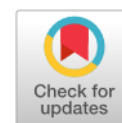


Religious Identity Negotiation in The Translation of *Bidāyatul-Hidāyah* Book into English

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article history
Received: 28 April 2025
Revised: 21 May 2025
Accepted: 1 June 2025

Keywords
Negotiation,
Religious Identity,
Translation

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Translating religious text involves negotiating religious identity to convey meaning across different languages and cultures while preserving spiritual values. Despite growing interest in translation studies, limited attention has been given to how this identity negotiation operates in classical Islamic texts. This study examines the negotiation of religious identity in the English translation of *Bidayatul-Hidayah* by Al-Ghazali and explores the cultural and theological factors that influence this process. Using a quality descriptive method with comparative and interpretative approaches, the study collects data through close reading, identification of religiously nuanced linguistic units, and organisation in a comparison table. The analysis includes the classification of religious identity markers, comparison between the source and target text, and interpretation based on social-cultural and theological context. The findings reveal seven patterns of religious identity negotiations: in religious practice, eschatological terms, moral concepts, religious groups, sacred artefacts, enlightenment terms, and religious figures. These negotiations reflect the cultural, theological, and value-systems differences between Arabic and English. The Study concludes that translating religious text requires a strategic negotiation of meaning to preserve spiritual integrity while ensuring contextual relevance for the target audience.

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1. Introduction

Negotiation in translation can be understood as a process of “compromise” in meaning adjustment. This negotiation is carried out by the translator so that the source text can be understood within the language and culture of the target audience (Ali, [2023](#); Sareen & Gupta, [2000](#)). In general, negotiation in translation occurs across various genres, one of which is religious texts. Translating religious texts requires special consideration, as it involves profound spiritual

meanings, theological beliefs, and cultural contexts (Akhtar, [2025](#)). Negotiation is necessary because religious texts contain religious identity that is closely tied to the beliefs and life practices of their adherents. In fact, Lung ([2003](#)) and Simms ([1997](#)) argue that religious identity is a particularly sensitive term to translate. This necessity is due to cultural differences and the varying backgrounds of readers, which may influence how a term or concept is interpreted. If the translation is too literal, the meaning may become unclear or even misleading. On the other hand, if it is overly adapted, its spiritual essence may be diminished. Therefore, translators must negotiate meaning so that the target readers can clearly understand the translated religious identity.

Essentially, the concept of negotiation arises from the interaction between two different cultures. When two distinct cultures meet, differences in values, norms, and worldviews must be negotiated to create mutual understanding or common ground (Moore & Woodrow, [2010](#)). The concept of negotiation is necessary in the translation process (Eco, [2013](#); Tessicini, [2014](#)). Translation is not merely the transfer of meaning from one language to another but also involves the adjustment of meaning, values, and cultural context (Bassnett, [2013a](#); Sukmaningrum et al., [2022](#)). In this process, the translator acts as a mediator who bridges the cultural gap between the source text (ST) and the target text (TT). Negotiation can be applied to the translation of religious identity. AlGhamdi ([2016](#)) classifies religious identity into several categories, including eschatology, moral and ethical criteria, religious artefacts, religious buildings, religious events, religious groups, religious honorifics, religious figures, specific religious practices, supernatural beings, enlightenment terms, and religious sites. Thus, the negotiation process in translating religious identity may occur when these elements are translated into a different cultural context.

Studies on negotiation can be mapped into four orientations. So far, research on negotiation has focused on conflict resolution efforts, business negotiation, translation negotiation, and cultural negotiation. Several researchers have examined negotiation as an effort to resolve conflicts (Aulia et al., [2024](#); Basit et al., [2023](#); Eko & Putranto, [2021](#); Kaisupy & Maing, [2021](#); Vowels & Carnelley, [2021](#)). In this context, negotiation is applied to reach agreements that can ease tensions and resolve disagreements or conflicts without involving violence or coercion. Business negotiation has also been a research focus for some scholars (Banu et al., [2025](#); Fatyandri et al., [2023](#); Kazemitabar et al., [2024](#); Rouddah et al., [2021](#); Zhang et al., [2021](#)). In the business world, negotiation focuses on achieving mutually beneficial agreements between involved parties. Meanwhile, negotiation has also been examined in the field of translation to achieve equivalence between the source language and the target language. This issue has been explored by several researchers (Arrasyid & Sajarwa, [2023](#); Fatin & Cholsy, [2022](#); Ma'shumah et al., [2021](#); Sajarwa et al., [2023](#); Setyawan et al., [2023](#)). Some researchers have also studied negotiation in relation to

cultural identity (Erlangga et al., [2021](#); Maharani & Solihat, [2023](#); Mokoginta & Arafah, [2022](#); Ramdesta et al., [2023](#)). This kind of negotiation is carried out to form, maintain, or transform the cultural identity of individuals or groups. Based on these studies, it is evident that research on the concept of negotiation in the realm of religious identity has not been fully explored.

