7. ON TRANSLATION AND THE COMPILATION OF THE GLOSSARY

Translating the Šammari text and compiling the Šammari glossary which forms Part III of this work turned out to be two interacting processes which exerted mutual influences on one another. I shall start this chapter by giving a brief sketch of some of the general ideas that I have about translation which exercised a decided influence on my conception of the glossary. For anyone who has gone through the labor of translating a piece of Bedouin literature into another language, there will be nothing new in what I am about to say.

In translating a literary text of the sort we are dealing with here, one is always trying to strike a balance between the literal sense of the words and the artistic effect of the text. In many instances, this is an almost insurmountable task. The difficulty is felt more acutely when the text, as in our case, is presented as a literary specimen, as well as a linguistic corpus. A stiff, literal translation would compromise the artistic quality and literary character of the text. On the other hand, a smooth, free translation may obliterate its linguistic texture and syntactic structure. Words in a literary text are loaded with symbolic associations and emotional connotations. They are employed not only to convey meanings, but also to evoke sentiments and aesthetic sensations – not to speak of rhyme, rhythm, assonance and meter. In a literary text, there is the apparent meaning which is more immediately accessible and then there is also the submerged, but often more significant meaning. Literary language is suggestive and stratified into many layers of signification. This being the case, it is quite reasonable to ponder on what would be a more appropriate and accurate translation; whether to strive after the apparent, literal meaning of individual words and expressions; or, whether to reach out for the affective undercurrents intended to emanate from the text and stir the emotions of the native audience. Maintaining a happy medium between the manifest and

the latent content, and preserving the various levels of signification prove to be, at many points in literary translation, an objective which is simply unattainable.

Moreover, language, as ethnologists keep reminding us, is a reflection of its speaker's natural environment, cultural experience and social history which are different from one society to another. Therefore, it is nearly impossible to find two words in two different languages which are perfectly equivalent, having exactly the same denotative and connotative range. This becomes more impossible as the two groups speaking the two different languages become more widely separated and differentiated in their cognitive systems, world views and aesthetic sensibilities. Although almost any word can be explained in so many words in another language, a word for word correspondence is not always possible, especially with technical words and words which embody cultural values and social norms.

Our Šammari narrative is replete with images and metaphors related to the desert environment and nomadic existence that cannot be easily rendered for an urban, Western audience. The narrative is not only organically interrelated with other desert narratives and lore, but it is suffused with allusions and references which are not easy to grasp for someone who is not thoroughly familiar with Arabian popular traditions, history and religion. In the final analysis, it is not enough to understand the language of a text in order to discern its true significance and appreciate its literary merit. No less important, one must figure out the cultural ethos and aesthetic principles which enable the native audience to fathom the text and judge it as a true work of art.

To elucidate the above argument would mean practically examining our whole Šammari text in detail. A few illustrative examples should suffice. On the level of individual words, how can we translate such Bedouin concepts as *midda*, *xāwih*, *nxawih*, *manʕ wajh*, etc. without resorting to elaborate verbosity? How can we find the proper English words that carry the same emotional connotations associated with such poetic words as *xalūj*, *ḥāyil*, *ḥāyif*, etc.? A *xalūj* is not simply "a camel bereft of her suckling

calf." Rather, *xalūj* is a symbol of the ultimate in grief. The word brings to mind the pathetic groaning and aimless roaming of the bereaved beast which rends the human heart and fills it with pity and empathy. Also, the word *ḥāyil* is usually translated as "a barren animal," but, in fact, it refers to a female animal, though capable of bearing young, is intentionally prevented from mating and conceiving so as to fatten it or to preserve its strength. The word is etymologically related to *ḥōl* "year" and has certain associations with the passing of time, because the due time is let to go by without leading the female to the stallion. It is not so much the notion of infertility and sterility that the word *ḥāyil* brings to mind but rather the somewhat opposite idea of opulence, fatness, and strength. It is used to refer to, among other things, 1) a strong horse to charge on in the battlefield, 2) a fleet camel on which to traverse vast, waterless wastes or 3) a fat luscious sheep to feast on and satisfy one's biting hunger and craving after a long journey, or after a long year of drought and famine. As for the word *ḥāyif*, it is related to *ḥāfih* "edge, rim." A *ḥāyif* is one who raids on foot, either alone or with one or two companions. He lurks at the edge of a Bedouin encampment waiting for the right moment, mostly under the cover of darkness, to dash at a prey he had already spied during daylight, usually a horse or a few camels, and makes off with it. For a Bedouin, the word has none of the negative connotations associated with such English words as thief, robber, marauder, and the like, though it is usually so translated. On the contrary, the word evokes in the Bedouin mind an image of daring, resourcefulness and self-reliance. A successful and enterprising *ḥāyif* may move up eventually to become the leader of mounted raiders, i.e. *ʕaǵīd*, a very prestigious and honorable position. Aside from such words as *xalūj*, *ḥāyil*, and *ḥāyif*, there are others that are hard to explain satisfactorily, let alone translate, e.g. *imānih*, *ḏimmih*, *ḥarj*, *rīf*, *zirīǵ*, *māxūḏih* (look them up in the glossary).

