

Oaths in Jordanian Arabic: A Sociocultural and Translational Analysis

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Abstract—This study attempts to investigate Jordanian oaths from a sociocultural and translational perspective. The study shows that Jordanian oaths are insufficiently explored from such a perspective. The paper uncovers that Jordanian oaths have many formulas and are taken in many social and cultural aspects such as religion, body parts, honor, headdress, curse, and Arabic coffee, among many other things. In order to conduct the study, examples resembling these different aspects of oaths are suggested, and some social and cultural details are given before the examples. To make the Jordanian oaths clear, each oath example is contextualized in a social and cultural setting and then followed by a literal translation. Finally, the examples are analyzed and discussed, translationally, socially, and culturally in order to give a ground evidence that Jordanian oaths are difficult to translate from Arabic into English.

Index Terms—oaths, Jordanian Arabic, culture, translation, problem

I. INTRODUCTION

This paper investigates oaths in Jordanian society from cultural, social, and translational perspectives. This topic has not been thoroughly investigated from these perspectives, and therefore the study is hoped to be one of the first works in this regard. The oath terms and statements are taken from different social and cultural aspects such as religion, honor, body parts, divorce, headdress, Arabic coffee, and curse. The examples are selected from studies conducted on Jordanian culture, such as *The Dictionary of Traditions, Dialects and Strange Terms in Jordan* by Rocks Bin Zaid Al-Uzaizi.

II. OATH: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND, FUNCTIONS, AND TYPES

Oaths have been used over history to convey many social conversational functions. People historically employed oaths for emphasis, promise, and commitment. Since ancient times, people have sworn oaths to divine elements such as gods to show commitment and affirmation. According to Olaofe and Shittu (2014, p. 192), “Oath is normally used to affirm reality and reliability of information. Similarly, it is used in another occasion to show the seriousness and authenticity of what the speaker is talking about. In the same vein, oath may refer to a vow to carry out or not to carry out a particular act”.

According to Tyler (1834, p. 9), oath is defined as “the calling of God to witness, i. e., to take notice of what we say, and it is invoking his vengeance, or renouncing his favor, if what we say be false, or what we promise be not performed”. In his other words, oath is “a solemn, usually formal calling upon God or a god to witness to the truth of what one says or to witness that one sincerely intends to do what one says”.

Oath takers commit themselves strongly when they oath by God and they act in accordance with it. Gray (2013, p. 19) maintains that “the more one valued the majesty of God’s name and, as a result, oaths, the stricter one constrained the use of oaths”. Oath taking was considered by humans as a vital gateway through which they experience God, having an access to his power and harness his omniscience and omnipotence as a guarantor of their oaths (Marshall, 1975).

Oaths were firstly used by rulers and great kings to hold covenants and treaties. They also used them before their people when they are given the charge of ruling them. Freire (2017, p. 664) claims that “oaths and curses were often part of the covenant treaties enacted between great kings or, alternatively, between them and their subordinate kings. By taking an oath, a king played a representative role before the gods on behalf of those governed by him”.

Oath taking is universally frequent in daily conversations and debaters adopt this behavior for different communicative functions. To exemplify, the oath practice in Jordan has a social and cultural index as it reflects the

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society and the culture in which it is used. Oath is a universal phenomenon that is adopted to achieve different purposes such as the pledge to perform an action or a duty, with a promise of undertaking that action or promise honestly. In his article titled *The Cultural Evolution of Oaths, Ordeals, and Lie Detectors*, Mercier (2020, p. 8) confirms that “oath is a culturally accepted way of unambiguously signaling a maximum degree of commitment”.

There are different types and styles of the oath, and they are instigated according to the situations or settings. Taking the oath depends heavily on the nature of people or societies in which the oath is taken. Assertory and promissory are two main types of oaths and they can be positive when affirming and supporting a statement or a saying, and negative when denying them (Conklin, 2005).

It is worth mentioning that culture contributes largely in the formation of oath terms and statements. Cultural and social standards determine the words of the oath, its structure and even the style of taking it. They constitute the oath formula in the society in which this formula is used (Limbrick, 1991).

III. SOCIOCULTURAL ANALYSIS AND PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATING OATH TERMS

The way of building the oath depends mostly upon the relationship between the speaker and hearer(s) as well as the social situation. Ahmed (2020, p. 715) says “apparently, all societies perform oath as a requirement for affirmation or taking responsibility and it may be considered a treason or a high crime to betray a sworn oath. Oath can be classified into two main types, formal and informal”.