This study aims to analyze the negotiation of religious identity in the translation of the *Bidayatul-Hidayah* into English. This Islamic text contains a strong sense of religious identity, including Islamic values, moral teachings, and worship practices within the Islamic tradition. These elements of religious identity undergo changes in form and meaning when translated into a Western cultural context. In the process of translation, differences in belief systems and religious concepts between Islamic and Western cultures may lead to a negotiation process. This study observes how religious identity is negotiated within the target culture and examines the extent of religious equivalence achieved. Based on this, the study addresses two main research questions. First, what are the patterns of religious identity negotiation in the translation of *Bidayatul-Hidayah* into English? Second, what factors contribute to the negotiation of religious identity? The answers to these questions are expected to provide insights into how Islamic religious identity is negotiated within a different cultural context through the act of translation.

The translation of religious texts often involves a process of negotiating religious identity in order to adapt the message to the cultural and linguistic context of the target audience. Differences in belief systems, spiritual values, and religious expressions between the source and target cultures are the primary triggers for this process (Ali et al., [2024](#)). Therefore, translators are required to apply appropriate strategies to ensure that the religious meaning is conveyed accurately without deviating from the original intent (Boulaouali, [2021](#)). The *Bidayatul-Hidayah* contains Islamic teachings rich in spiritual values, intellectual concepts, and religious terms that are not always easily translated into English. As such, negotiation in translation becomes a necessity. Various studies have revealed that preserving religious meaning in translated texts poses a unique challenge. For instance, Al-Shloul ([2025](#)) highlights that religious identity is often adjusted to better align with the target culture. Meanwhile, Akhtar ([2025](#)) emphasizes the importance of considering cultural aspects and theological sensitivity in the translation of Islamic texts. Therefore, the translation of religious identity is a process of negotiation that is deeply meaningful and contextual.

This study presents a new approach by examining the negotiation of religious identity in the context of translation, specifically through the English translation of *Bidāyatul-Hidāyah*, a classical Islamic text. Until now, research on negotiation has mostly focused on areas such as conflict resolution, business, general translation, and cultural identity. However, studies on how religious identity is negotiated in translation remain very limited. Therefore, this research fills an important

gap in translation studies by offering an interdisciplinary perspective that combines religious identity and translation studies. Through this approach, the study provides new insights into how translators preserve, adapt, or transform elements of religious identity from the source text into the target language. The focus on *Bidayatul-Hidayah* is crucial, as the text not only conveys religious teachings but also reflects the values and identity of the Muslim community. As such, the translation process becomes a complex site of negotiation between fidelity to the original meaning and adaptation for cross-cultural readership. This study makes a significant contribution to the development of translation studies and intercultural understanding in religious contexts.

2. Method

The data in this study consist of religious identity represented through linguistic units, both in the form of words and phrases. The data sources are taken from the *Bidayatul-Hidayah* by Imam Al-Ghazali (Al-Ghazali, 2004) and its English translation by Mashhad Al-Allaf titled *The Beginning of Guidance* (Al-Allaf, 2009). This book was chosen because it is a widely influential classical Islamic text that is frequently referenced in religious education across various parts of the world (Mukminin et al., 2023). The high usage of this text reflects its significant spiritual and religious values, making it an intriguing subject for analysis in the context of religious text translation. It contains various Islamic terms and concepts, such as *akhlak* (morality), Islamic ethics, and worship practices that reflect religious identity (Anis, 2017). The existence of these concepts makes the translation of this text particularly challenging, especially in preserving its original meaning so that it remains accurate when transferred into English and the target culture. Therefore, the translation of this book requires careful meaning negotiation strategies to ensure the religious meaning is appropriately conveyed within the cultural context of the target audience.

This study uses a qualitative descriptive method. According to Creswell & Creswell (2017), this method aims to understand phenomena in depth through analysis of textual data. In this study, the qualitative descriptive method is applied to identify religious identity in the source text (ST) *Bidayatul-Hidayah* and the target text (TT) English translation *The Beginning of Guidance*. Religious identity is analyzed through expressions that contain Islamic concepts, as well as how these concepts are transferred into the target language and culture. In addition, a comparative method is used to compare the similarities and differences in the representation of religious identity between the source and target texts. According to Koster (2012), this method helps uncover systematic changes that occur in the translation process. Through this method, the process of negotiating religious identity can be studied more deeply, including how much of the religious meaning is retained or adjusted. This study also applies an interpretive approach to interpret the emerging religious meanings, considering the social, cultural, and theological contexts that underpin the texts.