   Translation of idiomatic expressions is even much harder. As is well-known, a literal translation of an idiom is in many cases misleading, even ludicrous at times. We cannot translate *ṭalaʕ hu*

bi-ḏrāʕuh ⟨8⟩ literally as "he rose with his own arm." The negative phrase *ma luh šwa* ⟨302⟩ equals the English declarative phrase "he had guts," but if we were to give it an exact, literal translation it would say "he had no guts," the exact opposite of what it really means. Also, *ya ballēto kbūdukum* ⟨165⟩ cannot be given the literal translation "moisten your stomachs" because the English word "stomach" is both external and internal. Thus, the reader could conceivably be misled to understand the phrase to mean "splash water on your stomachs" while the intended meaning is "wet the inside of your digestive tracks" i.e. "slake your thirst." This last phrase, though it gives the correct meaning, is not as figurative as the original. The English translation "moisten your throats" was chosen as a compromise solution, even though "throats" means *ḥlūg* in Arabic, not *kbūd*. By the same token, *tyābat ćabdi* ⟨358, 504⟩ is translated as "joy of my heart," and *farḥat ʕaḏādēk* ⟨509⟩ is translated as "at your service" instead of the literal "joy of your two forearms."

The difficulty of translating idiomatic expressions and formulas arises in some cases from the fact that such structures encapsulate certain incidents, e.g. *rimḥ al-mʕāzilih* ⟨112⟩, customary practices, e.g. *madfūgin finjāluh* ⟨469⟩, ethics, e.g. *waḏḥ an-niga* ⟨4,335⟩, concepts, e.g. *fayyaḏt w-bayyaḏt* ⟨384⟩, or attitudes, e.g. *liḥyitin ġānmih* ⟨382⟩. There are times when the syntax of a structure, not so much the semantics, presents a difficulty and makes it impossible to maintain the elegance of the original in translation, e.g. *ḥalāt ad-daʕwa ḥāḏr b-ḥāḏir* ⟨389⟩, *alli ʕind allah ʕinduh* ⟨389⟩.

What has been said in the above lines is only a glimpse of the actual difficulties encountered in translating a nomadic narrative into English. Meanwhile, it is a brief outline of the underlying considerations which guided the conception and organization of the glossary at the end. I could have chosen to cram the text and translation with extended exegetical footnotes, but I thought this would be too cumbersome and not very satisfactory. Instead, I decided to make as flowing a translation as possible, cut down the footnotes to a minimum and place whatever extra information that

needs to be said about a word or an expression under its entry in the glossary. The glossary will not merely be a lexicon, but a repository of syntactic, semantic and ethnographic information. In a sense, it is an intrinsic supplement to, and an integral part of, the text and translation, just as much as the footnotes would have been. Therefore, to make full and more accurate sense of the text, the reader should carefully examine the analytic part and then consult the glossary constantly while reading the translation.

Needless to say, the glossary deals only with the vocabulary contained in our text, not with the Šammari dialect as a whole. But in this limited respect, an attempt is made to make the glossary as full and as comprehensive as possible. Not only does it include practically all the Šammari words in the text, but it also deals with the various shades of meanings and different semantic ranges of a word as it occurs in diverse contexts in the narrative text. As large a number of English equivalents as possible is usually given to a Šammari word in the glossary in order to delineate as accurately as possible the semantic domain of the word and its extension from the literal to the figurative. Even extra-textual material, not only from the Šammari dialect but also from other Arabian dialects, as well as from Classical Arabic, is occasionally brought in so as to elucidate the sense of a word further. It must be emphasized, however, that the meanings given to a word in the glossary are primarily those that pertain to that word as it occurs in the narrative text, without necessarily laying any claims to any other meanings it may have in the Šammari dialect or any other Arabian dialect.