Jordanians, like other Arabs, often use oaths to ratify a statement by introducing what guarantees their claim. So, they use a common valuable or respectable character or a thing to make the oath. They resort to Islamic values and symbols believing that any break of an oath would be a dishonor. Nothing than God, the Holy Quran and the prophet Muhammad can unite the oath of all Arabs. What reinforces this orientation is that God himself took oaths in the Qur’an many times for several purposes. In fact, God uses oath-taking to confirm His unity and absolute power, and to warn and threat people who do not obey Islamic instructions. Otherwise, they will face great punishment (Ahmed, 2020). According to Labov, this is what makes Arabs keep their words and promises when they oath and attempt to convince their audience and/or readers in their claims or speech (Labov, 1966).

Translating oaths from one language into another is not an easy task. Difficulties of translating them stem from the social and cultural values they retain, as culture and its manifestations are a source of translation challenges (Al-Azzam et al., 2014). There are many translation procedures that are followed in the translation of oath terms or statements.

An oath in the Arab world can generally be taken in religious elements, dear people (dead and alive), revered shrines and honor. To put it in Ahmed’s words (2020, p. 1), “Of course, each society has its own way in taking the oath, whether in the expressions used or by some body movements that accompanied taking it. Regardless of these differences, oathing is almost always used to achieve a common purpose”. Kiani (1992) mentions more than twenty aims for oathing. To him, the most important aims are to: emphasize a subject, prove the guiltiness and exoneration, make a speech believable, prove claim, assure others, warn and threat others, and excite and encourage others.

In order to translate oaths from one language into another, the translator should be universally aware and acknowledged in oathing as a certain translation strategy of oaths can be ridiculous and nonsensical. Qarabesh et al. (2023, p. 13) maintain that,

If oathing is universal to all human languages and cultures, the translator’s task then becomes easier if he is fully aware of this universality of oathing. However, since cultures diverge, in that, there are certain oaths specific to a particular culture, (...) which are different from those of other culture(s), he/she should then focus more on the cultural aspects of oaths, where cultures diverge.

This paper has two main objectives. It first attempts to investigate the Jordanian oath as a social and cultural phenomenon; it explores the social and cultural values when taking the oath, and how these values influence the way of fashioning it. Second, it tries to translationally analyze the Jordanian oath as a social phenomenon in order to shed light on the social and cultural challenges that arise when rendering oath terms from Arabic into English.

IV. DISCUSSION

One way of emphasizing a person’s determination to fulfil a promise is the resort to an oath. The oath can be an oral statement, often taken on sacred objects such as holy books and scriptures, whereby the swearer pledges to execute an act in a certain way, accomplish something, or even exert an effort to achieve a certain vow. People differ culturally in the way of taking the oath, based on their customs, beliefs, traditions, and social values. Jordanians, like many other Arab societies, take oaths on something that they highly appreciate and venerate such as the Qur’an, holy shrines, honor, family members (wives, sons, parents, and grandparents and dead ones). They can also take the oath on venerable items such as the *shemagh* (scarf), *eqal* (*shemagh* black rope) *aba’ah* or *bisht* (cloak) by taking them off, holding them, or putting them down on the ground. And since the Arabic coffee is of great social and cultural values, Jordanians take their oath by spilling the coffee pots and emptying them on the ground, implying that the coffee will not be made anymore if the promise is not fulfilled. To continue, Jordanian men can take the oath on features of manhood or virility such as moustaches while women can take it on *qussa* (sideburns).

A. Religion

Jordanians oath by religion and sacred signs to prove their viewpoint and confirm their claim. Islam is the main religion in the country and Jordanian Muslims and even Christians take an oath in Islam and Islamic icons. Muslim scholars define oath as a sentence that confirms a statement or a pledge through emphasis (Az-Zarkashi, 1958) and its purpose is to emphasize and stress an oath statement (As-Suyuti, 2007). As religion is sensitive, revered, and sacred, Jordanians typically take their oath by religious icons. Following are examples of Jordanians' religious oaths.

Example 1: أقسم بالله العظيم (lit. I oath by Allah Almighty)

The most standard formula of the oath in the Arab World is أقسم بالله العظيم. In Islam, it is prohibited to oath in anything or object other than Allah. In the Pre-Islamic era, Arabs used to oath on idols they established around Ka'ba to worship. To show the real intention of fulfilling a promise, Jordanians sometimes repeat the formula والله (lit. by Allah). Sirajudin (2015, p. 17) maintains that,

when a person does use Allah's names and attributes in an oath, it becomes obligatory to believe such a person.