Data collection in this study was carried out through a series of structured steps. The first step involved carefully reading the *Bidayatul-Hidayah* and its English translation to understand the teachings and religious values contained in the text. Subsequently, various forms of religious identity representation in the source text (ST) and target text (TT) were identified. The data, consisting of linguistic units such as words or phrases with religious nuances, were then classified. This data was recorded in a table showing a comparison between the original text and the translation, as well as illustrating the negotiation patterns that emerged. Islamic or Arabic-specific terms were provided with explanations or transliterations to facilitate analysis and understanding. Each piece of data was numbered to facilitate grouping based on religious identity categories and to maintain consistency during analysis. Numbering also made it easier to track data during the interpretation and formulation of research findings.

Data analysis in this study was conducted in several systematically arranged stages. The first stage involved classifying the data according to the religious identity categories adapted from AlGhamdi (2016). This classification aimed to identify variations in religious representation in both the ST and TT. Second, a comparative analysis was conducted between the Arabic text and the English translation to trace the similarities and differences in the translation of religious identity, especially in terms of maintaining or adapting meaning. Third, the data was analyzed interpretively to trace the background of the differences, including the influence of the target culture and language system. Fourth, the findings were further analyzed to conclude the form of religious identity negotiation in the translation of *Bidayatul-Hidayah*. These conclusions provide an overview of how religious identity negotiation occurs in the translation of *Bidayatul-Hidayah* into *The Beginning of Guidance*, along with the implications of the differences found.

3. Results and Discussion

Bidayatul-Hidayah is a work of Sufism by Imam Al-Ghazali that contains moral and ritual guidance for those seeking the path of Allah. In its translation into English, a process of meaning negotiation occurs, particularly regarding specific religious terms. These specific religious terms in religious texts play an important role as markers of Islamic identity. These terms not only represent religious practices but also reflect the value system, worldview, and spiritual structure within Islam. The negotiation of specific religious terms is carried out to preserve the spiritual

meaning and Islamic context in the target language. The following is an explanation of the pattern of religious identity negotiation in the English translation of the *Bidayatul-Hidayah* book.

3.1 Negotiation Pattern of Special Religious Activity

The negotiation pattern of special religious activity is presented in the following section, in which specific religious elements are highlighted as being maintained, adapted, or transformed in the process of translation.

Tabel 1. Negotiation Pattern of Special Religious Activity

No	ST	TT
1	وَصَلَاةٌ بِسَوَالٍ أَفْضَلُ مِنْ سَبْعِينَ صَلَاةً بِغَيْرِ سَوَالٍ	<u>A prayer</u> before which one has used a toothstick is better than seventy prayers without having used the toothstick
2	فَصَلَاةُ الْجَمَاعَةِ تَفْضُلُ صَلَاةَ الْفَدِّ بِسَبْعٍ وَعِشْرِينَ دَرَجَةً	<u>A prayer in congregation</u> is twenty-seven times better than a prayer alone
3	فَإِنَّ الْجِلْيَةَ فِي الْجَنَّةِ تَبْلُغُ مَوَاضِعَ الْوُضُوءِ	For the adornment in Paradise encompasses the place touched in <u>ablution</u> .
4	فَيَجْزِيكَ أَدَاؤُهُمَا عَنِ التَّحِيَّةِ	Performing them will take the place of <u>the greeting prayer</u>
5	فَانُوا لَاعْتِكَافَ	... Make the intention for <u>spiritual retreat</u>
6	فَإِذَا سَمِعْتَ الْأَذَانَ ...	Then, when you hear <u>the call to prayer</u> ...
7	ثُمَّ صَلِّ الْفَرَضَ بَعْدَ جَوَابِ الْإِقَامَةِ	After responding to <u>the call to commence</u> , perform the obligatory prayer
8	وَلَكِنْ تَشْتَغِلْ بِوُطَائِفِ الْعِبَادَاتِ مِنَ الذِّكْرِ وَالْقِرَاءَةِ وَالتَّسْبِيحَاتِ وَالصَّلَوَاتِ	But spend your time engaged in the duties of worship, such as <u>remembrance of Allah</u> , <u>recitation of the Qur'an</u> , <u>glorification</u> , and <u>extra prayers</u>
9	فَإِنَّ فِيهَا مَعُونَةً عَلَى قِيَامِ اللَّيْلِ	<u>The night vigil prayer</u> or remain awake for some other good purpose
10	كَمَا أَنَّ فِي السُّحُورِ مَعُونَةً عَلَى صِيَامِ النَّهَارِ	As <u>the pre-dawn meal</u> helps one in fasting during the day
11	وَتَشْتَغِلْ بِالتَّسْبِيحِ وَالِاسْتِغْفَارِ	And occupy yourself in <u>glorifying Allah</u> and <u>seeking forgiveness</u>
12	فَاقْرَأِ الْقُنُوتَ فِي الرُّكْعَةِ الثَّانِيَةِ	Then recite <u>the supplication</u> in the second <i>rak'a</i>

