Sufi Terms and Their Translation from Arabic to English

Diwân al-Ḥallâž as a Case Study

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Abstract

The translation of Sufi poetry is a relatively unexplored topic. This paper examines the challenges a translator may encounter when translating Sufi terminology into English, covering the formation of Sufi terms, their nature, and how they function in context. A textual approach to terminology is envisaged, where Sufi concepts are analyzed along with their translation.

We analyze terms extracted from the collection of poems by the Sufi mystic al-Ḥallâž (*Diwân al-Ḥallâž*) and consider their translations by the British scholar Martin Lings in his book *Sufi Poems: A Medieval Anthology - Arabic and English ed*.

Keywords: sufism; terminology; translation; poetry.

1 Introduction to Sufism and Sufi Poetry

The term "Sufism" or /taṣawwuf/ in Arabic is derived from the Arabic word /ṣûf/, which means "wool". According to Tavakoli (2014, p. 11), «As a sign of religious mendicancy, Sufis used to wear coarse woolen garments, expressing thus their strict rejection of any kind of worldly pleasures». Other definitions of Sufism might be also considered like that of Vaswani (2002, p. 8), who states that «There are some who associate the word *'Sufi'* with the Greek word *'sophía'* which means wisdom and others who associate it with the word *'safa'* which means pure». Accordingly, we could affirm that the term Sufism itself is polysemous, referring to different concepts.

However, it is very important to know that Sufism is a spiritual experience that cannot be explained by the mind nor put into words; in fact, it is very far from rational and worldly matters. A Sufi is on a mystical journey and a spiritual path to reveal the secrets of knowing the Ultimate Truth. Sufis look to the Quran and Hadith as spiritual references (see Iraqi, 2017, p. 5). For them, the only way to reach the Divine is by turning inwardly and experiencing the unity of existence. Moreover, for Sufis, God is the Absolute Being and whatever exists is a determination and manifestation of Him (see Nurbaksh, 1990, p. 5). For a Sufi to walk this spiritual path, he/she must pass by several "maqâmât"[i] or "stations" that are attained through prayer, fasting, meditation, and the "ḥâl"[ii] or "mystical state of mind" might be granted in a gracious manner to the Sufi only by the Grace of God and cannot be attained by the mystic's efforts (see Makarem, 1989, p. 196).

As for Sufi poetry, it has been referred to as a coded declaration of Sufi experience, as an expression of divine love and unity of being. Some of the most prominent Sufi poets are Žalâl ad-Dîn ar-Rûmi, Šams at-Tabrîzi, ʻIbn al-Fârid, Manṣûr al-Ḥallâž, and many more.

2 Aims and Importance of this Study

The objective of this study is to examine the various issues and challenges of translating Sufi terminology, with a focus on terms used by al-Ḥallâž. This is important as an adequate translation of Sufi poetry has not yet been achieved, reflected through the lack of studies published on this specific topic. On the issue of spiritual texts, including Sufi texts, Abdel Jawad

& Al-Hajri (2016, p. 145) state that «Spiritual texts have not received due attention in translation. With the exception of few studies, such as Pokon 2005 and Piken 2014, very little in the translation theory or practice has been dedicated to the discussion and translation of such texts». Therefore, this study, mainly based on the translation of Sufi terms from Arabic to English, can be a building block for translators who are considering translating Sufi texts, and particularly Sufi poems. Throughout this study, we offer insights into the translation of religious texts and examine the conceptual and terminological challenges that translators would face in rendering Sufi terms and concepts into English, those challenges and difficulties that underlie the translation process and make it very delicate, and mostly complex.

We analyze some terms extracted from the collection of poems written by the Sufi mystic al-Ḥallâž (*Diwân al-Ḥallâž*). Extracts of the poems are reproduced by the British scholar Martin Lings in his book *Sufi Poems: A Medieval Anthology - Arabic and English ed.* and translated by him into English. The translation of *Diwân al-Ḥallâž* was done using Old English. This could be explained by the fact that Lings was extremely passionate about this language that he studied when he was young. According to The Islamic Encyclopedia, «To the young Lings and his close class companion, Adrian Paterson, the Old English poetry sessions taught by Lewis[iii] were so spell-binding that little else mattered then».

The Sufi terminology al-Ḥallâž used in his writings is difficult to understand even for native speakers of Arabic. How clear, then, would a translation of his poems be in English? Our main and key questions in this study are the following: Is the translation of Sufi terms easy task? To what extent did Lings succeed in rendering Sufi concepts? And what are the different elements that should be taken into consideration when translating Sufi terms?

We begin by explaining why al-Ḥallâž's works are chosen as focus and discuss, in a brief manner, the ever-tight relationship between translation and terminology on the one hand, and between term and concept on the other.

3 Why al-Ḥallâž?

Al-Ḥallâž, whose full name was Abu 'l-Muġîṯ al-Ḥusayn bin Manṣûr al-Ḥallâž, was a Persian mystic, poet, and teacher of Sufism born c. 858 near Bayda, a town in the Iranian province of Fars, and executed c. 922. «Although evidently his family was partly of Iranian

stock, they had become Arabicized; the name Hallaj has been taken as referring to Husayn's father's work as wool carder» (Dictionary of Word Biography, p. 421). His impact on Sufism and mysticism was great, and therefore it is important to study the poems he wrote in Arabic with their translation into English.

