

The Elixir for the Redemption of Captives, a little known account of late 18th century Spain through the eyes of Moroccan Ambassador Muḥammad ibn °Uthmān al-Miknāsā

El elixir para la redención de los cautivos, un relato poco conocido de la España de finales del siglo XVIII a través de los ojos del embajador marroquí Muḥammad ibn °Uthmān al-Miknāsā

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Abstract: This article presents some of the characteristics and difficulties faced by the translator in the translation of an important, although little-known travel account authored by Muḥammad ibn °Uthman al-Miknasi, Ambassador to the sultan of Morocco and later Minister, when he travelled across Spain to meet King Carlos III in 1789. The text is a colourful portrait of the people and customs of late 18th century Spain, with its technological innovations and cultural contrasts, as well as the constant allusion to the end of the Muslim presence in the Iberian Peninsula. It is in itself an essential

text in the history of intercultural relations between both countries, but it also poses a great challenge to the translator who attempts to render a Spanish translation, where foreignness becomes familiarity and vice versa. This article summarizes several aspects of the author's PhD dissertation, based on a complete Spanish translation of the *Elixir for the Redemption of Captives*, describing some of the difficulties encountered in what is an outstanding example of cultural translation.

Key words: ideology; translation; alternative medicine; cultural patterns.

Resumen: Este artículo presenta algunas de las peculiaridades y dificultades para el traductor del importante, aunque poco conocido, relato de viajes que hiciera Muḥammad ibn ʿUthman al-Miknasi, embajador del sultán de Marruecos y más tarde ministro, al recorrer España con objeto de una audiencia con el rey Carlos III en 1789. Su vivo retrato de las gentes y costumbres de la España de la época, con sus adelantos tecnológicos y sus contrastes culturales, así como el recuerdo constante del fin de la presencia musulmana en la Península, es en sí un texto fundamental en la historia de las relaciones interculturales entre ambos países, pero además presenta una gran dificultad al traductor que aborda su versión española, donde la extrañeza se vuelve familiaridad y viceversa. En este artículo, que resume diversos aspectos de la traducción completa al español del *Elixir para la Redención de los Cautivos*, que es el objeto de la Tesis Doctoral del autor, se presentan algunas de las dificultades en lo que es un caso paradigmático de traducción cultural.

Palabras clave: literatura de viajes; traducción intercultural; diplomacia; relaciones hispano-marroquíes; árabe marroquí.

In October, 1779, a high ranking official at the Moroccan court, Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān al-Miknāsā, prepared himself for an exceptional voyage: the third diplomatic mission to modern Spain since al-Ghassānī's first mission to Spain almost a century before, and al-Ghazāl's expedition fourteen years earlier¹. He travelled to the court of King Carlos III on behalf of the Moroccan sultan Sayyid Muḥammad ben ʿAbd Allāh and his endeavour would culminate in the Aranjuez treaty of 1780. On a personal level, this diplomatic journey would shape his conception of the world and was the

1. Al-Ghassānī's mission took place in 1690-91, under the reign of Mulay Ismaʿīl, while al-Ghazzāl's took place between 1766-67, under the same sultan Muḥammad ben ʿAbd Allāh (Muḥammad III). Al-Ghassānī wrote another *riḥla* or travel account entitled very similarly *Riḥlatu al-wazīri fī iftikāki al-asīri* (*Voyage of the Minister for the Redemption of the Captive*, رحلة الوزير في افتكالك الأسير), cf. Vernet (1953) and Matar (2003); while al-Ghazāl, who also concluded a treaty of friendship and peace with Spain, wrote another account under the title *Natījatu al-ijtihādi fī al-muhādānati wa al-jihādi* (*Result of the Effort in the Truce Negotiation and the Battle for the Faith*, نتيجة الاجتهاد في المهادنة والجهاد).

motive for a unique personal account of late 18th-century Spain now preserved in three manuscripts kept in Moroccan libraries².

His account is extraordinary in many ways. Muḥammad ibn ʿUthmān al-Miknāsī was a man educated as a Moroccan *faqīh*, following an education based on traditional customs and a predominance of religion: He learned by heart the holy Qurʾān, acquired knowledge of Classical Arabic and was sent to the prestigious Al-Qarawiyyīn University of Fez, a place of learning that, like Al-Azhar in Cairo, is vested with an aura of sanctity among Moroccans. His learning had an interdisciplinary character: along with religious subjects, literature, mathematics and other subjects falling within the category of pure sciences were also taught. Founded by a noble woman in the fourth century according to the Islamic calendar, this University has acquired a special status among the universities in the Islamic world. As a graduate from Al-Qarawiyyīn, Ibn ʿUzmān was granted the title of *talbe*. According to the Spanish historian Vicente Rodríguez Casado, «the Alawī ambassador spoke Spanish with certain fluidity. When he was later to hold an interview with the Count of Floridablanca, Minister of State, they needed no third party to act as an interpreter, although in other occasions he preferred not to speak Spanish in public, since he thought his command of that language to be rather deficient, and let the work in the hands of interpreters» (Rodríguez Casado 1946, 74).

