

Asir before World War I: Ideological Representations of the Local Tribes and Translational Shifts

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Abstract

This paper aims to examine the representation of Asiri people in *Asir before World War I* (Cornwallis 1976), a historical British travel writing book, and its respective Arabic translation. Following Toury's (1995) descriptive approach and van Leuven-Zwart's (1989) model of shift analysis, I investigate the impact of particular sociocultural factors on the image construction process in terms of Asiris' personal and physical characteristics, ethnic heritage, and traditional values and practices. Then, I explore the impact of these shifts on the macro level of meaning and overall representation of people and traditions of Asir. The study finds the representation of the local people in the book is pragmatic and strictly goes in line with the colonial agenda and perspectives. Furthermore, the translation shows frequent patterns of modification, mutation shifts and omissions related to the representation and depiction of the local people (individuals and groups) reported in the original text.

Keywords: Asir, Ideology, Translational shifts, Travel writing

1. Introduction

In the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, in particular, British travellers traditionally documented their travels around the globe and provided readers and researchers back in England with unique information on exotic far-away lands, new peoples, and unfamiliar cultures. Due to the scarcity of native scholarship and near absence of archival materials, their writings became primary historical references about the people of the land (Reilly 2015), and these writings held a position of prestige in the literatures of the world at the time as they were seen as bearing witness to encounters with those new people and cultures across historical, social, geographical, and ethnic divides (Clarke 2018). According to Pratt (2007), travel writing gave the European reading public a sense of ownership, entitlement, and familiarity with respect to the distant

parts of the world that were being explored, invaded, invested in, and colonized; hence the popularity of travel books at that time.

Travel writing, then, depends on the authority of the writer who, as the only (reliable) witness, attempts to persuade readers of the authenticity of the facts reported in their account. In addition to this, English travel literature, especially during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, became clearly identified with the interests and objectives of European powers, who, at the time, wished to bring the non-European world into a position where it could be influenced, exploited and, in some cases, directly controlled. Therefore, although the historical records European travellers left behind are quite valuable in terms of novelty of information, the travellers' self-identification as morally and intellectually superior explorers leads to representations influenced by their egocentric assumptions and ideologies, rather than the provision of information about the 'reality' of the situation.

Today, more and more studies are exploring the connection between travel and translation, many of which focus on the way in which both practices are used to construct images of the 'Other'. In fact, according to Dominte (2016), the traveller and the translator have both played, for a long time, the historical role of intermediary between two spaces/cultures. Both the translator and the traveller share the ambiguous status of, on the one hand, the privileged witness of diversity, and, on the other hand, a potential liar or even double agent; both, as a result, face questions related to faithfulness and objectivity, transparency, and visibility. Moreover, both travellers and translators, and their products, are deeply linked to ideology and power (Polezzi (cited in Baker and Saldanha 2009)). That is:

Translators and travellers play a crucial role in constructing images of foreign cultures under the sign of difference, at times relegating those cultures into the realm of the exotic, or even representing them as devoid of 'civilization' and therefore pushing them outside the boundaries of the human. (Polezzi, cited in Baker and Saldanha 2009: 174).

Thus, in exploring the relationship between travel and translation, we need to be aware that both practices are frequently seen as metaphors of mobility and flexibility and that both practices are closely linked to representation and ideology.

However, research on such substantial travel accounts and their translations seems to be neglected in the field of translation studies. The aim of this paper, thus, is to shed some light on the representation of Asiri people in one of the Earliest British travel books, *Asir before World War I* (Cornwallis 1976), and its Arabic translation. It is an investigation into the impact of some sociocultural factors on the image construction process related to personal

and physical characteristics, ethnic heritage, and traditional values and practices related to these natives. The paper is interdisciplinary in that it addresses a translational issue (semantic shifts), utilizing cultural constituents (representation and ideology).

Thus, the present paper attempts to address three questions:

1. How did the British traveller represent Asiri people in the selected travel book?
2. How do the Arabic translations of the British travel book reflect the ST's representation of Asiri people and their traditions?
3. What is the impact of shift patterns on the macro-structural level and thus the overall representation of Asiri people?

The organization of this article is as follows. Section 2 reviews the previous studies on travel writing. Section 3 introduces the methodology of the current study. In section 4, I provide a background of the necessary theoretical concepts adopted in the study, and the analysis of the data will follow in section 5. Section 6 summarizes the conclusions of the study.