You may have doubts: if you are unsure of something and person swears by Allah it is fitting that you believe in him (or what he says) because Allah is so great that we do not doubt what is said in His name.

What has made taking a religious oath common in Jordanian society is the lack of trust, doubt and suspicion among Jordanians. Formally, the oath formula under discussion is taken by putting the oather's right hand on the Qur'an and uttering it in the presence of the king, for example, in case a government is formed and ministers are assigned ministerial portfolios. Ordinary Jordanians also utter the same oath formula to reinforce their statement when holding deals, as shown in the following example:

احتاج حامد مبلغ خمسة الاف دينار اردني، فذهب الى جاره حسن، وطلب المبلغ، وحين سأله حسن عن موعد السداد، رد حامد على الفور قائلاً: أقسم بالله العظيم انني سأعيد المبلغ في الأول من أغسطس القادم.

(lit. Hamid was in need of five thousand JDs, and he went to his neighbor Hasan and asked for this sum of money; when Hasan asked about the due time of repaying the money, Hamid immediately replied by saying: I oath by Allah Almighty to pay the money back on the first day of the coming August). In this example, the oath is necessary and is required in such situations, where the deal is mainly concerned with money, which is a sensitive issue in social relations. The current example shows the prompt reply of Hamid to repay the money to his neighbor, Hasan. Hasan has also asked about the money repayment due time. This interlocution at the time of handing over the money vividly shows the lack of trust between Jordanians in such matters, which has become very common in the Jordanian community. To continue, resorting to the oath of Allah Almighty reflects the need to convince the borrower to lend the money since the two parties are aware of the suspicion that has become omnipresent among Jordanians.

As far as translation is concerned, literal translation of the current oath formula into English does not convey its social and cultural dimensions; it does not reflect the meanings of the source text. Aichele (2001, p. 3) maintains that, "Every translation betrays and transforms its source text, but a literal translation is more likely to record problems and defects that appear in the source text. Such problems and defects hinder the clear transmission of the canonical message". Not only this, the formula which seems emotive and poignant in Jordanian Arabic oath is viewed as awkward, nonsense, and odd, which is a real translation loss.

Example 2: الله ومحمد رسول الله والبيت الذي بناه الله

(lit. by Allah, Mohammed the Messenger of Allah, and the House that Allah built).

Taking an oath in Jordan includes some religious associations of Allah such as the prophet and the Islamic shrines to confirm the intention of fulfilling a promise or ratifying a claim. The inclusion may come rhythmically in order to attract the attention of audience, and gain the needed coaxing. Following is an illustrative example that represents a visit paid to voters by a candidate for the parliamentary elections:

طلب المرشح مفليح من شيخ العشيرة سرحان جمع اقاربه، من اجل دعمه في الانتخابات. وبعد ان شرح مفليح بيانه الانتخابي، اقسم له سرحان قائلاً: الله ومحمد رسول الله، والبيت الذي بناه الله، غير نصوت معك.

(lit. Muflih, the candidate, asked Serhan, the chief of the tribe, to call for a gathering for his kinsmen for support in the election. After Muflih had explained the election statement, Serhan swore to support him by saying: by Allah, Mohammed, the Messenger of Allah, and the House that Allah built, we will vote for you.

In the Jordanian community, oath is needed and is a necessity when a promise is taken to do something. The manner of oath has become a norm and resulted from suspicion and dishonesty that the Jordanians began to experience in their deals. The above illustrative example is a case in point. Jordanians often religiously oath for ratifying promises and pledges.

The translation of the present example into English results in many linguistic, social, and cultural challenges. The rhythmic influence shown in the Arabic oath formula cannot be replicated in English; the Arabic lexical item الله in the Arabic text is assonantly essential, as it helps in convincing the audience. This persuasion is lost in translation as the assonance cannot be reproduced likewise, and thus cannot incur the same effect on the audience. Socially, the people of the source language are familiar with this manner of conversation and they can understand the function, while people of the target text have no familiarity with such an oath manner, which could seem exotic.

Culturally, people of the receptive culture do not make their election in the same manner, and they usually vote on the basis of a statement delivered on the screen to the whole nation. As a result, the linguistic, social and cultural implications of the oath taken by Jordanians cannot be recreated in the target culture. According to Rubel and Rosman

(2020, p. 6) “The values of the culture of source language may be different from those of the target language and this difference must be dealt with in any kind of translation”.

Another oath formula that may have the same function and is similar to the present example in wording is *الله ومحمد* (by Allah, Mohammed, the messenger of Allah; the traitor is to be betrayed by Allah). The only difference in the supporting example is the reference to the traitor and the betrayal as commonly witnessed in the social interactions among Jordanians, which require the oath.

