

Translating Sacred Scriptures in Sundanese: A Comparative Analysis of the Bible and the Qur'an in West Java, Indonesia

Menerjemahkan Kitab Suci ke dalam Bahasa Sunda: Analisis Komparatif atas Alkitab dan Al-Qur'an di Jawa Barat, Indonesia

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Abstract

This study critically examines the various characteristics of the Sundanese translations of the Bible and the Qur'an. It focuses on two translations of each scripture—S. Coolsma's 1891 and the LAI 1991 editions of the Bible, alongside *Miwah Tarjamahna* (2002) and MORA (2020) translations of the Qur'an. Using library research and employing Venuti's theory of foreignization-domestication, as well as Vermeer's Skopos theory, this study examines linguistic orientations in both target and source languages. The findings reveal significant distinctions in translation strategies. Bible translations into Sundanese predominantly adopt domestication strategies, emphasizing fluency and accessibility in the target language. In contrast, the Qur'anic translations preserve source language structures through foreignization, reflecting fidelity to original Arabic forms. These tendencies are shaped not only by textual and doctrinal considerations but also by historical and sociolinguistic contexts. Specifically, Bible translations are characterized by colloquial expression and dynamic shifts in Indonesian Bible translation movements, while Qur'anic translations maintain formal diction and syntactic patterns rooted in Arabic. The analysis further identifies lexical, semantic, and syntactic patterns that reveal each scripture's translation ideology. These differences illustrate how theological authority, religious tradition, and institutional policy influence linguistic choices. The study highlights the importance of understanding translation as a cultural and ideological act, particularly in multilingual and multi-religious regions such as West Java.

Keywords: *Translation, Source Language, Target Language, Scripture, Sundanese*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini secara kritis membahas karakteristik yang berbeda dalam terjemahan Alkitab dan Al-Qur'an ke dalam bahasa Sunda. Fokus kajian diarahkan pada dua versi terjemahan masing-masing kitab suci, yaitu Alkitab edisi S. Coolsma (1891) dan LAI (1991), serta Al-Qur'an edisi *Miwah Tarjamahna* (2002) dan Kementerian Agama RI (2020). Dengan menggunakan metode studi pustaka dan pendekatan teori foreignisasi-domestikasi dari Venuti serta teori Skopos dari Vermeer, penelitian ini mengkaji orientasi kebahasaan dalam bahasa sumber maupun bahasa sasaran. Hasil temuan menunjukkan adanya perbedaan signifikan dalam strategi penerjemahan kedua kitab. Terjemahan Alkitab ke dalam bahasa Sunda cenderung mengadopsi strategi domestikasi dengan menekankan kelancaran dan keterjangkauan makna dalam bahasa sasaran. Sebaliknya, terjemahan Al-Qur'an



mempertahankan struktur bahasa sumber melalui strategi foreignisasi yang merepresentasikan kesetiaan terhadap bentuk bahasa Arab asli. Kecenderungan ini tidak hanya dipengaruhi oleh aspek tekstual dan doktrinal, tetapi juga konteks historis dan sosiolinguistik. Terjemahan Alkitab ditandai oleh penggunaan bahasa sehari-hari serta dinamika pergeseran gerakan penerjemahan Alkitab di Indonesia, sedangkan terjemahan Al-Qur'an menekankan diksi formal dan pola sintaksis yang mengakar pada bahasa Arab. Analisis lebih lanjut menunjukkan pola leksikal, semantik, dan sintaktis yang mencerminkan ideologi penerjemahan masing-masing kitab. Perbedaan tersebut memperlihatkan bagaimana otoritas teologis, tradisi keagamaan, dan kebijakan institusional memengaruhi pilihan kebahasaan. Studi ini menegaskan pentingnya memahami penerjemahan sebagai tindakan kultural dan ideologis, terutama dalam konteks masyarakat multibahasa dan multiagama, seperti di Jawa Barat.