Previous Studies

Salama-Carr (2007) examines the representation and translation strategies used to construct national identity in *Negotiating Conflict: Rifā'a Rāfi' al-TahTāwī and the Translation of the 'Other' in Nineteenth-century Egypt*. She explains how the writings of al-TahTāwī, a well-known Egyptian thinker, translator, and essayist who travelled to France during the time when Egypt was a site of European expansion, included numerous examples of constructive translation and representation that familiarized and legitimized the 'Other'. Through analysis of his writing, Salama-Carr (2007) argues that al-TahTāwī was attempting to highlight parallels and values common between Egyptian and French cultures. In doing so, he was striving to create representations of alterity, negotiating between the conflicting discourses of modernism and traditionalism.

Gholi and Ahmadi (2017) analyze the issue of Orientalism and representation in travel writing through the study of domestication and mistranslation. They explore descriptions of the Turkmen people and culture in *Edmond O'Donovan's The Merv Oasis, Travels and Adventures East of the Caspian during the Years 1879-80-81*. Like many colonial travel writers, according to Gholi and Ahmadi, the British traveller not only domesticates but also mistranslates cultural signs of a nation, including people's clothing and music.

Alzahrani (2018) examines a chapter of Charles Doughty's (1888) *Travels in Arabia Deserta*, aiming to explore representations of the native people of Arabia. From a critical discourse analysis (CDA) perspective, her study

explores the lexical items used by Doughty to describe desert Arabs (Bedouins). She examines these lexical choices in light of two themes relevant to the discourse of Orientalism according to her research premise: the first is the underlying cultural superiority of the West and the other is 'the interdependence' of texts describing the people of Arabia. As such, her paper supports the premise that the label 'discourse of Orientalism' can comprise even seemingly neutral descriptions of people of Arabia, and those existing representations of Bedouins are a product of an accumulated body of work rather than from one specific text (Alzahrani 2018).

Nevertheless, Azahrani's (2018) work represents a rare study in the field of translation studies that focus on travel writing, historical or recent, and representation in related to the Arabia and its inhabitants. Other research on this subject is, unfortunately, absent and was thus a significant motivation for conducting this study, as it will fill an important research gap in the field.

Methodology

Data

The data of this study are taken from *Asir before World War I* (Cornwallis 1976), which was written by Sir Kinahan Cornwallis, a British administrator and diplomat who lived and worked in the Middle East for several years. Born in February 1883, Cornwallis was the son of the British poet, journalist, and traveller Kinahan Cornwallis and was educated at Oxford before working for the British government. During his career in the Middle East, Cornwallis occupied several positions, including advisor to King Faisal of Iraq and director of the Arab Bureau in Cairo. Established in 1916, the Arab Bureau was a section of the British Intelligence Department responsible for coordinating imperial intelligence activities in the Middle East during the First World War.

It is worth mentioning here that the book was originally published in 1916 as an in-house military handbook for the Arab Bureau in Cairo. It is based on Cornwallis's journey to Asir, a few years prior to the First World War (the exact dates of the trip were not indicated). Decades later, and due to its historic value (according to the publisher of the book), permission was granted by the British Foreign Office for the book to be reissued to the wider public (Cornwallis 1976).

The Arabic translation of *Asir before World War I* under study was revised and published in 2009 by Ali Al-Shahrani, a writer and historian from Saudi Arabia. It makes no mention of the translator, although some commentators indicate that the original translation of the book was undertaken by an Egyptian translator called Abdul-Rahman Abu Salah. Unfortunately, upon searching online and across Arabic and English libraries and data entries, I found no information about this translator nor any evidence that he undertook the translation of this book. Instead, the book bears the name Ali Al-Shahrani, the main publisher who, as stated in the introduction, carried out the tasks of verifying historical information, and supervising and 'carefully rechecking' the translation

(Al-Shahrani, cited in Cornwallis 2009). However, there are no publication details other than Al-Shahrani's name and postal address and a statement that the book was registered at the ministry of culture in Yemen in 2007.

Method

This study implements an empirical and analytical methodology with elements drawn mainly from Toury's (1995) descriptive approach and van Leuven-Zwart's (1989) model of shifts analysis. The first stage of analysis involves a comparative description of extracts representing significant and radical cases of shifts, and it examines the representation constructed in the original text within its socio-ideological context and how the Arabic translation reflects/reconstructs this representation.

