Hans J. Vermeer will be discussed as a possible answer to these underlying problems.</p> <p>The method of research applied in this thesis will consist of various hermeneutical cycles of reading, interpretation, and re-reading. After analyzing the Sūrat al-Qāri'a in Arabic, I will provide a comparative analysis of the translations juxtaposing the texts with each other and with the Arabic text. This section will discuss similarities and differences, the proximity between the original and the translation, some possible biblical intertextualities, and possible interpretative associations of the translations in their Nordic context.</p> <p>This thesis will point out many subtle similarities, differences and translational tendencies related to the translator's background that can illuminate, enrich and broaden our understanding of the Sūrat al-Qāri'a and its reception in the Nordic countries, while also opening new perspectives on the complexities involved in translating ancient texts that are revered as sacred by many.</p>		
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1. Introduction

This thesis will discuss the Finnish, Swedish, Norwegian and Danish translations of the Sūrat al-Qāri'a (Q 101). As a student in the Religious Roots of Europe (RRE) Master Program, I became more and more interested in the Qur'ān and its interpretation by Nordic believers and non-believers alike. As will be argued in the following sections, descriptive translation studies can offer valuable information about how a text is received and interpreted. From this point of view, the Nordic translations of the Qur'ān are an understudied topic in academic research.

The reasons for focusing on the Nordic translations are following. As a Finn living in Finland, I am interested in how the Qur'ān is received and interpreted in my local context. Reading the Finnish translations revealed that at least the translators of the 1980 Finnish Qur'ān admit to having used and benefitted from a previous Swedish translation of Qur'ān,¹ which is not surprising as Swedish is the other official language in Finland. This fact positions Finland as a part of the Scandinavian language area, even though linguistically, Finnish belongs to the Finno-Ugric language group. It could also be pointed out that the shared history, religion (Lutheranism) and social mobility between the neighboring countries has resulted in a somewhat vaguely identifiable Nordic culture that encompasses the region. As the RRE Master Program also involved traveling between the Universities of Helsinki, Lund, Oslo, and Copenhagen, I became more interested in the Nordic societies and how the emerging Muslim minorities are affecting the field of literature as well. The Scandinavian languages (Danish, Norwegian, Swedish) are mutually intelligible, and from that perspective, the comparison between translations seems warranted. As for the decision to incorporate Finnish translations as well, I will argue that even though the languages are not comparable, the influence of, e.g., Swedish translations are stated by at least one translation and thus gives at least some basis for their inclusion in this study.

I have tried to use every translation available in the Nordic languages and will present them later. To my knowledge, there are no translations of the Qur'ān in Sami, Greenlandic or Faroese. There is an Icelandic translation, but I was not able to obtain a copy within the time scope of this thesis.

As for the selection of the Sūrat al-Qāri'a (Q 101), I conducted some research on it as a part of my master's studies and found it to be quite revealing regarding translation analysis. From the perspective of translation studies, the Arabic version of the text has numerous interesting features, including the form, rhyme, and ambiguous expressions that force the

¹ These and the other Nordic translations of the Qur'ān will be introduced in chapter three.

translator to choose what aspects of the text he/she prioritizes over others. The reasons for this will be explained in the chapter concerning translation theory. The Sura is also one of the shortest in the Qur'ān, comprising of only 11 verses, which makes it suitable for a study of this length.

1.1. Descriptive translation studies of the Qur'ān

Descriptive translation studies on the Qur'ān have gained popularity in recent years and seems to fit a broader trend in the relatively new field of Translation Studies, where the initially pragmatic need of providing a normative theory of translation has led the theorists to seek a better understanding of *what it is that the translator does?*² The complex issues concerning translation theories and approaches will be discussed in chapter two. To give some examples of recent studies in this area, I will follow by briefly introducing some articles that discuss the issue from different perspectives.

In his article "*Women in English Qur'ān Translations: Critical Intertextual, Intratextual, and Contextual Analyses*," Aly El-Hussein (2018) discusses the English Qur'ān translations from the perspective of feminist theories. He argues that translations, being always interpretations, can lead to an oppressive understanding of gender if not done cautiously. Johanna Pink (2015), has studied Indonesian Qur'ān translations in her article "*'Literal Meaning' or 'Correct 'aqīda'?* The Reflection of Theological Controversy in Indonesian Qur'an Translations" and argued that the influence of current debates and controversies between different branches of Islam also shows in translations. Some scholars have studied the translation of a specific term or concept, e.g., Aḥmad al-Shahḥāt Haykal (2010) who published an article about "*'Dhikr' in Hebrew Translations of the Qur'an*" in which he also makes suggestions for translators. In his article, "*Muslim Translators and Translations of the Qur'an into English*," Stefan Wild (2015) has discussed the history of English translations of the Qur'ān in the context of British colonialism. Kathrin Eith (2015) has published an article called "*The meāl Trend: The Rising Popularity of Qur'an Translations in Turkey in the 1990s and the Reactions of Turkish Academic Theologians*", in which she studied the Turkish translations of the Qur'ān and the academic discussion by Turkish theologians about the legitimacy of such endeavors in the current political climate.

² Williams (2013, 20) writes about the various aims of translation studies: "The first of these is description, formulated by Chesterman as follows: 'to describe what translators do, what strategies they use and what roles they play, under given linguistic and socio-cultural conditions' (2000a: 48)."

Just by looking at the topics of this brief survey, one can conclude that a lot can be learned from descriptive translation studies of the Qur'ān. As the sacred text of 1.3 billion people, the Qur'ān is one of the most influential texts in the world today and how it is interpreted and applied in the lives of believers can have significant consequences. Descriptive translation studies can give us valuable information about the contemporary reception and interpretation of the Qur'ān.

During the last decades, the field of Islamic studies has gathered more interest and funding in the Nordic countries as well. Many country-specific studies about Islam and its changing role in the society has been done as the issue had become more relevant to rising immigration rates, especially since the refugee crisis when the influx of asylum seekers from the Middle East peaked in 2015. But even during the recent rise of interest in Islamic studies, not many studies on the Nordic translations of the Qur'ān have been published. In 2004, Anne Sofie Roald published a monograph called *New Muslims in the European Context: The Experience of Scandinavian Converts* where she discusses some Scandinavian translations of the Qur'ān and their reception among Muslim converts.³ Nora Eggen (2012), a Norwegian scholar has discussed some of the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish translations of the Qur'ān in her article *Koranoversetting i Skandinavia*. She gives a brief chronological survey of the translations and then proceeds to analyze how the polysemantic terms *islam/aslama/muslim* are translated. One of her arguments is that the semantic field of these concepts in the Arabic language is complex and broad enough so that a translation of the Qur'ān does not necessarily have to use loanwords such as *Islam* or *Muslim* as these are loaded with (sometimes negative) cultural baggage.⁴ In 2016, an expanded version of her study was published in the *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* with the title "*Universalised versus Particularised Conceptualisations of Islam in Translations of the Qur'an*", where she further analyzes the translational strategies employed in Scandinavian versions of the Qur'ān and the benefits/caveats of monosemantic versus polysemantic treatment of the word cluster *islam/aslama/muslim*. In 2015, a master's thesis at the University of Oslo titled *Koranen i Skandinavia: En deskriptiv-komparativ analyse av utvalgte 'āya i oversettelse* was written by Anne-Lene Nymoén. In her thesis, she presents some of the prevailing translation theories as well as descriptive translation studies. She focuses on the translations of Zetterstéen, Schencke, Berg, Bernström & Asad and Wulff.⁵ She analyzes the translations of Q 2:177, Q 4:34 and Q 17:22-25 with a discussion of

³ Roald 2004, 163-169.

⁴ Eggen 2012, 122-123.

⁵ These and other Nordic translations will be introduced in the chapter *Introducing the Sources*.

selected *tafsīr* material as well. The results are framed within the concepts of *proximity* between the source and the translation, *foreignization/domestication*, *translator's positioning* and the dilemma of *equivalence* in the translations.

As this survey demonstrates, more research on the Nordic translations of the Qur'ān could be done to better understand the reception of this influential text in this part of the globe.

1.2. The Aims and Methods of this Thesis

This thesis will aim to answer at least the following questions:

- 1) How is the *Sūrat al-Qāri'a* (Q 101) rendered in the Nordic translations of the Qur'ān?
- 2) What are the similarities and differences between different translation?
- 3) In what ways do the different translations relate to the *source text*?
- 4) What aspects of the *source text* are prioritized by the translators?⁶

The method of research applied in this project will consist of various hermeneutical cycles of reading, interpretation, and re-reading. As a starting point, I will consult the empirical data, which in this case is the *ink on the paper*. I will first read and analyze the *source text*, i.e., the Sura 101 in Arabic using appropriate tools, such as commentaries, dictionaries, encyclopedias, articles, etc., to construct an overall understanding of the text. I will then provide my working translation of the Arabic text. Following this, I will read the *target texts*, i.e., the translations with all the introductory materials that the translators have included. I will then provide a comparative analysis of the translations juxtaposing the texts with each other and with the Arabic text. This section will discuss similarities and differences, the proximity between the original and the translation, some possible biblical intertextualities, and possible interpretative associations of the translations in their Nordic context. The project ends with a discussion of the form and function of the translations, conclusions/observations about the choices between translational strategies and suggestions for further study.

This thesis is structured in the following order. This introduction is followed by a discussion of *translation theory* in chapter two, the *what/how* of translation with an appropriate reflection on the question of interpretation and hermeneutics in the process. This is followed by an introduction to the sources in chapter three, in this case, the Nordic translations of the Qur'ān. Chapter four focuses on the Sura 101, its structure, questions of

⁶ I will leave the question of *why* open. In my opinion, it is not fair to make assumptions about motives without consulting the author. The question about translational motives is intriguing and a topic worth of study but for this thesis I have chosen to leave it out if the author does not bring it forth in his/her introduction of the translation.

*historical meaning*⁷ and context, and then proceeds to analyze the different translations in five parts, the last discussing the translations as a whole. The conclusions are presented in the last section.

I will conclude this section with the claim that translation is always interpretation and as the nature of this study is *an interpretation of various interpretations*, no claims of *objectivity* can be warranted. One of the methodological difficulties encountered in this project was the number of different languages present. How does one discuss a Finnish translation of the Qur'ān in English? To make the analysis section understandable to a larger audience, I have chosen to translate some of the translations as well which will enable the reader to get an overall understanding of the discussion without having to know Finnish, Danish, Swedish or Norwegian. I am fully aware of the caveats of such practice and the material in its original form is also presented at the beginning of each section.

I am motivated by the hope that an enterprise like this could illuminate, enrich and broaden our understanding of the *Sūrat al-Qāri'a* and its reception in the Nordic countries. For my self, this study has been enlightening in many ways, especially in opening new perspectives on the complexities involved in translating ancient texts that are revered as sacred by many.

⁷ I am aware that this concept is problematic and it will be discussed in the chapter concerning translation theory.

2. Theory and method

This chapter will discuss the philosophical, theoretical and methodological issues involved in the process of interpreting and translating ancient texts. This chapter aims to examine and lay out (as far as it is possible) the philosophical assumptions and reasoning behind the methodology used in this study. Since the first task in my research is to translate the text, I will start by examining translation theory. I have divided this chapter into sections dealing with the different aspects and problems related to translating ancient texts. The first section deals with **The Problem of Equivalence** and discusses the most obvious problems of translation mostly in relation to the work of Eugene Nida in his *Towards a Science of Translation* (1964). I will argue that translating cannot be separated from hermeneutics, since "every translation is at the same time an interpretation"⁸ as Gadamer has stated. The second section will deal with **The Problem of Hermeneutics** and discuss translation theory from the hermeneutical perspective of Hans-Georg Gadamer especially as developed in his magnum opus *Truth and Method* (1960). In the third section, I will introduce and discuss **The Skopos Theory** formulated by Katharina Reiß and Hans J. Vermeer.

2.1. The Problem of Equivalence

In her introductory monograph *Theories of Translation* Jenny Williams divides the different theories of translation into three categories: 1) Theories about the Product, 2) Theories about the Process and 3) Theories about the Translator. The first category includes the theories that have their main focus in the relationship between the source and the target text. Traditionally in Translation Studies, this relation has been discussed in the debates about "equivalence." The most basic way to conceptualize translation is that it is simply about recoding the same message in a different language, but most scholars have seen this view quite simplistic and problematic. At the opposite side of the spectrum, we have theories that deny any equivalence between two messages in different languages, e.g., Catford, who proposed a view that any form of meaning is language specific (in an absolute sense) and cannot be transferred across languages.⁹ The majority of the theories about equivalence fall between these two opposites, proposing different types of models. Since Translation Studies generally moved on from debating the possibility of equivalence and started to focus more on

⁸ Gadamer 2004, 386.

⁹ Williams 2013, 32.

describing the type and degree of equivalence in specific cases, equivalence remains a central topic in the debate.¹⁰

I suspect that the issue might also be a matter of definition since it seems that denying the possibility of *any* equivalence raises the question about how to evaluate translations. Logically, for one to do that, it is necessary to have some standards or a model for the perfect or good translation. I will assume that most people (and scholars) would say that the perfect translation would transfer the *meaning* of the source text to the target language *as closely as possible*. But this seems to imply that the text has some *objective* or (at least) *most probable meaning* and the one performing the evaluation has the epistemological ability to access this meaning. There are also scholars who deny my basic assumption and argue that there is no *objective meaning* in any text and that translation is more of a process of recreation. But what is it, then, that differentiates a translation (or recreation) from any other text? Is it not because of some sort of relationship or *likeness* in the two texts, even though their precise meaning cannot ever be identical? It also seems to align with common sense that it is possible to make mistakes in translation which imply that there is at least a more accurate way of translating.

What I conclude is that even though the term might have fallen out of fashion, I will use the term *equivalence* to refer to the relationship between the original and the translation. This relationship can then have many different forms which can be described using, for example, the categories developed by Swiss-German scholar Werner Koller:

1. Denotative equivalence, which refers to the equivalence of content;
2. Connotative equivalence, which refers to the equivalence of emotional and associative responses in the reader/listener; the connotations can be linguistic, social, geographical, stylistic, pejorative and so on;
3. Text-normative equivalence, which refers to the extent to which the ST and TT fulfill the norms for their respective text types in each culture;
4. Pragmatic equivalence, which refers to the equivalence of communication function;
5. Formal aesthetic equivalence, which refers to the formal, artistic dimension of (mostly literary) STs and TTs.¹¹

So, in this thesis, equivalence can refer to any of the above and as such serves an umbrella-term for this complex phenomenon.

¹⁰ Williams 2013, 39.

¹¹ as summarised by Williams 2013, 36.

In addition to the categories of Koller, one of the key terms, at least in biblical translation, has been Dynamic Equivalence¹² developed by Nida in *Toward a Science of Translation* (1964). Williams summarizes the main idea of Nida's theory as "reproducing in the receptor language the closest natural equivalent of the source-language message, first in terms of meaning and secondly in terms of style."¹⁴ Williams' brief exposition of Nida's theory does not do justice to the original. Nida is well aware of the challenges posed by modern linguistics to translation theory and brings into discussion many issues that are still relevant today. Regarding his standards for evaluating translations, his approach foreshadows the Skopos Theory of Reiss and Vermeer (1984) in its emphasis on the different functions and audiences for translations.¹⁷ This includes the goals of Christian missions, but it certainly is misleading to claim that this was Nida's main standard even in Bible translation. It is true that after accepting this functional approach, Nida still goes on to give plenty of opinions on what constitutes a good translation and I would consider most of them to be functional and audience specific. But if we take into consideration his audience (which I assume to be mostly other Bible translators) and look beneath the surface, we find a theory that brings out many, if not most, of the relevant problems regarding translating ancient texts.

At the beginning of the chapter *Principles of Correspondence*, Nida writes:

Since no two languages are identical, either in the meanings given to corresponding symbols or in the ways in which such symbols are arranged in phrases and sentences, it stands to reason that there can be no absolute correspondence between languages. Hence there can be no fully exact translations. The total impact of a translation may be reasonably close to the original, but there can be no identity in detail.¹⁸

This is what we might call the most basic problem of translation. There are many ways in which this seemingly superficial problem surfaces. Nida discusses the simple example of translating proper names with different writing systems. There might not be a direct way to transliterate names since different writing systems differ in their range of phonological symbols. So, the translator has to create the most natural equivalent in the target system, and this new word might resemble some other word and thus transfer unwanted associations and meaning to the translation. Other problems relate to texts that play with the sound of words, often impossible to reproduce in another language. Languages also differ in their range of

¹² Nida's concept predates that of Koller and could be seen to encompass all of Kollers categories.

¹⁴ Williams 2013, 33.

¹⁷ Nida 1964, 156.

¹⁸ Nida 1964, 156.

grammatical or morphological possibilities. A language might not have a passive verb form or uses verbs in place of certain nouns. Nida discusses these different types of contrasts between languages quite extensively,¹⁹ but for my purposes, it is not necessary to repeat it here any further. It is enough to accept that "literal translation" is usually simply impossible due to the basic differences in languages. The issue becomes further complicated with differences in syntax and literary conventions. Nida illustrates the point:

For example, the piling up of largely synonymous phrases in the Pauline Epistles, not without a number of anacolutha, serves in Greek to give the impression of profound spontaneity—a man who finds himself overwhelmed with the grandeur of his theme and his own deep emotional involvement; but when this form of expression is translated more or less literally into English, the result may be an impression of muddy verbosity. To do justice to the dynamic qualities of Paul's style, one must sometimes use quite different formal correspondences.²⁰

We have thus far only looked at linguistic²¹ differences, which only form the tip of the iceberg regarding the problems of translation. Nida terms this difference between languages as "linguistic distance" in contrast to "cultural distance." He goes on to say that: "differences between cultures cause many more severe complications for the translator than do differences in language structure."²³ Nida does not state it explicitly, but I assume that the cultural distance also includes temporal and geographical distance. I would also add the subjective distance of difference in personality and experience that can further distort one's understanding of a text. For example, one could question whether even a simple word for an everyday object such as "table" in English would mean the same as "pöytä" in Finnish. The visual imagery and the social/cultural values that we attach to things like "table" might differ more than we would expect. Actual physical tables and what we do around them can vary quite a lot depending on the culture, time and place, but still, we assume that there is some basic "tableness" that differentiates a table from a chair, for example. In the words of Nida:

The limiting factors in human communication consist of two basic facts: 1) no two people employ precisely the same symbols for the same types of experience (i.e., no two people have exactly the same background, and hence all differ in their use of even the same language code); and 2) no two people employ the same symbols in exactly the same ways, i.e. in exactly the same types of arrangements. In other words, each

¹⁹ Nida 1964, 193-225.