Kata Kunci: *Terjemahan; Bahasa Sumber; Bahasa Sasaran; Kitab Suci; Bahasa Sunda*

Introduction

Islam and Christianity have the largest number of adherents in Indonesia. These two religions are significant that coexist and develop in West Java.¹ As a religion of *da'wa* and mission, efforts have been made to spread and strengthen faith, one of which involves translating the Bible and the Qur'an into Sundanese. The main objective is to ensure that the teachings of their religions are readily accessible and accepted by the Sundanese people. It is essential for missionaries in West Java to use Sundanese in the translation of the Bible.²

Compared to translations of the Qur'an, the Bible is one of the the earliest Sundanese books printed in West Java. Christian missionaries used print media supplied by the Dutch colonial government to distribute the Bible through Sundanese translations.³ In the beginning of the twentieth century, Muslims began printing Sundanese translations of the Qur'an. This is shown in the writings of Sundanese ulamas, both individually and collaboratively, from 1927 to 2020. The translations indicate a significant number of Sundanese interpretations of the Qur'an, particularly those that emerged in the early twentieth century.⁴

This study focuses on the different characteristics of the translation of the Bible and the Qur'an into Sundanese in Indonesia. There are some research questions presented here. How do the characteristics of the Sundanese translations of the Bible

1 Leo Suryadinata, Evi Nurvidya Arifin, and Aris Ananta, *Indonesia's Population: Ethnicity and Religion in a Changing Political Landscape* (Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2003).

2 Koernia Atje Soejana et al., "Christianity in Javanese Culture And Society" in Jan Sihar Aritonang and Karel Steenbrink (eds.), *A History of Christianity in Indonesia* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2008), 651.

3 Ajip Rosidi, "Terjemahan Bahasa Sunda," in Henri Chambert-Loir (ed.), *Sadur : Sejarah Terjemahan di Indonesia dan Malaysia* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2009), 299.

4 Jajang A Rohmana, "Sundanese Translations of the Qur'an in West Java: Characteristics and the Limits of Translation," *Dinika* 4, no. 2 (2019): 168–169. <https://doi.org/10.22515/dinika.v4i2.1713>.

and the Qur'an compare? Why do the Bible translations tend to be in the target language, while the Qur'an translations tend to be in the source language?

The study of the Sundanese translation of the scriptures is significant not only to illustrate the influence of the source language on the target language but also to highlight the diversity of Sundanese terms in the translation.⁵ The translation generally contains the subjectivity of the translator in bridging the source language and the target language. It is an expression of Christianity and Islam embodied in the translations of the Bible and the Qur'an.

There have been some studies on the translation of the Bible and the Qur'an.⁶ However, comparative studies focusing on the characteristics of these two scriptures in Sundanese have not been widely conducted. While several studies on the translation of the Qur'an tend to focus on the complexities of translating into non-Arabic languages and related debates, few have addressed the Sundanese context.⁷ For instance, Ismail Lubis examined the official Indonesian translation of the 1990 edition by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (MORA), while Ichwan focused on the political context surrounding MORA's translation in Indonesia.⁸ In addition, Muhammad (2016), Faizin (2022), and Rodin (2023) published studies on MORA's translation as the official translation in Indonesia.⁹ The most recent publication is from Lukman (2022), who presented his dissertation at the University of Freiburg in Germany, with a focus on changes in MORA's translation.¹⁰ Rohmana conducted

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- 5 Mikihiro Moriyama, "Bahasa Sunda dalam Berdo'a," in Julian Millie and Dede Syarif (eds.), *Islam dan Regionalisme* (Bandung: PT. Dunia Pustaka Jaya, 2015), 114.
- 6 Rahmatullah Rahmatullah, "Hermeneutika Intertekstualitas Muqatil bin Sulayman," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 20, no. 2 (2019): 126-142. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2019.2002-01>; Nur Afra Afifah Amani Amatullah, Nur Laili Nabilah Nazahah Najiyah, Inayah Rohmaniyah, "Intertextuality and Late Antiquity in Michael E. Pregill's Interpretation of the Worship of the Golden Calf in Surah Thaha: 83-97," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 24, no. 1 (2023): 1-21. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.v24i1.4093>
- 7 Fahmi Gunawan, "The ideology of translators in Quranic translation: lessons learned from Indonesia," *Cogent Arts & Humanities*, 9:1 (2022): 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23311983.2022.2088438>
- 8 Ismail Lubis, *Falsifikasi Terjemahan Al-Qur'an Departemen Agama Edisi 1990* (Yogyakarta: Tiara Wacana, 2001), 8-9; Moch. Nur Ichwan, "Negara, Kitab Suci dan Politik: Terjemahan Resmi Al-Qur'an di Indonesia," in Henri Chambert-Loir (ed.), *Sadur : Sejarah Terjemahan di Indonesia Dan Malaysia* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2009), 418-419.
- 9 Muhammad Muhammad, "Dinamika Terjemah Al-Qur'an (Studi Perbandingan Terjemah Al-Qur'an Kementerian Agama RI dan Muhammad Thalib)," *Jurnal Studi Ilmu-ilmu Al-Qur'an dan Hadis* 17, no. 1 (2016): 1-24. <https://doi.org/10.14421/qh.2016.1701-01>; Hamam Faizin, *Sejarah Penerjemahan Al-Quran di Indonesia* (Ciputat: Gaung Persada, 2022); Dede Rodin, "The Sunni Ideology in 'Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahannya' by the Ministry of Religious Affairs," *Subuf* 16:2 (2023): 245-266. <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v16i2.885>.
- 10 Fadhli Lukman, *The Official Indonesian Qur'an Translation: The History and Politics of Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahnya* (Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers, 2022). <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0289>.