The second stage of analysis is a quantitative inspection of shifts to identify frequent patterns. Using both quantitative and qualitative findings, the third stage of analysis discovers the impact of the micro-level shifts on the macro-structural level of meaning and the overall representation in each book. By doing so, patterns of significant and radical semantic shifts in translation are determined and their impact on the overall representation is revealed.

Due to the historical value of the information in the corpus at hand, I consider translation to be concerned with semantics more than structure. Therefore, following Vinay and Darbelnet (in Hatim and Munday 2004), I consider a 'lexicological unit' or a 'unit of thought' to be a translation unit, i.e. a word or group of words expressing a single description (representation) related to people is considered to be a translation unit.

The method of analysis followed in this article is inspired by the comparative part of van Leuven-Zwart's (1989) shifts analysis model, which involves a thorough and detailed comparison of ST and TT and a classification of all micro-structural shifts as well as Toury's (1995) method of describing the translation phenomena/translation products within their sociocultural context. The analysis focuses on micro-level shifts that represent semantic differences between the source text and the translation, with reference to three categories: modification shifts, mutation shifts, and shifts beyond the sentence level (deletion of paragraphs). All extracts analysed in this part were obtained from the travel book: *Asir before World War I* (Cornwallis 1976).

Theoretical Background

Representation

A substantial and complex notion in language and culture, representation has been defined in many ways. According to the cultural theorist Hall (1997: 15) representation is a process of "giving meaning to" or "making sense of" objects, people or events through the use of language, attaching a deeper and more semiotic sense to

the term. He defines the notion of cultural representation as “producing meaning and exchanging it between cultures by the use of language, signs or images which represent things” or “the production of the meaning of the concepts in our minds through language” (Hall 1997: 17). Culture, according to Hall’s definitions, denotes “whatever is distinctive about ‘the way of life’ of a people” or the sum of a society’s ideas and practices, as represented in their works of literature, music, philosophy, or any other widely distributed forms (Hall 1997: 2).

Thus, the term ‘representation’, in this current paper, indicates the process of producing particular meanings about particular people and/or their traditions, with the purpose of portraying a certain image to readers in a specific manner.

The Role of Ideology

Representation is not a transparent process of representing events and entities objectively, as there is always “a mediating effect whereby an event is filtered through interpretive frameworks and acquires ideological significance” (Poole 2009: 23). Ideology is seen as “an organization of opinions, attitudes, and values – a way of thinking – about man and society” (Adorno et al.1950: 2). The term ideology is used in this study to denote a set of assumptions, beliefs, and value-systems adopted by a traveller/author or a translator/editor when producing a text concerning the people of Arabia and their particular traditions.

Translation Shifts

Another important aspect of translation studies is the analysis of translational shifts. The current study adopts van Leuven-Zwart (1989, 1990) shift analysis model. Drawing on categories proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (1958, 1995) and Levy (1969), and applying them to the descriptive analysis of translation, van Leuven-Zwart’s model is distinctive and more thorough than previous ones. The model presents a study in which linguistic and textual analyses are both in use, and proposes a bottom-up procedure that compares the original text with its translation by identifying common ground between them, while placing both texts on an equal footing (Hermans 1999). The main aim of this model is “to describe and catalogue ‘shifts’ in translation and to deduce from these, the translator’s underlying strategy or norm” (Hermans 1999: 58).

In this model, van Leuven-Zwart makes a clear distinction between micro-structural shifts, which are shifts at the textual level, and macro-structural shifts, which represent the effects of micro-structural shifts at the broader level of a text’s discourse. The model includes two categories, comparative and descriptive, in order to build a systematic framework of comparison within and above sentence level (Munday 2001). The comparative category involves a thorough and detailed comparison of the ST and the TT and a classification of all micro-structural shifts (van Leuven-Zwart 1989). These shifts, which can be found in sentences, clauses, and phrases, are identified by comparing comprehensible textual units in the ST and TT. These are called ‘transemes’. Transemes, in this

model, are divided into two kinds: the state of affairs transeme and the satellite transeme. Van Leuven-Zwart (1989: 156) states that the state of affairs transeme “consists of a predicate – a lexical verb or a copula – and its arguments”, whereas the satellite transeme “lacks a predicate and might be described as an adverbial specification or amplification of the state of affairs transeme”. This model also introduced the concept of the “architranseme” (ATR), which is defined as “the common denominator” that includes the similarities and/or dissimilarities between the ST and TT transemes (van Leuven-Zwart 1989: 157). The occurrence of shifts depends on the existence of a synonymic relationship between the ST and TT transemes and the ATR: “if both transemes have a synonymic relationship with the architranseme, no shift is deemed to have occurred” (van Leuven-Zwart 1989: 158).