²⁰ Nida 1964, 225.

²¹ The term "linguistic" is used here like in Nida (1964) and refers to the grammatical, phonetic, morphological and syntactical differences.

²³ Nida 1964, 161.

person has his own distinctive style. This being the case, absolute communication between persons is impossible.²⁴

Nida discusses the issues and problems related to meaning in chapter *An Introduction to the Nature of Meaning*. One of the difficulties in determining lexical meaning is the fact that words have different meanings depending on the context. Nida thus states that the "tendency to think of the meaning of a word... as apart from an actual communication event is fundamentally a mistake".²⁵ If accepted, this view poses a serious challenge for our assumed ability to understand ancient texts, since we often have no information about the situation available. The problem is further amplified by the realization that "no word ever has the same meaning twice, for each speech event is in a sense unique."²⁷

Another problem is due to the "freedom of linguistic symbols." The relationship between a symbol and referent is never constant but changing in time. New meanings can and will be added, while some connotations lose their significance.²⁸ The meaning of a speech event is also determined by the socio-cultural context, which can be analyzed at various levels Nida distinguishes between:

1. What S (the source) wants R (the receptor) to understand by M (the message) –the theoretical norm.
2. What R understands by M—the practical norm.
3. What M means to the majority of persons in the S-R culture—the cultural norm.
4. What authorities on tradition (specialists: lawyers, professors, priests, et al.) in the S-R culture say S meant or should have meant by M—the legal norm.
5. What leaders of opinion say M ought to mean to R, irrespective of what S may have intended—the dynamic form.²⁹

Even though Nida is also dealing with ancient texts, namely the Bible, he is remarkably still somewhat optimistic that the making of an adequate translation is possible. His optimism is based on the assumption that despite these apparent difficulties, barriers and differences, there is generally a lot of (or perhaps enough) overlap and similarity in human experience across humankind, before and beyond us.³⁰ Whether this optimism is warranted becomes even more problematic after surveying the problem of meaning in more depth.

²⁴ Nida 1964, 53.

²⁵ Nida 1964, 40.

²⁷ Nida 1964, 48.

²⁸ Nida 1964, 49.

²⁹ Nida 1964, 53.

³⁰ Nida 1964, 53-55.

Some of these complications are illustrated in an example by Alsayed M. Aly Ismail in his monograph *Hermeneutics and the Problem of Translating Traditional Arabic Texts* (2017). Influenced mostly by the hermeneutics of Gadamer, especially as presented in his *Truth and Method* (1960), Ismail touches on an important issue in translating ancient texts, namely the difference between what the text *says* and what it *means*. In the seventh chapter, "Hermeneutic Translation: Theory and Practise," he gives an example case of translating an Arabic proverb into English. The proverb لا تفرح نسرعة امك علي التنور literally says "Do not feel happy about your mother's quick performance at the oven" which makes little sense in most English-speaking contexts. Ismail explains the meaning of the proverb:

In this proverb, the speaker is warning the listener about the risks of being overly optimistic or from extending his/her expectations beyond normal limits. The historical context in which this proverb was produced is a prerequisite for providing a true and precise translation. In this context, the addressee may feel pleased at the expectation that his/her mother is preparing a delicious meal for a few moments time. However, summoning up the historical context in which such a proverb was said can help us provide a true translation and this can communicate the core message of the original text without misrepresenting it. The historical context in which this proverb was said relates to the scarcity of food and the lack of essential ingredients for cooking a good and delicious meal. As such it speaks of the mother cooking a meal very quickly because of a lack of resources.³²

This illustrates that without extra-linguistic information about the culture and context, the meaning of the proverb would not be accessible. The translator does not only need to know Arabic, but also the contextual factors that make the proverb meaningful. As Mantzavinos explains, as native speakers of any language, we understand these extra-linguistic features automatically and usually do not even pay attention while we apply our cultural framework³³. That this process is mostly hidden from our conscious mind becomes problematic when we are dealing with texts that fall outside our culturally familiar contexts. The fact that a text "doesn't make sense" is usually a cue that we are missing a relevant piece of cultural information.³⁴ This is not usually the problem, but the danger lies in what we *assume we understand*. If we encounter an ancient text in an ancient language, the *outward strangeness* of the object will give us a clue that we are dealing with a foreign object. But

³² Ismail 2017, 141.

³³ One could argue that these extra-linguistic cues are related to context, time and space and even inside the same language-culture these cues can be easily missed.

³⁴ Mantzavinos, C., "Hermeneutics".

when we encounter it in a translated form, some of the strangeness is already stripped away, and there is a chance that the translation "makes sense," even though we are possibly reading into the text the meanings burdened with the associations tied to the words that are familiar to us. It is also possible that this misunderstanding goes unnoticed since the original author is not present to challenge our interpretation. Since I will be working on a text that is from a time, place and culture quite distant from mine, it seems necessary to adopt a *method of constantly questioning my understanding and the meaning I have imposed on the text*. A superficial translation of the Arabic terms into modern English will likely obscure the meaning of the terms in their original context, so I must start from the assumption that even when I think I understand, I probably do not.

For the translator, the meaning of the original forms only one side of the problem. After determining what the text means, the task of translating it to another language remains, and this might not be so straight forward as it seems. Let us consider the Arabic proverb in the example above. According to Ismail, "simple linguistic equivalence is irrelevant, unnecessary and does not communicate the invisible and hidden message of the proverb."³⁶ While this seems correct, what about his proposed translation: "Blessed is he who expects nothing, for he shall never be disappointed"?³⁷ I agree that what the text literally says alone would not deliver the meaning to most English speakers. But replacing it with the English proverb leaves out a lot of information as well, namely the historical context in which the meaning is embedded. To bring out the richness and the contextual meaning of the proverb, the best option would be to provide what Ismail actually does, the literal meaning, the contextual factors and a proposed equivalent in English. Not all of this is important in every context, of course. If an Arabic speaker wants to use that proverb in an English speaking everyday context, the English proverb alone would surely accomplish his communication goal. The goal and function of the translation are important factors, especially if we come to share a more pessimistic view of the possibilities of transferring meaning from one language to another. I will discuss this later. The main points here that I will adopt to my approach are that there is a difference in what the text says and what it means, and the question about how to merge or separate these in the translation process depends on the goals and functions of the final text. Another insight is that in addition to a good translation, *a description of the translation process delivers important information* that significantly enhances the understanding of an ancient text.

³⁶ Ismail 2017, 141.

³⁷ Ismail 2017, 142.

The importance of context and other extra-linguistic cues becomes apparent when one thinks of the myriad ways humans use language. In the context of spoken communication, the way of speaking and gesturing and the minute variations in pitch and tone in the voice of the speaker can deliver important information about the meaning of the linguistic content. This is especially relevant in the use of humor, irony, sarcasm and the like. Even in written communication, the form and genre of the publication, choice of fonts and other visual elements can be crucial to a proper understanding of the message. The fact that ancient texts are usually entirely stripped of these original outward factors significantly diminishes the chances of recognizing these and other genres of communication, thus reducing the probability of proper understanding. And without proper understanding, how can there be a proper translation?

So far, I have stated that to avoid misunderstanding and mistranslation, the translator must understand the original text, and this implies the need for sufficient knowledge and information about the cultural context of the original. But since understanding becomes a central feature for any good translation process, we should ask the more fundamental questions: 1) what is this thing called *understanding*? And more importantly, 2) how can we know whether we have *understood* or not? And so, we must broaden our inquiry into the field of hermeneutics as well.

2.2. The Problem of Hermeneutics

It should be clear from the previous reflection thus far that translation and interpretation³⁸ go hand in hand, or as Gadamer has stated: "Thus every translation is at the same time an interpretation. We can even say that the translation is the culmination of the interpretation that the translator has made of the words given him".³⁹ Translation then becomes one form of applied hermeneutics. What must precede any theory of interpretation is a definition of proper *understanding*. In *Truth and Method*, Gadamer defined understanding as "to come to an understanding of the subject matter, not to get inside another person and relive his experiences (Erlebnisse)".⁴¹ This simple and pragmatic definition has many benefits, especially in that it avoids the overwhelming complexity of contemporary models of understanding in cognitive sciences.⁴² This definition also brings to the surface the pragmatic

³⁸ I am using the words understanding and interpretation somewhat synonymously as does Gadamer.

"Interpretation is not an occasional, post facto supplement to understanding; rather, understanding is always interpretation, and hence interpretation is the explicit form of understanding". (Gadamer 2004, 306)

³⁹ Gadamer 2004, 386.

⁴¹ Gadamer 2004, 385.

⁴² Mantzavinos, C., "Hermeneutics".

dimension in all communication. Even though I cannot ever *truly know* what another person meant, the person in question *knows* and together we can *agree* that my interpretation of his/her words is correct. The problem lies in the fact that the author of an ancient text is not available for verbal communication. It is clear then that any understanding regarding ancient texts in this sense is impossible. Only the original author has access to the absolute meaning of the text, and since the author is unavailable to judge between interpretations, there exists no absolute authority above different interpretations. This brings us back to the problem of evaluating translations if we deny the possibility of any objective interpretation of the text (and this seems to be the case). Two observations should be made: the fact that we do and must evaluate different interpretations, and the fact that we do so in the light of another interpretation. This insight must not necessarily lead to the abandoning of the search for the "true," "best" or "faithful" interpretation but rather can give light to the process of how this is done. What Gadamer imagines, as I believe, is a conversation or dialogue between the reader and the text and also between different interpretations. Understanding then is also a social phenomenon, since communication must involve at least two people. All of this means that reaching an understanding is not a simple matter. Gadamer writes:

Reaching an understanding in conversation presupposes that both partners are ready for it and are trying to recognize the full value of what is alien and opposed to them. If this happens mutually, and each of the partners, while simultaneously holding on to his arguments, weighs the counterarguments, it is finally possible to achieve—in an imperceptible but not arbitrary reciprocal translation of the other's position (we call this an exchange of views)—a common diction and a common dictum.⁴³

Applying Gadamer's thinking to my task as a researcher then means becoming part of an ongoing conversation, where questions and answers, critique and affirmation move in a circle (or spiral) towards a shared and better understanding. As an answer to the fundamental question about how I can know whether I have understood or not, Gadamer's thinking seems to imply that regarding the interpretation of ancient texts, the only measure of correctness is the educated opinion of oneself and other scholars. One could call this the *social dimension of understanding*, and this is not to downplay the importance of the *subjective dimension*, where one's own *understanding* is always in movement, changing and boundless.

Gadamer also points out that all interpretation and understanding is also *application* in one way or another. He points out that this connection was always present and visible in pre-

⁴³ Gadamer 2004, 388.

modern interpretation, but that in recent discussions it has been forgotten or suppressed because of modern illusions of objectivity.⁴⁴ I believe he means that every attempt to discover new knowledge is preceded by a question that needs answering. Thus, fundamentally the search for knowledge is guided by very pragmatic concerns and it is the application that gives any knowledge its relevance in the present moment. This is also the case with translation. There is always some reason or motive behind the project, a goal to be accomplished or a function to be fulfilled. We already touched upon this previously when discussing the example of translating Arabic proverbs. The importance of the functionality of translations becomes apparent when we ask the questions: 1) who is the audience for which we are translating, and 2) why does the audience need this information? For example, when translating for children, I would probably use a simpler language than if I were translating for adults. Or I could add commentary to make it more intelligible. Regarding the *why* of translating, for someone who needs to have a quick overall picture of a text, for example, a more general translation would suffice rather than for someone who wants to appreciate the aesthetic features of the poetry.

2.3. The Skopos Theory

As an answer to these problems and other issues that had emerged in Translation Studies, two German scholars, Katharina Reiß and Hans J. Vermeer, published a monograph *Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Translationstheorie* (1984) that proposed a new function-oriented approach to translation. The book was later published in English as *Towards a General Theory of Translational Action: Skopos Theory Explained* (2013). Reiß et al. argue that there are various "contradictory requirements for a 'proper' translation" and provides a list of twelve such conditions:

1. A translation must give the words of the original.
2. A translation must give the ideas of the original.
3. A translation should read like an original work.
4. A translation should read like a translation.
5. A translation should reflect the style of the original.
6. A translation should possess the style of the translator.
7. A translation should read as a contemporary of the original.
8. A translation should read as a contemporary of the translator.
9. A translation may add to or omit from the original.

⁴⁴ Gadamer 2004, 306-307.

10. A translation may never add to or omit from the original.
11. A translation of verse should be in prose.
12. A translation of verse should be in verse.⁴⁵

Since it is impossible that any translation could accomplish all these goals at once, a translator is forced to make translation choices. The first observation drawn from this by Reiß et al. is that of concerning the very definition of translational action itself. Instead of defining it as a two-phase communication process, Reiß et al. argue that a more accurate definition would describe translation as (a certain type of) "information in language B about a source text presented in language A."⁴⁷ In my opinion, this definition is rather accurate as it emphasizes the active role of the translator and the fact that a translation is never the same thing as the original text. This "information offer" is a communicative act that "aims to achieve a goal and thus to alter the current state of affairs."⁴⁹ The first and foremost rule of translation is then stated as follows: "*A translational action is governed by its purpose.*"⁵¹ This should also be kept in mind when evaluating translations. Translational action is also guided by the intended audience and Reiß et al. call this observation "the sociological rule" in addition to "the *skopos* (purpose) rule."⁵³

As an answer to the question of how to determine an "adequate translation", Reiß et al. start with a preliminary definition: "An action is considered to be successful if the feedback does not include a protest and if the producer does not protest in a counter-reaction to the recipient's reaction at a later point".⁵⁴ It is probably not a coincidence that this seems very similar to what Gadamer stated about "coming to an understanding of the subject matter." There are also two other requirements (that can only be determined in accordance with the *skopos* rule): that the text should be coherent in itself (understandable in the recipient's situation) and that it should be coherent with the source text. The theory can then be laid out as a list of six rules:

- 1) A translatum is determined by its *skopos*.
- 2) A translatum is an offer of information in a target culture and language about an offer of information in a source culture and language.

⁴⁵Reiß et al. 2013, 38.

⁴⁷ Reiß et al. Reiß, Nord & Dudenhöfer 2013, 39.

⁴⁹ Reiß et al. Reiß, Nord & Dudenhöfer 2013, 85.

⁵¹ Reiß et al. Reiß, Nord & Dudenhöfer 2013, 85.

⁵³ Reiß et al. Reiß, Nord & Dudenhöfer 2013, 90.

⁵⁴ Reiß et al. 2013, 95.

- 3) A translatum is a unique, irreversible mapping of a source-culture offer of information.
- 4) A translatum must be coherent in itself.
- 5) A translatum must be coherent with the source text.
- 6) These rules are interdependent and linked hierarchically in the order set out above.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ Reiß et al. 2013, 106.

3. Introducing the Sources

In this chapter, I will introduce the Nordic translations of the Qur'ān used in this thesis. I will present them by language and in chronological order. Relevant parts of the prefaces/introductions are also discussed. I have translated all the quotations from the prefaces/introductions into English and for the sake of readability and limited space chose not to include them in their original language since they can be easily accessed by following the footnotes if the reader wishes.

3.1. *The Qur'ān in Finnish*

At the time of writing, there exist four full Finnish translations of the Qur'ān. I will introduce them in chronological order and give some background information about the translator(s) and if or how they describe the text and their translation method.

To my knowledge, the first translation of the Qur'ān into Finnish is *Koraani: Opastus ja johdatus pahan hylkäämiseen ja hyvän valitsemiseen*, by Z.I. Ahsen Böre, published in 1942. In the preface, Böre explains his motivations as personal, namely that he is himself a Muslim and aims at making the Qur'ān more accessible to the Finnish people and society in general. He states that he has no intention of proselytizing anyone but only hopes to advance a better understanding and respect towards Muslims and Islam in Finland.⁵⁶

The translation has a lengthy introduction where Böre summarizes the life of Muhammad as it is generally taught in the Muslim tradition. He describes Muhammad in a very hagiographical fashion, highlighting his virtuous character, e.g., chastity, humility, and thirst for truth.

Regarding the task of translating the Qur'ān, Böre shortly acknowledges that in the Arabic original, the rhythm of the language determines the divisions of the verses, but this is quite impossible to emulate in Finnish, and so he has decided to keep the original divisions,⁵⁷ even though that does not do justice to the flow of the text. The method or principles of translation are not discussed in any further.⁵⁸

In 1957, Jussi Aro and Armas Salonen published, as described in their preface, a "scientific" Finnish translation of the Qur'ān. At the time of publishing, Aro and Salonen were both working as adjunct professors of Assyriology and Semitic Philology at the

⁵⁶ Böre, 1942, 5.

⁵⁷ The most popular numbering system of the verses is based on the Cairo edition of 1925 and is used in this thesis also. The Western Orientalist tradition sometimes uses a different system established by Flügel in 1834. There is also some variation in whether the *Bismillah* should be counted or not. In this work, I follow the Cairo edition that does not number the *Bismillah*.

⁵⁸ Böre 1942, 28.

University of Helsinki. In their preface, they also give credit to Knut Leonard Tallqvist, a professor of Oriental Literature at the University of Helsinki in earlier decades. In his lifetime, Tallqvist had done translations of many parts of the Qur'ān and also hoped that his work would help future translators.

In their preface, Aro and Salonen acknowledge the difficulties in translating the Qur'ān and describe it to be so unique and stylistically Arabic that some features of the original will unavoidably be lost in translation. They say that in their translation, they aim for "equivalence" but leave the term undefined and remark that in many places they had to choose between many possible options. In these places, Aro and Salonen write that they have relied on a previous Swedish translation by the Swedish orientalist Karl Vilhelm Zetterstéen. Regarding biblical names, the authors have chosen to follow the forms used in the Finnish Bible 1933/38, because in their opinion the Arabic forms would seem odd for the Finnish audience.⁵⁹

The translation also has a short introduction about the life of Muhammad and the Qur'ān. They recount the main parts of the life of Muhammad as it is transmitted in the Islamic tradition and though the style is somewhat critical regarding the historicity and reliability of some stories, they seem to accept the main events as historical realities.