a study on other translations of the Qur'an, particularly those in Sundanese.¹¹ However, Rohmana has not compared the Sundanese translation of the Qur'an with the Sundanese translation of the Bible. Therefore, comparative studies between the Bible and the Qur'an in Sundanese translation remain scarce. These studies are very limited to the dynamics of Qur'anic translation in Indonesia, which is not at all related to the context of the existence of Bible translation. In fact, the historical context of Qur'anic translation cannot be separated from the development of Bible translation which indirectly influences Qur'anic translation, as seen in the translation of the Ahmadiyya Qur'an in India.

The objects of this study were the printed Sundanese translation of the Bible and the Qur'an as primary sources: translations of the Bible compiled by S. Coolsma (1891), Indonesian Bible Society or LAI (1991), *Al-Qur'an Miwah Tarjamahna dina Basa Sunda* published by the Provincial Government of West Java (2001) and *Terjemahan Al-Qur'an Bahasa Sunda* published by MORA (2020). These texts of Sundanese translations were chosen due to their status as official versions acknowledged by respective religious authorities in West Java during the Dutch colonial period and after Indonesian independence.

The study uses the method of library research with the focus on textual analysis of two official versions of Sundanese translations of the Bible and the Qur'an. It will be used some examples of these primary sources to show the different characteristics of its translations. Qualitative data categorization or coding procedures are carried out by analyzing from documentary sources. It employs a comparative linguistic analysis, examining lexical, semantic and syntactic variations in the Sundanese translations of the Bible and the Qur'an. Data validity is carried out using data source triangulation techniques based on comparisons of categorization confirmed by theory, so that validity and reliability can be maintained.

The study uses Venuti's translations theory to assess foreignization and domestication in the translation process. Venuti locates the translation theories and practices in British, American and European cultures which aim to communicate linguistic and cultural differences. It is different with this study which critically interrogate or adapt his framework for the Sundanese context. This study employed translation theory to analyze the interplay between the source and target languages, focusing on the concepts of foreignization and domestication (see table 1).¹²

11 Jajang A Rohmana, "Metrical Verse as a Rule of Qur'anic Translation: Some Reflections on R.A.A. Wiranatakoesoema's Soerat Al-Baqarah (1888-1965)," *Al-Jami'ah Journal of Islamic Studies* 53, no. 2 (2015): 439-467. <https://doi.org/10.14421/ajis.2015.532.439-467>.

12 Lawrence Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation* (London: Routledge, 1995), 5-20.

Table 1. Summarizing key comparative features

No	Primary sources	Semantic Units	Sentence structure	Lexical
1.	S. Coolsma's Sundanese translation	Domestication	Domestication	Domestication
	LAI 1991's Sundanese translation	Domestication	Domestication	Domestication
2.	<i>Miwah Tarjamahna</i>	Foreignization	Foreignization	Foreignization
	MORA's translation	Foreignization	Foreignization	Foreignization

The table shows that the problem of Sundanese translation, both in the Bible and the Qur'an, will always be related to the problems of foreignization and domestication between the source and target languages. Bible translations that tend to the target language use the domestication approach. This is different from the Sundanese translation of the Qur'an which tends to use a foreignization approach.

However, Hans J. Vermeer's theory of Skopos is also used. This theory asserts that translation activity does not only transfer language, from the source language to the target language, or foreignization and domestication, as Venuti states. Translation also transfers the culture of the source language to the target language in order to achieve the translator's goal as a subject who has full power in presenting the translated work.¹³

This study contributes to the expansion of Qur'anic studies in Indonesia and to elaborate the diverse expressions of Sundanese in translation of the two scriptures as well. It is a development of the scripture studies in an effort to build good Muslim-Christian relations in Southeast Asia. The novelty of this study is that it does not simply compare, but analyzes the complexities of both translations. It is a unique contribution to the development of Qur'anic translation studies in Indonesia is limited to the production of a variety of Qur'anic translations in the world and the issue of interlinear translation, as discussed by the Global Qur'an (GloQur) project in Germany and Macrocosmos Text in Israel. It is important to see Qur'anic translation in the context of its relationship with Bible translation since the Dutch colonial era. Whereas Sundanese Bible translation was linked to Christian missionary activity supported by the Dutch government in the nineteenth century, Qur'anic translation developed in line with the Islamization of West Java in the early twentieth century.