Therefore, he used Spanish placenames, despite the fact of having a well-known Arabic name, except in the case of great cities like Cordova and Granada. He also quoted extensively neologisms which reflect the presence of Spanish loanwords in Moroccan Arabic, often with a faulty pronunciation, as is the case of «Inquisition», transcribed *Inkistryūn*. انكستيون.

1. AL-IKSĪR. DIARY OF A MOROCCAN AMBASSADOR

The manuscript of al-Iksīr belongs to the literary modality of *riḥla*, or travel literature, a prestigious genre in Arabic literature. The manuscript was edited in 1965 by Muḥammad Al-Fāsī, historian and at the time President (*raʾīs*) of Muḥammad V University in Rabat, and it was published by the Centre for Scientific Research at Rabat University. It has never been wholly translated into Spanish, except for a few partial translations by

2. National Library, Rabat, Ms 2542-9, a fairly well preserved manuscript. It consists of 100 pages and it is therefore the most complete version extant. It is bound in red leather and written in a typically Moroccan script called *Maghribī mujawhar*, literally «jewelled Moroccan [script]». Each page is 14 × 19 cm with 20 lines each. There is no indication of having been copied, and therefore it may have been written by ibn ʿUthmān himself. This manuscript was the basis for Al-Fāsī's edition and my own translation. There are, however, two more manuscripts extant, less complete: one at the *Khizānat Ḥassaniyya*, the Royal Library (Ms 2326) and another in the library of the al-Nāṣiriyya *zāwiya* in Tamgrut, South-Eastern Morocco (Habūs Ms 124).

Spanish scholars Nieves Paradela and Mariano Arribas Palau. Because of the intrinsic interest that the work has, I have undertaken a complete critical translation that is the subject of my PhD thesis about to be presented in the University of Salamanca, Spain. The interest of the work is justified:

- As a precious testimony in the history of intercultural relationships and diplomatic relations between Spain and Morocco, and the Islamic world at large.
- As a particular account that reflects a personal representation of Spain and Spanish life in the late 18th century, seen through the lens of a learned Moroccan of the time.
- As a case study of cultural translation.

In this article I shall focus mainly on the interest that this outstanding work has in the light of contemporary culturally-oriented translation studies.

2. TRANSLATING MOROCCAN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

The main problems we have faced as translators are subsumed into four categories:

- a) the peculiarities of the *riḥla* genre.
- b) the variety –or varieties– of postclassical Moroccan Arabic.
- c) the specific terminology used by the author.
- d) the familiarizing strategies used by the author to bridge the gap between novelty and foreign realities and his native experience.

The discursive peculiarities of the *riḥla* genre in translation fall beyond the scope of this short article, but the reader may consult the outstanding work by Matar (2003) and its parallel and pioneering Spanish essay by Paradela (1995).

As regards language, we are dealing with a diglossic situation affecting especially the lexicographical level of the Arabic language. In this view, it is relevant to bear in mind, on the one hand, the academic formation of the writer and, on the other, the variety of the Arabic language spoken at the time in Morocco, which undoubtedly left a visible mark in his written language.

The use of jaculatories addressed to God and the Prophet, redundancies, Qur'ānic expressions and a mixture of the colloquial variety of Moroccan Arabic, known as *dārija*, and Classical Arabic, are found in the manuscript, revealing the characteristic traits of a post-Classical Arabic variety.

The Moroccan variety of Arabic spoken in the 18th century had experienced the influence of many languages and cultures. It is notorious in particular the great contribution of the Andalusian dialect at all levels, before and after the great expulsion

of 1609, the substrate and adstrate of Amazigh varieties, and also the influence of Portuguese –the Portuguese controlled almost all of the Moroccan coast between the 14th and the 15th centuries. To speak of the local variety (*ʿāmiyya* in general; *dārīja* the Moroccan variety in particular) leads us to address the well-known problem of diglossia in Arab communities: the coexistence of an upper level, the pan-Arabic written language, with an official status and the language of religion, the press, the media and literature, alongside the register of everyday language, varying according to geographical criteria. Thus every country, region or even city has its own geographical variety articulated in various registers, which basically affect the lexicon and, to a lesser degree, syntax and morphological traits (Rubiera Mata 2004, 33-35).

In order to approach the characteristics of Moroccan *dārīja* as are shown in this work one must not forget the influences received from other Arabic varieties and, especially, from Andalusian Arabic. The *lksīr* shows a good number of words and expressions of Andalusian origin, whose meaning acquires a new dimension when addressed to 18th-century Spain as a referent, and even more when translated into Spanish, a language that preserves many Andalusian loanwords.