The different kinds of shift occurring as a result of the different ST-TT relationships are as follows: modulation, a hyponymic relationship between ST and TT transemes when compared to the architranseme; modification, a relationship of contrast between ST and TT segments or transemes; and mutation, where there is no relationship between ST and TT transemes. The descriptive category, on the other hand, involves a hypothetical estimation of the effects of micro-structural shifts at the macro-structural level. This is done by employing the three metafunctions of language from systemic linguistics exemplified by Halliday (1973): the interpersonal, which refers to the relationships between writer and reader or speaker and hearer of the text; the ideational, which refers to the way textual information is presented to the reader; and the textual, which refers to how a text’s information is organized in language (van Leuven-Zwart 1989).

Data Analysis

In this section, I provide a comparative and descriptive qualitative analysis of some of the extracts comprising the primary corpus for this study.

Modification Shifts

A modification shift indicates a change in the meaning of the source text by adding something new to it, taking something out of it, or substituting part/s of it in translation. It results in a noticeably significant difference in meaning between the translation and the information that the ST provides, while maintaining the core elements from the source in the translation.

The following is an example of modification shift via addition in a translation of a generalized description of an entire tribe’s characteristics, extracted from the travel book *Asir before World War I* (Cornwallis 1976):

ST	p.30	Unless there is a good prospect of loot, it is difficult to collect the Arabs in any numbers, and in any case their natural independence and their dislike of restraint render them unsuitable for a long campaign.
TT	p.50	إن لم يكن هنالك أمل في كسب الغنائم فإنه من الصعب أن تجمع أي عدد من العرب كما أن استقلالهم الطبيعي وكرههم وبغضهم إلى كبت وتقييد الحريات يجعل منهم رجالاً غير صالحين للحملات الطويلة الأمد.
	BT	Unless there is hope of winning loots, it is difficult to collect the Arabs in any numbers, and their natural independence and their hate and contempt for any restraint and restriction of freedom make them unsuitable men for the long-lasting campaigns.

In the translation, the word “dislike” is translated by two words, “hate” and “contempt”, both of which generate a stronger meaning than that of the ST. Similarly, the meaning “restraint” is emphasized through the addition of lexis in the phrase “restraint and restriction of freedom”. Although the impact of such additions in translation might not be very significant for the core meaning of the ST, it gives an indication of the occurrence of addition in the translation of this book compared to other shifts, such as that of recurrent omission.

A similar practice of addition is seen occasionally in the translation. In the following unit, the ST concerns some nomadic clans in Asir. These specific clans traditionally viewed sheep- and camel-raising, horse-breeding, hunting, and raiding as honourable occupations worthy of an independent and free man, but never agriculture, craft, or trade (Hitti 1937). In the Arabic translation, the word “dignity” is translated by two words: “dignity” and “status”:

ST	p.62	They are the most famous in war and consider it beneath their dignity to engage in trade of any sort.
TT	p.104	كما يعتبرون الاشتغال بالتجارة لا تليق بمقامهم وكرامتهم
	BT	...consider working in trade beneath their status and their dignity.

The following rather negative representation offers another example of modification shift as the TT now includes two cases of shift; omission and substitution:

ST	p.76	The settled portion is prosperous and hospitable, but the nomads are wild, intractable, almost pagans and with no marriage laws.
TT	p.134	القسم المستقر منهم معروفون بإقدامهم وكرمهم بينما الرحل منهم.....وشرسون ووطنيون غالبا ولا تسود بينهم قوانين.....
	BT	The settled portion are known to be courageous and hospitable, but the nomads are.....and wild, and usually patriotic, with no.....laws.