Regarding the contents of the Qur'ān, Aro and Salonen see many contradictions in the earlier and later Suras and conclude that Muhammad was a genius of "practical wisdom" committed first of all to his mission and not so much in the consistency of his message.⁶⁰

The introduction has a specific part of the formation of the Qur'ān and its contents. This part discusses many issues in a critical style: whether Muhammad could read and write (in their opinion probably a little bit of both), the intertextual relationship to the Bible and Apocrypha, the order of Suras and their timing. Regarding which Suras belong to the Meccan period and which ones to Medina period, they give a summary of the proposed stylistic characteristics developed by the German orientalist Noedelke.

At the time of publishing his Finnish translation of the Qur'ān in 1995, Jaakko Hämeen-Anttila was an adjunct professor of the Arabic language and literature at the University of Helsinki. In his short preface, which is only a few pages long, he goes on to give some basic information about the text and some guidelines for a more fruitful reading, especially for those encountering it the first time. He acknowledges the fundamental belief among Muslims that the Qur'ān cannot be translated but should be first and foremost read in

⁵⁹ Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist 1957, 5-6.

⁶⁰ Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist 1957, 7-10

Arabic. In Islamic thought, a translation should always be regarded as a commentary or an interpretation.

Hämeen-Anttila writes that there are essentially two approaches towards translating the Qur'ān: the *scientific approach* tries to capture the meaning that the text had in its birth-context and uses the later traditions critically, and the *religious or confessional perspective* approaches the text and its meaning from the framework of Islamic theology. When these two approaches collide, Hämeen-Anttila has chosen to favor the scientific perspective. Hämeen-Anttila also makes one interesting comment about the ambiguity of the older Suras, meaning especially the poetic ones that are found near the end of the Qur'ān. According to him, these poetic Suras are not aiming at the clarity of thought but rather to affect the reader emotionally and spiritually, which raises interest in how he has treated this aspect in his translation.

Regarding the style of his translation, he writes that he has tried to find a balance between faithfulness to the original and the readability of the translation. He has chosen to use the common rendering of the biblical names and concepts, rather than the Arabic versions. Some of the most ambiguous words are left untranslated, e.g., the term *hāwiya* that is relevant for this study. Hämeen-Anttila has also published a commentary of the Qur'ān (1997) to discuss this and other difficulties in the text, and I will discuss his comments in the analysis section.

In addition to the medieval Muslim exegetes, Hämeen-Anttila gives credit to modern scholars, of whom he especially mentions R. Paret and N.J. Dawood whose previous translations he has found useful in his work.⁶¹

Hämeen-Anttila revised his translation in 2013 (reprinted in 2017), but regarding Sura 101 his translation has remained the same, except the changing of the spelling of *ylympäri* to *ylympäri*. The preface has been edited to modernize the language, and there are some minor additions. When discussing his method of translating, he has added a remark saying that when compared to the translation of prose or the previous version, his translation tries to follow the original more precisely.⁶²

The most recent Finnish version of the Qur'ān, published in 2015, is actually a translation of a translation, originally into Urdu by an acclaimed Islamic authority Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri.⁶³ It includes comments on certain words, marked with parenthesis in the translation. According to Atik Ali, the project was initiated by a group of

⁶¹ This section is based entirely on the preface in Hämeen-Anttila 1995, 5-8.

⁶² Hämeen-Anttila 2017. 13-15.

⁶³ The original translation into Urdu was published in 2005.

Pakistani Muslims residing in Finland.⁶⁴ Since then, the text has also been published online⁶⁵ with an introduction and information about the author.⁶⁶ Because it is not a direct translation of the Arabic text, I decided to leave it out of this analysis.

3.2. The Qur'ān in Swedish

To my knowledge, the whole Qur'ān has been translated into Swedish six times. Like in the previous section, I will introduce the translations in chronological order.

Published in 1843, *Koran / öfversatt från arabiska originalet, jemte en inledning af Fredrik Crusenstolpe* was the first full translation of the Qur'ān into Swedish. Crusenstolpe (1801-1882) gained his expertise in Arabic and Islam during his military service and diplomatic career in Libya, Morocco, and Algeria. He was the brother of Magnus Jacob Crusenstolpe who was a famous writer, historian and a member of the Swedish parliament.

In the preface, Crusenstolpe writes that he aims to shed light on Islamic thinking and practice and thus he has tried to translate "the spirit and letter" of the Qur'ān as close as possible and according to the interpretation of the Muslim scholars and the Islamic world as he knows it. He admits his debt to other known translations, especially Maracci (Latin), Sale (English) and Savary (French) being mentioned. Also, he mentions the advantage of being able to consult with Muslim scholars personally when translating the most difficult passages.

The translation is preceded by a long introduction of more than 150 pages that gives the reader a general depiction of Muhammad and his life. The introduction is interesting as Crusenstolpe writes about Muhammad and Islam in a very sympathetic and diplomatic way, mostly in accord with Islamic tradition. Even though it has a positive take on Islam, the

⁶⁴ He introduced me to this translation during a tour of their mosque that he gave to our student group in February 2017.

⁶⁵ <http://koraani.minhaj.fi/>

⁶⁶ The preface explains that the original translation to Urdu has tried to follow the Arabic as closely as possible. The comments that are embedded in the text are told to be based on hadith-literature and Islamic tradition. Interestingly the work also claims to acknowledge the advance of the natural sciences and the comments include references to scientific knowledge in parts where the text speaks about certain natural phenomena. The translation also presents alternative translations of certain verses where they could have multiple layers of meaning that are impossible to include in one translation. According to the preface, special attention has also been directed to expound terms like *jihad* and *qital*, to avoid any misunderstanding that might lead to illegitimate violence. Regarding the author, the preface contains a lengthy appraisal of the degrees and studies that Tahir-ul-Qadri has done in academia and centers of Islamic learning in Medina, Mecca, Syria, Bagdad, Lebanon, India and Pakistan. Tahir-ul-Qadri is also a lawyer by training and has worked as a legal advisor in the High Court of Pakistan. He was also appointed as the Professor of Islamic Law in the University of Punjab but is now leading an independent organization, Minhaj-ul-Quran International, that operates in ninety countries worldwide. His version of the Qur'ān is translated to at least some other Nordic languages.

introduction still suggests that the writer is not a Muslim as Crusenstolpe distances himself from both of the "friends or enemies" of Muhammad.⁶⁸

The next translation was done by Carl Johan Tornberg (1807-1877), a Swedish orientalist who studied Arabic, Persian and Turkish in Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and France. In addition to his scholarly work, he also taught eastern languages in the Universities of Lund and Uppsala. His translation of the Qur'ān was published in 1874, only three years before his death in 1877.

The translation has a lengthy (79 pages) introduction, mostly about the life of Muhammad. In the preface, Tornberg explains the main features of the Arabic text, its production, canonization, and characteristics, namely the style of rhymed prose. He also explains that his translation differs from the interpretations of Muslim scholars in its approach, as he is not bound by orthodoxy. He shortly explains the rise of the critical method in Europe and his knowledge of previous studies. Regarding the translation, he says he has been working on it slowly over forty years of academic studies and assures the reader that even though his interpretation might differ from other translations, "every word and meaning were weighed and justified from all sides." After working through the life of Muhammed, the introduction ends with a very negative description of Muhammad's character that even spurs on to racist comments about the general character-flaws of the people of the Orient.⁶⁹

The third translation was done by Karl Vilhelm Zetterstéen (1866-1953) who was the professor of Semitic languages at the University of Lund during 1895-1904 and later at the University of Uppsala. Besides his expertise in Arabic, he also did studies in Persian, Turkish and Nubian languages. In 1917, he published a translation of the Qur'ān that, according to his preface, was intended for those not familiar with Islam or Arabic. He mentions the help received from the previous translations of Crusenstolpe and Tornberg. In addition to modern European scientific literature, he has consulted the classic commentaries of Tabari, Zamahsari, and Bajdawi.

The introduction gives a brief overlook of the life of Muhammad and recounts the beginning and development of the revelations as the Islamic tradition tells it. The introduction also includes some critical commentary including speculation about whether Muhammad had misunderstood the doctrine of the Trinity comprising of the Father, the Christ, and the Virgin

⁶⁸ Crusenstolpe 1843, 1.

⁶⁹ Tornberg 1874, i-ix.

Mary.⁷⁰ About Muhammad, he writes that he was a product of his time and a man with practical wisdom rather than logical thinking.⁷¹

Concerning the history of the Qur'ān, Zetterstéen concludes that Muhammad was familiar with both Christian and Jewish traditions to some degree (as is evident in the text) but that he probably didn't have access to any written sources and it is debated whether he was, in fact, illiterate or not.⁷² Zetterstéen identifies the style of the Qur'ān as rhyming prose, not with a set meter but occasional parts with a distinct rhythm.⁷³ According to him, the lack of theological terminology in Arabic caused Muhammad to adopt certain loan words, which also might explain some of the misunderstandings he had about other traditions.⁷⁴

The translation of Zetterstéen, as well as Crusenstolpe and Tornberg all, follow the verse numbering of the Flügel edition.⁷⁵ For the sake of comparison and clarity, I have numbered all of the texts according to the Cairo system, which is used in most of the translations.

In 1963, Åke Joel Ohlmarks (1911-1984) published another translation of the Qur'ān. Ohlmarks was a somewhat controversial Swedish academic, author and translator, who in his early years held several academic positions in Tübingen, Reykjavik and Greifswald and later worked mainly as an author and translator. Because of his activity in Nazi Germany, he was suspected of having sympathies for National Socialist ideology but the historian Andreas Åkerlund concluded that it was nothing out of the ordinary among the German academics of the era.⁷⁶ More controversial was his work as a translator, especially his translation of *The Lord of the Rings*, which was even criticized by J.R.R. Tolkien himself after he learned that Ohlmarks had taken great liberties in transforming and even making up many of the names in the original.⁷⁷ His free interpretive method to translating was not restricted to the proper names only, and the Tolkien fandom in Sweden adopted a very negative view of Ohlmarks translation that remained the only Swedish version until the year 2005.

Published in 1963, Ohlmarks' translation of the Qur'ān comes with a lengthy introduction about the life and times of Muhammad. Ohlmarks makes critical comments of the inconsistencies of the text⁷⁸ and even suggest that Muhammad might have had epilepsy

⁷⁰ Zetterstéen 1917, xvi.

⁷¹ Zetterstéen 1917, xxiii.

⁷² Zetterstéen 1917, xxiv.

⁷³ Zetterstéen 1917, xxvii.

⁷⁴ Zetterstéen 1917, xxviii.

⁷⁵ As well as the Norwegian version of Berg (1980).

⁷⁶ Åkerlund 2008, 565-566.

⁷⁷ Tolkien, Carpenter & Tolkien 1981, 263.

⁷⁸ Ohlmarks 1963, 31.

that caused his visions,⁷⁹ so it becomes clear that he does not share a traditional Muslim view of the Qur'ān. On the last pages of his introduction, he explains that most of the translation is transformed to prose, except some parts that he has translated to free rhythmic verse imitating the style of the biblical books of Job and the Psalms. It is interesting to notice that for the Sura 101 he has chosen to transform it to prose. Regarding comparisons to other translations, he mentions all the previous Swedish translations, Crusentolpe, Tornberg and Zetterstéen in addition to the German translation of Leo Winter in 1959, the English translations by Palmer in 1900 and Rodwell in 1909 and the French translation by Savary that he has used as aids in his work. He explains that his goal was to produce a translation that would be interesting and readable for non-believers also.⁸⁰

In 1988 Christina Gustavson, a Swedish convert to the Ahmadiyya Muslim community published *Den heliga Qur'anen*, under the alias Dr. Qanita Sadiqa.⁸¹ Not a lot of information can be found about the author or her academic status. The translation is done under the supervision of the Ahmadiyya community, verified by Imam Kamal Yousuf, and is therefore clearly confessional.

The preface reads rather like an apologetic pamphlet than an academic introduction to the book per se. The Qur'ān is presented as the light to humankind inviting everyone to repentance and proper conduct. According to the preface, one should seek wisdom to every aspect of human life and society from the Qur'ān. Apologetic remarks are also made towards the Christian dogmas about Jesus and also against orientalist perspectives to the Qur'ān. Being an Ahmadiyya publication, the preface also confirms the status of the Indian teacher Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908) whom the Ahmadiyya believe to be the Mahdi. The preface does not discuss the method or theory of the translation process.⁸²

In 1998, Mohammed Knut Bernström (1919-2009) published *Koranens budskap*, a Swedish translation of the Qur'ān with an introduction and a commentary in the form of footnotes. Bernström was a Swedish diplomat who converted to Islam in 1986 after serving as an ambassador in Morocco 1976-1983. According to the preface, the translation was revised by a group of Swedish experts in Islam and was then approved by The Al-Azhar University in Cairo. To my knowledge, no other Scandinavian translation claims to have similar status.

⁷⁹ Ohlmarks 1963, 24.

⁸⁰ Ohlmarks 1963, 32.

⁸¹ Jacobsen et al. 2015, 363.

⁸² Sadiqa 1988, i-vii.

In his preface, Bernström acknowledges the efforts made by previous translators, especially Zetterstéen's (1917), but writes that it had some shortcomings particularly concerning the growing Muslim audience. Zetterstéen was an Orientalist, and his perspective on the Qur'ān was different from the Islamic point of view, and this sometimes skews the meaning of certain passages according to Bernström. He also observes a minimalist tendency in the 1917 translation, a result of trying to follow the original too closely that makes the translation seem almost incomprehensible at times. According to Bernström, a word-for-word translation is not practical because of the linguistic differences between Arabic and Sweden. He has favored a method that aims at delivering the idea rather than the words of the original and stresses the importance of understanding the text. I have discussed the problems related to the task of understanding and interpretation in previous chapters, and it becomes clear that Bernström here is referring to the traditional Islamic linguistics and interpretation. Regarding the target text, Bernström writes that he has tried to produce a translation in modern Swedish that would suit the needs of the Muslim audience and also correct some misunderstandings concerning the message of the Qur'ān that have resulted from various modern phenomena, e.g., "Islamic" terrorism. The commentary section is based on another work, *The Message of THE QUR'ĀN* (Dar al-Andalus, Gibraltar, 1980) by Muhammad Asad, but is edited and enhanced by Bernström where he has seen the need for correction or addition.⁸³

The introduction includes a section dealing with the problems of translating the Qur'ān. Bernström discusses various topics, for example, the problem of equivalence, about which he seems to favor a "dynamic" approach, namely that clarity of the message is more important than a rigid word-for-word approach. He also discusses allegory, metaphors, and metonymy, all of which frequently occur in the Qur'ān and in his opinion, would best be translated literally but explained in the commentary. After presenting some of the difficulties, he seems to accept the Islamic dogma that essentially views the Qur'ān as untranslatable, but also concludes that an interpretation following the classical Muslim exegetes will suffice when the Arabic text is beyond the capabilities of the (Muslim) reader.⁸⁴

3.3. The Qur'ān in Norwegian

According to an article by Nora Eggen, the first translation of the Qur'ān into Norwegian is an unpublished manuscript dated to about 1900. The first that got published was a translation of selected suras in 1952 by Wilhelm Schenke who was a scholar of Semitic languages and a

⁸³ Asad & Bernström 1998, viii-ix

⁸⁴ Asad & Bernström 1998, xiv-xvi.

professor of religious history. Einar Seim also produced translations of at least some suras, but they were never published. The first translation of the Qur'ān in its entirety was done by Einar Berg and published in 1980. The Ahmadiyya Community published a full translation with a commentary in 1996. During the years 2009-2012, the Islamic Cultural Center published translations of selected suras with the aim of translating the whole Qur'ān in seven parts, but work is still in progress. There also exists some translations of a specific Sura or a selection of suras, but my focus will be on the two published translations of whole Qur'ān, the ones by Einar Berg and the Ahmadiyya community.⁸⁵

The information available about Einar Berg is minimal. According to Anne Sofie Roald, who has written briefly about Scandinavian Qur'ān translations (2004), he was a lecturer in Arabic studies at the University of Oslo.⁸⁶ The translation has a short four-page preface with some preliminary information about the Qur'ān. He says in advance that it is a collection of very different texts born in various circumstances and can thus seem chaotic and unsystematic. Berg writes openly about his Christian conviction but says that the common roots of all Abrahamic religions should inspire us to encounter each other with humility and respect. He writes that the goal of his translation is to promote understanding and respect towards "those who seek God under the banner of Islam."⁸⁸ About the translation, he writes that the Qur'ān has a rhythm and rhymes that give the original a unique character. These facets of the text cannot be translated, but he has tried to provide the text some rhythmic structure without doing violence to the original meaning of the text. He has tried to use appropriate and plain language. He admits that Arabic terms can have multiple meanings depending on the context and the deeper meaning "beyond the clear words" cannot be translated, as the Islamic tradition teaches.⁸⁹ The translation by Berg does not include any explanatory notes.

The only other complete translation of the Qur'ān into Norwegian was published in 1996. It is a group effort by the Ahmadiyya community in Norway and includes a translation side-by-side with the Arabic text. It also has a quite extensive commentary running along with the text in footnotes. The two-page foreword states that the translation was done under the leadership of Hadrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad, who is the international head of the Ahmadiyya Movement and also supervised by Mubashar Ahmad Tariq who is the leader of the

⁸⁵ Eggen (s.a)

⁸⁶ Roald 2004, 164.

⁸⁸ Berg 1980, 3.

⁸⁹ Berg 1980, 4.