Table 1 illustrates the negotiation of meaning in the translation of terms related to specific religious practices in Islamic law. For instance, صَلَاةٌ is translated as *a prayer* (1), while its more specific form صَلَاةُ الْجَمَاعَةِ becomes *a prayer in congregation* (2). The term الْوُضُوءُ is rendered

as *ablution* (3), depicting the process of self-purification *التَّحِيَّةُ* is translated as *the greeting prayer* (4), and *الْإِعْتِكَافُ* as a *spiritual retreat* (5), emphasizing the meditative and seclusive elements. The terms *الْأَذَانُ* and *الْإِقَامَةُ* are translated as *the call to prayer* (6) and *the call to commence* (7), respectively. Furthermore, *الْقِرَاءَةُ*, *التَّسْبِيحَاتِ*, *الذِّكْرُ*, and *الصَّلَوَاتِ* are translated as *recitation of the Qur'an*, *glorification*, *remembrance of Allah*, and *extra prayers* (8). The term *قِيَامُ اللَّيْلِ* is rendered as the night vigil prayer (9), *السُّحُورُ* as the pre-dawn meal (10), *التَّسْبِيحُ* and *الِاسْتِغْفَارُ* as *glorifying Allah* and *seeking forgiveness* (11), and *الْقُنُوتُ* is translated as *the supplication* (12).

3.2 Negotiation Pattern of Eschatological Terms

The negotiation pattern of eschatological terms is discussed in the following section, with emphasis on how afterlife-related concepts are preserved, interpreted, or modified through the process of translation.

Table 2. Negotiation Pattern of Eschatological Terms

No	ST	TT
13	اللَّهُمَّ : أَرِحْنِي رَائِحَةَ الْجَنَّةِ وَأَنْتَ عَيِّي رَاضٍ	O Lord, let me smell the fragrance of <u>Paradise</u> , and may You be pleased with me!
14	اللَّهُمَّ : أَسْمِعْنِي مُنَادِي الْجَنَّةِ مَعَ الْأَبْرَارِ	O Allah! Let me, with the obedient ones, hear the Caller to <u>Heaven</u> .
15	اللَّهُمَّ : إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ رَوَائِحِ النَّارِ وَمِنْ سُوءِ الدَّارِ	O my Lord, I seek refuge in You from the foul odors of <u>the Fire</u> and from the evil of that abode!
16	... وَيُكْتَبُ لَهُ ثَوَابُ ذَلِكَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ	... To be write for him until <u>the Day of Judgment</u>
17	وَرَحْمَةً أَنْالَ بِهَا شَرَفَ كَرَامَتِكَ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ	And mercy whereby I may receive thr honor of Your favor in this world and <u>the next</u>
18	فَذَلِكَ بِالإِضَافَةِ إِلَى مَقَامِكَ فِي الدَّارِ الْآخِرَةِ	In comparison with your stay in <u>the afterlife</u>

Table 2 presents the forms of meaning negotiation employed in the translation of eschatological terms. For example, the term *الْجَنَّةُ*, which in the Islamic context refers to the afterlife abode for the righteous, is translated in two ways: *Paradise* (13) and *Heaven* (14).

Meanwhile, النَّار is rendered as *the Fire* (15), conveying its symbolic meaning as the place of hellish punishment. The term يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ, literally meaning “day of resurrection,” is translated as *the Day of Judgment* (16). In addition, the term الْآخِرَةِ appears in two forms: *the next* (17) and *the afterlife* (18).

3.3 Negotiation Pattern of Moral and Ethical Criteria

The negotiation pattern of moral and ethical criteria is examined in the following section, focusing on how these values are preserved, adjusted, or altered during the translation process.