Example 3: والقرآن والنبي والكعبة (lit. by the Qur'an, by the Prophet, by the Ka'ba)

The majority of the Jordanian society are Muslims, and Islam is the religion of the state. Jordanians tend to oath by Islamic icons such as the prophet Mohammad, the Ka'ba as the holiest sanctuary for Muslims, and the Qur'an as a holy book. According to Cakmak (2017, p. 1183) in Islam “the oath can be made with the Quran, because the Quran is the word of Allah”.

As wariness and dishonesty may have become a trend in Jordan, many Jordanians adopt oath to prove their viewpoint in what they are saying or what they are intending to do. The oath has emerged as an echo to many economic, social, religious, and cultural changes that Jordanians have witnessed over the last few decades. The current oath formula can be illustrated in the following example that displays bargaining over the price of a sheep in the Friday market:

أراد مروان ان يشتري خروفا من سوق الجمعة، لدعوة أصدقائه الى بيته للعشاء. وحين سأل عن سعر ذلك الخروف، فاجأه سلامه قائلا: والقرآن والنبي والكعبة، انه اشتراه بمائتي دينار من أحد التجار.

(lit. Marwan wanted to buy a sheep from the Friday market because he wanted to invite his friends to dinner. Salamah suddenly surprised him by following oath: by the Qur'an and by the prophet, and by the Ka'ba I bought this sheep by two hundred JDs. What has driven Salamah to surprisingly take the oath is the desire to sell the sheep through the oath that may help in convincing customers.

Translating the above oath statement into English results in a translation loss. First, the translation does not reflect the resort to the oath as an outlet to sell one's items, for example, as in the current situation. The function of the oath which lies in the attempt to persuade the partners or the audience cannot be reflected likewise in the receptive culture as selling and buying and other issues are not based on the manner of taking an oath. Moreover, the tripartite divine connectedness between Allah, the prophet, and Ka'ba cannot be reproduced in the receptive culture where people belong to other faiths, where the secularity is followed as a way of life. To add, dishonesty, distrust and doubt as common features of many Jordanians are not easily preserved in translation. Thus, the discussion and the explanation of the oath as a common way of dealing between people can help in revealing these values in other cultures.

B. Honor and Family Members

In some circumstances or situations, some Jordanians oath on their honor to do something or execute a declaration. Believing the oather results from the intense emotional power created on the audience by uttering an oath on dearest elements and taboos such as honor and family members. Uttering the oath causes a direct emotional influence on the addressee or audience. Some Jordanians oath when they do not have things at their disposal. Almutlaq (2013, p. 225) supports this idea when he is says, “One of the most important social norms and values in the Jordanian society is honor. It is considered as a taboo that causing any harm to it will lead to unpleasant results for all members of the community”.

Example 1: وشرفي وعرض خواتي وعرض أمي (lit. by my honor, by the honor of my sisters, and by the honor of my mother).

Oath by honor is very common in the Jordanian society. People usually oath in what is sacred, valuable, esteemed, and sensitive. Honor in the Jordanian culture is represented family female members, who are considered as taboos; mentioning the name of a female is socially considered a shame in some regions. All societies have their own forms of honor and shame. In the Mediterranean societies – including Jordan society- honor is one of the constant preoccupations of people of these societies, where the case of honor is very dominant and is the highest social value of the local moral code. Honor is collective and not only personal and it reflects on the entire family or social group (Peristiany, 1966). In order to confirm one's intention to do something or accomplish a promise, many Jordanians utter the above oath.

In Jordan as well as in the Arab world, oath in honor necessitates that one accomplishes what he is tasked in, or what he intends to do after the oath is said or uttered. The distinctness of the present oath is that it is uttered by males, and more specifically by teenagers. One's own honor, honor of sisters and mothers are highly respected to the extent that young people usually employ them to say their oath. What is more striking in this oath is that the oather may name a sister in the oath. The following example illustrates a situation, where the oath is taken: خرج طلاب الثانوية

من الامتحان النهائي للرياضيات، وبدأ المعلم يجيب على تلك الأسئلة التي اشتكى الطلاب من صعوبتها. وعند مشاهدة الإجابات الصحيحة، أقسم فاييز ان اجاباته دقيقة قائلا: وشرفي وشرف أمي وخواتي، انني اجبت على جميع الأسئلة بدقة.