Norwegian Ahmadiyya community. The preface does not comment on the method or principle behind the translation. According to Roald, the Ahmadiyya translations are not accepted by most other Muslims communities (at least in Denmark) and so they tend to encourage people towards other translations.⁹⁰

3.4. The Qur'ān in Danish

The first translation of the Qur'ān was published in 1967 by a Danish Ahmadiyya Muslim named Abdus Salaam Madsen.⁹¹ His father was a Lutheran priest. Svend Aage Madsen, as he was then called, started his theological studies at the University of Copenhagen in 1947. During his studies, he got interested in Islam and changed his subject to Arabic studies. In 1958, he converted to the Ahmadiyya tradition of Islam. His translation of the Qur'ān was the only Danish version for 39 years but was mostly dismissed by other Danish Muslims.⁹²

The third and latest edition of Madsen's translation includes prefaces by Kamal Yousuf and Madsen. It becomes apparent from the first words of the preface that the translation has a confessional character:

God has given His great mercy to humankind in His revealed Will (law), which guides people's minds and hearts towards Him, who is Mercy and Love. The Holy Qur'ān is the guidance of all humankind - at all times. It is not merely a mercy for those who have "sinned" but also for those who are "righteous."⁹⁴

About the principles followed in a proper translation, Kamal writes:

The Qur'ān itself is the best interpreter of the Qur'ān, as one verse sheds light on the other. *The Prophet's* interpretation⁹⁵ and his disciples' interpretation has been followed. The two great Laws of *Nature* and *Spirit* spring from the one and the same source and must, therefore, confirm and complement each other. It follows that the laws of nature help us to understand the Law of the Spirit, the Qur'ān - and vice versa. Further, God's *new revelation* casts new light on hitherto obscure opinions and contexts.⁹⁶

The preface does not clarify what this new revelation is, but I assume it might mean the new interpretations by Ahmadiyya scholars. Lastly, Kamal praises Madsen's abilities as a translator, not only because of his academic credentials but also due to his Islamic piety.

⁹⁰ Roald 2004, 165.

⁹¹ I was only able to access the 3rd edition that was published in 1989.

⁹² Roald 2004, 165.

⁹⁴ Madsen 1989, XI.

⁹⁵ The context implies that he means the interpretation transmitted in early traditions.

⁹⁶ Madsen 1989, XI-XII.

In his brief preface, Madsen gives the reader some basic information about the edition (how to use the notes, indexes, etc.). He affirms that the Qur'ān in its deepest meaning cannot be translated. Also, he writes that it should be interpreted as a whole and not be treated as a reference book with verses taken out of context. In the translation, he has also included explanatory additions to the text (in parentheses) as well as alternative translations [in square brackets].⁹⁷

In 2006, Ellen Wulff published a Danish translation of the Qur'ān.⁹⁸ Wulff is a Danish scholar specialized in Semitic Philology and especially Arabic. She has been teaching at various institutions including the University of Copenhagen, Odense University, Copenhagen Business School and Carsten Niebuhr Institute.

In her preface, Wulff first explains her choice to stick with the verse-numbering used in the Cairo-edition, the main reason being that it is the most used system in the Muslim world. Following the same reasoning, Wulff argues for the traditional order regarding the organization of the Suras. Even though it is possible to arrange them thematically or chronologically, the possible benefits would not be significant enough to justify such a big change.⁹⁹ Wulff writes that the Muslim tradition has been to produce a translation that follows the original as closely as possible and to use explanatory parentheses and notes, but this does not often result in the most readable text. Therefore, she has chosen not to use such additions. Wulff also writes that she has tried to preserve the styles and genres of the different Suras. About translating some specific terms (e.g., Allah, Islam, Mosque, Jihad), Wulff writes that she had chosen to use the meaning that the words had before they were institutionalized (God, submit oneself, prayer house, to struggle). Generally, she has aimed to produce a translation that will render the Arabic original in understandable contemporary Danish.¹⁰⁰

In 2009, Kåre Bluitgen, who is a Danish journalist and author, published the probably most controversial Danish version of the Qur'ān. He has described himself as a socialist and in his writings, he has urged the political left not to shy away from criticizing religion, be it Islam or something else. Before 2005, Bluitgen was finishing a children's book called *Koranen og profeten Muhammeds liv*, but had trouble finding an illustrator for the book, apparently because of possible hostile reactions from Muslims. These events inspired the

⁹⁷ Madsen 1989, XI-XIII

⁹⁸ I was only able to access the 2nd edition published in 2009.

⁹⁹ Wulff, 2009

¹⁰⁰ Wulff 2009, 9-12.

Danish newspaper Jyllands-Posten to publish its infamous Muhammad cartoons in 2005. His translation of the Qur'ān was published in 2009 with the title *Koranen Kommenteret*.

The translation includes a 24-page introduction where Bluitgen briefly discusses the relevance of the Qur'ān in the current world, the emergence, and collection of the texts, its interpretative tradition in the Islamic world and the grounds for his translation choices. The first thing to notice is that the Suras are arranged chronologically according to the Islamic tradition of Muhammad's life. Regarding this, Bluitgen writes:

The reasons for the chronological organization of this translation lies in the countless attempts by Muslim scholars to create a historically meaningful order of the Qur'ān's revelation history, and several Western scholars have aimed for the same goal. Among (Western) scholars, there is some agreement on the major lines, but no final consensus on a historically correct order has never been achieved, because, among other things, there are currently no scientifically credible, contemporary sources for the story of the Qur'ān's origin.¹⁰¹

Bluitgen admits having also consulted various other translations including Sale (1973), Rodwell (1861), Palmer (1880), Zetterstéen (1917), Yusuf Ali (1937), Bell (1937), Pickthall (1953) and Arberry (1964). The translation tries to keep close to the Arabic original but at the same time aim for a readable, contemporary Danish language. The introduction makes it clear that the writer is not aiming for a confessional interpretation even though it seems that Bluitgen tries to present the text especially as the Muslims view and interpret it. He finishes his introduction with the words:

This translation of the Qur'an does not claim to be religiously or scientifically correct but rather aims to be readable to the one who wants to know what the Qur'an is about. And as for the Qur'an, a great experience awaits the reader who "opens his breast", whether for the divine revelations or for the work of Muhammad ibn Abdullah; the man, who was not only the greatest Arab preacher of early Arabia, but also the author of a text that has had incredible significance for world history.¹⁰²

In 2014, Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse published a translation that was done as a joint project by Abdullah Simsek and Ahmed Onay. At the moment of writing Simsek is doing post-doc research in Ottoman History in a University of Copenhagen project called The Many Roads in Modernity. Ahmet Onay, who initiated the project, is the Chairman of Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse. According to an article in Kristeligt Dagblad, a Danish imam Abdul Wahid Pedersen and the professor emeritus Jørgen S. Nielsen also contributed to the

¹⁰¹ Bluitgen 2009, 13.

¹⁰² Bluitgen 2009, 30.

project. In the article, Onay explains that the new translation is not a criticism per se of the previous Danish versions but mainly an update to a more contemporary language. He believes that a Danish translation can also be of help in the integration of Muslims into Danish society.¹⁰³ In another article, Simsek also brings out the concern for Danish Muslims who cannot read Turkish (or Arabic):

We try to ensure that this translation of the Qur'ān is very precise and at the same time easy to read. We know that many Turkish children in this country have Danish as their primary language and do not speak Turkish so well. For that group, it is especially important that an edition of the Qur'ān exists in Danish.¹⁰⁴

In the short preface, Onay gives four principles that have guided the translation process:

The work has been carried out within the framework of the following overall method.

1. The distinctive world of the Qur'an and the meaning context are as far as possible tried to be preserved in the Danish translation.
2. To be true to the original Qur'anic content of the Qur'an in the translation.
3. Parentheses have been used in two ways: partly to clarify specific expressions in Arabic and partly to reproduce meaning which is implicit in the original text.
4. Footnotes have been used in limited numbers, and only when deemed necessary, for brief explanations of particular habits, religious practices, or historical events, to which the Quran often refers by using a single word.¹⁰⁵

Onay also writes that Simsek, who conducted most of the translation, also consulted "recognized interpretations of the Qur'ān," but these are not named. The text was revised by Imam Abdul Wahid Pedersen and Jørgen S. Nielsen.¹⁰⁶

In 2016, another Danish translation of the Qur'ān was published by Amér Majid. What makes Majid's translation special is the fact that it was simultaneously published as an audiobook, read by a Danish hip hop-artist Isam Bachiri from the group Outlandish. The translator, Amer Majid, who also works as a communications consultant, has previously written a popular book about Muhammad and has also criticized Kåre Bluitgen's controversial book on Muhammad as "islamophobic."¹⁰⁸ Majid writes that the goal of his translation was to

¹⁰³ Søndergaard 2013a.

¹⁰⁴ Søndergaard 2013b.

¹⁰⁵ Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse 2014, ix.

¹⁰⁶ Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse 2014, x.

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.berlingske.dk/kultur/en-uhæderlig-og-usaglig-beretning> Kassebeer 2006.

provide the Qur'ān in a "clear, fluid and easily understandable Danish and on up-to-date media platforms".¹⁰⁹ Therefore the book was published as an e-book as well as in audio format in addition to the traditional print format. According to the preface, this is "the first audio version of the entire Qur'ān in a Scandinavian language."¹¹¹ Majid writes that originally the Qur'ān was an oral tradition and is most naturally absorbed by hearing. The introduction uses a *ṣalawāt* symbol in Arabic calligraphy with the name of Muhammad. The printed version includes some occasional commentary that is separated from the text with parentheses. Majid writes that the project was done without any sponsorship from persons or institutions. Majid finishes the short preface with the statement that he and the narrator Bachiri both belong to Sunni Islam.¹¹²

¹⁰⁹ Majid 2016, vii.

¹¹¹ Majid 2016, vii.

¹¹² Majid 2016, viii.

4. The Analysis and Translations of Sura 101

In this section, I will introduce the Sura 101, its context and structure and also provide my translation of the Sura into English. I will then analyze the different Nordic translations in relation to the Arabic text and see what type of similarities and differences the translations produced.

This early Meccan Sura falls in the category of eschatological discourse.¹¹³ It describes the Judgement Day when according to the Islamic tradition, the dead are raised, and everyone is resurrected and rewarded according to his/her deeds. Historically, Muslim scholars have debated the issue of proper faith/belief and how much it, or the lack of it, will affect the scales. After the judgment, every person is then allotted either Paradise or Hell, the latter being described ambiguously as *hāwiya*¹¹⁴ in this Sura.

As I'm discussing Arabic and Nordic terms in English, I have chosen to use *Italic* for both Arabic and Scandinavian and "*Italic with quotations*" to signify my translations to English.

4.1 Transcription

al-qāri`atu

mā l-qāri`atu

wa-mā `adrāka mā l-qāri`atu

yawma yakūnu n-nāsu ka-l-farāshi l-mabthūthi

wa-takūnu l-jibālu ka-l-`ihni l-manfūshi

fa-`ammā man thaqulat mawāzīnuhū

fa-huwa fī `ishatin rāḍiyatin

wa-`ammā man khaffat mawāzīnuhū

fa-`ummuhū hāwiyatun

wa-mā `adrāka mā hiyah

nārun ḥāmiyatun

¹¹³ According to Neuwirth 2007, 110.

¹¹⁴ An ambiguous term sometimes interpreted as Hell. The term will be discussed later.

4.2 My translation

"The Final Blow!"¹¹⁵

What is the Final Blow?

And what would explain to you what it is like, the Final Blow?

*On that day, the people will be like moths, scattered,
and the mountains will be like wool, fluffed.*

*The one whose deeds weigh heavy on his scales
will have a pleasant life,
but the one whose deeds are light on his scales,
his home will be the Pit.*

*And what would explain to you what it is like?
It is a blazing fire".*

4.3 The Background and Structure of The Sura

In his article *Sound and Meaning in "Sūrat al-Qāri'a*, Sells (1993) divides the Sura into four parts based on rhythmic, grammatical and phonological parallelism and repetition.¹¹⁶ In my analysis, I will follow this structure and have named the sections according to their content in the following way:

- 1) The Introduction/Question (Q 101:1-3)
- 2) The Answer (Q 101:4-5)
- 3) The Explanation (Q 101:6-9)
- 4) The Ending (Q 101:10-11)

The length of the verses seems to be designed to form a diamond pattern, starting and ending gradually with shorter verses.¹¹⁷ The sections are marked by changes in end rhymes (*fāṣila*), sentence length and in content, fitting for the Qur'anic genre of rhymed prose called *saj'* in Arabic.¹¹⁸ The Sura centers around a repeated rhyme/sound-figure: *qāri'a* (v.1-3),

¹¹⁵ There are quite a few ways to translate *al-qāri'atu* and I will discuss it in the commentary. But to avoid ruining the visual representation of the form, I chose not to add additional translations to the text itself.

¹¹⁶ Sells 1993, 410

¹¹⁷ Sells 1993, 410.

¹¹⁸ Neuwirth 2007, 98.

rāḍiya (v.7), *hāwiya* (v.9), *hāmiya* (v.11) with emphasis on the terms referring to destruction/punishment.¹¹⁹ The Sura begins by repeating the word *al-qāri'atu* three times and progresses with rhymes occurring in increasing frequency towards the end.

The first section starts with repetition which is common in musical contexts. The line between poetry and music is an elusive one and differentiation of the two depends on the context. Neuwirth discusses this as the essential "orality" of the Qur'an, meaning that the text is best suited for recitation and being heard, and in my opinion, the structure of this sura supports the argument.¹²⁰ The three opening verses have a strong rhythmic and melodic nature, emphasizing the word *al-qāri'atu*, the great disaster that will capture the wicked.

Verses 4 and 5 answers the question posed. The verses rhyme almost word for word, creating a pair separated from the rest. The simile implied by the *ka*-particle gives further rhetorical emphasis to the verses.¹²¹ There also seems to be a case of paronomasia in the ending words *l-mabthūthi* and *l-manfūshi*. Both of the words describe the process of dismantling or breaking apart, and the use of similar words seems to emphasize this idea further.

The third part is structured around repetition in verses 6 and 8 and rhyming endings of 7 and 9. There is also a conditional structure with the particle *fa-* at the beginning of verses 6, 7 and 9 that ties the section together.

Verses 10-11 close the Sura by repeating the question of verse 3 almost word for word and also end the Sura with the word *hāmiyatun* which is similar to the opening word and title of the Sura. Some scholars have suggested that these two verses are later interpolations. Stewart (2011) discusses the suggestion by Richard Bell that the meaning of the term *hāwiya* in the original text was lost or unknown to the later reader and the formula *wa-mā 'adrāka* was then added with an explanation of the term.

Günter Lüling (2003)¹²² has introduced an interesting theory that the Sura was originally a Christian hymn and had a strophic composition. In his attempt to reconstruct "the original form" of the Sura he came to conclude that the last two verses are an interpolation. To give Lüling's lengthy and cumulative argumentation proper attention would mean to evaluate it as a whole and this is not a proper place for that. In his analysis, he seems to rely on some unwarranted statements such as: "Since the whole matter of pre-Islamic Arabic strophe poetry

¹¹⁹ *qāri'a* (Calamity, Final Blow, Striking blow), *rāḍiya* (pleasant), *hāwiya* (Hell, the Abyss, The Pit), *hāmiya* (hot).

¹²⁰ Neuwirth 2007, 104.

¹²¹ Beaumont 2001, "Simile".

¹²² The original work in German was published in the 70's

has consciously been blurred by Islamic tradition."¹²⁴Also, his "reconstruction" seems forced rather than a more natural structuring of the text, and it obstructs the parallelism in verses 4 and 5. It is certainly possible that the Sura originally had a different form, but Lüling's version is not very convincing. Though possible that the Sura was originally a Christian (or Jewish) hymn, with the available evidence this seems almost impossible to prove. The same kind of ambiguity seems to surround the speculation about interpolations in general. In my opinion, the form and structure of the Sura seem coherent enough as it stands. In any case, as this is the version that all of the translators use, I will not discuss this matter any further.

I will end this section with a quote from Sells who has beautifully summarized his interpretation of the Sura in the following words:

The proclamatory aspects of the text, the strange vocabulary, the semantic gaps, the cosmic perspective, establish a distance between text and audience. However, within the elusive discourse of sound-figures, something very different occurs. As the proclamatory surface of the text «breaks apart» into the sound-figures clustered around simple, basic sound-units such as *hā* and *mā*, a new mode of discourse is heard: whisperings, intimations, inferences, highly personal intonations of emotion and gender; it is as if the speaker, the hearer, and the subject of discourse were intimately known to one another. At this point, the immediacy of the text translates itself into sadness rather than awe; the sadness that comes with a personal realization of unavoidable loss. In this more personal mode of immediacy ornowness, fear is replaced by grief. This combination of a sense of awe with interior whisperings of intimacy and sadness may help account for the broadness of the sura's literary appeal (admired by classical exegetes and non-Muslim orientalist alike) and well as its distinctiveness as a form of apocalyptic discourse.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Lüling 2003, 200.

¹²⁵ Sells 1993, 429-430.

4.4 Commentary

4.4.1 The Introduction/Question (Q 101:1-3)

Q 101:1	al-qāri'atu ¹²⁶
Q 101:2	mā ¹²⁷ l-qāri'atu
Q 101:3	wa-mā 'adrāka ¹²⁸ mā l-qāri'atu

Finnish	Swedish	Norwegian	Danish
Böre 1942 1. Vyöryvä tuho! 2. Miten hirveä on vyöryvä tuho! 3. Ymmärrätkö, kuinka kauhea on vyöryvä tuho?	Crusenstolpe 1843 1. Den pulserande dagen! 2. hvad är den pulserande dagen? 3. Och hvad gör dig begripligt hvad den pulserande dagen är?	Berg 1980 1. Det knusende slag! 2. Hva er det knusende slag? 3. Hvordan kan du vite hva det knusende slag er?	Madsen 1967 1. Den (store) ulykke - 2. Hvad er den (store) ulykke? 3. Og hvad skal lære dig, hvad den (store) ulykke er?
Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist 1957 1. Jysähdys! 2. Mikä on jysähdys? 3. Tiedätkö mikä on jysähdys?	Tornberg 1874 1. Katastrofen – 2. hvad är katastrofen? 3. Huru vet du hvad katastrofen är?	Ahmad & Bajwa 1996 1. Den (store) ulykke – 2. Hva er den (store) ulykken? 3. Og hva skal fortelle deg hva den (store) ulykke er?	Wulff 2006 1. Tordenslaget. 2. Hvad er Tordenslaget? 3. Hvordan kan du vide, hvad Tordenslaget er?
Hämeen-Anttila 1995 1. Jysähdys! 2. Mikä on jysähdys? 3. Mistäpä tietäisit, mikä jysähdys on!	Zetterstéen 1917 1. Dunderslaget, 2. vad är dunderlaget? 3. Vet du ock, vad dunderlaget är?		Bluitgen 2009 1. Det Knusende Slag! 2. Hvad er Det Knusende Slag? 3. Og hvad skal lære dig, hvad Det Knusende Slag er?
	Ohlmarks 1963 1. Det fasaväckande ödesslaget. 2. Vad är det fasaväckande ödesslaget? 3. Vem kan lära dig inse vad det fasaväckande ödesslaget är?		Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse 2014 1. Dommens Dag. 2. Hvad er Dommens Dag? 3. Hvad ved du om Dommens Dag?
	Sadiqa 1988 1. Den Stora Olyckan! 2. Vad är den Stora Olyckan? 3. Och vad skulle låta dig veta vad den Stora Olyckan är?		Majid 2016 1. Braget. 2. Hvad er Braget? 3. Hvad kan få dig til at indse hvad Braget er?
	Asad & Bernström 1998 1. (EN DAG skall ni höra) det dundrande slaget! 2. Vad betyder det dundrande slaget? 3. Vad kan låta dig förstå vad detta dundrande slag betyder?		