Table 3. Negotiation Pattern of Moral and Ethical Criteria

No	ST	TT
19	ثُمَّ انْزَعِ الْحَدَثَ	Then make the intention of lifting <u>the state of impurity</u>
20	فَإِذَا أَصَابَتْكَ جَنَابَةٌ مِنْ إِحْتِلَامٍ أَوْ وَقَاعٍ	If you have entered <u>a state of ritual impurity</u> by having a wet dream or sexual intercourse
21	بِالتَّقْوَى	... With <u>consciousness of Allah</u>
22	وَإِيْتَارُ التَّوَاضُّعِ فِي الْمَحَافِلِ وَالْمَجَالِسِ	Preferring <u>a lowly status</u> in gatherings and meetings
23	وَتَرْكُ التَّكَبُّرِ عَلَى جَمِيعِ الْعِبَادِ	Refraining from showing <u>haughtiness</u> toward any slave of Allah
24	وِظْفِيفَةٍ فِي التَّفَكُّرِ	And <u>reflection</u>

Table 3 illustrates how terms reflecting moral and ethical values in Islam are negotiated in meaning when translated into English. These terms encompass categories of spiritual states, moral consciousness, and inner attitudes that are deeply rooted in the Islamic epistemological framework. For example, the term الْحَدَثُ, which in Islamic jurisprudence refers to a state that nullifies ablution and necessitates purification, is translated as *the state of impurity* (19). Similarly, جَنَابَةٌ, which specifically refers to the condition following sexual intercourse or nocturnal emission requiring a major ritual bath, is rendered as *a state of ritual impurity* (20). The term التَّقْوَى a central concept in Islamic spirituality meaning God-consciousness and piety, is translated as *consciousness of Allah* (21). Meanwhile, التَّوَاضُّعِ which denotes humility as a highly regarded moral value in Islam, is translated as *a lowly status* (22). In contrast, التَّكَبُّرِ is rendered as

haughtiness (23). Lastly, the term *التَّفَكُّرُ* which in Arabic reflects the practice of deep contemplation on God's creation as a form of inner worship, is translated as *reflection* (24).

3.4 Negotiation Patterns of Religious Groups

The negotiation patterns of religious groups are analyzed in the following section, emphasizing how group identities are represented, negotiated, or reshaped through translation.

Table 4. Negotiation Patterns of Religious Groups

No	TSu	TSa
25	وَتَرَكُ التَّكَبُّرَ عَلَى جَمِيعِ الْعِبَادِ	Refraining from showing haughtiness toward <u>any slave of Allah</u>
26	فَذَلِكَ مِنْ دَرَجَاتِ الْعَابِدِينَ وَسِيرَ الصَّالِحِينَ	This is among the stations of <u>the worshippers</u> and the ways of <u>the righteous</u>
27	أَنْ تَنْظُرَ بِهَا إِلَى غَيْرِ مُحَرَّمٍ	From looking at <u>a marriageable person [of the opposite gender]</u>

Table 4 reveals patterns of negotiation in the translation of terms referring to religious groups. In Arabic, these terms are not merely descriptive but are also laden with theological and ideological meanings that collectively signify Islamic identity. For instance, the term *جميع العباد* which literally means “all servants (of Allah),” is translated as *any slave of Allah* (25). The term *الصالحين* is rendered as *the righteous* (26). In Arabic, this term conveys not only spiritual obedience but also the embodiment of moral and social exemplariness. Meanwhile, *العابدين* meaning “devout worshippers” or “those who engage in worship consistently,” is translated as *the worshippers*. The term *محرم* is translated as *a marriageable person [of the opposite gender]* (27), reflecting the cultural and religious nuances surrounding kinship and gender relations in Islamic jurisprudence.

3.5 Negotiation Patterns of Religious Artifacts

The negotiation patterns of religious artifacts are explored in the following section, focusing on how the meanings and significance of these objects are preserved, adapted, or transformed during the translation process.

Table 5. Negotiation Patterns of Religious Artifacts

No	ST	TT
28	فَإِذَا فَرَّغْتَ مِنَ الْإِسْتِنْجَاءِ .. فَلَا تَتْرُكِ السَّوَاكَ	Having cleaned yourself after relieving yourself, do not neglect to use a <u>toothstick</u>

29	وَلَا تَتَوَضَّأُ بِالْمَاءِ الْمُشَّمْسِ	Do not perform your ablution with <u>water that has been sitting in the sun</u>
30	إِذَا عَجَزْنَا عَنِ الْغَنِيمَةِ ...	When we are unable to gain any <u>spoils of battle</u> ...