Al-Ḥallâž was a big traveler, and his journeys took him into countries beyond the frontiers of Islamic rule to preach and teach. In his book *The Passion of Al-Hallāj: Mystic and Martyr of Islam*, the French Islamicist Louis Massignon (1982, p. 10) describes al-Ḥallâž as the «Martyr of Divine Love». On the cross, al-Ḥallâž, the martyr of Sufism, asked forgiveness for those who slaughtered him; his unconditional love did not differentiate between friend and foe. The body perishes, the spirit never dies, it shall ever live. "I am the truth", /'ana l-ḥaq/ in Arabic, was the famous and controversial sentence he pronounced that ended his earthy life and made him the martyr who can never be forgotten, the martyr of truth. The act of communion and oneness with God who was the Truth led him to state this. «Although it seems highly probable that he referred instead to experiences of the divine presence, many Muslims regarded him as attempting to arrogate a place for himself alongside Allah. For Sufi thinkers, this expression, while comprehensible to the mystic, was regarded as a dangerous breach of the secrecy which should shroud such experiences» (Dictionary of Word Biography, p. 423). Deceitfully, he was accused of proclaiming Godhood. Al-Ḥallâž devoted his life to spread the light of knowing to everyone regardless of gender, origin, and social class. His name has come to represent suffering, love, and unitive experience and is still cited frequently in arts and literature.

4 Terminology and Translation

Terminology and translation are two fields of knowledge that share cognitive, linguistic, and communicative grounds. If specialists are by definition the users of terminology, translators and interpreters must also be considered high-priority users insofar as they facilitate communication between specialists considering that multilingual terminology goes hand in hand with translation.

For translators, terminology facilitates the translation of content from one language to another. This process implies the understanding of the original text, and therefore the importance of knowing the terminology of the original language, because it is primarily through terms that

specialized texts convey knowledge. There is no knowledge without terminology. It follows that translators must have some knowledge and familiarity with the content of the discipline they are translating from.

In this study, we will observe in some places how the translator's familiarity with Arabic and especially with Islamic religion, culture, and civilization facilitated the understanding and apprehension of various concepts related to Sufism. Nevertheless, some challenges continue to exist due to the nature of Sufi concepts, or more exactly the nature of the Sufi domain itself, which is essentially built on secrecy, and secrets that can only be revealed to spiritually enlightened people. Early Muslim Sufis «consider their works (books, texts, prayers, etc.) their own property, not to be revealed to out-group members», as noted by Abdel Jawad & Al-Hajri (2016, p. 147). This makes us question whether the translator should be loyal to the readers or to the source text.

5 Term and Concept

A term can be composed of one "lexeme" or can be a combination of many "lexemes"; however, it is worth noting here the difference between a term and a word in a sense that any term can be a word but not any word can be a term. Indeed, a *word* belongs to the general vocabulary while a *term* must be specific to a domain and does not exist independently of a domain. This implies that the main difference between a term and a word is the nature of reference. Valeontis and Mantzri (2006, p. 5) portray the methods of term formation, which are creating new forms, using existing forms, and translingual borrowing. The process of creating new forms is through derivation, compounding, and shortening forms or abbreviating. In the second method, which is using existing forms, the formation of new terms can be achieved through the conversion of the parts of speech. The third method used in term formation is translingual borrowing, whereby terms existing in a language are incorporated into another language through different procedures such as loan translation. Other methods that we can mention and that are considered of extreme importance in terms formation are the semantic transfer which incorporates essentially "metaphor" and "metonymy", and terminologization[iv] in which a term is transferred from the general vocabulary to a specific vocabulary, or

transdisciplinary borrowing also known as internal borrowing where a designation from one specific subject field is used in another one in order to represent a different concept.

A concept is the meaning of a given term in a specific domain. It is part of the extra linguistic world. It consists of a set of traits called conceptual traits, represented as follows: TC1, TC2, TC3, TC4, to infinity. These traits are used to name a concept and may differ from one language to another. This implies that different languages see the same reality differently.

It is impossible to express all the conceptual traits that constitute a concept in the process of nomination; otherwise, the term will turn out to be a description or a definition. For researchers working with language, linguistics, and translation, the essential question is how to gain access to a maximum number of traits in order to understand a concept and render it in another language. This access cannot be done without the assistance of an expert in a specific domain, who is the only one capable of largely providing explanation about a concept. The most important step in the process of translating Sufi texts is to discern the nature and particularity of Sufi terms, which will constitute a key decision for the translator in the process of finding the appropriate equivalents in the target language.