Lexical items are entered in the glossary according to their consonantal roots and arranged according to the Arabic alphabet. Under each root all its derivatives which occur in the narrative text will be given. An idiom or a formula which includes any of these derivatives as a constituent will also be entered under that root. Idiomatic phrases and formulaic expressions drawn from the text are amply provided to illustrate usage. By grouping related derivatives and idioms under one root, their etymological and semantic affinity will be apparent. Examining the word within two

different contexts, the syntactical in the narrative and the etymological in the glossary, would hopefully illuminate its meaning and usage in its literal as well as in its figurative sense.

An idiom will appear under more than one entry, as many as its constituent words. But its meaning will be explained only once; under the key lexical item which gives it its idiomatic status, or under the item which figures as a key constituent in other idioms. In the other entries, the reader will simply be referred to the place where the idiom is explained. For example, the epithets *jarʕat al-mōt* ⟨351⟩, *ḥifrit al-mōt* ⟨219⟩ and *ṭēr mōt* ⟨478⟩ will all be entered and explained under the root *mwt* but at the same time, the first will also be entered, though not explained, under the root *jrʕ*, the second under *ḥfr*, and the third under *ṭyr*. On the other hand, the expressions *ṭūl ḥissuh* ⟨483⟩, *ṭūl rsanah* ⟨513⟩, *ṭiwīl ar-rimḥ* ⟨564⟩ will not be explained under the entry *ṭwl*, but under *ḥss*, *rmḥ*, *rsn* respectively.

The glossary is organized to contain sufficient information on the one hand, and, on the other, to make the retrieval of this information foolproof, even at the risk of some degree of redundancy, as in the examples just cited above. Here is one more example of redundancy. A derivative, the root of which is not immediately apparent, is entered in the glossary as such and the reader is referred to its root where it is to be found fully explained.

Two words derived from the same root, which have the same meaning but slightly different phonetic shapes, will be listed one after the other, each followed by the number of the segment of the text where it appears, and then the meaning in English (cf. *bṭn*).

On the other hand, the same word may have different meanings in different contexts in the text. In this case, these various meanings will be listed after the word and after each specific meaning the number of the segment(s) of the text where the word is used in this specific meaning will be given (cf. *twr* and *dry*).

Alphabetical arrangement according to the root has proven to be the most suitable method of organizing dictionaries of Classical

and Standard literary Arabic. This method, however, is not so easy
to apply when it comes to compiling dictionaries of the various
Arabic dialects. A glossary is not merely a list of words. It is a
systematic work based on underlying theoretical linguistic
assumptions which are numerous and complex. Classical/Literary
Arabic has been thoroughly researched by the ancient philologists,
with special emphasis on lexicology and inflection (*ṣarf*), the two
sides of the lexicographical coin. In the case of Arabic dialects,
we have a completely different situation. Spoken Arabic is not as
stable and self-contained as written Arabic. In addition to
influences from literary Arabic as well as from foreign languages,
the various regional and social dialects and the successive
chronological stages of the same dialect blend into one another
and exercise mutual influences on each other. Change resulting
from such diverse influences is not even, leaving a dialect always
in a state of flux. The difficulty is compounded by the fact that
Arabic dialect study is practically in its infancy and many
theoretical decisions relating to such matters as morphology and
semantics are yet to be settled and agreed upon by the community
of concerned scholars.

To determine the radical consonants of a root, one must examine
the various forms derived from the root through the process of
inflection. This procedure, however, is not always easy to follow,
especially when the root is of limited occurence or derivationally
not very productive. This becomes even more problematic when
one of the radicals is a semi-vowel or a *hamzah*. The root might
be quite productive derivationally, but due to uneven linguistic
changes, the forms in the inflectional paradigm are not affected all
in the same way. The only course one can follow in such instances
is to make tentative solutions, having recourse sometimes to
Classical Arabic.