Table 5 illustrates patterns of meaning negotiation in the translation of terms related to religious artifacts found in the source text. In this context, *artifacts* refer to objects or materials that serve spiritual, legal, or symbolic functions in Islamic religious practices. One example is the term *السواك* which in Islamic tradition refers to a specific type of twig (commonly from the *Salvadora persica* tree) used for cleaning the teeth and regarded as a Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This term is translated as *toothstick* (28), conveying the functional use of the object. Another example is *آلَاءُ الْمَشْمَسِ* which literally means “sun-exposed water,” and is rendered as *water that has been sitting in the sun* (29). Meanwhile, the term *الغنيمة* referring to war booty obtained by Muslims in the context of jihad, is translated as *spoils of battle* (30).

3.6 Negotiation Pattern of Enlightenment Term

The negotiation pattern of the term "enlightenment" is examined in the following section, highlighting how its meanings are preserved, adapted, or transformed throughout the translation process.

Table 6. Negotiation Pattern of Enlightenment Term

No	ST	TT
32	الْمُعَوِّذَتَيْنِ	The two Chapters of Protection [al-Falaq and al-Nas]
33	ثُمَّ اقْرَأْ آيَةَ الْكُرْسِيِّ	Then read <u>the Throne Verse</u>
34	فَلَا بَأْسَ أَنْ تَشْتَغِلَ بِعِلْمِ الْمَذْهَبِ مِنَ الْفِقْهِ	Then you may occupy yourself in the study of a school of <u>jurisprudence</u>
35	وَصَدِّ الْمُتَعَلِّمَ عَنْ أَنْ يَشْتَغِلَ بِفَرْضِ الْكِفَايَةِ قَبْلَ الْفَرَاحِ مِنْ فَرْضِ الْعَيْنِ	And preventing the student from occupying himself with <u>the communal obligations</u> before he has completed his <u>individual obligations</u>

Table 6 presents how terms related to the concepts of spiritual and intellectual enlightenment in Islamic tradition undergo meaning negotiation in translation. For instance, the term *الْمُعَوِّذَتَيْنِ* which refers to the two protective chapters of the Qur'an *al-Falaq* and *al-Nas* is translated as *The two Chapters of Protection [al-Falaq and al-Nas]* (32). Furthermore, *آيَةُ الْكُرْسِيِّ* a significant verse

in *Surah al-Baqarah* associated with divine protection and authority, is rendered as *the Throne Verse* (33). The term **الفقه** which refers to the comprehensive understanding of Islamic jurisprudence derived from the Qur'an and Hadith, is translated as *jurisprudence* (34). However, it is worth noting that in Islamic tradition, *fiqh* encompasses far more than Western notions of positive law. Finally, the concepts of **فَرَضِ الْعَيْنِ** and **فَرَضِ الْكِفَايَةِ** which represent two distinct categories of religious obligations in Islamic law, are translated as *communal obligations* and *individual obligations* respectively (35).

3.7 Negotiation Patterns of Religious Figures

The negotiation patterns of religious figures are discussed in the following section, focusing on how their identities and roles are represented, negotiated, or modified during the translation process.

Table 7. Negotiation Patterns of Religious Figures

No	ST	TT
36	ثُمَّ قُلْ مَا قَالَ عِيسَى ...	Then say what <u>Jesus</u> said ...
37	وَلَا يَتَكَلَّمْ مَا لَمْ يَسْأَلْهُ أُسْتَاذُهُ	Not to speak unless asked something by <u>the teacher</u>
38	والحج والغازي والقاري	The pilgrim [to Makka], the warrior, and <u>the reciter of the Qur'an</u>
39	قال الراوي	<u>The narrator (of this hadith)</u> says

Table 7 illustrates a pattern of meaning negotiation in the translation of terms referring to religious figures. These figures not only occupy important roles within the text but also embody structures of religious authority that are deeply embedded in the source culture. For example, the term **عيسى** which in the Islamic context refers to the Prophet Isa as one of the major prophets, is translated as *Jesus* (36). While denotatively referring to the same individual, the connotative meaning differs significantly across cultures. In Islam, 'Īsā is regarded as a prophet and not the son of God, whereas in Christian theology, Jesus is viewed as the Son of God and the central figure of salvation. Another example is **أستاذ** which in classical Arabic and Islamic contexts denotes a teacher or scholar with both religious and intellectual authority. It is translated as *the teacher* (37). Although this translation is neutral and accessible to English-speaking audiences, it loses the

spiritual and social-religious nuance inherent in the original term. Similarly, القاري is rendered as *the reciter of the Qur'an* (38), and الراوي is translated as *the narrator (of this hadith)* (39).