6 Nature and Particularity of Sufi Terms

6.1 The metaphorical aspect

Poetry is known as a dense form of literary work where language is compressed within a certain rhyme and structure; thus, it is the pinnacle of figurative meaning. Figurative language is used to express an idea in a metaphorical manner in a sense that the term or expression cannot be understood literally. In fact, the real meaning is conveyed in subliminal phrases that can invoke similes, metaphors, imagery, connotations, and implications. Figurative language is intensively used in Sufi poems and al-Ḥallâž excels in delivering his experience, beliefs, and knowledge in metaphorical verses full of multi-layered implications and significance. It is no wonder that Sufis have resorted to figurative language in its two wings—metaphor and symbolism; this is partly because of the fear of being accused of doing wrong to the religion or the State; in fact, freedom of expression at that time did not exist. Table 1 shows examples of metaphorical terms extracted from *Diwân al-Ḥallâž* and how Lings translated them into English.

6

Transcription	Arabic Source Text	English Target Text
*Ra'aytu rabbi **biᶜayni qalbi*** *Faqultu man 'anta? Qala'anta!*	رأيت ربّي **بعين قلبي** فقلتُ من أنتَ قال أنتَ (p. 29)	*I saw my Lord with the **eye of the heart*** *I said: 'Who art thou?' He answered: 'Thou.' (p. 28)*
*Ta'ammal **biᶜayni l-ᶜaqli** mâ anâ wâṣifun* *Falil-ᶜaqli 'asmâᶜun wu'âtun wa'absâru*	تأمّل **بعين العقل** ما أنا واصفٌ فللعقل أسماعٌ وُعاةٌ وأبصارُ (p. 31)	*O ponder what I say with the **Intellect's eye.*** *Keen is the Intellect of hearing and of insight. (p. 30)*
*Wa'anta **ḥiẑâbu l-qalbi** ᶜan sirri ġaybihi* *Walawlâka lam yuṭbaᶜ ᶜalayhi k̲itâmuhu*	وأنت **حجاب القلب** عن سرّ غيبه ولولاك لم يُطبَع عليه ختامهُ (p. 29)	*The **heart's veil** o'er its secret mystery* *Art thou, nor, but for thee, had it been sealed (p. 28)*

Table 1 Lings's Translation of Metaphorical Terms in Diwân al-Ḥallâẑ

In the first example, al-Ḥallâẑ brought the "eye" (an organ for seeing) to make the heart (an organ for living and loving) see and realize what cannot be seen with the physical eye. This is obviously a metaphor showing in what way God can be seen (known by the seeker of Truth) and the level of connection with the Divine a Sufi can attain, emphasizing the aspect of true knowledge in comparison with mere faith. Lings's strategy was to keep the same image in English, "the eye of the heart", which is a calque of the original metaphor, in the sense that he took up the same conceptual traits used to nominate the Arabic concept and used them for the equivalent in English. Although it constitutes a calque, this metaphor is not strange to Western culture and to Christianity where Saint Augustine for example used the same metaphor in one of his quotes[v] to refer to the concept by which God can be seen.

In the second example, al-Ḥallâẑ invites the reader to contemplate, yet to meditate what he described with consciousness and awareness, what he called /ᶜayn al-ᶜaql/. This is the eye of perception which he is pointing at, the knowing eye from which nothing can be hidden, the tool by which truth can be unveiled and recognized. In English, the translation can better refer to this meaning by using the term "Third eye" and not "Intellect's eye", the term used by Lings. Al-Ḥallâẑ did not mean by /ᶜaql/, the limited mind trapped by the play of existence, but the unbounded consciousness transcending every materialistic dimension and piercing through it with supreme senses of seeing and hearing (/'asmâᶜ wu'ât wa'absâr/). It is a confirmation from a realized being that a subtle realm exists and can be experienced when bypassing the five senses and relying on perception /baṣîra/ not normal vision /baṣar/. Perception is a main trait of a true knower, with his evolved spiritual eye, he witnesses the unseen, the subtle which flows secretly behind all appearances.

The metaphor used in the third example is /ḥizâb al-qalb/. As mentioned, the strategy of the translator consists of keeping the same image in English, "heart's veil". This can be explained by the fact that translating Sufi images and metaphors literally «better preserves the intended meaning and is more faithful to reality», as put by Amina Iraqi (2017, p. 21).

6.2. Symbolism

Another characteristic of the Sufi terms in al-Ḥallâẑ's poems is symbolism. Sufis have used symbols or coded terms to remain mysterious even while revealing secrets. Abdel Jawad & Al-Hajri (2016, p. 148) describe Sufi language as «a system of codes, metaphors, symbols, signs, significances, and configurations which differ totally from those in literature, philosophy, politics and the like». Thus, Sufis have created a terminology with the aim of being understandable only by those who are on the same path and which could reflect total ambiguity to others. Symbols in Sufi literature do not express the literal meaning of the term or phrase; in fact, they describe meanings that transcend human senses. Hiding the secret of truth from unaware ignorant people and not those genuine aspirants is mandatory and sacred, and whoever discloses it is a traitor to the fundamentals of the Sufi path; nonetheless, it is a way to secure the knowledge and avoid clashes with religious and political authorities at that time. It is worth mentioning in this respect that symbolism was deeply rooted in the Arabic culture, and more precisely in the Arabic

language. In fact, each letter of the Arabic alphabet—which was not ordered, as is the case currently, with graphically similar letters succeeding one another—was represented by a specific number for the purpose of dissimulation of messages, as shown in Figure 1.