(lit. The high school students got out from the final exam of Mathematics, and the teacher began to answer the questions from which the students complained. When seeing the right answers, Fayeze swore that his answers were accurate saying: by my honor, the honor of my mother and sisters, I have correctly answered all the questions. Males more than females say oaths.

Investigating the oath in this example uncovers that Jordanians say the oath in what is considered a taboo, such as the family female members. This oath springs from the social and cultural values of the Jordanians that necessitate the compliance of the oath utterer in what he promised. Literal translation of the oath statement into English leads to many social and cultural challenges due to the differences between the source language culture and the target language culture.

Oathing by female family members is functional in the source text and gives a firm confirmation of fulfilling the promise, a sense that cannot be felt likewise in the target language. Moreover, what is socially and culturally motivating and appealing in the source culture might not be so in the receptive culture due to these differences; this causes social and cultural translation loss. The cultural translation is one of the most difficult types of translations, where the translator tries to convey the cultural context of the SL to the TL. Hron (2010, p. 67) maintains that, "Undeniably, the biggest threat facing cultural translation is wholesale assimilation – the loss of one's cultural identity and social and historical roots, and the erasure of one's source cultural language". Other oath examples in relatives are made by dead people such as parents like *روح أبي بترابه، وروح أمي* respectively by *the soul of my father in his grave, and by the soul of my mother*.

C. Body Parts

Jordanians sometimes take oath in body parts and in signs of manhood such as the big moustaches. The oath in this case can have a conditional structure; the oather swears, for example, to cut his hand or shave his moustaches if what he promises is not fulfilled or achieved.

Example: 1 ومن شاري

In Jordanian culture, the moustache is a sign of maturity and manhood. That is why people keep big moustaches. The thick moustache in the Middle East is not only a personal and a social style; it is deeply rooted in history and has many social and cultural undercurrents. Many Jordanian men have thick mustaches, which are regarded as a sign of manliness, masculine virility, wisdom and maturity; the luxurious mustache was traditionally taken as a symbol of considerable social status. To compliment someone with a heavy moustache, for example, Jordanians may describe him by saying: an eagle could land on your mustache. As such, the moustaches are a sign of dignity and honor; in situations of curse, a man may be insulted by saying: curse upon your mustache.

Since thick moustaches are of high social values, men in certain situations take an oath on them as collateral for loans to be taken or promises to be fulfilled. An illustrative example of taking an oath on moustaches can be explicit in the following example: *وحين علم بطروفهم الفاسية، أقسم مباشرة ممسكا بشاربه: من شاري طلبت أم ذلك اليتيم من الشيخ فارس وظيفة لولدها الوحيد. رح يتوظف خلال أقل من شهر.* (lit. The mother of that orphan appealed to sheikh Faris for an employment to her only child. When he knew about their hard conditions, he immediately took an oath, while holding his moustaches by saying: by my moustaches, he will get a job within a month.

The present example shows that men in Jordan make an oath on their moustaches as a way to prove their firm and real intention to fulfil the task for which the oath is taken. People in the western culture do not oath in this manner, and getting a job is based on qualifications and liability, where applicants fill forms for job vacancies. Translating the dialogue above which includes the oath formula into English is not simple for many social and cultural reasons. The Jordanian traditional way of the oath is highly appreciated in the Jordanian society and oath takers are praised for the favor they do after the oath is taken. These social and cultural values of moustaches, when used to oath, cannot be observed or appreciated likewise in a completely different culture, like the western one.

There is another formula of the oath, where the moustaches are employed. This form is conditionally based on shaving one half or one strip of the moustaches or two of them. The following example illustrates the conditional oath on shaving the moustaches. *وقع خلاف بين دلبوح صاحب ذلك الحقل، وعويذر راعي غنم الشيخ فرهود، لأن الغنم كانت ترعى بين أشجار الزيتون. غضب دلبوح، وهدد عويذر قائلاً: بخلق شاري اذا ما خليتك تندم.* (a dispute erupted between Dalbouh, the owner of that field, and Uweither, who was working as a shepherd for sheikh Farhoud. Dalbouh got so angry and threatened Uweither by oath: I will shave my moustache, if I do not make you regret.

In the traditional Arab World, it is very hard to avoid the moustaches among men ranging from the leaders to civil servants and cab drivers. The moustaches are a sign of bravery, fertility, virility, manhood, manliness and one's charisma. So, in Jordanian society, when they want to humiliate and dishonor a man, his moustache is forcibly shaved. Sacher (2012, p. 104) maintains that "in Arabic cultures, swearing "upon my moustache" is a quite a serious thing to do. (...) it is used to seal business deals on a moustache, and lavishing praise on a man's facial hair is the utmost compliment. Conversely, insulting a moustache is a sure way to show scorn and disrespect".