Here, the text describes Beni Bishr, a section of the Qahtan tribes of Arabia, which are subdivided into several settled and nomadic clans. The omission – in this case the words “intractable” and “marriage” – is indicated in the translation by ellipsis. More importantly, a rather interesting case of shift via significant substitution of meaning is seen in the change of the ST terms “prosperous” and “pagans”. The ST “prosperous” is changed to “courageous” in the TT, and “pagans” is changed to “patriotic”. The term ‘patriotic’ generally indicates loyalty and devotion to one’s country. Using the term in a historical text when describing a nomadic group during the very early stages of the establishment of the modern Arabian state might be very confusing to the translation reader, especially people from that specific region.

The following units demonstrate a modification shift in representations related to the ethnic background of individuals in Arabia:

ST	p.91	Tall, fair (Circassian mother); M.P. has a Circassian wife at Constantinople [sic].
TT	p.154	طويل القامة وأشقر البشرة. عضو في البرلمان وله زوجة شركسية في القسطنطينية.
	BT	Tall and fair. Member of the parliament and has a Circassian wife in Constantinople.

Appendix XV of *Asir before World War I* (Cornwallis 1976) lists, and briefly describes, numerous personalities, including prominent tribesmen and chiefs. One of these Asiri figures is the person described above, Faraj Ibn Said. The man is reported to be tall and fair and the traveller/author explains, in parenthesis, that the ethnicity of his mother is Circassian. In the translation, however, this explanation of the mother’s origin is omitted. The reference to the ethnic background of Faraj’s wife, who is also Circassian, in the same sentence, is maintained. Although information on the man’s background is omitted in the translation, this example is not considered a case

of mutation shift as the omission here does not affect the core message of the unit and the omitted phrase is in fact inserted in parenthesis in the ST. Also, a word or phrase inserted into a passage that is grammatically complete without it usually indicates further explanation or afterthought, rather than being part of the core message.

A reference to the “Sudanese” roots of another tribe in Asir, Beni Shaibah, in the same book, includes modification through omission, also signalled by an ellipsis. In this case, oddly, the ST meaning “have been emancipated” is omitted and replaced by an ellipsis rather than the claimed ethnicity itself, “Sudanese”:

ST	p.39	The tribe is mixed, the Sheiks and chief families being Arabs, the rest Sudanese who have been emancipated for many generations.
TT	p.64	والقبيلة مختلطة من شيوخ وعائلات عربية رئيسية والباقي سودانيون.....منذ عدة أجيال
	BT	The tribe is mixed, Sheiks and chief families being Arabs, the rest Sudanesefor many generations.

The two omissions above clearly interrupt the flow of the sentences, but they do not result in a radical change in ST meaning, nor do they make understanding the whole TT impossible, at least not to the extent we will observe in the next section

A noticeable characteristic of the Arabic translation of texts encompassing religious references in the travel book is that omissions are not indicated by ellipses. Consider the following instance:

ST	p.88	About forty, small, pock-marked, intelligent; but lost religion in his visits to Constantinople and is unpopular with his tribe.
TT	p.150	يبلغ من العمر (٤٠) عاما ضعيف النفوذ وفيه آثار جدري وهو متقد الذهن ولكنه غير شعبي بين أفراد قبيلته.
	BT	About (40) of age, has weak influence, pock-marked and intelligent but unpopular with his tribe’s members.

This is from the appendix of this book, which comprises a list of tribal chiefs, with some brief and general information about each one of them. The ST extract above is the only description we see of a tribal chief named Ali Ibn Khanfour. The man is described as small, pock-marked, and intelligent but unpopular with his tribe. The traveller, moreover, claims, without any further explanation, that Ibn Khanfour lost his faith due to/during his travels to Constantinople. In the Arabic translation, the description of the man is retained as it is, apart from the word “small”, which is substituted, oddly, by ‘has weak influence’. When it comes to the reference to religion, however, the statement “lost religion in his visits to Constantinople” is omitted entirely and the man’s faith is not indicated. This omission, although highly significant with regard to the representation of a person from Asir, is

not indicated by ellipsis and does not affect the core message of the ST. This is why it is categorized as modification.

A similar case is related to drinking alcohol, which is known to be forbidden in the Islamic faith, and which is a proscribed activity in Arabian, specifically Asiri, societies, especially at that time in history:

ST	p.91	Rich and to be reckoned with, but a drunkard and libertine.
TT	p.154	ثري ويحسب له حساب
	BT	Rich and to be reckoned with.