Thus, one of the words that appears frequently in the text is *al-iqāma*, sometimes written *līqāma*, as it is pronounced in the Moroccan dialectal varieties up to this day. I prefer in this context to refer to *dialects* or *varieties* instead of a single Moroccan dialect, because the Arabic language in Morocco is a dialectal bundle that changes from region to region, inducing confusion to translators not well versed in the Moroccan cultural diversity. Returning to the previous example, the polysemic word *al-iqāma* (“elevation, setting, erection, execution, performance, etc.» in standard Arabic, among many other senses), is used in *Al-lksīr* in different senses depending on the context in which it is used, as such is the case with the military academy that the diplomat visited in Seville, where it means «gear, equipment»:

وبالدار المذكورة مكان اخر فيه سفينة بقلوعها وأحبالها وجميع اقامتها من مدافع وغير ذل..

En otro lugar de esta casa, hay un barco con sus velas y cordaje y todo el equipamiento necesario como cañones etc.

In other location in this same house there is a ship with all its sails and rigging and all necessary equipment such as cannons and so forth...

The use by Ibn ʿUthmān of religious expressions, in a number that may seem excessive to contemporary readers, is explained by the religious foundation of the author’s academic training. The Qur’ān is constantly referred to, and there are many expressions where the Holy Name of God is used with various pragmatic functions, as we shall see below.

In sum, the style used in the diary of the Moroccan ambassador was typical of cultured users two centuries ago, at a time when neo-Arabic, or modern standard Arabic, had not fully developed.

Translating a text marked with these characteristics poses serious problems as regards the correct understanding and interpretation of the original sense intended. We have approached the translation helped by our native knowledge of contemporary Moroccan *dārīja*, but we have had to resort quite frequently to specific sources, such as Federico Corriente's *Dictionary of Andalusī Arabic* (1997). In several cases this has been the only way to shed light on words or expressions long since disappeared in the Moroccan variety, taking the necessary precautions as regards the possible distinct evolution in the course of the two centuries that separate the last accounts of autochthonous Arabic on Andalusian soil, from Ibn ʿUthmān's Moroccan usage.

One of these enigmatic terms is *šamārīx*. As it appears in our text, this term seems to refer to a sort of earth or soil, or a specific plant name:

وقد كانت هذه الغابة ملتفة غاية فعمد اليها الطاغية وحطب جلها ولم يبق بها الا شجر الكروش وحطب ماعاده فلا يمكن لاحد من اللصوص ان يتستر فيها، ولما خرجنا من الغابة المذكورة اشرفنا على مدينة قرطبة وسرنا في أرض شماريخ كثيرة الطين لا يسلك منها إلا بمشقة نحو ساعتين

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Era un bosque enorme y el tirano había talado gran parte de él, dejando solo los robles, para que ningún ladrón se pudiera esconder ahí. Al salir de ese bosque pudimos divisar la ciudad de Córdoba; anduvimos con dificultad casi dos horas por una tierra fangosa de *šamārīx*.

It was an enormous forest and the tyrant had cut down a good portion of it, only sparing the oaks, so that no robber could hide inside. When we came out of the forest, we were able to see the city of Cordova in the distance; we walked with difficulty for almost two hours across a muddy land of *šamārīx*.

وسفرنا من المدينة المذكورة الى مدشر يقال له لربيه ذى الرى والرى بلغة الصنبول الوادى لان هذا المدشر على الوادى الكبير فوصلناه على ثلاث ساعات ونصف كلها بلاد جيدة كبيرة وهي المسماة عندنا بالشماريخ أشبه سيء بلاد الاحيانية ترابا وكدى وأهلها أهل فلاحه كثيرة

(pages 54-55)

Viajamos de esta ciudad a un pueblo llamado Villa del Río (*Lardīyah dī al-rī*), que en la lengua española significa río, ya que este pueblo está a la orilla del río Guadalquivir, adonde llegamos tras tres horas y media. Toda esta región es tierra buena y extensa que llamamos nosotros *šamārīx*. Se parece mucho a la región de Alh̄yāynā tanto en sus terrenos como en sus colinas, y sus habitantes son gente dedicada a la agricultura.

We travelled from this city to a village called Villa del Río, and *río* in the Spanish language means «river», for that village is located on the shore of the Guadalquivir river. We

reached it after three hours and a half. All this region is a good and extense land that we call *šamārīx*. It looks very much like the Alḥyāynā region both as regards the earth and its hills, and its inhabitants are all engaged in agriculture.