The translator is encountered with many social and cultural challenges when literally translating the above oath on the shaving of the moustaches. To express his anger upon grazing the sheep among the olive trees, Dalbouh oaths that he would have shaved his moustaches, had he not made Uweither regret for the fault of grazing in the field of olive trees. Employing moustaches in taking the oath in the original text is very functional and has a very strong message to convey; it shows determination and firmness. This strong threat perceived in the source language oath cannot be reproduced in a completely different culture, where men do not grow big moustaches, and the grown ones are not socially valued. In such cases, a translation based on paraphrasing is recommended. According to Abdellal (2020, p. 28), the translator when using this translation "attempts to produce the content of the ST without its form. It is usually longer than the original ST because it paraphrases the ST; that is why it is called interlingual translation".

Example 2: أقص ايدي اذا ما تم كذا وكذا (I will cut my arm if so and so does not happen)

Conditional statements are used by Jordanians to show their decisiveness to do something. Oathing is one way of giving or showing a firm promise. The vow can have a conditional form, where the pledge taker combines between two events. The following is an illustrative example: *لم يدرس طارق على الامتحان مطلقا، وأقسم لوالده انه سيحصل على درجة عالية، لكن والده*

رد غاضبا بالقول: اقص ايدي اليمين اذا تنجح. (lit. Tariq has not studied at all for the exam, and he swore to his father that he would get a high grade. His father replied angrily by saying: I will cut my right hand, if you pass).

The conditionally taken oath in Jordan has resulted from the distrust and dishonesty that have become prevalent in the Jordanian community. At a certain period of schooling, especially in the high school, parents exert enough attention to their teenage sons to ensure getting high scores. The fact that the father, in the present example, is aware his son has not prepared well for the exams has driven him to angrily take the above conditional oath. In the western culture, where the relationship between sons and parents is clear and honest, such a conditional oath cannot be observed.

Translating the above oath اقص ايدي اذا ما تم كذا وكذا (lit. I will cut my arm if so and so does not happen) into English seems awkward and odd because people in the receptive culture are more frank, direct and clear. The case being so, the oath in situations like the one under discussion is nonexistent or too rare. Consequently, the social and cultural values deeply rooted in the Jordanian oath formula cannot be reflected or preserved due to the sharp differences between the two cultures. A *covert* translation for such situations is recommended to follow by the translator, House (1997, p. 69) defines this type of translation as a strategy which leads “to the creation of a target text that enjoys the status of an original source text in the target culture”. House recommends the use of such strategy between cultures that have no particular ties.

Other examples that are commonly used in Jordanian culture in similar situations are تكون امي مرتي (lit. my mother would be my wife, if so and so happens; يكون قواد اذا تم الامر (lit. I will be a bastard if that happens) and اكون خارج من الإسلام اذا حمدان يتزوج حمده (lit. I will be an apostate from Islam, if Hamdan marries Hamdeh).

D. Divorce

Example 1: بالطلاق من المره (lit. by divorce of wife)

Divorce is another way of taking an oath in Jordan. In difficult situations, some Jordanians take an oath of divorcing the wife. Wives are sensitive and divorce results in many social problems; the case being so, and for fear of many consequences, men usually take an oath on their wives. Oathing in divorce dates back to pre-Islamic period, where men used to oath in abstaining from having sexual intercourse and considering wives as mothers and this is called *ila'* or *Zihar* (Spectorsky, 2010, p. 36).

The following example explains how a divorce oath is taken in Jordan: اراد منذر أن يعطي نذير الف دينار كمساعدة، لكن نذير (lit. Monther wanted to give Natheer a thousand JDs as an assistance, but Natheer refused that proposal. Mother then took a divorce oath of his four wives, in case Natheer does not take the sum of money).

What is strange in this example is polygamy, where a man can have many spouses at the same time. Translating the above example into English can result in many social and cultural challenges. In the target culture, a husband can marry only one wife, and marrying more than a wife at the same time is prohibited.