Again, the above text is taken from the appendix at the end of *Asir before World War I* (Cornwallis 1976). It describes Faraj, a chief of a tribe, who is presented as being rich and powerful, but also a “drunkard and libertine”. This last description was omitted in the TT without being indicated in any way. Reading the Arabic translation, a reader is presented with a meaning that is much weaker than that of the original, with no information about Faraj’s ‘unvirtuous’ tendencies, as described by the traveller in the original account.

Mutation Shifts

This section examines a second category of shifts detected in the translations of descriptions linked to people, namely mutation shifts. A mutation shift occurs when there is a radical change in the meaning of the ST in the translation, rendered by the addition of items that radically alter the meaning, radical omission (of the entire sentence or all the meaningful elements in the sentence) or a radical substitution of the original meaning. Radical substitution here is taken to mean that the translation’s message deviates entirely from the message of the ST (providing a conflicting meaning). It should be noted that all mutation cases considered in this part were evaluated depending on how the fundamental meaning change with regard to the person/s described was brought about via these shifts. The following cases provide clear examples of mutation shifts brought about by a radical substitution of meaning.

The following extract provides a relatively brief description of one of Asir’s tribesmen, Abu Alamah, within a list of personalities in the region. Abu Alamah is described as a poor but honest consultant to the region’s chief at the time. Other than this statement, no previous or further description of this man’s appearance or personal attributes is found within the travel book.

ST	p.85	Has a birthmark covering one side of his face.
TT	p.146	وله علامة في وجهه وهي علامة الصلاة.
	BT	Has a mark on his face that is a prayer mark.

The change in the ST meaning here is considerable. In the ST sentence, the main information in the description of Abu Alamah relates to a distinctive birthmark covering one side of the man's face. However, we see that the translation provides entirely different information about this characteristic, as the birth mark is rendered into "a prayer mark". A prayer mark is a rather small dark skin blemish that appears on the forehead of some Muslims due to the friction generated by repeated contact with a prayer mat. Describing a man as having a prayer mark therefore constructs a representation of piety or religious devotion (as in frequent praying). Moreover, the translation assigns a completely new meaning to the sentence through omission of the ST information "covering one side". A person reading this translation, hence, receives an entirely different meaning, in terms of the physical feature described, to that of the original text. They will understand that the described person has only a small dark prayer mark on his forehead and not a large birthmark covering half of his face, as the original text states.

One noticeably recurrent theme in many representations of Asiri tribes is liberty and the longing for freedom and self-determination. The following extract describes Dhuwwi Hassan, a nomadic clan from the tribes of Asir. The shift is one of mutation because the entire sentence describing the clan is not translated, a frequent practice seen in the translation of this book:

ST	p.32	They are, however, thoroughly impatient of any control and what little deference they show to anyone is paid to the Idrissi, who are sufficiently far away to appear attractive.
TT		Omitted

The traveller explains here, in a generalized manner, how some specific tribes of Bishah (a large agricultural town in the south of Asir) are divided into settlers (palm- and wheat-growers) and nomads – the former being civilized, the latter 'mostly' "savage". He frequently describes many of the nomads negatively, as having an evil reputation related to their raiding methods and cruelty. To him, they are lawless, although some show loyalty to the Idrissi, the leader of the Idrissid Emirate that controlled minor parts of Asir at the time. Due to this omission, a reader of the Arabic translation of the passage obtains far less information about the Bishah's tribes than is present in the ST, and altogether no information about their political allegiance.

Shifts beyond Sentence Level

The examples in the above sections have highlighted significant and radical instances of modification and mutation, where descriptions of people of Asir are substituted, added, or removed at sentence level in translations. This section, however, demonstrates a type of shift that affects the meaning of more than one sentence at the same time: deletion of paragraphs. This shift means the removal of a larger lexical portion of the source text, with more than one sentence omitted in the Arabic translation (and a maximum of five). Due to space constraints, other omitted paragraphs cannot be quoted in their entirety here. Instead, representative examples related to this part will be discussed.

In more than one instance, large portions of the description of the personal characteristics of some tribal chiefs or ruling tribal families are clearly subject to deletion. Consider this example from *Asir before World War I* (Cornwallis 1976):

ST	p.101	Said Ibn ‘Abd. Eldest son of ‘Abd el-Aziz Ibn Mishait (<i>q.v.</i>) and virtual chief of the Shahran. Age about thirty-two. Has a good fighting record and is popular. Supports the Turks and is a friend of the Sherif of Mecca, but is also said to correspond with the Idrissi [sic].
TT		Deleted

The deleted paragraph describes Said, the eldest son of Abdul-Aziz Ibn Mishait, chief of the Shahran tribes in Asir at that time and a fairly influential figure in the region. The omitted portion provides information about the man, his age, and his fighting record, which made him popular amongst his people. It speaks also about his support for the Turks and his friendship with the Sherif of Mecca at one stage.