غ	ظ ض	ذ خ	ث ت	ش ر	ق	ف ص ع	س ن	م ل ك ي ط ح ز و ه د ج ب ء
1000	900 800	700 600 500	400 300 200 100	90 80 70 60	50 40 30 20	10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1		

Figure 1. Arabic alphabet

Table 2 presents examples of symbolism from al-Ḥallâž's poems:

Transcription	Arabic Source Text	English Target Text
'Ana man 'ahwa wa man 'ahwa 'ana *Naḥnu rûḥani ḥalalna badana* *Fa'idâ 'absartani 'absartahu* *Wa 'idâ 'absartahu 'absartana*	أنا من أهوى ومن أهوى أنا نحن روحان خَللنا بدنا فإذا أبصرتني أبصرتَه وإذا أبصرتَه أبصرتنا *(p. 39)*	*He am I whom I love, He whom I love is I,* *Two Spirits in one single body dwelling.* *So seest thou me, then seest thou Him,* *And seest thou Him, then seest thou Us. (p. 38)*
'Ana l-ḥaqqu wal-ḥaqqu lil-ḥaqqi ḥaqqu *Lâbisun dâtahu famâ tâmma farqu*	أنا الحقَّ والحقّ للحقّ حقَّ لابسٌ ذاته فما ثَمَ فرقُ *(p. 29)*	*I am the Truth, and Truth, for Truth, is Truth,* *Robed in Its Essence, thus beyond separation. (p. 28)*

Table 2 Examples of Symbolism from al-Ḥallâž's Poems

In the first example, the lover and the beloved are one, the "I" and the "He" are also one since he who realizes the Truth and is able to see the whole existence and non-existence, the

manifested and the non-manifested as a single entity, is a sparkle of the endless divine ocean. Thus, the "unity of existence" is reflected and symbolized by introducing the creation as a divine revelation and not separate from the Divine Being. The individual is then an image or a manifestation of the cosmic soul and the human being is divine since his essence is divine too, and in him the eternal is dwelling.

Furthermore, symbolism was closely associated with imagination to touch the beyond which resides behind the "veil", or the so-called "Maya" in the Eastern philosophies. Imagination is deemed important since the mystical experience cannot be attained by logic but through mystical and spiritual experiences.

In the second example, "Al-Ḥaq" (the Truth) is one of the 99 names of God in Islam; for this reason, the statement might seem too arrogant and full of blasphemy for those who are not on the path of al-Ḥallâž and Sufism nor understand his experience of truth and struggle to decipher his language. This is a coded text; therefore, one cannot adhere to the surfacing meaning, which led to the terrible death of the legendary Sufi poet[vi].

6.3 The function of al-Ḥallâž's Sufi terms in context

Our approach is based on "textual approach in terminology" since we examine both the Arabic text with its various terminology and meaning of terms and the translation into English with the various terms used to render Sufi concepts. If it is true that terminology must come from the texts to better return to them, this is because texts constitute a kind of medium without which the term cannot exist or be understood since it becomes isolated from its natural environment (see Thoiron & Béjoint, 2000, p. 16). This approach was adopted by many terminologists, among them Didier Bourigault & Monique Slodzian. In their article entitled "Pour une approche textuelle de la terminologie" (Towards a Textual Approach in Terminology), they argue that it is in the texts produced by a community of experts that a good part of the shared knowledge of this community is expressed, and this is where the analysis should start (see Bourigault & Slodzian, 1998-1999, p. 30).

In order to study the function of al-Ḥallâž's Sufi terms, we must examine terms and their use in context. Each term reflects a certain meaning in Sufi poetry that is far from its literal

meaning. In this case, we can indeed study the meaning of each Sufi term in context and analyze the concept it holds.

It is evident that Sufis have introduced a vast number of terms to describe their experience of the spiritual path towards the Divine Being. So as to exemplify the manner in which context specifies the function of terms, we analyze some Sufi terms that we have extracted from our corpus. The total number of terms extracted is 21, as listed in Table 3.

ARABIC SUFI TERMS IN *DIWÂN AL-ḤALLÂŽ*	EQUIVALENTS IN THE TRANSLATED TEXT
/SIR/	SECRET
/QALB/	HEART/SOUL
/TAWḤÎD/	ONENESS
/TAŽALLI/	MANIFESTATION
/ḤUB/	LOVE
/RÛḤ/	SPIRIT
/ḤAQ/	TRUTH
/NÛR/	LIGHT
/ĠAFLA/	IGNORANCE
/MAQÂM/	STATION
/QUDSI/	SANCTUARY
/ḎÂT/	ESSENCE
/ḤAŽ/	PILGRIMAGE
/FAṢL/	GONE
/ĠAYB/	MYSTERY
/MU'NIS/	INTIMATE FRIEND
/'ISM/	NAME