This word may allude to a kind of land or vegetal species very difficult to identify; in Classical Arabic *šamārīx* is the plural form of *šumrūx*, a branch of date-palm laden with dates. In other sources, depending on regions, *šamārīx* may also refer to a naked branch, or to the spiked branches of any bush, such as the common brush (*Cytisus scoparius*) or the jacaranda. The original editor, Professor Muḥammad Al-Fāṣī, followed the classical interpretation in a footnote (page 55) acknowledging the difficulty of ascertaining what Ibn ʿUthmān really had in mind:

الشمرآخ في اللغة هو العتكال وهو العيدان التي يكون عليها الثمر في النخيل وهو بمثابة عنقود العنب في الكرم ولا شك أنه عبر بهذه الكلمة عن شيء آخر كانت تطلق عليه هذه اللفظة في عامية المغرب في وقته

Al- šamārīx in the [Arabic] language is [the same as] *al-cuthkāl*, which is the branch (*cīdān*) where dates grow in the palm-tree, resembling grape clusters in the vine, but there is no doubt that he [Ibn ʿUthmān] used this word to refer to an altogether different thing expressed with the same word in the Moroccan dialect of his time.

Šamārīx does not appear in Corriente's dictionary of Andalusī Arabic, but it does show in Abū'l-Xayr al-Išbīlī's *ʿUmdat aṭ-ṭabīb fī macrifat al-anbāt*, a 12th-century botanical treatise, with the diction *šimrāx-šamārīx* (584):

شمرآخ: (واحد الشمرآخ): هي أغصان العُدق، وهو عنقودُ النخلة يكون فيها التمر.

This is the classical sense: «*šimrāx*: (singular *aš- šamārīx*): they are the branches of the date clusters, and these are the bunches of the palm-tree, where dates are found.» But this sense poses a problem, since the association *muddy earth of date-clustered bunches* does not seem to provide coherence, as al-Fāṣī aptly noted. Unless there has been a confusion in the reading of the manuscript, or even in al-ʿUthmān's idiolect, for *šamārīq*, synonym of *al-labsān* (and then *labsān*: *nawcun min al-lift al-barrī* (343), a species of wild mustard (*Sinapsis arvensis*) (Corriente 1997, 475).

However, there are other possible interpretations. According to Dozy's *Supplément aux dictionnaires arabes* (1881), the word *šumrūx* or *šimrāxa* (pl. *šamārīx*) may refer to a thin or small stick or rod («*badine, petite baguette*») or, as used in a Berber tribe, to the *démons* or spirits. Furthermore, *šimrāxat* or *šimrāx*, as quoted by Dozy, is explained by John Godfrey Lewis Kosegarten as *قمة الجبل* that is, «*top of a hill*» in his edition of *The poems of the Huzailis* (1854), an Arabic manuscript in the University of Leyden. This geographical description is further amplified by Lane's *Lexicon* (1893 [1968]), where we also find «*a round, tall, slender head, or peak, of a mountain*» as a related sense. We do not have other information to confirm our hypothesis in late 18th-century Moroccan

local usage, yet the fact that Kosegarten alludes to a feature of the terrain, and the evidence that Ibn ʿUthmān is applying this term to *the land itself*, and not to vegetation, may lead us to an extension of Dozy’s «Berber» meaning, perhaps in the sense that the lie of the land is abrupt and insecure, more apt for demons than humans; or, more down-to-earth, a kind of landscape where small round hillocks abound, sticking smoothly out like clusters. In fact the geological area around Córdoba and Villa del Río, an eroded area of Tertiary sandstones and marlstones, corresponds to this image, locally reflected in place-names like *Los Mugrones* o *El Mugronal* –*mugrón* literally being a «bud, sprout, especially of grapevines», but geographically used to refer to hills of round contours (cf. Catalan *mugró* «nipple»), in a surprising parallel to the Moroccan Arabic image.

According to the chronology of his voyage, Ibn ʿUthmān and his retinue arrived in Cordova some weeks after Christmas, probably by the beginning of February or even March. The last date recorded is their exit from Ceuta on the 12th of *Dhū al-ḥijjah* of 1193 (21st December 1779).

2.1. Neighbouring exoticism

Since the Christian conquest of al-Andalus, Arab writers refer to that lost land as «the lost paradise», *al-firdaws al-mafqūd* (الفرديوس المفقود). It certainly represents a period of splendour of the Arab culture and civilization in all respects. Arab travel writers to Spain kept on alluding to this cliché in their accounts of their voyages (see for example Al-Ghassānī’s account in Matar 2003). Al-Miknāsī similarly identified with the «traces of the Muslims, God had mercy on them!», and does not miss the chance to implore God to return a town or city to the rule of Islam. When he encounters people with Morisco surnames such as Moreno (مورينو) or Vargas (بركاش), or when carried away by the attentions dispensed to him along his journey, he could not avoid expressing his desire that God may lead them to the right path of Islam.

However, his relationship with institutional Spain was ambivalent, since on the one hand, like al-Ghassānī had done one century before (Matar 2003, 114) he does not shun his hatred and repulse for the heresies and deviations of the Christians led by their «tyrant», exclaiming frequently sentences such as «May God annihilate them and purify their land of them», yet quite frequently, albeit sometimes implicitly, he also expresses his admiration and wonder at their administrative organization and technical development.