¹²⁶ *al-qāri'atu*: root *q-r-*, nominative feminine noun with the definitive article.

¹²⁷ *mā*: interrogative noun

¹²⁸ *wa-*: conjunction prefix, *mā*: (see 101:2), *'adrāka*: root *d-r-y*, verb perfect 3rd person masculine singular (form IV)

Q 101:1 The Sura begins with a repetitive pattern that Sells has described with the term "semantic openness" that he defines in the following way: "By calling a particular locution semantically open I mean simply that it is indeterminate, lexically, syntactically, or in some other way, and to such a degree that its indeterminacy plays an important literary role".¹²⁹ This three-part structure is also used at the beginning of the Sura 69. There are also other parallels between the two suras that will be discussed later.

The word *al-qāri'atu* is a difficult one to translate, as is evident from the many different glosses found in translations. Sells has proposed that the ambiguous term serves as a literary device to draw attention, to create expectations and to bring out the phonological aspects of the text.¹³⁰ I found the most common rendering in English to be "*Calamity*," but the translation by Abdul Haleem (the *Crashing Blow*) seems more convincing. It seems to be implied by the context that the word refers to the Day of Judgement, but the literal meaning is something like "*the striking one*." The word *qar* also refers to a blow so hard that it produces noise. I think this is why Haleem has chosen to use the phrase "*Crashing Blow*." The fact that the word is used three times in a sequence at the beginning of a surah gives it extra emphasis and serves as a kind of "punch in the face" wake up call, or serious warning for the receiver. In English, Haleem's translation is difficult to improve upon, even though there are quite a few different ways to present the same idea ("*The Ear-drum-smashing Punch*," etc.). I believe that the rendering "*Final Blow*" would also be a suitable translation as the context implies that this will be something irreversible.

Most of the Nordic translations try to render the literal meaning in some way. All of the Finnish versions refer to an explosive event that produces a loud noise. Böre has translated the term as *vyöryvä tuho*, which in English means something like "*the rumbling destruction*" or "*the billowing destruction*." The term *vyöryvä* in Finnish has a sense of something heavy rolling forward by itself, a process, not a single event, which is somewhat different to the idea of a "*blow*," which seems more sudden. The term could also be interpreted to refer to some natural disaster, a sense that I think is not obvious in the Arabic text. Aro and Salonén have translated the term *al-qāri'atu* as *jysähdys*, which has a sense of loud noise or explosion. It can have the sense of a blow or a strike as well, and in that regard, it is a good choice in how it reflects the sense of the Arabic term. Hämeen-Anttila has used the same term.

Of the Swedish translations, only Zetterstéen and Bernström translate the literal meaning of the term. Both *Dunderslaget* and *det dundrande slaget* refer to a "*thundering*

¹²⁹ Sells 1993, 410.

¹³⁰ Sells 1993, 411.

blow." Bernström makes an addition "*On The Day you shall hear*" in parentheses, and the commentary explains that this is a reference to the Last Moments when the world is transformed. In Norwegian, Berg has chosen to translate it as *Det knusende slag* which is very similar to that of Haleem's English translation "*The Crashing Blow*." Bluitgen has used a translation similar to Berg, which in Danish happens to be the same rendering. Bluitgen also adds a commentary: "*One of the many terms for the Judgment Day: The day that will hit the hearts of all living beings like a crushing blow.*" Wulff has translated the term as *Tordenslaget*, which means basically "*Thunderstrike*" in Danish. Majid's Danish translation of *al-qāri'atu* with the term *Braget* means something like "*The Crash*" referring to explosive noise.

Some translations have chosen to use a more interpretative gloss. Some translations have incorporated the idea of the Judgement Day to the rendering of *al-qāri'atu*. Crusentolpe, for example, translates it as *Den pulserande dagen*, and explains in the commentary section: "*A day that is pulsating, a term for the Last Day and for the events that will happen.*"¹³² The translation of the Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse uses *Dommens Dag*, which literally means "*The Judgement Day*" and the choice is explained in a footnote: "*Qariah*" means what hits, cripples or shocks. Here the word is used as a term for the Day of Judgment".

Other translations refer to a calamity or a disaster. Sadiqa, Ahmad & Bajwa and Madsen all translate it in the style of "*The Great Disaster*." The obvious similarity between these translations is most probably due to the fact that they are all translations made by the Ahmadiyya community. In a somewhat similar vein, Tornberg has translated the term as "*The Catastrophe*."

Knowing the controversial reputation of Ohlmark as a translator, it is not a surprise that his translation is the only one standing out from the rest. Ohlmark has created his own term "*fasaväckande ödesslaget*" to translate the term *al-qāri'atu*. The meaning could be close to "the horrific blow of destiny."

Q 101:2-3 The verb *'adrāka*, form IV of the word "to know," here with a 2nd person pronoun suffix implies causation, "*cause you to know*." The urgency of the *al-qāri'atu* repeated three times suggests that it would be desirable to translate this ayat in a way that would communicate that. There is a sense of imminent threat cast by these opening verses. One possibility of translating the idea would be "*what would it take to make you understand*." The

¹³² Crusentolpe 1843, commentary section, p.26.

same question form is repeated in verse 10, and the translator needs to consider which rendering works best if choosing to maintain the parallelism. It should also be taken into consideration that the question and answer in verses 10-11 refer to the previous verse and this could be implied with a translation such as *"what would explain to you what it is like."* This meaning is implied by the context (the similes "like moths" Q 101:4, "like wool" Q 101:5).

In their rendering of verse Q101:3, the Nordic translations fall roughly into three categories. The minimalistic versions simplify the structure in the style of *"Do you know/understand what x is?"* (Böre, Aro et al., Zetterstéen). Some versions render the implied causation in the style of *"How do you know/understand what x is?"* (Hämeen-Anttila, Tornberg, Berg, Wulff) and most translations try to capture the whole idea with the type of formula *"What/who will make you understand what x is?"* (Crusenstolpe, Ohlmarks, Asad & Bernström, Sadiqa, Ahmad & Bajwa, Madsen, Bluitgen, Majid). There are also two translations that do not fit this categorization. The Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse also formulate the question in a somewhat similar style: *"What do you know about the Judgement Day?"*. Böre's translation also differs from the rest in that he adds the adjective *hirveä* ("*Terrible*") and has chosen to treat verse 2 as an exclamation rather than a question.

I noticed some language-specific consistencies. For example, none of the Finnish translations render the question in its full formulation. Also, none of the Danish translations were in the minimalist category. This might be the result from a language-specific tradition of translating, such as consulting older versions while translating, but still almost all of the translations render this verse somewhat differently. The only word-for-word parallel was in the Danish versions of Madsen and Bluitgen.

Regarding these three verses, one can notice the versions that consistently follow the Arabic in the strictest style. In Swedish, this would be the translations of Zetterstéen and Asad & Bernström, in Danish, Bluitgen, and Majid. None of the Finnish or Norwegian include both a literal translation of verses 1 and 3.

I thought it was also worth asking whether there were any tendencies to translate this section in a certain way that would be explained by the translators background. Some observations can be made, such as that the Ahmadiyya translations are similar and that the more recent "scientific" translations seem to stick with a quite literal rendering of the Arabic. Some of the translations by self-identified Muslims included explanatory additions, but there were others quite minimalistic as well. The translation by the Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse could be regarded as the most theologically oriented in its treatment of this section.

4.4.2 The Answer (Q 101:4-5)

Q 101:4 yawma yakūnu n-nāsu ka-l-farāshi l-mabthūthi¹³³

Q 101:5 wa-takūnu l-jibālu ka-l- 'ihni l-manfūshi¹³⁴

Finnish	Swedish	Norwegian	Danish
<p>Böre 1942</p> <p>4. Päivä, jolloin ihmiset ovat kuin hajoitettu sääksien parvi, 5. ja vuoret kuin keritty villa.</p>	<p>Crusenstolpe 1843</p> <p>4. En dag människorna varda liksom kringströdda mygg, 5. och bergen skola blifva liksom olikfärgade ulltappar.</p>	<p>Berg 1980</p> <p>4. Den Dag blir menneskene som flagrende mygg, 5. og fjellene som kartet ull!</p>	<p>Madsen 1967</p> <p>4. Den dag, da menneskene vi være som spredte møl, 5. og bjergene som kartet uld.</p>
<p>Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist 1957</p> <p>4. Päivänä, jolloin ihmiset liitelevät kuin perhoset 5. ja vuoret kuin nypityt villat,</p>	<p>Tornberg 1874</p> <p>4. En dag skola människorna fladdra omkring såsom kringspridde mal, 5. ock bergen varda såsom spräcklig, kardad ull.</p>	<p>Ahmad & Bajwa 1996</p> <p>4. Den dag, da menneskene vil være som spredte møll, 5. og fjellene som kartet ull.</p>	<p>Wulff 2006</p> <p>4. På den dag, hvor menneskene er som spredte møl 5. og bjergene som kartetede uldtotter.</p>
<p>Hämeen-Anttila 1995</p> <p>4. Päivä, jona ihmiset ovat kuin ylt'ympäri lojuvia yöperhosia 5. ja vuoret kuin karstattua villaa.</p>	<p>Zetterstéen 1917</p> <p>4. Den dag, då människorna varda som fladdrande myggor. 5. Och bergen som plockad ull.</p>		<p>Bluitgen 2009</p> <p>4. På den dag, da menneskene skal blive som spredte møl, 5. og bjergene som totter af kartet uld,</p>
	<p>Ohlmarks 1963</p> <p>4. På den dagen skall människorna skingras likt vindströdda knott 5. och bergen skall te sig som kardad ull.</p>		<p>Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse 2014</p> <p>4. Den dag vil menneskene være som sommerfugle, spredt (for alle vinde). 5. Og bjergene bliver som kartet uld.</p>
	<p>Sadiqa 1988</p> <p>4. Den dagen då människor kommer att vara som spridda fjärlar, 5. och bergen kommer att vara som kardad ull.</p>		<p>Majid 2016</p> <p>4. (Det er) På den dag hvor menneskene er som spredte møl, 5. og bjergene som kartede uldtotter.</p>
	<p>Asad & Bernström 1998</p> <p>4. (Det skall höras) den Dag då människorna myllrar och svärmar som mott och mal, 5. och då bergen (förvandlas) till högar av kardad ull.</p>		

¹³³ yawma: root *y-w-m*, accusative masculine time adverb, yakūnu: root *k-w-n*, verb 3rd person masculine singular imperfect, n-nāsu: root *n-w-s*, nominative masculine plural noun with the definitive article, ka-l-farāshi: root *f-r-sh*, genitive masculine noun with the definitive article and the prefix *ka*, l-mabthūthi: root *b-th-th*, genitive masculine passive participle with the definitive article

¹³⁴ wa-takūnu: root *k-w-n*, verb 3rd person feminine singular imperfect with the conjunction prefix, l-jibālu: root *j-b-l*, nominative masculine plural noun with the definitive article, ka-l- 'ihni, root *'-h-n*, genitive masculine noun with the definitive article and the prefix *ka*, l-manfūshi: root *n-f-sh*, genitive masculine passive participle with the definitive article.

Q 101:4-5 The *yawma* is in the accusative which I interpreted to support my use of the biblical formula "on that day."¹³⁶ This also brings out the intertextual connection to the biblical "Day of the Lord," a concept that seems to be shared by both scriptures. *Yakūnu* is an imperfect form, meaning non-past time but the context implies a future event rather than the present time. The word *l-manfūshi* could refer to the process of wool carding, where the fibers are prepared for making string. It's quite a strong image, God grinding or molding the mountains, like a piece of wool, to something formless.

In Arabic, verses 4 and 5 rhyme almost word for word, a feature that is difficult to translate and all of the Scandinavian translations have discarded this aspect of the text. The fact that translating rhymes is difficult does not mean it is impossible. At least in Finnish, it is not impossible to translate the verses with phonetically similar endings, e.g.:

4. Päivä, jona ihmiset ovat kuin koiperhosia hajalleen lyötyjä

5. ja vuoret kuin villoja pöyhittyjä

I'm not arguing that this would be a better translation but simply suggesting that a somewhat rhyming translation could be possible. Forcing the target text to rhyme may result in obscure word order or other undesired effects, and it is the translator that chooses (consciously or not) what aspects of the text are prioritized before others.

The imagery of "scattered moths" might not be very familiar to some Scandinavian readers. When visiting Egypt and Israel, I noticed that after the sunset, when darkness falls, one could see moths gathering towards any light that was available and sometimes one could see someone "scattering" them away. I thus think that the idea of this verse might be that of a result from action rather than a natural fact like some translations imply. The idea of wool carding also implies action, and even though God is not directly mentioned as the cause of these events in this Surah, in the Qur'ānic context this is an obvious assumption. Most of the Scandinavian translations express this idea in the style of "*are/will be like scattered mosquitoes/moths*" (Böre, Crusenstolpe, Sadiqa, Ahmad & Bajwa, Madsen, Wulff, Bluitgen, Majid, Dansk Tyrkisk Islamic Stiftelse).

Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist have chosen to translate the phrase *ka-l-farāshi l-mabthūthi* with the gloss *liitelevät kuin perhoset*, (in English "*fly around like butterflies*") which lacks the sense of scattering and destroying and rather brings to mind something tranquil and beautiful. In a similar vein, Zetterstéen's translation reads *fladdrande myggor*, "*fluttering*

¹³⁶ Sells (1993, 413) has rightly pointed out that the "*yawma*" could also be interpreted to refer to a "kind of non-linear time, a time not confined to a particular moment in the future".

mosquitoes" which to me feels somewhat weak and the lacks the majestic feel of the original. Berg has also used a similar expression in Norwegian (*flagrende mygg*).

Hämeen-Anttila has translated the verse as *kuin yltympäri lojuvia yöperhosia* (*like moths lying everywhere*) which is a quite dramatic rendering that in my opinion reflects the apocalyptic imagery of the Surah. The translation could also be interpreted to indicate that the people/moths are dead.

Tornberg's version reads *skola menniskorna fladdra omkring såsom kringspridde mal* which in English would read something in the style of "*people will flutter around like scattered moths,*" which bring to mind images of crowds running around in a state of panic.

Ohlmarks has translated *ka-l-farāshi l-mabthūthi* as *skingras likt vindströdda knott* ("*scattered like windblown midges*") which uses another neologism coined by Ohlmarks. Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse has also added a reference to the wind in parentheses (*for alle vinde*).

Asad & Bernström have chosen to add synonyms (*myllrar och svärmar som mott och mal*) to emphasize the destruction brought upon humanity. In the parentheses, there's an additional explanation ("*It will be heard*") that I assume to be a reference to the previous verses. The verse 5 is likewise a rather creative translation: *and then the mountains (transformed) into piles of carded wool*. The rhymes in these verses are not translated, but the added words give dramatic emphasis.

There are no significant differences in how most of these translations render verse 5 in that they express the idea "*and mountains will be like carded wool*." However, Crusentolpe has translated *och bergen skola blifva liksom olikfärgade ulltappar* ("*and the mountains will be like different colored tufts of wool* "). This meaning of "dyed wool" can indeed be found in the classic lexicon of Lane (1863) which was based on various medieval Arabic dictionaries and the *Tāj al-ʿArūs* by al-Zabidi from the 18th century. Lane was careful to note his sources and this meaning can be traced back to the dictionaries of al-Zabidi (1774) and al-Fayrūzābādī (1410).¹³⁸

¹³⁸ Lane 1863, 2185.