/MASLAK/	PATH
/ᶜAQL/	INTELLECT
/MUSIR/	DEPTH OF SOUL
/WAHM/	IMAGINING

Table 3 Sufi Terms from the Corpus

Table 3 shows three categories of terms. The first category includes Sufi terms such as /ḥub/ (love), /ḥaž/ (pilgrimage), and /maslak/ (path), which are formed by terminologization. Terminologization is used to refer to the use of common language words in language for specific purposes where they take on a particular meaning. This passage from general to specialized vocabulary is analyzed by many terminologists who speak about the "osmosis" that exists between the specialized vocabulary and the general language (see Candel, 2003, p. 228). Maria Teresa Cabré, for instance, gives the example of arms, head, limb, body, foot, eye, and brain that are currently used with a specific meaning in mechanics, construction, administration, geology, computer science, or urban planning (see Cabré, 1994, p. 593). The second category consists of terms taken from the Quran, such as /tažalli/ (manifestation), /nûr/ (light), and /tawḥîd/ (oneness). Finally, the third category represents terms taken from other specialized domains, mainly philosophy, such as /d̠ât/ (essence) and /ᶜaql/ (intellect), and Arabic grammar such as /faṣl/ (gone) and /'ism/ (name). This passage from one domain to another is very common in terminology and in the formation of terms. It can be also explained through the interpenetration that exists between different domains of knowledge in general; many domains share many concepts with others. In fact, it is often difficult, if not impossible, to create barriers between domains.

As illustration, using Table 4, we take the first category of terms formed by terminologization and we analyze the concepts of /ḥub/ and /maslak/ in al-Ḥallâž's poems:

Transcription	Arabic Source Text	English Target Text
Wallâhi mâ ṭalaʿat šamsun wala ġarubat *ʿilla* **waḥubbuka** *maqrûnun bi'anfâsi*	والله ما طَلَعَت شمسٌ ولا غَرُبَت إلّا **وحبّك** مقرونٌ بأنفاسـي (p. 33)	*I swear by God, sun riseth not nor setteth,* *But in each breath I breathe my **love** for Thee (p. 32)*
Waḥḥidni wâḥidi bitawḥîdi ṣidqin *Mâ ʿilayhi mina l-**mâsâliki** ṭuruqu*	وحِّدنـي واحدي بتـوحيدِ صِدقٍ ما إليه من **المسالك** طُرقُ (p. 29)	*One with Thee make me, O my one, through Oneness* *Faithed in sincerity no **path** can reach. (p. 28)*

Table 4 Sufi Terms Formed by Terminologization

Studies of the scripts, discipline, and worship can lift the aspirant closer to truth. However, for the Sufis, love is the doorway to divinity. Divine love is an exquisite peculiarity in Sufi poems, love to the level of annihilation and full dissolution of the individual self into the universal ocean of divinity. When love is so colossal it merges the lover and the beloved, when the beloved becomes far dearer than the lover, all dimensions fall. It is that collapse of dimensions that pierces the veil and reveals the beauty of the truth to quench the eternal longing within. Al-Ḥallâẑ loved the Divine to the edge of craziness, an intense love that led to death. What seems to be a love story in which the two lovers are inseparable, in complete fusion and blending into one everlasting essence; the story is actually a state of effacement of the ego, a vanishing into God. Love for the Sufis is a transcendental act, applied in their life as a blossoming of their experience. In his poems, Al-Ḥallâẑ describes intimate moments with his beloved and the feeling of intoxication, too. This explanation portrays the meaning of love in the Sufi context, in contrast to its meaning in general vocabulary. Love, as defined in the Oxford Dictionary online, is «an intense feeling of deep affection, a great interest and pleasure in something, a person or a thing that one loves». The meaning of love when taken out of the Sufi context is nothing but related materialistic and worldly connection with someone or something.

This kind of connection is generally limited and conditioned, unlike the unconditional divine love expressed by Sufism.

The concept /maslak/ (/masâlik/ in plural) in spirituality does not mean /tarîq/ (road) and cannot be translated as "road" or "route" in English as is the case in the general vocabulary; it means a journey of transcendence, an attainment, and a higher realization to get closer to the truth until enlightenment happens and not merely a simple trajectory between two locations. In Sufi contexts, the concept /maslak/ is not a paved passage but a tough and rough escalation in consciousness, a know-how of pure love dissolving the very identity of the seeker to realize the illusion of duality, and the oneness of the existence in truth.

6.4 Challenges encountered in the translation of al-Ḥallâž's terms

When translating al-Ḥallâž's terms, translators face diverse problems posed either by understanding the meaning of the terms and concepts or by rendering Sufi concepts without distorting the image in the target language. They also face a huge dilemma in preserving the poetry structure including poetic devices such as the rhyme and meter.