This is clearly a relationship of ambivalence in a pre-colonial context, an ambivalence between the North, a developed system that boasts exclusivity in the new sciences and technical skills, and an archaic South, self-contained and decadent. As far as

translation is concerned, we decided not to intervene in any case to soften the tone of the ST and to transmit its ideological load as it stood in the original.

But the cultural stereotypes that crop up in Ibn ʿUthmān’s travel diary pose several problems for its translation. As Ovidi Carbonell mentioned in his article «Traducción, Oriente, Occidente..., y la necesidad del exotismo para la traducción» (Carbonell 2000, 175), «the translation of works written from cultures in which there is a notorious (and pretended) cultural gap poses problems to the translator because of the great ideological load with which the reader (and the translators themselves) face the task of translating». Exoticism, in this sense, is «an ideological structure» (Feria García 2000, 177).

The distance between the Spanish cultural realities and the experience of the Moroccan ambassador is bridged in many ways. More often than not, Ibn ʿUthmān al-Miknāsī draws from source-culture realities to give consistency to his experience in a clearly familiarizing move, but sometimes these result in a dubious mixing-up of cultural categories. Take, for instance, the use of the concept *badāwa* «bedouin» to refer to rustic people or the familiarization that can be felt through the whole of this passage:

فوجدنا فيها من آثار المسلمين رحمهم الله برجا مستديرا به جدار وهو الآن مسمى عند النصارى ببرج المسلمين،
وقد جعلوا اليوم بازائه داخل السور المذكور سوق الجزائرين، وأهل هذه القرية أهل بدواة

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[En este pueblo] vimos uno de los restos de la antigua presencia de los musulmanes ¡Que Dios tenga misericordia de ellos! Se trata de un minarete (*alburj*) rodeado por un muro, y que hasta hoy en día los cristianos siguen llamándolo «el minarete de los musulmanes», cerca del cual, dentro del muro, está el mercado de los carniceros mientras los habitantes de este pueblo son gente beduina (*badāwa*).

[In this town] we found some of the remains of the [presence of] the Muslims, may God have mercy on them! It is a tower surrounded by a wall, and it is still referred to by the Christians as «the Tower of the Muslims», next to which, inside the alluded wall, is located now the butchers’ market (*sūq al-jazzārīn*), and the townsfolk in this village are Bedouin people (*ahl badāwa*).

Since *tower* here most likely refers to a former minaret, there is a potential censure in the fact that the butchers’ *souk* or market, being an impure trade, is normally located *outside* the city walls and certainly away from a mosque or other religious or «pure» activities.

As it is always customary among travellers describing hitherto unknown lands, there is constant reference to local realities in another attempt at familiarization:

وهي أشبه شيء ببلاد دكالة بأرض المغرب نباتها النبات المسمى بالخرشف وليس بها ماء اصلا الا الآبار او ماء الامطار الا ان ماء آبارها قريب لا كآبار دكالة

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[Esta tierra] se parece mucho a la región de Dukkāla en Marruecos; la planta (que se cultiva) es la llamada alcachofa, y no dispone de aguas salvo las de los pozos o la de lluvia, pero el agua de pozo es superficial, no como en Dukkāla.

[This land] resembles the region of Dukkāla in Morocco; the plants that are grown here are the plants called artichokes, and there is no water except that which is drawn from wells or rainwater. However the water from the wells are near [the surface], unlike that in Dukkāla.

2.2. Dios or Alá?

One of the dilemmas we faced in our translation was the rendering of the word *Allāh* (الله), which appears constantly in the text of *Al-Iksīr*. We may give the impression that by choosing *Dios* (God) we are contradicting ourselves, because one of our guidelines was to preserve the idea of foreignness -the exoticist dimension- of the source text in the target text having resource to techniques such as cultural borrowing and calque. To this end, and to preserve also the ambivalence of identity of a foreign land perceived as an Other which formerly was not (or so Ibn ʿUthmān wants to transmit), we have decided to use the words of Arabic origin in the Spanish lexicon, even some little-used ones³. But when it comes to the case of God/*Allāh*, we have opted in our Spanish translation for a pragmatic or communicative equivalence (God) instead of using the Spanish loanword *Alá*.

The reasons for this decision are that *Alá* is defined as the name given to God by the Muslims or Arabic speakers in general, that is, «the Supreme being who is considered to be the Creator of the Universe in monotheistic religions» (DRAE). Provided that it is our intention that the translated text of *Al-Iksīr* would function in Spanish as an ideologically communicative text, despite maintaining its categories of foreignness and

3. In our translation we have tried to recover the linguistic ties that exist between the Arabic and the Castilian language; thus we use common, more or less assimilated Arabic loanwords such as *alcoba* القبة «room», *noria* الناعورة «wheel, waterwheel», *muyahidies* المجاهدين «combatants» and *aceituna* الزيتون «olive», and to recover others that are nowadays considered unusual such as *jácena* الجائزة «girder beam», *arráez* الرايس «boat captain», *jaloque* شرقي «The wind» and *galima* غنيمة «booty». Arabic loanwords are a fertile ground that allow us to bring nearer the Arabic text to the Spanish culture, without either of them losing entirely their identity and, at the same time, reflecting upon the fact that the Arabic language and culture had once been one of the languages and cultures of the Spanish cultural and linguistic mosaic.