4.4.3 The Explanation of the Answer (Q 101:6-9)

Q 101:6 *fa-’ammā man thaqulat mawāzīnuhū*¹³⁹

Q 101:7 *fa-huwa fī ʿīshatin rāḍiyatin*¹⁴⁰

Q 101:8 *wa-’ammā man khaffat mawāzīnuhū*¹⁴¹

Q 101:9 *fa-’ummuhū hāwiyatun*¹⁴²

Finnish	Swedish	Norwegian	Danish
<p>Böre 1942</p> <p>6. Sen osana, jonka hyvien tekojen mitta on suuri, 7. on elämä täynnä tyydytystä, 8. mutta toisin käy sen, jonka hyvät teot vaa’assa keveiksi havaitaan, 9. hänen asumuksensa on oleva horna</p> <p>Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist 1957</p> <p>6. niin mitä häneen tulee, jonka vaakakupit ovat raskaat, 7. hän saa mieluisen elämän, 8. mutta mitä häneen tulee, jonka vaakakupit ovat keveät, 9. hän on kadotuksen oma.</p> <p>Hämeen-Anttila 1995</p> <p>6. Jonka punnukset ovat raskaat, 7. se saa suloisen elämän, 8. mutta jonka punnukset ovat keveät, 9. sen sija on Hawija.</p>	<p>Crusenstolpe 1843</p> <p>6. Beträffande den hvars vågskålar varda tunga, 7. han skall njuta ett angenämt lif; 8. Men den hvars vågskålar varda lätta, 9. hans boning blifver helvitets djup:</p> <p>Tornberg 1874</p> <p>6. Den, hvars vågskålar då nedtyngas, 7. får föra ett angenämt lif. 8. Men den, hvars vågskålar äro lätta, 9. hans bostad varder helvetet.</p> <p>Zetterstéen 1917</p> <p>6. Vad beträffar den, vars vågskålar äro tunga, 7. skall han få ett behagligt liv, 8. Men vad beträffar den, vars vågskålar äro lätta, 9. varder han en förlorad son.</p> <p>Ohlmarks 1963</p> <p>6. Den vilkens vågskål då sjunker tungt ner med goda gärningar, 7. han skall föra ett glädjefullt liv, 8. men den vilkens vågskål blir befunnen för lätt, 9. hans plats skall vara helvetets avgrund.</p>	<p>Berg 1980</p> <p>6. Den, hvis vetskåler er tunge, 7. vil gå til et godt liv! 8. Men den, hvis vetskåler er lette, 9. – Avgrunnen har omsorg for ham.</p> <p>Ahmad & Bajwa 1996</p> <p>6. Hva da den angår, hvis vetskåler er tunge (av gode gjerninger), 7. han vil da være i et salig liv. 8. Men hva angår den, hvis vetskåler er lette (av mangel på gode gjerninger), 9. Helvetes fang vil da være hans tilholdssted.</p>	<p>Madsen 1967</p> <p>6. Hvad da den ångar, hvis vægtskåle er tunge (af gode gerninger), 7. Han vil da være i et saligt liv. 8. Men hvad den ångår, hvis vægtskåle er lette (af mangel på gode gerninger) 9. Helvede vil da være hans moder.</p> <p>Wulff 2006</p> <p>6. Den, hvis vægtskåle er tunge, 7. lever et behageligt liv; 8. men den, hvis vægtskåle er lette, 9. hans moder er et helvedesdyb.</p> <p>Bluitgen 2009</p> <p>6. da skal den, hvis vægtskåle er tunge, 7. få et liv, der skal bekomme ham vel. 8. Men hvad angår den, hvis vægtskåle er lette: 9. Hans bolig skal være i Afgrunden.</p> <p>Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse 2014</p> <p>6. Den, hvis (gode handlingers) vægt vejer tungt, 7. vil få et tilfredsstillende liv. 8. Men den, hvis (gode handlingers) vægt vejer let, 9. vil få Helvedes afgrund som bosted.</p>

¹³⁹ *fa-’ammā*: prefix presumption and explanation participles, *man*: conditional noun, *thaqulat*: root: *th-q-l*, 3rd person feminine singular perfect verb, *mawāzīnuhū*: root *w-z-n*, nominative masculine plural noun with 3rd person masculine singular possessive noun

¹⁴⁰ *fa-huwa*: prefixed result particle and 3rd person masculine singular personal pronoun, *fī*: preposition, *ʿīshatin*: root *ʿ-y-sh*, genitive feminine indefinite noun, *rāḍiyati*, root *r-ḍ-w*, genitive feminine indefinite active participle

¹⁴¹ *wa-’ammā man*: (see 101:6) *khaffat*: root *k-f-f*, 3rd person feminine singular perfect verb, *mawāzīnuhū*: (see 101:6)

¹⁴² *fa-’ummuhū*: root *’-m-m*, nominative feminine singular noun with the 3rd person masculine singular possessive, *hāwiyatun*: root *h-w-y*, nominative feminine indefinite active participle

Sadiqa 1988

6. Då, när det gäller den vars vikter
är tunga,
7. – han kommer att få ett behagligt
liv.
8. Men när det gäller den vars vikter
är lättä,
9. kommer Helvetet att bli en moder
för honom.

Asad & Bernström 1998

6. Då skall den vars vågskål (med
goda handlingar) väger tungt
7. gå till ett liv i salighet;
8. men den vars vågskål väger lätt
9. skall se sig innesluten i en
avgrund.

Majid 2016

6. Den hvis vægtskåle er tunge (af
godhed),
7. vil gå til et behageligt liv.
8. Men den hvis vægtskåle er lette,
9. ham vil (helvedes)dubete drage
omsorg for.

Q 101:6, 8. The Arabic verses form two pairs that are structurally and phonetically almost parallel. The endings of verses 7 and 9 (*rāḍiya*, *hāwiya*) also form a rhyme with the opening term *qāri`a* and the *ḥāmiya* in the last verse.

The Nordic translations have some variation in how they have translated the *fa-`ammā man/ wa-`ammā man* structures. There are some that have chosen a translation in the style of "regarding/concerning him/the one whose" (Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist, Crusenstolpe, Zetterstéen, Ahmad & Bajwa, Madsen) and those with a more minimalist approach in the style of "The one/him whose" (Hämeen-Anttila, Tornberg, Berg, Wulff, Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse, Majid). Some have chosen a construction referring to time: "Then he/the one whose"(Asad & Bernström, Sadiqa, Bluitgen). Ohlmarks adds the image of "the scale under the weight of good deeds." Böre has chosen to add "The fate of the one whose" and has also added, "But another fate awaits that whose" at the beginning of verse 8 thus hiding the parallelism of these verses. Some translations have also translated verses 6 and 8 in a somewhat different style (Crusenstolpe, Tornberg, Bluitgen) but the rest have maintained the same structure in both verses. Ohlmarks again deviates from the rest with his translation "but the one whose scale is found to be light" which hints to an active process of evaluation.

Many of the Nordic translations add a mention about "good deeds" in these verses, but there is no mention of deeds, good or bad in the Arabic. The text simply says that "the scales" are heavy or light. The translations that add this to the text are all done by self-identifying Muslims (Böre, Asad & Bernström, Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse, Majid), the only exception being Ohlmarks. Interestingly, the Ahmadiyya translations differ in this regard as Sadiqa does not make this addition. It is also interesting that Majid has added "of goodness," but the rest add "of good deeds/actions". A subtle but significant difference when considering

the ethical application of this surah. One can spend a lifetime pondering the philosophical question whether someone can do "good deeds/actions" without "goodness" and what is the relationship of the two and the difference is ultimately a matter of interpreting these terms. But I think that a point can be made, that "good actions" has a more outwardly oriented connotation than "goodness", which is a broader term that can also be understood as a more virtue oriented rendering. It is also striking that none of the non-identifying-Muslim translators (except Ohlmarks) make this addition, a fact that in my opinion reflects a different interpretation and view of the text.

Q 101:7 The Arabic text has some grammatical peculiarities, e.g. Sells has analyzed the interplay between gender forms in the Sura.¹⁴³ The meaning of this phenomenon is difficult to interpret, let alone translate as the Nordic languages lack the same possibilities to express gender.

The literal meaning of this verse is *He is in a pleasant/satisfying life*" or *He will have a pleasant/satisfying life*."¹⁴⁵ A word for word parallel of this verse can be found in Q 69:21 where it is followed by a description of a Garden with plenty to eat and drink. Most of the translations render this in a somewhat literal way with some variation in terms that describe the coming life. Hämeen-Anttila has translated the verse as *"He/she¹⁴⁶ will have a sweet life,"* but the adjective *suloinen* can also be translated as adorable, cute, happy or blissful. In a similar style, Crusenstolpe reads *"he shall enjoy a pleasant life."* With Tornberg they use the same term *angänäm*, which means pleasant, enjoyable, gratifying. Another term used in many translations is *behagligt* (Zetterstéen, Sadiqa) and *behageligt* (Wulff, Majid), which means comfortable, pleasing, sweet. Böre has translated the idea as *"life filled with satisfaction,"* and the Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse also uses a similar expression. Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist have used a rendering *mieluisen elämän*, which carry the meaning of a *"life that he/she*

¹⁴³ "The aspirate pronunciation of the feminine terms in verses 7, 9, 10, 11 sets up an incomplete assonance with the aspirate pronunciation of the masculine pronoun *hu* in verses 6 and 8. In effect, masculine and feminine endings are combined into a special aspirate ending. Gender is further underscored by the unusual use of *raḍiya*. The tafsir discussions take it in the sense of *marḍiya*, "pleasing to another," or *ḍātu riḍā* (having approval) rather than the sense of "one [fem] pleased" that it would take as a participle of *raḍiya*, "to be pleased". The plain sense meaning of the text seems to demand such an interpretation. However, the attempts to justify this grammatically unusual interpretation of *raḍiya* have resulted in the most tortured explanations. When viewed from the context of the gender interplay within the sura, the more customary meaning of *raḍiya*, a participial form for one (fem.) who is pleased—a meaning which is semantically displaced in a very unusual fashion—will echo within the texts as an undertone, and will echo most strongly with that other feminine participial adjective with which it is phonically, metrically, and grammatically parallel, *hāwiya*". (Sells 1993, 417-418)

¹⁴⁵ I will discuss the issues of time and gender in the last part of this analysis.

¹⁴⁶ The Finnish pronouns are neutral regarding gender.

likes/wants/enjoys." Ohlmarks has chosen to use "joyful", and Berg has translated the idea simply as "good life." Bluitgen has used a rendering that hints towards *well-being*. A translation that stands out from the rest is that of Asad & Bernström which reads (*goes on to live in salvation/blessedness/happiness*). The term *salighet* used by Asad & Bernström has a biblical connotation to it, similarly as the word *avgrund* (*abyss/perdition/hell*) they have chosen in verse 9. Two of the Ahmadiyya translations use a somewhat similar expression *salig/saligt liv* (Ahmad & Bajwa, Madsen) which could be translated as "blissful life."

Q 101:9 The literal meaning of this phrase and the term *hāwiya* is debated. According to Stewart, the term is a cognate of the verb *hawā/yahwī*, "to fall,"¹⁴⁸ and Sells has argued for the interpretation that "It is the act of falling, not some topographically defined place of punishment, that is most prominent."¹⁵⁰ Referring to the dictionary of al-Zabidi (1774) Lane (1863) has defined the term as "An Abyss; a depth, or deep place, of which the bottom cannot be reached."¹⁵² Badawi & al-Halīm (2007) define the meaning as "the Abyss, bottomless pit of Hell."¹⁵⁴ Depending on the classification of this term as either a verb or a noun, the phrase can be understood as saying: "His mother shall perish"¹⁵⁵, "His mother will be the *hāwiya/Pit*"¹⁵⁶, or "His mother will mourn (the death of her child)"¹⁵⁷, but the term *'ummuhū* could also be understood in an idiomatic sense meaning one's dwelling, home, abode. Stewart discusses the debate surrounding this term in his entry in the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*, and I will try to summarize the main points here. Traditionally this verse has been explained in this sense as "refuge/home," but there is also a tradition that interprets this verse as referring to "the crown of the head" and the verse would then mean that the sinner will fall on his head or something in a similar fashion. None of the translations in this thesis have adopted this interpretation. The third line of tradition interprets this to be an idiomatic expression or a curse in the style of "Then his mother will fall" as there are examples like this in the Arabic tradition eg. *hawāt ummuhu* ("his mother has fallen" or "May his mother fall"), *thakalatka ummuka* ("May your mother be bereft of you").¹⁵⁸ Modern scholars have also debated about the correct interpretation of this verse, some supporting the latter traditional interpretation

¹⁴⁸ Stewart, "Pit". Stewart 2004, 100.

¹⁵⁰ Sells 1993, 421.

¹⁵² Lane 1863, 3046.

¹⁵⁴ Badawi & al-Halīm 2007, 997.

¹⁵⁵ Bellamy 1992, 485.

¹⁵⁶ Sells 1993, 418.

¹⁵⁷ Hämeen-Anttila 1997, 223.

¹⁵⁸ Stewart, "Pit".

with the suggestion that the verses that follow are a later interpolation (Sprenger, Fischer, Goldziher) while others (such as Torrey) reject the interpolation hypothesis on the basis of literary form (the rhymes and structure of the Sura is not uncommon) and the Qur'ānic usage of ambiguous language and puns. Torrey has suggested that the text intentionally refers to both, the idiomatic sense in the style of *hawāt ummuhu* and Hell at the same time. Torrey has also suggested that *hāwīya* is a loanword from Hebrew (*hōwā*, "disaster") but this view has been questioned (Bell, Paret). According to Stewart, the most plausible interpretation is the idiomatic sense. He suggests that the term should be seen as a metaphor for final refuge as this, according to him is in line with the passages of the Qur'ān. ¹⁵⁹

Hämeen-Anttila has proposed for the interpretation "His mother will mourn (the death of her child)." ¹⁶⁰ One of the problems of this interpretation is the relationship to the question and answer in verses 10, and 11 and Bellamy has argued that the answer in verse 10, "it is a blazing fire" supports the idiomatic reading. He also finds it to be in contradiction with Qur'ānic ethics that a mother would be punished for her child's behavior. ¹⁶¹ Hämeen-Anttila writes that there are many incidents in the Qur'ān where a question is left unanswered or is answered indirectly, and when this is taken into account, the verses fit the style of the question/allusion pattern. ¹⁶² Also, I don't see any reason, why the pain of losing a child could not be described as feeling like a blazing fire?

Another explanation comes from Bellamy, who has argued that the phrase was originally *fa-`ummatun hāwīyah*, "then a steep course downward (sc. into hell shall be his)". ¹⁶³ He attempts to prove this by grammatical, rhetorical and paleographical reasons. His argument mostly relies on the assumption that his solution is not paleographically impossible. He asserts correctly that diacritics and vowel-signs were not used in the earliest form of the text and he proposes that by altering the vocalization and placing the dots above the *h* his reading becomes plausible. Why this was later changed, was according to Bellamy, because of the association with the expression *hawāt ummuhu* ("May his mother be bereft of him"). ¹⁶⁴ His other argument relies on this possibility, and in its defense, Bellamy argues that it solves the grammatical and rhetorical problems in the text. But the main problem with his argument is the lack of any hard evidence or manuscripts that support this reading, and the earliest

¹⁵⁹ Stewart, "Pit".

¹⁶⁰ Hämeen-Anttila 1997, 223.

¹⁶¹ Bellamy 1992, 485.

¹⁶² Hämeen-Anttila 1997, 223.

¹⁶³ Bellamy 1992, 486.

¹⁶⁴ Bellamy 1992, 487.

manuscripts with diacritics support the text in its current form as Bellamy admits. My conclusion is that his proposal is too far-fetched.

Sells has argued that the word *hāwiya* is purposefully ambiguous and would be best left untranslated. He has suggested for a translation "His mother will be *hāwiya*."¹⁶⁶ This is of course always an option with words that are hard or impossible to translate, but would not serve the casual reader without additional information. Stewart suggests that if the word form is determined by the poetic intention, then the word may be a cognate substitution for *huwwah* or *mahwāh* and would thus mean "the abyss" in general.¹⁶⁷

It is not the aim of this thesis to define what this verse "originally meant" and thus I conclude that the text gives possibilities for various interpretations. It is also possible that the author chose the term *hāwiya* because of its ambiguity.

Only three of the translations refer to mother. Of the Ahmadiyya translation, Sadiqa and Madsen translate the verse in the style of "*Hell will become his mother*" but Ahmad & Bajwa have chosen to translate as "*The bosom/lap of Hell will be his dwelling place.*" It is interesting that not even the Ahmadiyya translations agree concerning the interpretation of this verse. Wulff translates the verse as "*His mother is the depth of Hell.*" Some translations try to incorporate the idiomatic sense as caregiving e. g. "*The Abyss takes/will take care of him*" (Berg, Majid).

The most common choice of the translators is to follow the idiomatic interpretation rendering the idea as "refuge/abode/place/home" (Böre, Hämeen-Anttila, Crusenstolpe, Tornberg, Ohlmarks, Bluitgen, Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse). Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist have translated the verse as "*belongs to perdition.*" Zetterstéen has translated the verse as *varder han en förlorad son* ("*he will be a lost son*") which brings to mind the New Testament narrative of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) and one can indeed find the same phrase used in some Swedish translations of the Bible.¹⁶⁸ It is interesting to speculate how this imagery would affect the interpretation of this Sura as the Prodigal Son narrative is (in my experience) usually interpreted to be about forgiveness and grace regardless of good or bad deeds. In my opinion, Zetterstéen's choice of translation could thus be regarded as somewhat misleading in a Scandinavian context. Asad & Bernström writes in a footnote that the literal meaning of the verse is "*His mother will be the abyss,*" but the word (*umm*) is used idiomatically as

¹⁶⁶ Sells 1993, 418.

¹⁶⁷ Stewart 2011, 329.

¹⁶⁸ At least *Bibel 2000: Gamla testamentet, Apokryferna, Nya Testamentet*. Uppsala: Marcus förlag.

concealing/embracing/enfolding something. The translation Bernström has adopted reads "*will see himself enclosed in the abyss.*"

Regarding the translation of the term *hāwiya*, most translators have chosen to render it as "*Hell*" (Tornberg, Sadiqa, Ahmad & Bajwa, Madsen), some adding "the depth of Hell" (Crusenstolpe, Wulff, Majid) and some "the abyss/perdition of Hell" (Ohlmarks, Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse). The terms *avgrund* (Ohlmark, Asad & Bernström), *avgrunnen* (Berg), *afgrund* (Bluitgen, Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse) and *kadotus* (Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist)¹⁶⁹ are also used in Bible translations to refer to Perdition, Hades or the Abyss and bearing the sense of life without God, darkness, Hell and a place or state of lostness and emptiness depending on the context.

Böre has translated the term as *horna* which is an old Finnish word for Hell or the underworld. The word is not very common in contemporary Finnish. It is used once in the 1933/38 Finnish Bible¹⁷⁰ in a somewhat synonymous sense with *tuonela*, not originally a Christian concept which has a somewhat similar meaning of that of Hades, the dwelling place of the dead. The fact that the Finnish translators used these terms for referring to biblical ideas makes it difficult to speculate how people understand this term. To translate an ambiguous word with a similarly multi-layered Finnish term could of course also be a deliberate choice.

Only Hämeen-Anttila has left the ambiguous term *hāwiya* untranslated. In his commentary, Hämeen-Anttila states that the concept of Judgement according to works was shared all over the Middle East.¹⁷¹ According to him, it is quite likely that instead of the traditional interpretation of *hāwiya* as a proper noun for Hell, the verse meant "*his mother will grieve (the death of her child).*" This is a plausible translation of the ambiguous verse and Hämeen-Anttila claims that this would be in line with the often neglected qur'ānic phenomenon where rhetorical questions are often answered indirectly or with allusions.¹⁷² According to this interpretation, the verses 10 and 11 would be this kind of question-allusion pair. He gives no explanation as to why he has still chosen to translate the verse in line with the traditional interpretations as "*His place shall be Hawija*".

It seems that there is quite a lot of variation in how this verse is interpreted and translated even among those who identify as Muslims. It is interesting to note that those who hold on to the literal interpretation in reference "mother" are scholars such as Wulff and

¹⁶⁹ In their commentary section, they explain that the verse literally means "*His/her mother will become childless*". Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist 1980, 543.

¹⁷⁰ Proverbs 27:20

¹⁷¹ Hämeen-Anttila 1997, 223.