The omission of this reference to such an important Asiri figure is worthy of attention, especially if we take into account further omissions of paragraphs describing the same powerful family in the same translation. For example:

ST	p.69	Al Mishait. The paramount family. The present head is ‘Abd el-Aziz Ibn Mishait, a man of about sixty, who keeps on good terms with the Turks and is a friend of the Sherif of Meccah. He collects his own taxes. Most of the tribal administration is carried out by his son,
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		Said Ibn Abd. The Idrissi has succeeded in detaching some of the Shahrani sections; but the influence of the ruling family is still very strong and 'Abd el-Aziz Ibn Mishait and his son are probably the most important tribal chiefs in Asir [sic].
TT		Deleted

The deleted paragraph also describes the head of the Mishait family, one of the most powerful tribal leaders in Asir, according to the traveller. The man is described as being about 60 years old and sufficiently powerful to be collecting taxes from people. In the paragraph, it is explained how most of the tribal administration is carried out by his son, Said, and how the family maintain strong ties with the Idrissi, which enhances their very strong influence as a ruling family in the area. It is noted that almost all references to this family and their members are subject to omission in the translation of this book, *Asir before World War I* (Cornwallis 1976). Omitting such historical information about a family described as one of the most important in Asir at that time results in a loss of vital socio-political data about the history of the region and its tribal order.

The Impact of Micro Shifts on the Macro-Level

As seen above, descriptions in *Asir before World War I* (Cornwallis 1976) include a number of remarkably negative social and historical narratives about locals, along with several typically prejudiced portrayals (Al-Assaf 2015). Nevertheless, as much as the ST delivers inaccurate representations of Arabian people and their culture, I believe that the Arabic version of the book, through major translation shifts, distorts these representations even more. Indeed, findings from the qualitative descriptive analysis undertaken above, as well as the numerical results clearly demonstrate this. The following graph provides a comprehensive overview of all semantic shifts detected in the Arabic translation:

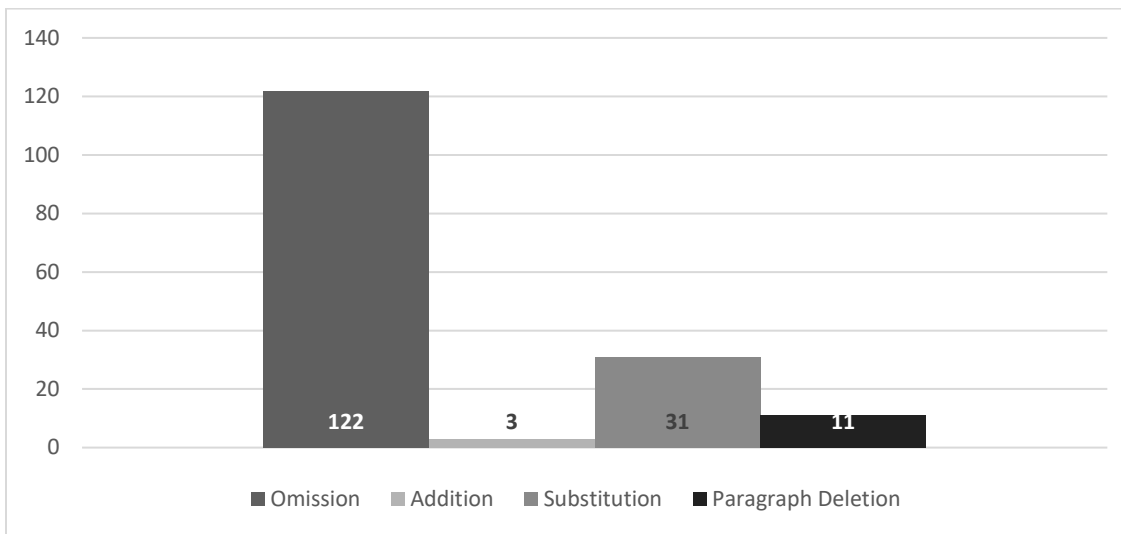


Figure 1.1. Shifts in the Translation of *Asir before World War I*.