These problems can best be illustrated by examining the status
of the *hamzah* in the Šammari dialect. Practically all the Peninsular
dialects have gotten rid of the *hamzah* except in initial position
where its status is rather tenuous. It is not always clear whether
the glottal catch (*hamzah*) in initial position is a true radical or

whether it is a muscular necessity resulting from the sudden release of the closed glottis as a concomitant of vocalic onset. An initial syllable consisting of a glottal catch and the following vowel disappears when it is preceeded by a prefix or by another word; e.g. *tāxiḏ* (*←axaḏ*) ⟨71⟩, *ya-mānt allah* ⟨383⟩, *ʕala ṭiruh* ⟨148⟩, *ya-xu Samra* ⟨23⟩, *ana xu Samra* ⟨35⟩, or when a suffix or another word is added to the word leading to a realignment of its syllabic structure; e.g. *ḥadēhum* ⟨146⟩, *ḥada l-ʕyāl* ⟨411⟩. The initial *hamzah* drops in such forms as *klituh, xḏuwah*. The *hamzah* may be dropped and compensated for by a final vowel; e.g. *axaḏ* → *xaḏa, akal* → *kala, ajal* → *jali, aṭir* → *ṭari*. Sometimes the *hamzah* changes to *w*; e.g. *wimar, wiman, wilif*. In the passive voice and in the second and third verbal forms, the *hamzah* always changes to *w*; e.g. *wcil, wamman, wāxaḏ*. All these examples show the vacillation of the initial *hamzah* radical between retention, deletion and substitution. Under such unstable conditions, it seems to me that the best solution is to retain the initial *hamzah* as a true radical, as a part of the root, and consider whatever changes it goes through as inflectional.

In the Peninsular dialects, the *hamzah* never occurs as medial radical. Even in lexical items directly borrowed from literary Arabic the *hamzah* is avoided by substituting *ʕayn* for it; e.g. *saʕal, masʕalih, hēʕih*. Some verbs with medial *hamzah* have disappeared from the dialects to be replaced by totally different items; e.g. *nišad* instead of *saʔal, šāf* instead of *raʔa*, and *ayyas* instead of *yaʔisa*. The more common way to deal with the medial *hamzah* in the dialects is to drop it and make the preceeding vowel long; e.g. *būrih* ⟨252⟩, *ḏīb, rās, bās, jāš*. In the last three examples, we are faced with the problem that the *alif* does not qualify as a radical and we have to examine the word in its various derivations in order to determine whether the medial *alif* is an inflected *wāw* or an inflected *ya*. For example, the classical verb with a medial *hamzah raʔaf* "to show mercy, to be kind, to take pity" becomes a hollow verb, *rāf/yirūf*, i.e. the medial radical changes from *hamzah* to *wāw*. As we have already seen, the verb *saʔal*, as such, does not exist in the dialects. But, there are other derived forms

that do exist: e.g. *misālih, msāyil* (=*sāʔil*). Yet due to the great gaps and the atrophied condition of this inflectional paradigm it is hazardous to guess whether the medial radical is *wāw* or *ya*. Also, the verb *raʔā* does not exist in the dialect, but we have the verbal noun *rāy* "opinion," which is the only form of this inflectional paradigm existing in the dialect. In the glossary *fāl* is given the classical root *fʔl* because there is no way of knowing whether the medial *alif* is *wāw* or *ya*. The same is true with *rāy* which is derived from CA *rʔy*. In this last example, it is difficult to imagine that the medial *hamzah* would change to *y* in the dialect because such a change would leave us with the second and third radicals of the root both being *y*. On the other hand, if the medial *hamzah* changes to *w* the resulting root *rwy* would be the same as the root relating to drinking and watering.

Another example of both paradigmatic corrosion and avoidance of medial *hamzah* in the dialect is the verb *yzīr* "to roar" which exists in the imperfect but not in the perfect.