¹⁷² Hämeen-Anttila 1997, 223.

Hämeen-Anttila (in his commentary) and the Ahmadiyya translators Sadiqa and Madsen. Chronologically it is also possible that both Sadiqa and Wulff were familiar with Madsen's previous Danish translation and that it influenced their translation choices.

4.4.4 The Ending (Q 101:10-11)

Q 101:10 wa-mā 'adrāka mā hiyah¹⁷³

Q 101:11 nārun ḥāmiyatun¹⁷⁴

Finnish	Swedish	Norwegian	Danish
Böre 1942	Crusenstolpe 1843	Berg 1980	Madsen 1967
10. Tiedätkö, mikä horna on?	10. Men hvad gör dig begripligt	10. Og hvordan kan du vite hva det	10. Og hvad skal lære dig, hvad det
11. Se on polttava tuli.	hvad det är?	er?	er?
	11. En brännande eld!	11. Det er het ild!	11. En svidende ild.
Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist 1957	Tornberg 1874	Ahmad & Bajwa 1996	Wulff 2006
10. Tiedätkö mitä se on?	10. Vet du ock, hvad det betyder?	10. Og hva skal fortelle deg hva det	10. Hvordan kan du vide, hvad det
11. Se on polttava tuli.	11. En lågande eld.	er?	vil sige?
		11. (Det er) en flammende ild.	11. En hed ild!
Hämeen-Anttila 1995	Zettersteen 1917		Bluitgen 2009
10. Mistäpä tietäisit, mitä se tarkoittaa!	10. Vet du ock, vad detta är?		10. Og hvad skal lære dig, hvad
11. Hehkuvaa tulta!	11. Jo, brinnande eld.		Afgrunden er?
	Ohlmarks 1963		11. En rasende ild!
	10. Men vad skall kunna lära dig begripa vad helvetets avgrund är?		Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse 2014
	11. En brinnande eld.		10. Og hvad ved du om dette?
	Sadiqa 1988		11. Det er en flammende ild.
	10. Och vad skulle låta dig veta vad det är?		Majid 2016
	11. Det är en flammande Eld.		10. Hvad kan få dig til at indse hvad det (dyb) er?
	Asad & Bernström 1998		11. (Det er) En held ild!
	10. Och vad kan låta dig förstå vad denna (avgrund) betyder?		
	11. En (famn av) het eld!		

¹⁷³ wa-mā 'adrāka mā: (see 101:3), hiyah: 3rd person feminine singular personal pronoun

¹⁷⁴ nārun: root n-w-r, nominative feminine indefinite noun, ḥāmiyatun: root h-m-y, nominative feminine indefinite active participle.

Q 101:10-11 The question and answer refer to the *hāwiya* in verse 9 as is implied by the congruence of the feminine pronoun *hiyah* and the rhyming of the words *hāwiyatun* and *ḥāmiyatun*. The word form *hiyah* is an hapax legomena¹⁷⁵ and according to Sells, functions as a unique sound-figure in the phonetic structure of the sura.¹⁷⁶ The question-formulas in the verses 3 and 10 are parallel, and most of the Nordic translations maintain this parallelism (Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist, Hämeen-Anttila, Crusenstolpe, Zetterstéen, Asad & Bernström, Sadiqa, Berg, Ahmad & Bajwa, Madsen, Wulff, Bluitgen, Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse, Majid). Böre differentiates the questions by translating verse 10 as "*Do you know*" compared to verse 3 "*Do you understand how terrible.*" Tornberg has translated the implied causality of the question in verse 3 but translates the verse 10 simply as "*Do you know.*" Ohlmarks uses a structure "*But what would be able to teach you*" as opposed to the question in verse 3 "*Who can teach you to understand.*"

Verse 11, *nārun ḥāmiyatun* literally means "*a hot fire,*" and some Nordic versions have translated it in this style (Berg, Wulff, Majid). According to Sells, this verse has been used to justify the interpretation of *hāwiya* as Hell in some classic commentaries. But as Sells points out, this interpretation is not obvious as the phrase, lacking the definitive article, simply refers to "a fire" and not "the fire". He also makes the observation that the question formula in verse 10 also leaves room for the interpretation that this "fire" somehow will/can teach the reader what the *hāwiya* is.¹⁷⁷ If one takes to account the intertextual references to Biblical literature, e. g. the story in Exodus where Yahweh speaks to Moses through a burning bush, this interpretation might not be too far-fetched. Some translations have rendered the phrase in a way that does not obscure this ambiguity (Crusenstolpe, Ohlmarks, Asad & Bernström, Berg, Madsen, Bluitgen) but some translators add an explanation in parentheses that seems to deny this interpretation (Ahmad & Bajwa, Sadiqa, Majid).

Many translators have chosen a rendering in the style of "*a fire that burns/burning fire*" (Böre, Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist, Crusenstolpe, Zetterstéen, Ohlmarks). This sense can have two somewhat overlapping meanings: it can function as a descriptive/adjective phrase and refer to a fire that is so hot that it will/can burn or it can be interpreted in a verbal sense as

¹⁷⁵ Toorawa 2011, 218.

¹⁷⁶ "The final rhyme in a pronounced aspiration, /h/, is distinctive in that it can allow the masculine pronominal suffix and the feminine participial marking to be pronounced in the same manner. Such a collapse of normally incompatible gender signs brings the issue of gender marking to a more prominent role. Just in case the gender issue might have been lost on the hearer, two examples of the masculine pronominal suffix, pronounced as /h/, are placed in an alternating sequence with the main rhyme. Further dramatizing the issue is the /h/ at the end of *hiyah*, which has no grammatical function and which the commentators are at a loss to explain beyond attributing it to a dialectical difference". (Sells 1993, 422)

¹⁷⁷ Sells 1993, 426-427.

already burning something. The phrase evokes imagery of pain and suffering as anyone who has accidentally suffered even minor burns knows.

Others point to "*a flaming fire*" (Tornberg, Sadiqa, Ahmad & Bajwa, Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse) which in my opinion is a more visual image. The associations that came to mind when reading these translations was that of something big burning with big flames, a house or city on fire or images of war. Hämeen-Anttila has described the fire as *hehkuvaa* which can mean "*glowing*" but also "*incandescent*" or "*fiery*." Madsen reads *svidende ild*, "*a scorching fire*," which has the sense of destroying or burning to ashes. He explains in a footnote that the word *ḥāmiya* also means *brændende*, "*burning*" and *beskyttende* which means to protect or shield. Badawi & al-Halīm list many possible meanings for the root *ḥ-m-w/y* including the *sanctuary, protection, to protect, to rebel, to avoid; in-laws; to heat up, to become angry, hot-headedness, zeal, fervor, impetuosity*, but in this form, they define the meaning to a *blazing fire*.¹⁷⁸ This does not exclude other interpretations, e.g., Asad & Bernström add in parentheses (*famn av*), with which the phrase reads something like "*The hug/lap/embrace of hot fire*," which is a possible and interesting metaphor when considered together with the maternal language of verse 9. The included commentary explains that the Qur'ān uses metaphors to describe the pain of the punishment for sin that is incomprehensible otherwise to the human mind.¹⁷⁹

4.5. The Form, Structure, Time and Grammatical Gender in The Translations

In this section, I will briefly discuss the form and structure of the Sura in the translations compared to the Arabic text. As was noted already in section 4.3, the Sura can be divided into four parts based on rhythmic, grammatical and phonological parallelism and repetition¹⁸⁰ and that the length of the verses is designed to form a diamond pattern, starting and ending gradually with shorter verses.¹⁸¹ The sections are marked by changes in end rhymes (*fāṣila*), sentence length and in contents, fitting for the Qur'ānic genre of rhymed prose called *saj'* in Arabic.¹⁸² The Sura centers around a repeated rhyme/sound-figure: *qāri'a* (v.1-3), *rāḍiya* (v.7), *hāwiya* (v.9), *ḥāmiya* (v.11) with emphasis on the terms referring to destruction/punishment.

¹⁷⁸ Badawi & al-Halīm 2007, 238.

¹⁷⁹ Asad & Bernström 1998, 932.

¹⁸⁰ Sells 1993, 410

¹⁸¹ Sells 1993, 410.

¹⁸² Neuwirth 2007, 98.

Regarding the divisions or the four parts, none of the Finnish translations divide the text in any visible way. All of the printed versions present this Sura on one page with verse numbers. The layout of the Sura in the printed copies does not resemble or imitate the diamond form¹⁸³ and is laid out on one page in all Finnish version. The visual appearance seems similar to Finnish poetry books, and no ornamental decorations are included, which would be typical in the Arabic context. None of the Finnish translators have tried to produce rhymes in the target language, but the overall impression of the Sura in Böre and Hämeen-Anttila could be considered leaning towards a more poetic style, while Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist aims for a simpler expression.¹⁸⁴

The earliest Swedish translations (Crusenstolpe, Tornberg, and Zetterstéen) have multiple Suras on one page, and in Tornberg the verses are all crammed together as a single paragraph. They also follow a different system of verse numbering that divides the Sura into 8 *āyah*. In Ohlsmark, the text is on a separate page and as a single paragraph without verse numbers, removing the sense of form and structure almost completely. In the printed version of Sadiqa¹⁸⁵, the translated text is presented side-by-side with the Arabic, which is given on the left side of the page, making the diamond form somewhat visible. Asad & Bernström likewise present the Arabic text on a separate column, but the diamond form of the text is obscured. None of the Swedish translations divide the text to reflect the Arabic divisions in their layout or add visual decorations except Sadiqa, that has the name of the Sura printed in Arabic calligraphy on before the text. Regarding rhyme, none of the Swedish translators have tried to produce this feature in the target language.

The Norwegian translation of Berg has the Sura in one page that is beautifully decorated with geometric ornaments. The name of the Sura in Norwegian and the *bismillah* are located at the top of the page surrounded by decorations. Berg follows the verse numbering of Flügel and a diamond shape is somewhat visible. He has not marked any divisions in the text. The layout of the text in Ahmad & Bajwa is similar to that of Sadiqa. None of the Norwegian translations rhyme.

The Danish version of Madsen has a similar visual appearance as the other Ahmadiyya translations of Sadiqa and Ahmad & Bajwa. The name of the Sura is printed in Arabic

¹⁸³ Neither is this the case in many of the Arabic printed copies of the Qur'ān. But in the Islamic context, the oral recitation forms another important way of receiving the text. When recited, the form is often emphasized with tonal, rhythmic and melodic markers.

¹⁸⁴ As a native Finnish speaker, I decided that my lack of fluency in Scandinavian languages makes commenting on the stylistic features of the Swedish, Norwegian and Danish translations somewhat unwarranted.

¹⁸⁵ Sadiqa has also numbered the *bismillah*, which changes the total number of verses to 12.

calligraphy, and the Arabic text is positioned on the right column and thus makes the diamond shape visible. The printed version of the Danish Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse translation has many Suras on one page, but the diamond shape is somewhat visible. The translation of Majid shows a decorated column of the Arabic text running along with the translation and the short Suras are laid out on separate pages. The Sura in question is printed across two pages breaking the form that would be visible in the Arabic text. Wulff has the Sura on one page with the shape somewhat intact. None of the Danish translations rhymes either.

As an overall observation, it seems that none of the translations highlight the form and structure that is somewhat obvious in the Arabic text. As stated above, in some version the diamond form can be detected when one knows what to look for, but I assume that for the casual reader, this would not be obvious from the visual presentation of the text. Concerning rhyme, I am somewhat surprised that no one has tried to produce a rhyming translation. As was argued in the chapter about translation theory, there is no obvious relationship between the source text and the translation. This does not warrant free recreation of the text, but from the perspective of the Skopos theory, it can be considered whether the *communicative function* of the Sura is to create an emotional response or to lay out religious claims with dogmatic accuracy. From this perspective, it seems that all of the translators have considered the aspects of form and rhyme irrelevant regarding the communicative purpose of the text or in other words, have considered other aspects more relevant.

Regarding grammatical time and tense, the Arabic text could be interpreted as referring to a future event, but the text also allows for a more immediate or ambiguous timing. The translations can be positioned on a continuum from those with ambiguous timing and those who explicitly refer to a future event. Most of the translations fall in the latter category, if maybe not so strongly (Crusenstolpe, Tornberg, Zetterstéen, Ohlsmark, Asad & Bernström, Sadiqa, Ahmad & Bajwa, Madsen, Bluitgen, Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse, Majid). The translations of Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist and that of Berg can be regarded as somewhat future-oriented while the translations of Böre & Wulff could be regarded as somewhat ambiguous. In my opinion, Hämeen-Anttila is the only translation that can be viewed as consistently ambiguous in this regard. A slight trend that posits the Muslim-identifying translators towards future-oriented interpretation can be observed, while those that lean towards more ambiguous timing are mostly done by non-Muslim translators.

Regarding grammatical gender form, Sells (1993) has pointed out that there is a peculiar interplay in this Sura. To illustrate this, I have marked the masculine forms with a **bold** font and the feminine with an *italic* font with underlining in the following transcription.

al-qāri 'atu
mā l-qāri 'atu
wa-mā 'adrāka mā l-qāri 'atu

yawma yakūnu n-nāsu ka-l-farāshi l-mabthūthi

wa-takūnu l-jibālu ka-l- 'ihni l-manfūshi

fa- 'ammā man thaqulat mawāzīnuhū

fa-**huwa** fī īshatin rādiyatin

wa- 'ammā man khaffat mawāzīnuhū

fa- 'ummuhū hāwiyatun

wa-mā 'adrāka mā hiyah

nārun hāmiyatun

Sells focuses especially on the endings of verses 6-11, where the masculine pronoun *hū* in verses 6 and 8 is juxtaposed with the feminine forms that make up the ending rhymes of verses 7, 9, 10 and 11. According to Sells, it is especially the semantically unusual forms of *rāḍiya* and *hiyah* that suggest a specific function of gender forms in these verses.¹⁸⁶ In the words of Sells: "The seeming personification of *hāwiya*, the turn in its meaning that occurs within the phrase *mā hiyah*, adds to the sense of drama and intimates that the gender structure of the sura may be more than grammatical. Otherwise unremarkable and purely grammatical gender features in the previous verses now resonate in a new key".¹⁸⁷

This linguistic feature might be impossible to translate in some languages, as is the case in Finnish, with basically almost gender-neutral pronouns, nouns, and verbs. Swedish and Danish are similar in having two gender forms for nouns and pronouns, and Norwegian has three. But as it might be almost impossible to find a gender-matching rendering for a noun in the source language and the choice would possibly be at the cost of obscuring the meaning, I am not surprised that none of the translations seem to highlight this feature.

On the other hand, the feature of personification that Sells is pointing out, is possible, at least in Finnish, but none of the translations have tried to render this idea in the ambiguous sense that Sells means.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁶ Sells 1993, 417.

¹⁸⁷ Sells 1993, 421.

¹⁸⁸ Translation of the pronoun in verse 10 as "who/what she is".

In translating the gendered pronouns in verses 7 and 9, the translations differ. The Finnish versions are gender-neutral. Most of the Scandinavian translations (Crusenstolpe, Zetterstéen, Ohlsmark, Sadiqa, Ahmad & Bajwa, Madsen, Bluitgen) use a masculine pronoun in both verses whereas Tornberg, Berg, Wulff, and Majid have translated the verse 7 without a pronoun and use a masculine pronoun in verse 9. Asad & Bernström and Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse have chosen to translate the verses in a gender-neutral way.

4.6. Comments on Equivalence, Coherence, and Prioritization in the Translations

In addition to the detailed analysis of the text in the previous commentary, this section will be dedicated exclusively for comments on how the translational aspects of equivalence, coherence, and prioritization show up in the translations. As was explained in the chapter Theory and Method, the relationship between the source text and the target text can be framed with the concept of equivalence and its different dimensions as formulated by Werner Koller.

1. Denotative equivalence, which refers to the equivalence of content;
2. Connotative equivalence, which refers to the equivalence of emotional and associative responses in the reader/listener; the connotations can be linguistic, social, geographical, stylistic, pejorative and so on;
3. Text-normative equivalence, which refers to the extent to which the ST and TT fulfill the norms for their respective text types in each culture;
4. Pragmatic equivalence, which refers to the equivalence of communication function;
5. Formal aesthetic equivalence, which refers to the formal, artistic dimension of (mostly literary) STs and TTs.¹⁸⁹

It seems that in all of the translations, the primary guiding principle is what Koller defined as *denotative equivalence*. With the exception of Ohlsmark, it was surprising that all of the translations read as the somewhat *literal* rendering of the Arabic, with variation in interpretation and accuracy of course. The only translation that stands out from the rest in this regard is the version of Ohlsmark, who has presented the text in a style that could be described as prose poetry. With many original expressions and neologisms, the translation illustrates the vast possibilities and creativity of the translation process. In his translation, Ohlsmark might have been emphasizing another aspect of the source/target text relationship,

¹⁸⁹ as summarised by Williams 2013, 36.

namely the *connotative equivalence*, an attempt to produce an emotional and associative response that the text arouses, according to the interpretation of Ohlsmark.

Regarding the other three types of equivalence the *text-normative*, the *pragmatic* and the *formal*, with ancient texts these aspects become increasingly difficult to evaluate. The question of the original genre, for example, is sometimes hard to settle as there might be very limited evidence on corresponding text types from the same period. The genre and social function of a text can also change, especially when texts are assembled or redacted together in new compositions or collections. In reflecting the *pragmatic equivalence* in relation to a corpus like the Qur'ān, the translator must consider if he/she is aiming to translate the meaning that the text had originally (in some point of time) or the meaning that the text has now (in what context?). Considering how problematic these features are, it seems somewhat odd that the translators have neglected the aspect of *formal aesthetic equivalence*, that in my opinion could be produced. At least it does not seem impossible to envision a translation that utilizes literary devices like rhyme and visual presentation to some degree. This leads us to the final question of prioritization.

Regarding the prioritization of certain aspects of the text over others in the Nordic translation, I will return to what Reiß et al. pointed out in chapter two and to the list that they presented that consists of six pairs of conflicting aims that the translator faces.