exoticism, the use of a pragmatic or functional translation would «privilege the intention of the translated text in the receiving culture» (Molina Martínez 2001, 138); that is, *Dios* (God) instead of *Alá* (Allah) would reproduce the intentionality of the translated text in the target culture. In this way, we underline the common beliefs uniting Islam with Christianity, both monotheistic religions as Ibn ʿUthmān himself remarked when discussing the differences between both religions: referring to Jesus Christ he mentioned that differences were simply in the details and not in the essence, which is the common belief «in one only God». We consider that, in this spirit, it is preferable to translate *Dios* instead of another name (*Alá*) that may be wrongly interpreted as the God of the Muslims as opposed to the God of the Christians.

2.3. The translation of Quranic expressions in *Al-Iksīr*

The *riḥla* of the ambassador Ibn ʿUthmān al-Miknāsī is a quintessentially ideological text. Its ideological message is political, cultural and also religious, a trait which shows in the excessive use of Islamic expressions and quite often complete verses extracted from the Holy Qurʾān.

When translating these religious expressions and quotations into Spanish we follow the translation into Spanish of the Sacred Qurʾān by the Spanish scholar Julio Cortés, widely considered to be one of the most authoritative and respectful towards the Muslim faith. However, on many occasions, what the writer says are incomplete and decontextualized expressions taken from Qurʾānic verses or *ayāt*, whose literal rendering in Cortés' translation does not harmonize with the pragmatic intention of the source text.

A clear example is the use by Ibn ʿUthmān of an expression found at the beginning of the chapter narrating his visit to Madrid. That expression is a Qurʾānic quote from the Sūrat al-Naḥl («The Bees»), يتقيون ظلالها, translated by Julio Cortés as *la sombra de todo lo que Dios ha creado* (the shadow of all that God has created)⁴.

هذه المدينة كبيرة غاية في الكبر وضخامة البناء حاضرة الحواضر ببلاد اصبانية وبنى على روبة وبيابها وادي مانسنارس زادها حسنا وبهاء وبهجة وسناء، وقد غرسوا على جانب الوادي اللذي من ناحية المدينة أشجارا كثيرة مثل النشم وما أشبهه في غاية العلو بصفوف معتدلة يتقيون ظلالها عشية وقت خروجهم

(page 83)

Esta ciudad es muy grande; con sus grandiosos edificios es una urbe que destaca entre las urbes del país de España. Fue construida sobre una colina; cerca de su puerta

4. The whole *ayat* (48) is: «¿No han visto que la sombra de todo lo que Dios ha creado se mueve hacia la derecha y hacia la izquierda, en humilde prosternación ante Dios?».

trascurre el río Manzanares concediéndole más belleza, esplendor y agradabilidad, y habían plantado en la orilla del río de la parte de la ciudad muchos árboles como el olmo y otros tipos parecidos, muy altos, en líneas rectas y de cuya sombra se disfruta por la tarde al salir a pasear...

This is a very large city. It boasts grandiose buildings and it is a city that excels among the cities of Spain. It was built on top of a hill, and near its gate flows the Manzanares river, granting her more beauty, splendour and pleasantness. On the shores to the city's side many trees like the elm had been planted, and they towered in straight lines, providing shadow for promenaders to enjoy...

Obviously it would have been awkward to force the Qur'ānic quotation in our translation, so that we opted for a straightforward *de cuya sombra se disfruta*, mentioning the reference to the Holy Book in a footnote.

2.4. Technical terms and descriptions

Perhaps one of the most socially interesting aspects of Ibn ʿUthmān's voyage through eighteenth-century Spain was the opportunity that it represented for the diplomat to bear witness to the technical achievements of Spain at the time. Spain was a much more technically and administratively evolved country than Morocco, an archaic empire in decadence.

Facing this reality seemingly posed to Ibn ʿUthmān a real problem as regards the use of technical terms and descriptions. In most cases the writer resorts to the use of Moroccan terminology in order to bring closer to the Moroccan reader a technique or instrument which may be totally unknown in the target country. The style used in his descriptions of mechanisms, inventions or instruments is often very confusing, and it is sometimes difficult to ascertain clearly their functions and components. This leads us to question the translation strategies used by the Moroccan diplomat when relaying technical or social novelties into his language.