13 Hans J. Vermeer, "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action," in Lewrance Venuti (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader*, trans. Andrew Chestermen (London: Routledge, 2000), 1989.

Sundanese Translation of the Bible

The translation of the Bible in Indonesia cannot be separated from the trade and colonization by European powers, particularly the Dutch, during the sixteenth century. The translation of Christian scriptures began from the arrival of the colonists. It is reported that 35 years after the first Dutch ship sailed and docked in Indonesia, the Gospel of Matthew was translated into Malay by Albert Cornelisz Ruyl in 1629. This translation was subsequently printed by Jan Palenstein with financial support from the East India Trade Union. Since that time, the Bible has been translated into hundreds of languages across the Malay-Indonesian Archipelago. As of 1998, among the 715 languages spoken in Indonesia, there were 142 complete translations of the Bible (16 languages), translations of the New Testament (40), or translations of individual books (86). The translation of the Bible into Sundanese is one of the 16 complete translations.¹⁴

Therefore, compared to translations of the Qur'an, the Sundanese Bible was one of the earliest Sundanese books printed in West Java. Christian missionaries used print media to expand the spread of the Bible through Sundanese. This Bible translation also cannot be separated from the Sundanese people who converted to Christianity. The conversion of some Sundanese to Christianity resulted from the efforts of Christian missionaries to promote their religion, including the translation of the Bible into Sundanese.¹⁵ In addition to socioeconomic motivations, conversion heavily relied on the ability of missionaries to adapt Christian practices to local cultures and identities, which facilitated the development of a Sundanese Christian identity.¹⁶

The history of Bible translation in Indonesia, including Sundanese translation, has been described by de Vries (2009) as divided into several periods, namely 1800s-1950s (pioneering period) and 1950s-present (development period) (see table 2).

14 Lourens de Vries, "Ikhtisar Sejarah Penerjemahan Alkitab di Indonesia," in Henri Chambert-Loir (ed.), *Sadur: Sejarah Terjemahan di Indonesia dan Malaysia* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan Populer Gramedia, 2009), 459.

15 Th. van den End, *Sumber-Sumber Zending tentang Sejarah Gereja di Jawa Barat, 1858-1963* (Jakarta: Gunung Mulia, 2006), 222.

16 Chaider S Bamualim, "Negotiating Islamisation and Resistance: A Study of Religions, Politics and Social Change in West Java from the Early 20th Century to the Present" (Leiden: Leiden University, 2015), 19, 49.

Table 2. Historical Periodization of Sundanese Bible Translation¹⁷

Period	Translation Forms
1800s-1950s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Sundanese Bible (translation from Dutch) by J. Esser was first printed in 1854 using Latin script. – The Dutch mission organization NZV (Nederlandsche Zendingsvereniging) sent G.J. (Gerhardus Jan) Grashuis (1835-1920), Albers and Linden to the Dutch East Indies in 1863. Grashuis successfully translated the Bible into Sundanese, then returned to the Netherlands in 1865. – In 1886, the Netherlands Missionary Union commissioned G.J. Grashuis to translate the Gospel of Luke into Sundanese until it was published by the British and Foreign Bible Society. – Albers and Geerdink, zending missionaries from the Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap (NBG) translated parts of the Bible. – In 1872, the NZV sent Sierk Coolsma (1840-1926), a missionary Sundanese linguist, to translate the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke. The result was published by the Netherlands Bible Society in Amsterdam in 1891. – NBG commissioned Coolsma again to translate the entire Bible until it was finally published in 1877, 1882 and 1891. The Gospel of Johannes was published in 1895, the Gospel of Mark in 1907 and the Gospel of Matthew in 1928. – In 1929, a revised edition of Coolsma's translation was published by the NBG and NZV. – Almost none of the Dutch missionaries translated the Bible after S. Coolsma.
1950s-present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Indonesian Bible Institute (LAI) was established on February 9, 1954. – In 1991, LAI published a Sundanese translation of the Bible, Kitab Suci Nganggo Basa Sunda Sadidinten. – Despite the launch on February 9, 2023 of the New Indonesian Translation of the Bible 2nd Edition, there has been no effort to update the Sundanese translation of the Bible.