One interesting example of avoiding medial *hamzah* in the dialect is the changes undergone by the Classical root *ṯʔr* "to revenge, avenge." The first verbal form *ṯaʔar* has been dropped and in its place the sixth verbal form *tiṯāra* ⟨388⟩ is used. But it is quite obvious that *tiṯāra* is derived from the root *ṯry* and not *ṯʔr* (otherwise, the sixth form would have been *tiṯāwar*) . Also, the third form is *ṯāra* ⟨330⟩ and not *ṯāwar*. But the form *aṯ-ṯuwāriyyāt* ⟨356,513,525⟩ is clearly derived from *ṯwr* which is ultimately derived from *ṯʔr*. In fact, the verbal noun meaning vengeance, revenge exists in two forms *ṯār* and *ṯara*. The second form is attested in the hemistich *ḥda dārikum min ʕigbikum tandb aṯ-ṯara* which comes from the famous poem entitled *al-xalūj* by Mḥammad al-ᶜŌni. It seems that what we have here is a radical shift from the root form *ṯʔr* to *ṯry* but the change has not permeated all the forms of the inflectional paradigm.

Verbs in which the third radical is *hamzah* have been transformed in the dialect into defective verbs. (e.g. *drʔ* in the glossary). The verb *jāja/yjāji* ⟨549,551⟩ which is derived from the classical *jaʔaʔ* "to refrain, desist" is problematic. The final *alif* is an inflected *ya*, but what about the medial *alif*?

There is a tendency in the Arabian dialects to assimilate the final radical *wāw* to *yā*. Thus, the classical verbs *yatlu, yajlu, yadnu, yarju* become *yatli, yajli, yadni, yarji*. This seems to be a part of an older and more general trend. It is consistent with changing *u* to *i* and it serves to streamline the inflectional paradigm since the imperfect of all the verb forms II-X end with a final *yā*. As final radicals, *wāw* and *yā* have always been interchangeable in Classical Arabic, so much so that lexicons which arrange entries according to the final radical of the root, lump these two letters in one section, as in *al-Qāmūs al-Muḥīṭ* by al-Fayrūzābādi.

Despite this trend of assimilating the final radical *wāw* to *yā*, there are few examples in the glossary of roots with *wāw* as a final radical, e.g. *ʔbw, ʔxw, jww, hmw, xtw*.

Among the other problems in vernacular lexicography which can be mentioned only in passing is the vacillation between alternate roots (cf *wdʕ/dʕy* and *wds/dws* in the glossary). Another problem is the merging of two older roots into one in the vernacular due to such factors of linguistic change as metathesis, velarization, develarization, etc. For example, the two classical roots *qṣd* and *qṣṭ* have merged into *gṣd* (see *gṣd* in the glossary.)

In the arrangement of Arabic lexicons, particles represent a special problem. Unlike nouns and verbs, some particles do not go through the various processes of inflections that help determine the radicals and the root of a word. Also, as is well known, particles are notoriously unstable in their phonetic form (not to mention the fact that some of them are hard to pin down semantically). Due to these considerations, a particle will be entered in the glossary not according to its consonantal root but according to its regular stem. In case of particles with unstable lexical forms, the isolated or most common form will be taken as the regular stem, and, hence, the main entry form. Right after the main entry form the other forms will be given, each separated from the other by a comma. In entering the stem of a particle it will be positioned in the alphabetical order of the vocabulary list according to its consonantal configuration regardless of its

diacritic vowels, except for initial or final *a* which, like medial *ā*, will be counted as an *alif*. In addition to its main entry form, other forms of a particle will be entered in the glossary according to their alphabetical arrangement. Under such entries the reader will be referred to the main entry where the particle is fully explained. In case of homonymy, the stem of the particle will be entered after the root of the other word.

Like particles, foreign words and words the roots of which cannot be established are listed in straight alphabetical order according to the consonantal configuration of the stem.

These are some of the formal and semantic considerations which influenced my conception of the organization of the glossary forming Part III of this work. It will be apparent to the user of this glossary that some of the decisions regarding its organization are arbitrary. These decisions are tentative solutions which I make at my own risk, begging the indulgence of my colleagues. In many respects, I am treading the path paved by Hans Wehr and Milton Cowan in their excellent dictionary of Modern Written Arabic, taking into account, naturally, the differences between written and spoken Arabic. The glossaries appended to Palva (1976) and Palva (1978) served as good, pioneering examples for organizing vernacular data. I have also benefitted with regard to the meaning of some words from the vocabulary lists and indices appended to Burckhardt 1831, Dickson 1949, Doughty 1921, Musil 1928, and Socin 1900-1901.