We have chosen two telling examples from his descriptions of the Tobacco Factory and the Mint House in Seville. Note the ideological opinions of the author:

a) The Fábrica de Tabacos in Seville:

وباشبيلية دار كبيرة مثل القصبة لها أربع حلق لكبرها في حيطانها من السراجب والطيقان لادخال الضوء مانتان وسبعون وفيها من المخازن الكبار ما لا يعد يسمونها دار عشبة طابة (...), ولقد رأيتهم يطبخون العشبة الخبيثة بالأرحية على شكل معاصر الزيتون وهم أي الأرحية مصطفون وكل رحي موكل به أصحابه يجعلون طابة أول مرة مقصوفة في الرحي الأول ولهم ألواح من حديد يدفعون بها إلى حجر الطحن ما لم يصله من العشبة المذكورة ويخرجون ما دارت عليه الرحي

بتلك الألواح ويضعونه في رحي أخرى ملاصقة لها وينقلون من تلك الرحي إلى رحي أخرى وينقلون إلى أرحية عديدة حتى يصل الغاية التي يغربل فيها

En Sevilla hay un edificio enorme como si fuera una alcazaba, tiene cuatro patios, y por lo grande que es dispone en sus paredes de doscientas setenta y cinco ventanas y claraboyas para dejar entrar la luz, e innumerables almacenes. La llaman la Casa de la Planta de Tabaco (*tāba*) [...] Les he visto machacando esta maldita planta en molinos que tienen la forma de las almazaras de nuestra tierra. No pude contarlos, puesto que están alineados; en cada molino unas cuantas personas encargadas meten primero la planta de tabaco cortada para una primera molienda, empujándola con barras de hierro, y luego sacan la sustancia machacada, que meten después en una segunda muela dispuesta justo al lado, y siguen así hasta llegar a la etapa en la que la pasan por un cedazo.

There is an enormous building in Seville that resembles a citadel fortress; it has four courtyards and, due to its dimensions, it has two hundred and seventy-five windows and skylights to let sunlight in and countless storerooms. They call it the House of the Tobacco Plant (*tāba*) [...] I have seen them crushing that cursed plant in mills like the oil mills in our country. I could not count them all, for they are aligned; in each mill a group of men in charge introduce in the first place the tobacco plant cut for a first grinding, pushing it with iron rods, and then they take out the mashed substance, which is then placed in a second mill just by its side, and they go on like that until the phase when the tobacco is passed through a sieve.

b) The *Casa de la Moneda* in Seville:

وباشبيلية دار السكة وهي في غاية الكبر وفيها قوم موكلون بها ساكنون فيها بديارهم متأهلين بأولادهم ولهم فيها من الآلات والنواعير والدواليب عدد كثير ولا كلفة عليهم في الخدمة لأن جل خدمتهم بالحرركات، ولقد رأيت عند رجل من القيمين على دار السكة وهو بمنزلة الأمين عندنا ميزانا صغيرا يختبر به السكة ويعلم به المقدار الذي يزداد في السكة من النحاس وما رأيت أغرب من ذلك الميزان، وقد وضع في إحدى كفتيه مقدار جناح بعوضة من الكاغيط ونزلت الكفة التي فيها الكاغيط إلى الأرض

En Sevilla está la Ceca o Casa de la Moneda; es un edificio muy grande en el que trabajan y viven hombres casados y con hijos, y en ella disponen de muchas máquinas, norias y mecanismos, por tanto su trabajo no es un trabajo duro ya que en su mayoría se hace mecánicamente. Hay allí una pequeña balanza con la que se examina la moneda y por ella se sabe la cantidad de cobre añadido; esta balanza estaba a cargo de un oficial con rango de *amīn* (administrador). No había visto jamás una balanza tan rara, ya que puso en una de sus dos platos un pedazo de papel del tamaño de una de las alas de un mosquito, y el plato bajó al suelo bajo su peso.

In Seville there is the Mint; it is a very big building in which there live married men with their children, and in it there are many machines, wheels and mechanisms; therefore

their work is not a strenuous one, since for the most part it is done mechanically. There is also a small scale with which the coins are examined and thus the quantity of added copper is checked. A person with the rank of *amīn* (administrator) was responsible for this scale. I have never seen such a remarkable scale in my life, for that man placed on one of its two cups a piece of paper with the size of a mosquito's wing, and the cup fell down under its weight.

In both examples the writer does not use specialized knowledge; he only tries to transmit the image having recourse sometimes to metaphor and sometimes to redundancy.

We distinguish two categories of technical terms in Ibn ʿUthmān's diary. The first one consists of terms alluding to material of daily use or well-known warfare items, such as *madāfiʿ* «cannons» or *mahāris* «mortars».

The second category comprises loanwords or neologisms, such as *al-qarārīṭ* «las carretas» (carts), *al-akdash* «los coches» (cars), *al-magāna* «el reloj» (the clock).

By way of conclusion, I shall quote the passage where Ibn ʿUthmān encounters a social novelty: the theatre. All in all, this passage, and the translation of *Al-Iksir* in its entirety, has served us to recover, albeit partially, a long-forgotten Spanish identity reflected in an also non-contemporaneous Moroccan way of experiencing the world. If the task of the translator is to act as cultural mediator, the recovery of forgotten social identities should remain as one of their greatest concerns. In this way, we attain not only a cultural mediation, but also a certain type of reconciliation with an undervalued or forgotten past.