In Jordan, oath takers may name one of the wives. Mentioning the name of a wife shows that she is the dearest and therefore the oath is so strong and the husband should execute the promise completely. Following is an example that illustrates such an oath: دعا رضوان زملاءه لتناول العشاء، لكن يزيد اعتذر بشده، فأقسم حينها رضوان بالطلاق من نوره، وهي أصغر زوجاته (lit. Radwan invited his colleagues for dinner, but his Yazeed strongly apologized; therefore, Radwan swore by the divorce of Noura, his youngest and most beautiful wife if Yazeed does not accept the invitation. Naming the wife is what makes this example distinct; this scandals the husband before his other wives, a situation that might ignite family wife problems sometimes. The literal translation of the example into English uncovers many social, religious and cultural translation challenges that can only be overcome with the addition of explanatory details. Addition as a translation technique is recommended in such examples. According to Sin-Wai (2016, p. 132), addition “is a common method in translation. It involves the provision of some essential information for a better comprehension of the translated passage”. To be specific explanation as a type of addition is the useful method in such situation, which can help bring out a contextual meaning of the original (Barik, 1971).

The translator should be prudent when using addition in their translation. They should avoid adding too much information and deviate from the core information, converting their translations to a composition. Chen Lim (2001, p. 480) explains “such a translation work is a breach of fidelity, and a breach of fidelity is a taboo in translation”.

E. Headdress

Arab men have a peculiar way of dressing. The head cover is called *ghutra*, and *eqal* is used to fix it on the head; *ghutra* or *kufiyya* as a traditional headdress is designed from a square scarf, usually made of cotton or silk. The function of *ghutra* is to protect men from sun heat, dust, and other atmospheric elements.

Example 1: رمي العقال والغرة على الأرض (lit. throwing aqal and ghutra into the ground)

In the Bedouin and countryside regions in Jordan, people put on these two clothing elements; they resemble manhood, leadership, representation, authority and chief authority given to the *sheikh* of the tribe. The social sacredness and the symbolism of these two head elements spring from the associations that they have in the Jordanian society; it is so shameful if Jordanian men break the promise they give to others, especially in sensitive situations. Putting one's hand on the *ghutra* at time of giving a promise or holding the intention of doing something is an oath in itself that should be turned into action. To add, if the oather throws down the *ghutra* and the *eqal* into the ground, a firm and strong oath or oath is held, and promises should be turned into practice.

The following example illustrates the point of the *eqal* and *ghutra* oath. من اجراء ولده من جاءت امرأة عجوز الى خيمة الشيخ لافي، لإخراج ولده من السجن، بعد اتهامه بسرقة أسلاك شركة الكهرباء عن الطرق الخارجية. أقسم الشيخ لافي بإخراجه من السجن، وأكد لها ذلك حين ألقى بالغترة والعقال على السجن، بعد اتهامه بسرقة أسلاك شركة الكهرباء عن الطرق الخارجية. أقسم الشيخ لافي بإخراجه من السجن، بعد اتهامه بسرقة أسلاك شركة الكهرباء عن الطرق الخارجية. *Sheik* Lafi swore to her and threw down the *eqal* and the *ghutra* to the ground in the presence of his men.

Translating the scene of throwing down the *ghutra* or the *eqal* into the ground would seem ridiculous in English as a target language. People in the receptive culture do not oath in such a manner using pieces of cloth such as *eqal* and *ghutra*. Rendering the scene even in a video form does not reflect the social and cultural associations of the two head elements to convey the firm oath, shown while throwing them down to the ground. Thus, enough social and cultural explanation is needed to illuminate the implications of these cultural items, and their reverence and appreciation among Arabs in general and Jordanians in particular. As recommend by Moropa (2011, p. 287) in such cases “the translator may sometimes add some information which is not found in the source text so that the message can be more easily understood by the target reader”. The explanatory information is necessary to convey the importance of the *eqal* and *ghutra* in Jordanian culture. Such information should not be used indifferently by the translator, who should use them judiciously according to the demands of the text (Reiss, 2014).

F. Arabic Coffee

In Jordan, Arabic coffee as a primary tradition has its social and cultural values. It is served on many occasions and events such as weddings, reconciliation and other social events. Serving Arabic coffee has certain rituals, and the movements made by the coffee pourer or waiter have particular meanings (Al-Rabayah, 1982). With the passage of time, the Arabic coffee traditions have constructed and established a heritage that represents the Arab culture. The high prestige that the Arabic coffee has occupied among other drinks has given it a social and cultural sacredness; spilling or pouring the coffee into the ground is considered a form of firm oath in Jordan, and that carries many social and cultural implications.