6.4.1 Conceptual-related challenges

Translation is a process of rewriting a source text in another language, which consists of several stages to deliver the final product. Sufi poems might be extremely challenging for a translator. The first stage of the translation process lies at the basis of reading and understanding the meaning of the source text. On the level of understanding the meaning residing behind the terms in al-Ḥallâž's poems, the translator might encounter figurative language including metaphors, imagery, and symbolism that could hinder the process of interpreting the meaning of the source language beforehand. In dealing with al-Ḥallâž's poems, one must not only master the Arabic and English languages, but he/she must also be equally familiar with Sufi concepts to be able to comprehend the meaning and find adequate equivalents. Sufi texts form part of the classical Islamic discourse, which

> presents a number of specific challenges for the translator; in addition to being formalistic and
> highly rhetorical, each individual field of study evolved its own, very distinctive technical lexicon

that was designed for the practitioners of the discipline. Consequently, this *terminus technicus* was not necessarily accessible to the "outsider" but indeed, had to be acquired, so as to navigate one's way through such texts. Sufism also presents a particularly unique challenge since, as a mystical tradition, the experience it represents is fundamentally ineffable. The fact that conventional language could not express such experiences did not deter Sufis from attempting to articulate their perspective, creating a unique communicative paradox. (Picken. 2014, p. 177)

An illustration of the above is the concept /ġafla/ translated into English as "ignorance" by Lings instead of "inattention". The term /ġafla/ in Arabic stands for /tažâhul/ (the back translation of which is "inattention") and not /žahl/ (ignorance), as it was understood by Lings in the first example of Table 5.

Transcription	Arabic Source Text	English Target Text
Mâ lâmani fîka 'aḥibba'i wa'a^cdâ'i *'Illa* **liġaflatihim** *^can ^ciẓmi balwâ'i*	ما لامني فيك أحبّائي وأعدائي إلاّ **لغفلتِهم** عن عِظم بلوائي (p. 31)	*They chided me because of Thee,* *My friends and foes, in* ***ignorance****. (p. 30)*
Kânat **liqalbi** *'ahwâ'un mufarraqatun* *Fa'stažma^cat mud ra'atka l-^caynu 'ahwâ'i*	كانت **لقلبي** أهواء مفرّقَة فاستجمَعَت مذ رأتك العين أهوائي (p. 31)	*Diverse longings had my* **soul***,* *But seeing Thee hath made them one. (p. 30)*

Table 5 Translation of Terms with Conceptual-Related Challenges

Another example of conceptual-related challenges is the term /qalb/ which appears to be polysemous in the Sufi domain. /Qalb/ was translated in different contexts by the English term "heart"[vii]. However, in the context above /kânat **liqalbi** 'ahwâ'un mufarraqatun/, the translation was different. Guided by the context in which terms are used and acquire their meaning, Lings

suggested the appropriate equivalent in English as "soul" and not "heart" to render the concept /qalb/ in Arabic. This choice is justified because the term /qalb/ here collocates with the word /'ahwa'/ (longings) to form a new meaning. In this context, the word /'ahwa'/ in Arabic means /šahawât/ or desires. Since only the soul can possess desires and longings, it would be inappropriate to use "heart" in this context.

6.4.2 Linguistic-related challenges: finding the equivalence of terms or terminological accuracy

A problematic factor in translating al-Ḥallâž's poems lies in the process of finding the equivalence of terms in the target language. According to Abdel Jawad and Al-Hajri (2016, p. 144), «The role of the translator in dealing with such texts [spiritual texts] goes beyond the inter-lingual equivalences of the messages to a deeper understanding and interpreting of their spiritual function». Some Sufi terms might have no equivalents in the English language and may not fully communicate the desired effect on the reader, and some of them might be untranslatable[viii].

This untranslatability, as Tavakoli (2014, p. 45) puts it «can be due to cultural differences, so there are words outside of the frame of the target language». The true meaning of Sufi terms can only be ascertained through an understanding of the religious and spiritual culture in which such terms occur. As such, the translator should read not only the words or terms, but also the context in which they appear.

This poses a major challenge to the translator who is conveying only the literal meaning of the poetry, and mainly to the one who is not aware of the Sufi path. In other words, the translator must succeed in maintaining compatibility and rendering Sufi concepts in the target language, as well as being faithful to the original meaning. As Al-Ḥallâž's verses are very rhetorical, figurative, and complicated in nature, the translator becomes more prone to the inability of rendering Sufi concepts. Hence, the translator must not convey the literal meaning of the term, but he/she must find an equivalent to the given in the target language. In other words, for a translator to render Sufi concepts, he/she must have full knowledge of the subject to be able to convey the real meaning behind the terms. Proper spiritual analysis of the concepts must be addressed prior to the act of translation, in the sense that the translator has to be aware of putting the spiritual experience into words that give justice to the deeper understanding of the self and

the beyond. Therefore, ideally a translator who has a similar spiritual experience that goes beyond the scope of human mind and logic can better convey Sufi concepts. As an example of the above, we take the term /quds/ from al-Ḥallâž's verses where the translation was plausible and other terms like /al-wahm/, /al-musirrîn/, /sir/, and /mu'nis/ where it was questionable.

Transcription	Arabic Source Text	English Target Text
Ḥawaytu bikulli kulla kullika yâ **qudsi** *Tukâšifuni ḥatta ka'annaka fi nafsi*	حوَيت بكُلّي كلَّ كلِّك يا **قدسي** تُكاشفنـي حتَّى كأنَّك في نفسي *(p. 37)*	*I clasp with all my being all Thy Love,* *Thou art my* **Sanctuary***: Thou showest me Thee. (p. 36)*

Table 6 Translation of Terms with Linguistic-Related Challenges

Lings was able to find the right equivalent for the term /quds/, which means the only refuge and final destination; thus, a sanctuary is not just a sacred part of al-Ḥallâž but a sacred unlimited dimension in which he dissolves totally, where the sacred of the individual being melts in the sacred of the one universal being.