ومن جملة اكرامه ايانا ان هينوا دارا بالقرب منا للفرجة تسمى الكميدية وطلبوا منا ان أتوجه اليها حتى انظرها فامتنتت من التوجيه اليها وراودونا مرارا فأبيت فورد علينا نصراني له معرفة بنا لكونه كان أسيرا عند سيدنا ومولانا وله كلمة عند قومه وهو صاحب المرسى وأخوه وزير الهند فقال لي ان الحاكم وأهل البلد صنعوا هذه الفرجة بقصدك اكراما لك وتعظيما لسيدنا المنصور بالله وقد صرفوا عليها مالا كثيرا وليس هذه وقت صنعة هذه الفرجة وانما جعلت اليوم بسببك فلا يمكن لك الا ان تجيبهم وتسعفهم ، فبينما نحن كذلك اذ اقبل الحاكم والقاضي واعيان البلد يستدعوننا ، فما أمكنني الا ان توجهت معهم فاذا بدار عظيمة لها أربع طبقات ، وقد اوقدوا فيها من الشمع ما لا يعد ولا يحصى وأصحاب آلات الطرب والموسيقي في سفلي الدار وقد هينوا لنا موضعا في احدى الطبقات مقابل للموضوع الذي يكون فيه لعبهم وطربهم وشاهدنا من العجب في تلك الدار مالا يمكن وصفه من أنواع التصاوير والبنآت والحيونات التي تخيل للناظر كأنها قائمة الذات ومن الآت الطرب والرقص ما لا يكيف فجلست معهم شيئا ما وانصرفت الى الدار التي نحن فيها (page 24)

Dentro de estos actos honoríficos, prepararon también una casa destinada al espectáculo cerca de la nuestra y a la cual llaman la *comedia* (*al-kumidya*), y nos invitaron a asistir, pero yo rechacé la invitación. Me intentaron convencer repetidamente, y yo lo rechazaba siempre, hasta que me enviaron un cristiano que tiene un profundo conocimiento de nuestras costumbres, y nos conoce muy bien ya que fue cautivo

en la corte de nuestro señor. Era persona muy respetada en la sociedad (*lahu kálíma cinda qawmihí*⁵), es el oficial del puerto y su hermano es el ministro de las Indias. Ese hombre me explicó que los habitantes de la ciudad habían organizado este espectáculo especialmente para mí, y para honrar y venerar a nuestro señor, el Glorioso por Dios, y que habían gastado una gran cantidad de dinero en eso. Entonces me sentí obligado a aceptar dicha invitación. Aparecieron entonces el gobernador, el juez y las grandes personalidades de la ciudad para acompañarnos, y así, por supuesto, no tuve más remedio que acompañarles.

Era una casa enorme, de cuatro pisos y en la cual habían encendido innumerables velas. En la planta baja se situaban los músicos con sus instrumentos. Nos prepararon un sitio en una de esas plantas enfrente del lugar donde jugaban y se divertían.

Extrañas cosas vimos en esta casa, como imágenes, construcciones⁶ y animales, cosas que soy incapaz de describir y que pueden engañar a quien las está viendo hasta creer que existen realmente (*qá'ima adhāt*), mientras que los instrumentos musicales eran incomparables. Me quedé con ellos un rato y luego me despedí y volví a la casa donde estábamos.

As part of these honorific acts, they also prepared a house intended for a spectacle near our own, and which they call the *comedia* (*al-kumidya*), and they invited us to attend, but I rejected it. They tried to convince me repeatedly and I kept rejecting it, until I was sent a Christian who has a deep knowledge of our customs and knows us very well, for he was once a captive in the court of our King. He was a highly respected person in the society (*lahu kálíma cinda qawmihí*); he was the official in charge of the harbour and his brother was the minister of Indies. That man explained to me that the citizens of the city had organized that entertainment especially for me and to honour and revere our Lord, the Glorious through God, and that they had spent a good amount of money on that. So I felt obliged to accept the invitation. The Governor, the judge and the high personalities of the city appeared then to escort us, and so, of course, I had no choice but to follow them.

It was a huge four-story house, in which countless candles had been lighted. In the ground floor were located the musicians with their instruments. We were given a space in one of the stories in front of the place where they played and feasted.

Strange things did we witness in that house, such as images, constructions, and animals or things which I am unable to describe and which can deceive the senses of the spectator to induce him to believe that they do really exist (*qá'ima adhāt*), while the musical instruments were without rival. I remained with them for a while and afterwards I bade them farewell and returned to the house where we stayed.

5. Cf. modern Moroccan *cindu'l-kílma* «who is trustworthy and dignified; who possesses authority».

6. He is probably alluding to the stage props.

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