Negotiation in the translation of religious identity occurs due to fundamental differences in belief systems, cultural frameworks, and spiritual concepts between the source language (Arabic) and the target language (English). Terms such as صَلَاةٌ and الذِّكْرُ carry meanings that extend beyond linguistic denotation, encompassing deeply rooted theological and cultural dimensions. As such, translators must seek meaning equivalents that are intelligible and acceptable to cross-cultural audiences. This process is referred to by Venuti (1995) as *domestication*—a strategy that adapts a foreign text into the cultural system of the target language to enhance comprehensibility. For instance, the spiritually rich term آلَاغْتِكَافَ is rendered as *spiritual retreat*, emphasizing the contemplative aspect familiar within Western traditions. Furthermore, the limited scope of religious vocabulary in English compels translators to employ descriptive phrases or the closest possible equivalents, as seen in the translation of السُّحُورُ as *the pre-dawn meal*, rather than opting for a mere lexical substitution. Such negotiations are crucial for maintaining a balance between semantic accuracy and cultural acceptability (Moe et al., 2021). Therefore, the translation of religious texts demands heightened sensitivity to context, spiritual values, and the reader's cultural background (Mahbouba & Haider, 2024).

The negotiation of eschatological terms in translation is significantly influenced by theological divergences and conceptual systems between Islamic and Western cultures. For example, the Arabic term الْجَنَّةِ is translated as *Paradise* or *Heaven*—two terms which, within Christian tradition, carry distinct theological connotations (Bockmuehl & Stroumsa, 2010), yet are employed here to bridge understanding for the target readership. Similarly, النَّارِ is rendered as *the Fire* rather than the more explicit *hell*, thereby preserving the spiritual symbolism and narrative function it holds within the Qur'anic discourse. This practice reflects an *equivalence-oriented approach*, as described by Baker (2018), wherein translators aim to convey semantically and pragmatically equivalent meanings, even if the form must be adapted to suit the target context. The translation of يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ as *the Day of Judgment* exemplifies adaptation toward a concept more familiar to non-Muslim audiences, while the rendering of الْآخِرَةِ as *the next* or *the afterlife* demonstrates interpretive variation contingent on textual context. These examples underscore

that the translation of eschatological terminology extends beyond mere linguistic transfer, encompassing ideological and cultural dimensions as well (El-Sharqawy, 2021).

The negotiation of meaning in the translation of morally and spiritually nuanced Islamic terms reflects the inherent conceptual depth and epistemological framework of the source culture. Such negotiation arises due to differences in value systems and cultural paradigms between Arabic and English. Terms like *الْحَدَثُ* and *جَنَابَةٌ* which are deeply rooted in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), are translated as *the state of impurity* and *a state of ritual impurity*, respectively. These renderings represent attempts to concisely convey both the legal and spiritual dimensions of the original concepts in the target language. As noted by House (2023), ideological translation involves more than semantic transfer; it also accounts for how specific sociocultural systems shape meaning. For example, the term *التَّقْوَى* often rendered as *consciousness of Allah*, illustrates a simplification of a multifaceted concept into a form accessible to readers from diverse religious backgrounds. However, the translation of *التَّوَضُّعُ* as *a lowly status* may introduce a value ambiguity, potentially shifting the intended meaning of humility toward a connotation of inferiority. This highlights the necessity for heightened sensitivity in negotiating the meaning of ethical categories to ensure that spiritual values and moral concepts are not ideologically distorted in the translation process.

The translation of terms referring to religious groups in Islam involves complex meaning negotiations, as these terms do not merely convey descriptive information but also embody collective identity, theological positioning, and ideological values within the source culture. For instance, the term *جَمِيعُ الْعِبَادِ* is rendered as *any slave of Allah*, reflecting an effort to preserve the relational, spiritual connection to God while using familiar grammatical structures in English. However, such a translation may not fully encapsulate the broader theological implication of servitude and devotion in Islamic discourse. Similarly, *الصَّالِحِينَ* is translated as *the righteous*, emphasizing the moral dimension but overlooking the communal and exemplary role the term implies in the Islamic tradition. A comparable shift occurs in the translation of *الْعَابِدِينَ* as *the worshippers*, which, while semantically accurate, tends to underrepresent the intensity and constancy of spiritual devotion embedded in the Arabic term. A more problematic instance can be found in the rendering of *مَحْرَمٌ* as *a marriageable person [of the opposite gender]*. This translation introduces semantic distortion, as the term in its original Islamic legal context refers precisely to someone who is *not* marriageable due to permanent prohibitions—such as close kinship or

breastfeeding ties. This misrepresentation highlights the semantic shift that can occur due to differing epistemological frameworks and cultural norms between the source and target languages (Huseni & Hartono, 2018).