Transcription	Arabic Source Text	English Target Text
Walaylatu l-hažri 'in ṭâlat wa'in qaṣurat *Fa***mu'nisi*** 'amalun fîhi wataḏkâru*	وليلة الـهجر إن طـالت وإن قَصُرت فمؤنِسي أمَلٌ فيه وتذكار *(p. 33)*	*The night of separation, be it long or short,* *Mine* **intimate friend** *is hope of Thee, memory of Thee. (p. 32)*

Table 7 Translation of Terms with Linguistic-Related Challenges

It could be said that the best translation of the term /mu'nis/ is "permanent companion" since al-Ḥallâž is in continuous company with God, while an intimate friend—as translated by Lings—might not be persistent company.

Transcription	Arabic Source Text	English Target Text
Li'anwâri nûr r-iddîni fi l-ḵalqi 'anwârun *Walis-**sirri** fi sirri l-**musirrîna** 'asrâru*	لأنوار نور الدّين في الخَلق أنوارٌ وللسرّ في سرّ المُسرّين أسرار *(p. 31)*	*For the Lights of religion's Light are Lights in men,* *For the **Secret**, Secrets in **secret depths of souls**. (p. 30)*

Table 8 Translation of Terms with Linguistic-Related Challenges

In Table 8, the term /musir/ (singular form of /musirrîn/) means the initiated or the one holding the secrets of truth, but Lings linked the secret to the depth of the souls regardless of whether these souls are enlightened with truth secrets or not. Knowers of truth like al-Ḥallâž are holders of an immense secret, a secret only floating between the initiated or those on the path of realization. Those seekers are /musirrîn/ or hiders of the secret, which, if ever disclosed, can lead to death. And disclosing the secret is considered a sinful calamity. The term /sir/ is not a secret only as per the literal meaning but a description of what dwells within, the inner nature that is holy and veiled. Here, secret means the Divine, the only living which has endless secrets, such firmly protected dimension cannot be accessed without complete erosion of the individual self or ego and must not be wide open to the unfaithful. Nothing is more precious or more intriguing than the secret of the knowers. Thus, al-Ḥallâž joined the two terms /sir/ and /musirrîn/ in one verse to pinpoint that the Divine concealed a spark: (/anwâr an-nûr/, /asrâr as-sir/) lights of the light, secrets of the secret in creation and seekers alike.

Transcription	Arabic Source Text	English Target Text
*Walaysa lil-**wahmi** minka wahmun* *Faya^clamu l-**wahmu** 'ayna 'anta*	وليس **للوهم** منك وهمٌ فيعلم **الوهم** أين أنت *(p. 29)*	*Thou giv'st **imagining** no image* *For it to **imagine** where Thou art. (p. 28)*

Table 9 Translation of Terms with Linguistic-Related Challenges

The known reality for a Sufi is not but a matrix of illusion, and for the seeker who has the subtle eye, God is the true reality and the only existent. Thus, it could be said that illusion is a more accurate translation for the term /wahm/, since imagination is an act of a human thought not a divine play (illusive reality).

6.4.3 Preserving poetic devices

Translating poetry into prose is definitely less challenging than conserving a poetic structure, or in other words, conserving the rhyme. Most of al-Ḥallâž's poems became songs due to their musicality. Thus, preserving the spirit of poetry while translating is surely a difficult task and the compression of meaning requires mastery over the target language. In this regard, Lings did not conserve the rhyme at the end of his verses, but he delivered poetic stanzas. Throughout the translation process, he showed signs of great flexibility regarding the rhyme; in short, we could say that he preferred to lose the rhyme in order to preserve the meaning of the text as much as he could. It should be noted that gravely restricting oneself to the rhyming features usually comes at the expense of other equally important features, such as the meaning and the concepts used by the author.

7 Results

Many translation scholars have emphasized the importance of being faithful to the source text and have proposed different methods and strategies for a translator to adopt. While translating spirituality, one is dealing with metaphysical connotations and experiential states that language in general can only point to them without reflecting on them the way they are. Language, as we know, is unable to bring forth the realm of the beyond into the rigid reality (physical world). Al-Ḥallâž tried to explore the language by producing a novelty to the traditional literature of his time returning it to the level of letters and to its Quranic root. By this, al-Ḥallâž can be hardly understood in the original language due to his unusual use of terms, this implies that finding the relevant equivalents for Sufi terms in the target language is even a harder task. To what extent is it possible to translate Sufi terms into English? Are Sufi terms translatable or not? After analyzing the translated poems of al-Ḥallâž by Lings, we could say that the translator has made efforts to render Sufi philosophy to the English-speaking audience. Lings' understanding of Sufism and his lifelong interest in the Islamic culture and the Quran fruited in his work.