As can be seen in the graph above, 167 cases of modification, mutation, and shifts beyond sentence level were recorded in the Arabic translation in descriptions related to Asiri people and their traditions alone. This is a significant number, especially given the rather small size of this travel book (155 pages). The graph also shows that the vast majority of shifts comprise omission, with 122 cases. This is followed by substitution, and then paragraph deletion, both with far fewer cases, while additions form the smallest group.

From a macro perspective, excessive omissions in the translation not only remove valuable historical information, but they also create ambiguity, rendering many statements incomprehensible in the translated book. In fact, the general reading experience of the translation of *Asir before World War I* (Cornwallis 1976) is greatly disrupted by omission shifts (marked by ellipses or unmarked). Such interruptions not only detract from the overall meaning, but they also severely impair readability and flow of information. This occurs at the sentence level, as well as affecting general readability of the Arabic book as a whole. Radical substitutions, within mutation shifts, also include cases where the translation completely contradicts the original text, resulting in statements that are simply untrue.

It can be established then, that the impact of micro shifts on the macro-structural level of meaning in the Arabic translation of *Asir before World War I* (Cornwallis 1976) is primarily related to extreme loss of meaning and disruption of readability. This means that the overall representation of Asiri people and their traditions in the translation is distorted and greatly reduced due to significant and radical semantic shifts.

In a broader historical context, the British traveller claims to provide a valuable pragmatic account, documenting ‘for the first time’ the ‘unexplored’ region and its people during the period before World War I (Cornwallis 1976). However, a lack of investigative research into the region, alongside the traveller’s own prejudiced and racist

outlook, might have significantly impacted his account. The result is an offensive misrepresentation of the ‘travellees’ and their culture. To address this issue, the Arabic version of this historical document provides extremely disrupted and brief meanings, along with some contradictory ones, descriptions of native Asiris’ and their culture compared to the original. Readers of the Arabic translation, particularly those from the Asir region, encounter several misleading statements in the translation. They are also missing out on a great deal of information regarding the physical appearance, personal characteristics, culture, and traditions of their ancestors in the period of history before World War I, information which they can only obtain by way of this historical document. Thus, this Arabic translation of the historical European travel account constitutes the loss of a significant portion of Asiri, and consequently Arabian, history.

2. Conclusion

The representation in the travel document, *Asir before World War I* (Cornwallis 1976) seems to be purely pragmatic and strictly in line with the colonial agenda and perspectives. In fact, the traveller seems to perceive his journey to Arabia in purely practical terms. In Cornwallis’s (1976) account, ‘travellees’ appear as mere objects of inspection for future exploitation (Said 1978). They are classified in a list of brief descriptions, chiefly related to their abilities and behaviour in times of conflict. Images in this travel account are constructed so as to almost entirely negate any affinity between the traveller and to ‘Other’ the ‘travellees’, with no attempts by the former to understand the latter. Arabians (people of the Asir region) and their traditions are depicted only through demeaning stereotypical Orientalist themes such as inferiority, barbarity, and untrustworthiness. In this particular book, a very brief prefatory note is provided by the publisher and in it we are told that the book has been compiled by Captain K. Cornwallis almost entirely from information provided by natives of Asir, written by the author in Cairo but originally gathered in Asir itself around the time of the outbreak of World War I. Strangely, Cornwallis’s account is described by his publisher as one of “major historic value to students of the Arabian Peninsula” for there was “almost no European literature on Asir of any value” and no European had previously visited the interior of Asir and furnished a report about it (Cornwallis 1976: 3).

On the other hand, a comparative descriptive examination revealed frequent patterns of modification and mutation shifts related to the representation of individuals and groups in the translated book. Instances of deletion of paragraphs describing people were also detected. Whether positive depictions of people’s features and personal qualities, or negative allusions to primitiveness and conservative backwardness, depictions highlighted in the original texts were subject to frequent omissions, both significant and radical. Furthermore, the textual and contextual evidence generated from the micro analysis showed that these three categories of micro shifts were recurrent, which means they impacted the macro level of meaning and overall representation in each TT.

In conclusion, descriptions of Asiri people in the Arabic translation of this rare historical travel book are distorted and heavily reduced due to significant and radical semantic shifts. Consequently, the overall representation of Arabians and their traditions is much weaker and less informative than that in the original account.

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