1. A translation must give the words of the original.
2. A translation must give the ideas of the original.
3. A translation should read like an original work.
4. A translation should read like a translation.
5. A translation should reflect the style of the original.
6. A translation should possess the style of the translator.
7. A translation should read as a contemporary of the original.
8. A translation should read as a contemporary of the translator.
9. A translation may add to or omit from the original.
10. A translation may never add to or omit from the original.
11. A translation of verse should be in prose.
12. A translation of verse should be in verse.¹⁹⁰

I find some of these pairs somewhat overlapping with each other (and also with the taxonomy of Koller), but as an analytical tool, they can provide new insights when mirrored with the translations separately. Regarding the first pair (words vs. ideas of the original), it

¹⁹⁰Reiß et al. 2013, 38.

should be noted that the linguistic structure of Arabic is so different to the Nordic languages that a simple "word-for-word" translation is not even possible. The most revealing part of the sura from this point of view is verse 9, where the translator must choose whether to translate the grammatical or the idiomatic sense of the Arabic. In my opinion, the most "literal" rendering of the verse would be "*his mother is Hāwiya*," a gloss which none of the translations use. The closest one to this is the translation of Wulff and Hämeen-Anttila, then Sadiqa and Madsen, Ahmad & Bajwa and then the others who have interpreted the verse in an idiomatic sense one way or another.¹⁹¹ When this observation is compared with the translation of the other verses and how the aspects of time and gender are rendered, we can conclude that the translations of Wulff and Hämeen-Anttila are the most grammatically exact translations of this sura.

Hämeen-Anttila is also the shortest of the Finnish (and Nordic) translations with 46 words and 277 characters, with Wulff being the shortest of the Scandinavian versions with a word count of 56 and 278 characters. In word and character-count, the other Finnish translations come in the following order, from the shortest to the longest: Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist (51, 285) and Böre (63, 340). In word-count, the other Scandinavian translations come in this order: Tornberg (55, 296), Zetterstéen (58, 290), Berg (63, 270), Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse (66, 316), Crusenstolpe (66, 360), Majid (71, 305), Bluitgen (75, 325), Ohlsmark (79, 414), Madsen (82, 350), Sadiqa (84, 357), Ahmad & Bajwa (84, 374), Asad & Bernström (90, 416). Most of the last ones in this list are translations by self-identifying Muslims with explanatory comments embedded within the text.¹⁹²

The juxtaposition "a translation should read like an original work vs. like a translation" is somewhat hard to conceptualize in reference to the Qur'ān and its translations but I would argue that only the translation by Ohlsmark fits in the first category while all of the others read like a translation. I encounter a similar difficulty regarding the question of whether these translations read as "a contemporary of the original" or as "a contemporary of the translator."

Regarding the Qur'ān, we are dealing with a text that is more than a thousand years old but still "contemporary" in the Islamic context. From a historical perspective, I think it is safe to say that no one probably reads it like it was read a thousand years ago. On the other hand, none of the translations read like fresh creations of a contemporary author, in my opinion. In most of the translations (maybe with the exclusion of Ohlsmark) the style could be seen as resembling a "biblical" style, especially the prophetic books of the Old Testament.

¹⁹¹ As explained in the commentary section 4.4.3.

¹⁹² Asad & Bernström, Ahmad & Bajwa, Madsen, Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse, Majid.

5. Conclusions

The aim of this thesis has been to answer at least the following questions: How is the *Sūrat al-Qāri‘a* (Q 101) rendered in the Nordic translations of the Qur’ān? What are the similarities and differences between the different translations? In what ways, do the different translations relate to the *source text*? What aspects of the *source text* are prioritized by the translators?

Chapter two discussed the theoretical framework of this study. As the aim was to describe and compare different translations of an ancient text, the problem was framed within *translation studies*. The underlying philosophical problem of *equivalence* (how exactly should we conceptualize the relationship of two texts written in different languages) was first discussed in relation to the theory of Eugene Nida as presented in his *Towards a Science of Translation* (1964). The focus was then turned towards the concept of *understanding*, which was reflected in discussion with the hermeneutical observations of Hans-Georg Gadamer in his *Truth and Method* (1960). Lastly, *The Skopos Theory* of translation (formulated by Katharina Reiß and Hans J. Vermeer) was introduced as a pragmatic (both philosophically and methodologically warranted) solution to the problems anticipated by the works of Gadamer and Nida.

The most relevant insights from this reflection were that there is no *obvious* relationship between the source text and a translation, but that a translation should also be viewed as a contextual *communication event* driven by a *skopos*; a communicative function or purpose. Also, the reflection leads into a realization about the *hermeneutical* character of this research project per se, and to a view of *understanding* as both *agreeing* (social dimension) and also an infinite and limitless, ever-growing and ever-expanding feature of the learning mind (subjective dimension).

Chapter three introduced the sources: three Finnish translations of the Qur’ān (Böre 1942; Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist 1957; Hämeen-Anttila 1995), six Swedish (Crusenstolpe 1843; Tornberg 1874; Zetterstéen 1917; Ohlsmark 1963; Sadiqa 1988; Asad & Bernström 1998), two Norwegian (Berg 1980; Ahmad & Bawja 1996) and five Danish translations (Madsen 1967; Wulff 2006; Bluitgen 2009; Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse 2014; Majid 2016).

Chapter four first presented a transcription, and a translation of the *Sūrat al-Qāri‘a* (Q 101) and then discussed the background and form of the Sura in Arabic, which can be divided into four parts based on rhythmic, grammatical and phonological parallelism and repetition. The Sura has a diamond-shaped visual form, and many of its verses rhyme almost in a word-

for-word manner. Verse 9 of the Sura posits a dilemma for the translator, as it seems to warrant multiple differing interpretations.

Chapter four continues with a detailed commentary (which is divided into four parts according to the divisions of the Arabic text) of the translations. The texts are juxtaposed with the Arabic version and compared with each other. The chapter ends with two summarizing sub-sections, of which the first comments on the form, structure, time and grammatical gender in the translations. This study shows that none of the translations highlight the form and structure that is somewhat obvious in the Arabic text. The same can be argued for the rhythmic and rhyming style of the Arabic compared to the translations. It seems that all of the translators have considered the aspects of form and rhyme irrelevant regarding the communicative purpose of the text or in other words, have considered other aspects more relevant. At this point, one could ask why this is the case? From the perspective of the *skopos theory*, one could speculate if this is due to the sacred status of the text for the worldwide Muslim community, and even though the non-muslim translators are not restricted to hold a certain view of the *function* and *purpose* of the text, (for some reason) they still hold on to a somewhat similar view?

The final sub-section of chapter four comments on the translational features of equivalence, coherence, and prioritization in the translations. Even though the translations might seem very similar in quick reading, a more thorough reading of the texts highlights some significant differences as well. The most uniform group of translations was the ones produced by the Ahmadiyya translators, but there were some differences, the most significant in my opinion being the difference in how they rendered verse 9. Regarding this verse, I was surprised that even among translators that identify themselves belonging to the same religious community, there seemed to be no consensus about how this verse should be translated. In general, even as there were some tendencies that could be related to the background or tradition of the translators, their treatment of this verse seemed surprisingly diverse. In regarding the translation of other verses, the translations could be grouped somewhat differently depending on the verses in question.

That being said, based on the analysis and previous observations, the translations can be grouped in various ways. Hämeen-Anttila and Wulff could be seen as the most grammatically exact and minimalistic translations. At the other end of the spectrum, I would place the translation of Ohlsmark with its creative language and free form. Regarding whether there are differences between translations done by self-identifying Muslims and the others, some slight tendencies can still be observed. The Muslim translations lean towards a future-oriented

interpretation of the ambiguous tenses of the Arabic. They also tend to be a bit more wordy and willing to add explanatory additions within the text that are not always marked as commentary.

Regarding the style and language of the translations, I argued that, even though the language might be modern in the newest translations, none of them read like something written by a contemporary author. Rather, the literal style (excluding Ohlsmark) of the translations resembles that of the Bible, especially as some of them use vocabulary similar to that of some Bible translations. One interesting trait for further study would be the effect of this stylistic choice: how does this "biblical-like" form of the text affect the reception of the text?

I admit the limitations involved in working with so many languages and contexts in this thesis. I was not able to incorporate all of the existing versions of the Qur'ān in Nordic languages, for example, the Icelandic translation and the translation-commentary of Tahir-ul-Qadri that exists translated to (at least some) Nordic languages. Not being restrained by time and page-count, I could also have focused more deeply into the possible biblical intertextualities and allusions in the translations.

Still, I think this study has the potential to expand the readers' understanding of the reception of the Qur'ān in the Nordic countries. Some readers might not even be aware that so many translations exist and there is a translation history of the Qur'ān in the Scandinavia that spans over three centuries. In my opinion, this thesis has also pointed out many of the complexities that are involved in translating ancient texts that still hold a sacred status in many religious communities. I find the questions concerning the relationship between interpretation and power structures especially intriguing. Who has the final say, in what the text says? This question is not restricted to only to theological interpretation done in religious communities but could be pointed towards the academic community as well. Whose interpretation it is that matters most?

Even though this project has broadened my understanding of many issues, new questions have emerged as well. One interesting path for further study would be to examine the issue of interpretation from a socio-linguistic perspective. The idea of many possible social levels of meaning that was quoted in chapter two¹⁹³ could be a starting point for various case studies on the reception of the Qur'ān.

¹⁹³ The social dimensions of meaning as conceptualized by Nida:
"1. What S (the source) wants R (the receptor) to understand by M (the message) –the theoretical norm.
2. What R understands by M—the practical norm.

Other points of departure could be to expand the selection of texts from the Qur'ān, as this was a study of only one Sura. Also, the theoretical and philosophical questions regarding translation theory would benefit from further study. This project has sparked my interest especially in the theoretical and methodological foundations of the humanities and religious studies.

3. What M means to the majority of persons in the S-R culture—the cultural norm.

4. What authorities on tradition (specialists: lawyers, professors, priests, et al.) in the S-R culture say S meant or should have meant by M—the legal norm.

5. What leaders of opinion say M ought to mean to R, irrespective of what S may have intended—the dynamic form." (Nida 1964, 53)

From the contemporary socio-linguistic perspective, this taxonomy probably seems simplistic and naive, but I think his main purpose was to point out the dynamic and complex relationship of meaning and social structures.

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Appendix: The Nordic Translations of "Sūrat al-Qāri‘a"

Böre 1942

Vyöryvä tuho!

Miten hirveä on vyöryvä tuho!

Ymmärrätkö, kuinka kauhea on vyöryvä tuho?

Päivä, jolloin ihmiset ovat kuin hajoitettu sääksien parvi,
ja vuoret kuin keritty villa.

Sen osana, jonka hyvien tekojen mitta on suuri,
on elämä täynnä tyydytystä,
mutta toisin käy sen, jonka hyvät teot vaa'assa keveiksi havaitaan,
hänen asumuksensa on oleva horna.

Tiedätkö, mikä horna on?

Se on polttava tuli.

Aro, Salonen & Tallqvist 1957

Jysähdys!

Mikä on jysähdys?

Tiedätkö mikä on jysähdys?

Päivänä, jolloin ihmiset liitelevät kuin perhoset
ja vuoret kuin nypityt villat,

niin mitä häneen tulee, jonka vaakakupit ovat raskaat,
hän saa mieluisen elämän

mutta mitä häneen tulee, jonka vaakakupit ovat keveät,
hän on kadotuksen oma.

Tiedätkö mitä se on?

Se on polttava tuli.

Hämeen-Anttila 1995

Jysähdys!

Mikä on jysähdys?

Mistäpä tietäisit, mikä jysähdys on!

Päivä, jona ihmiset ovat kuin ylt'ympäri lojuvia yöperhosia
ja vuoret kuin karstattua villaa.

Jonka punnukset ovat raskaat,
se saa suloisen elämän,
mutta jonka punnukset ovat keveät,
sen sija on Hawija.
Mistäpä tietäisit, mitä se tarkoittaa!
Hehkuvaa tulta!

Crusenstolpe 1843

Den pulserande dagen!
hvad är den pulserande dagen?
Och hvad gör dig begripligt hvad den pulserande dagen är?
En dag människorna varda liksom kringströdda mygg,
och bergen skola blifva liksom olikfärgade ulltappar.
Beträffande den hvars vågskålar varda tunga,
han skall njuta ett angenämt lif;
Men den hvars vågskålar varda lätta,
hans boning blifver helvitets djup:
Men hvad gör dig begripligt hvad det är?
En brännande eld!

Tornberg 1874

Katastrofen –
hvad är katastrofen?
Huru vet du hvad katastrofen är?
En dag skola människorna fladdra omkring såsom kringspridde mal,
ock bergen varda såsom spräcklig, kardad ull.
Den, hvars vågskålar då nedtyngas,
får föra ett angenämt lif.
Men den, hvars vågskålar äro lätta,
hans bostad varder helvetet.
Vet du ock, hvad det betyder?
En lågande eld.

Zetterstéen 1917

Dunderslaget,
vad är dunderlaget?
Vet du ock, vad dunderlaget är?
Den dag, då människorna varda som fladdrande myggor.
Och bergen som plockad ull.
Vad beträffar den, vars vågskålar äro tunga,
skall han få ett behagligt liv,
Men vad beträffar den, vars vågskålar äro lätta,
varder han en förlorad son.
Vet du ock, vad detta är?
Jo, brinnande eld.

Ohlmarks 1963

Det fasaväckande ödesslaget.
Vad är det fasaväckande ödesslaget?
Vem kan lära dig inse vad det fasaväckande ödesslaget är?
På den dagen skall människorna skingras likt vindströdda knott
och bergen skall te sig som kardad ull.
Den vilkens vågskål då sjunker tungt ner med goda gärningar,
han skall föra ett glädjefullt liv,
men den vilkens vågskål blir befunnen för lätt,
hans plats skall vara helvetets avgrund.
Men vad skall kunna lära dig begripa vad helvetets avgrund är?
En brinnande eld.

Asad & Bernström 1998

(EN DAG skall ni hörä) det dundrande slaget!
Vad betyder det dundrande slaget?
Vad kan låta dig förstå vad detta dundrande slag betyder?
(Det skall höras) den Dag då människorna myllrar och svärmar som mott och mal,
och då bergen (förvandlas) till högar av kardad ull.
Då skall den vars vågskal (med goda handlingar) väger tungt
gå till ett liv i salighet;
men den vars vågskal väger lätt

skall se sig innesluten i en avgrund.

Och vad kan låta dig förstå vad denna (avgrund) betyder?

En (famn av) het eld!

Sadiqa 1988

Den Stora Olyckan!

Vad är den Stora Olyckan?

Och vad skulle låta dig veta vad den Stora Olyckan är?

Den dagen då människor kommer att vara som spridda fjärilar,
och bergen kommer att vara som kardad ull.

Då, när det gäller den vars vikter är tunga,

– han kommer att få ett behagligt liv.

Men när det gäller den vars vikter är lättä,

kommer Helvetet att bli en moder för honom.

Och vad skulle låta dig veta vad det är?

Det är en flammande Eld.

Berg 1980

Det knusende slag!

Hva er det knusende slag?

Hvordan kan du vite hva det knusende slag er?

Den Dag blir menneskene som flagrende mygg,
og fjellene som kardet ull!

Den, hvis vetskåler er tunge,

vil gå til et godt liv!

Men den, hvis vetskåler er lette,

– Avgrunnen har omsorg for ham.

Og hvordan kan du vite hva det er?

Det er het ild!

Ahmad & Bajwa 1996

Den (store) ulykke –

Hva er den (store) ulykken?

Og hva skal fortelle deg hva den (store) ulykke er?

Den dag, da menneskene vil være som spredte møll,
og fjellene som karded ull.
Hva da den angår, hvis vetskåler er tunge (av gode gjerninger),
han vil da være i et salig liv.
Men hva angår den, hvis vetskåler er lette (av mangel på gode gjerninger),
Helvetes fang vil da være hans tilholdssted.
Og hva skal fortelle deg hva det er?
(Det er) en flammende ild.

Madsen 1967

Den (store) ulykke -
Hvad er den (store) ulykke?
Og hvad skal lære dig, hvad den (store) ulykke er?
Den dag, da menneskene vi være som spredte møl,
og bjergene som kartet ild.
Hvad da den ångår, hvis vægtskåle er tunge (af gode gerninger),
Han vil da være i et saligt liv.
Men hvad den angår, hvis vægtskåle er lette (af mangel på gode gerninger)
Helvede vil da være hans moder.
Og hvad skal lære dig, hvad det er?
En svidende ild.

Wulff 2006

Tordenslaget.
Hvad er Tordenslaget?
Hvordan kan du vide, hvad Tordenslaget er?
På den dag, hvor menneskene er som spredte møl
og bjergene som kartetede uldtotter.
Den, hvis vægtskåle er tunge,
lever et behageligt liv;
men den, hvis vægtskåle er lette,
hans moder er et helvedesdyb.
Hvordan kan du vide, hvad det vil sige?
En hed ild!

Bluitgen 2009

Det Knusende Slag!

Hvad er Det Knusende Slag?

Og hvad skal lære dig, hvad Det Knusende Slag er?

På den dag, da menneskene skal blive som spredte møl,

og bjergene som totter af kartet uld,

da skal den, hvis vægtskåle er tunge,

få et liv, der skal komme ham vel.

Men hvad angår den, hvis vægtskåle er lette:

Hans bolig skal være i Afgrunden.

Og hvad skal lære dig, hvad Afgrunden er?

En rasende ild!

Dansk Tyrkisk Islamisk Stiftelse 2014

Dommens Dag.

Hvad er Dommens Dag?

Hvad ved du om Dommens Dag?

Den dag vil menneskene være som sommerfugle, spredt (for alle vinde).

Og bjergene bliver som kartet uld.

Den, hvis (gode handlingers) vægt vejer tungt,

vil få et tilfredsstillende liv.

Men den, hvis (gode handlingers) vægt vejer let,

vil få Helvedes afgrund som bosted.

Og hvad ved du om dette?

Det er en flammende ild.

Majid 2016

1. Braget.

2. Hvad er Braget?

3. Hvad kan få dig til at indse hvad Braget er?

4. (Det er) På den dag hvor menneskene er som spredte møl,

5. og bjergene som kartede uldtotter.

6. Den hvis vægtskåle er tunge (af godhed),

7. vil gå til et behageligt liv.
8. Men den hvis vægtskåle er lette,
9. ham vil (helvedes)dubt drage omsorg for.
10. Hvad kan få dig til at indse hvad det (dyb) er?
11. (Det er) En held ild!