To answer the question of translatability of Sufi terms based on our study, it is fair to say that Lings was able to translate Sufi terms only to an acceptable range of comprehension but not to the full scale of conviction. As a matter of fact, most Sufi terms hold meanings that do not exist in English, which poses a serious problem for the translator. For instance, a Sufi term like /ᶜišq/ cannot be translated simply as "love" because it identifies a very intense and advanced state of love. A language limitation adds to the mystical barriers that the translator may face during the process of translation. Lings's translation of al-Ḥallâž's poems falls under the mentioned challenges. Thus, while translating Sufi terms into English, the translator will stumble upon terms that do not really have equivalents in the target language, which will limit his/her choice of terms.

One beneficial strategy that can be adopted by a translator when translating Sufism is finding the closest equivalent in the target language and/or keeping the Arabic Sufi term as is between parentheses. The translator can additionally resort to adding footnotes in the target text to compensate for the meaning lost in translation. It is trivial to underline here the importance of relying on terminologies in the form of glossaries and dictionaries pertaining to Sufism, mainly

Sufi monolingual dictionaries such as /Muᶜžam al-muṣṭalaḥât aṣ-ṣûfiyya/ by Abdel Menem al-Hafni. Terminologies can be used as tools to aid the translator in rendering Sufi concepts and terms to an adequate extent. Sufism as a philosophy can be less difficult to deliver when one is aware of Sufi path and beliefs. To reiterate, putting a spiritual experience into words and materializing such subtle and abstract concepts into a linguistic framework is no easy task.

8 Conclusion

For a translator to convey Sufi concepts and terms in another language, he/she must not only be bilingual but also bicultural and well versed in Sufism. Lings played an important role as a mediator between two cultures (East/West and Islamic/non-Islamic) and contributed to the incorporation of Sufi terms into English. The discussion of the examples in our study taken from the source text and the target text provides an insight on the nature of Sufi concepts and terms. In a nutshell, spiritual texts such as Sufi texts must be approached with utmost caution to prevent any potential ambiguity or misinterpretation. The hymns of al-Ḥallâž have lived through history despite religious controversies and have crossed the barriers of language to reach human consciousness regardless of cultures and doctrines.

We have attempted to examine a sample of terms with their translation into English. This study is certainly not exhaustive neither are the bibliographical references that we have cited, but it seeks to answer questions related to any attempt of translating spiritual texts, and in particular Sufi texts, and highlighting some of the difficulties encountered by any translator of such texts. We hope that this work will constitute a cornerstone for further works and reflections on the terminology of Sufism. The translation of Sufi texts is, as Picken notes (2014, p. 177), «no more or less difficult than translating the sentiment of love displayed in the lyric poetry of a medieval sonnet, as it requires not only technical ability and theoretical knowledge but also, intersubjectivity and consequently, empathetic understanding».

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Transcription System: Times Beyrut Roman

Consonants

ء	/'/		ض	/ḍ/
ب	/b/		ط	/ṭ/
ت	/t/		ظ	/ẓ/
ث	/t̲/		ع	/ᶜ/
ج	/ž/		غ	/ġ/
ح	/ḥ/		ف	/f/
خ	/k̲/		ق	/q/
د	/d/		ك	/k/
ذ	/d̲/		ل	/l/
ر	/r/		م	/m/
ز	/z/		ن	/n/
س	/s/		ه	/h/
ش	/š/		و	/w/
ص	/ṣ/		ي	/y/

Short vowels	Long vowels
/a/	/â/
/u/	/û/
/i/	/î/

Notes

[i]The singular term is /maqâm/, which denotes a spiritual stage that marks the long path of Sufis and that could lead them to be united with God. Although the exact number of /maqâmât/ is not unanimously agreed upon, Sufis generally believe that there are seven major /maqâmât/: /maqâm of tawba/ (repentance), /maqâm of waraᶜ/ (fear of God), /maqâm of zuhd/ (renunciation, or detachment), /maqâm of faqr/ (poverty), /maqâm of ṣabr/ (patience), /maqâm of tawakkul/ (trust, or surrender), and /maqâm of riḍa/ (satisfaction). For Sufis, each /maqâm/ is a phase whereby they strive to purify themselves from the world and prepare themselves to reach a higher spiritual degree.

[ii]The plural term is /aḥwâl/. The difference between /aḥwâl/ and /maqâmât/ stems from the fact that /aḥwâl/ are favors granted solely by God, while /maqâmât/ are attained through efforts produced by Sufis themselves.

[iii]Writer, poet, and Christian apologist, C. S. Lewis.

[iv]This process of term formation will be studied here as one of the processes that characterize the formation of Sufi terms.

[v]«The whole purpose of life is to restore to health the eye of the heart by which God can be seen».

[vi]See p. 4.

[vii]See Lings's book p. 29 (3 frequencies of the term heart), p. 31 (2 frequencies of the same term), p. 33 (2 frequencies of the same term), p. 37 (2 frequencies of the same term), p. 39 (1 frequency of the same term).

[viii]In her article entitled "Translating the Sufi Dictionary into English", Amina Iraqi gives many examples of Sufi terms that are untranslatable into English given the difficulty of expressing the Arabic Islamic meaning in English. She said that «The Sufi dictionary is abundant with culturally-loaded terms that carry meanings having no exact equivalents in English» (Iraqi, 2017, p. 9).