The negotiation process in translating Islamic religious artefacts is closely linked to the concept of material culture. Material culture refers to physical objects imbued with symbolic meanings and social functions within a particular community (Hallam & Hockey, 2020). In this context, artefacts such as *السِّوَاكُ* are not merely tools for oral hygiene but are spiritually significant as a Sunnah of the Prophet, symbolizing Islamic values of cleanliness and prophetic emulation. However, its translation as *toothstick* tends to foreground its functional aspect while downplaying the symbolic and ritualistic dimensions due to the target culture's limited familiarity with its religious connotations. Similarly, terms such as *المَاءُ الْمُسَمَّى* and *الْغَنِيْمَةُ* undergo semantic reduction when translated as *water that has been sitting in the sun* and *spoils of battle*, respectively. These translations overlook the fiqh-based nuances and the historical-religious context related to Islamic jurisprudence and jihad. Thus, the negotiation in translating religious artifacts often reflects a shift from symbolic (religious and historical) meanings to practical and universal interpretations as a form of adaptation to the material cultural framework of the target audience.

The negotiation in translating terms related to spiritual and intellectual enlightenment in Islam arises from epistemological differences between the source culture (Islamic) and the target culture (Western). Terms such as *آيَةُ الْكُرْسِيِّ* and *الْمُعَوِّذَتَيْنِ*, which are deeply imbued with spiritual and protective significance in Islam, are translated as *The Two Chapters of Protection* and *The Throne Verse*, respectively. While these translations are informative, they fall short of fully conveying the profound spiritual meanings—such as *tawakkul* (reliance on God) and metaphysical protection—that these texts embody in the Islamic tradition. A similar case occurs with the term *الفقه*, which is translated as *jurisprudence*. This translation reduces the rich dimensions of *fiqh*, which integrates spiritual, social, and moral elements beyond the confines of Western formal legal systems. Semantic negotiation is also evident in the translation of *فَرَضِ الْعَيْنِ* and *فَرَضِ الْكِفَايَةِ* as *communal obligations* and *individual obligations*. Although these terms are denotatively accurate, the religious connotation attached to *shari'ah*-based obligations risks being diluted. According to Bassnett (2013b), differences in belief systems and frameworks of knowledge

compel translators to engage in negotiation to maintain a balance between semantic accuracy and cultural acceptability in the target language.

The translation of religious figures can be analyzed through the lens of anthroponym translation, which involves the rendering of personal names that carry cultural, historical, or religious significance (Aziza, [2024](#)). In the context of Islamic religious texts, anthroponyms are not merely personal identifiers but also theological and ideological symbols rich with meaning. For instance, the name (عِيسَى) is translated as *Jesus*, following a historical-cultural transliteration practice. However, in the target culture, the name *Jesus* is strongly associated with Christian doctrines such as divinity and atonement—concepts that diverge from the Islamic understanding of prophethood. This situation creates what Newmark ([2010](#)) refers to as *cultural overlap*, in which the translator must balance semantic accuracy with ideological sensitivity. In addition, terms such as (أُسْتَاذُ), (القاري), and (الراوي) may be viewed as anthroponyms denoting religious titles that represent roles within the structure of Islamic scholarly authority. When translated as *the teacher*, *the reciter of the Qur'an*, or *the narrator (of this hadith)*, the embedded nuances of reverence, social standing, and spiritual significance often become flattened or lost in the target language.

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study on the English translation of the *Bidayatul-Hidayah*, seven patterns of religious identity negotiation were identified. These patterns include the negotiation of specific religious practices, eschatological terms, moral and ethical criteria, religious group terminology, religious artefacts, enlightenment-related terms, and religious figures. All these patterns reflect the effort to preserve religious meaning while ensuring acceptability within the cultural context of the target readership. The negotiation of religious identity in translation arises due to differences in belief systems, cultural frameworks, and spiritual concepts between Arabic and English. The primary influencing factors include theological disparities, moral values, and the cultural background of the target audience. Translators are often faced with the choice between preserving the original meaning or adapting it to ensure cross-cultural intelligibility. This process often results in semantic shifts, particularly when translating terms related to religious artefacts, religious communities, and anthroponyms, due to the limited cultural equivalents available in the target language. Thus, translation becomes a process of meaning negotiation aimed at maintaining spiritual and ideological values without creating cultural bias. Therefore, sensitivity to context and epistemological frameworks becomes essential in preserving semantic equivalence in the translation of religious texts.

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