When the *sheikh* of a Jordanian tribe spills or pours the tribe's coffee into the ground, he expresses an anger and a strictness or firmness in fulfilling a promise or an action to be taken. The way of spilling the coffee or pouring it and the social meanings are understood by Jordanians. The following example portrays how pouring the Arabic coffee into the ground or dirt is a solemn oath. اجتمعت القبيلة في أسبوع ما قبل الانتخابات، لتأكيد دعمها لمرشح القبيلة الوحيد عواد، وبعد أن قرأ المرشح البيان اجتماع القبيلة في أسبوع ما قبل الانتخابات، لتأكيد دعمها لمرشح القبيلة الوحيد عواد، وبعد أن قرأ المرشح البيان. صب شيخ القبيلة القهوة على الأرض وقال، تحرم علينا القهوة بعد اليوم، إذا عواد لم يفز بمقعد في البرلمان. (lit. the tribe gathered in the week before the elections, to assure its support to Awwad, the tribe's only candidate. After Awwad had delivered the electoral statement, the sheikh of the tribe poured the Arabic coffee into the ground and said: the coffee would have been prohibited on us, had Awwad not won the seat in the parliament).

The literal translation of the Arabic coffee formula as an oath into English results in many social and cultural challenges. The Arabic coffee, as a hot drink, has sacredness in the Jordanian culture; and the confirmation and the emphasis of the oath, taken on the coffee cannot be reflected likewise in the receptive culture. Another social and cultural meaning that cannot be reflected in the translation is the size of the emotive meaning, when the oath is taken with the pouring or the spilling of the Arabic coffee into the ground. This necessitates that, the tribe one and all, stand together to achieve and fulfill the promise given in the example above.

G. Curse

Example 1: ريتني أنعمي، وأقبر أولادي وبناتي (lit. I wish I would turn blind, I wish I would bury my sons and daughters)

One's soul or self is so dear to someone, and the same applies for one's sons and daughters. An oath is normally taken on what is dear to one and of great value. The oather's supplication against himself is known in Jordan as a way of confirming his real intention to do a task, and to give back other's dues or rights as is in the case of borrowing money. The following example illustrates the supplication as a form of oath: احتاجت رمزية بعض أدوات المطبخ من جارتي فوزية، فرفضت ذلك، لأن رمزيه لا تعيد ما تستعيره من الجارات. اقسمت رمزية لجارتها بإعادة ما تستعيره ودون تأخير قائلة: ريتني أنعمي، وأقبر أولادي وبناتي إذا ما رجعتهن بوقتهن، وعندما سمعت فوزية ذلك، وافقت على اعارتها ما تحتاجه. (lit. Ramziyya needed some kitchen utensils from her neighbor Fawziyya who refused because Remziyyah does not return what she borrows from her neighbors. Ramziyyah then swore before her neighbor saying: I wish I would turn blind, I wish I would bury my sons and daughters if I do not turn the utensils on time. When Fawziyyah heard that, she agreed to borrow Ramziyyah what she wanted).

What is surprising in this example is employing the supplication against one's self, sons, and daughters for a request. Dishonesty, doubt and mistrust are among the reasons that have driven Jordanians for oath to show real intention and firmness in doing tasks, and fulfilling promises. Translating the supplication as an oath into English results in many translation challenges. The pledge in a supplication manner is cultural and has many social and cultural values that cannot be sufficiently reflected in English. Only delving deep in the source culture and full comprehension of the Jordanian community can enable the target readers to understand why Jordanians resort to such different and strange ways of oathing.

The translator lives in the target culture and treats the translated text as a foreign text, which belongs to a foreign culture. In some cases, consulting some bibliography to comprehend the source culture and its cultural terms and

manner of expressing – oaths using supplication against oneself- is indispensable and necessary for the translator. According to Haque Khan (2017, p. 4),

The cognitive apparatus, ability and strategies of the translator as a necessary mediator” are of paramount importance. It is upon the translator that the comprehensibility/intelligibility of the translated text and the understanding of the source culture depend. (...) the translator should employ such strategies, which not only bridge “linguistic boundaries” but also remove the “cultural barriers”. To achieve this end, one of the key strategies adopted by many translators, is the use of supplementary information regarding the culture-specific items and activities.

V. CONCLUSION

This study has investigated the formula of oath terms and statements in Jordanian Arabic from a sociocultural and translational perspective. It has shown that constructing these terms and statements is based on many social and cultural grounds. The study has shown that oath taking is very common among Jordanians and has emerged as a result of dishonesty and distrust in the Arab society, as a whole. It has been found that oath is taken in many social and cultural aspects such as religion, honor, body parts, divorce, headdress, Arabic coffee, and curse. The study has revealed that the social and cultural values and aspects play a major role in the way and manner of uttering the oath terms and statements. As far as translation is concerned, the study has exposed that the social and cultural values are a real hindrance in reflecting the associated connotations of oath terms and statements in Jordanian Arabic.

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