¹⁷ Th. van den End, *Sumber-Sumber Zending tentang Sejarah Gereja di Jawa Barat, 1858-1963* (Jakarta: Gunung Mulia, 2006); Michael Laffan, *Sejarah Islam di Nusantara*, trans. Indi Aunullah and Rini Nurul Badariah (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Bentang, 2015), 129; Hendri F Isnaeni, "Penerjemahan Alkitab Ke Bahasa Sunda," last modified 2020, <https://www.nusantarainstitute.com/penerjemahan-alkitab-ke-bahasa-sunda/>; Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, "Ibadah Syukur 69 Tahun LAI & Peluncuran Alkitab Terjemahan Baru Edisi 2 (Tb2)," last modified 2023, accessed February 21, 2023, https://www.youtube.com/live/IA5TmTt_N2g.

The above condition shows that the Sundanese translation of the Bible has been done in long period especially in the second period (1811-1950) after VOC governed in the first period. It is also related to the existence of the Bible as one of the first Sundanese language books printed in colonial West Java and continued into the post-independence era.

Sundanese Translation of the Qur'an

The translation of the Qur'an has taken a considerable amount of time to be carried out into various local languages (Indonesian mother tongues) across different ethnic groups in Indonesia.¹⁸ From the beginning, the translation of Islamic teachings into Sundanese became an integral part of the vernacularization of these teachings. This has encouraged the absorption of Arabic into Sundanese language, which is evident in the religious and cultural life of the Sundanese people. This influence can also be seen from the significant number of Arabic words incorporated into Sundanese spoken and written that use old Sundanese and *pegon* script (Sundanese in Arab script), especially in Islamic boarding schools or *pesantren*.¹⁹

Since the end of the sixteenth century, with the establishment of Islamic rule in Cirebon and Banten, the vernacularization of Islamic teachings into Sundanese began to emerge. This is evidenced in the manuscript of *Carita Parahiyangan* (Parahiyangan Story) and *Sri Ajnyana*, which serves as one of the oldest records of the entry of Arabic vocabulary into Sundanese.²⁰

In later times, as Islam became increasingly pervasive in the hearts and all aspects of Sundanese life, Arabic vocabulary entered the Sundanese lexicon to such an extent that it ceased to be perceived as borrowed. The Sundanese translations were considered insufficient to fully capture the meanings of the Qur'an which is viewed as inadequate for translation, as it cannot be fully rendered into any other language.²¹

It is undeniable that efforts to translate the Arabic Qur'an were undertaken in the Sundanese environment, particularly in Javanese, following the increasing establishment of Islamic rule in Cirebon and Banten in 1579. Numerous manuscripts

18 Hartmut Bozbin, "Translations of the Qur'an," in Jane Dammen McAuliffe ed.), *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'an*, vol. 3 (Leiden-Boston-Koln: Brill, 2001), 340; Moch Nur Ichwan, "Differing Responses to an Ahmadi Translation and Exegesis: The Holy Qur'an in Egypt and Indonesia," *Archipel* 62 (2001). https://www.persee.fr/doc/arch_0044-8613_2001_num_62_1_3668.

19 Jajang A Rohmana, "Qur'an Translation and Reformist *da'wa*: Ideology, Literacy, and Modernity in West Java," *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 26:2 (2024), 37.

20 Ajip Rosidi, *Ensiklopedi Sunda, Alam, Manusia Dan Budaya* (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 2000), 620; J Noorduyn, *Tiga Pesona Sunda Kuna*, ed. A Teeuw (Jakarta: Pustaka Jaya, 2009), 168.

21 Benjamin G Zimmer, "Al-'Arabiyyah and Basa Sunda: Ideologies of Translation and Interpretation among the Muslims of West Java," *Studia Islamika* 7, no. 3 (2000): 31-65. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15408/sdi.v7i3.702>.

of the Qur'anic *mushaf* from the eighteenth century serve as strong evidence of these early translation attempts.²² These manuscripts were generally written on various media, such as *durwang* or *saéh* bark, European paper, and others. The Sundanese translation of the Qur'an is considered to have developed later, particularly in the pesantren of Priangan, coinciding with the waning power of Mataram in Java.²³

In this section, we identify the translation of Sundanese into several important periods. Rohmana has mapped it into three periods, namely the 1600s-1900s, 1900s-1930s, and 1930s until now.²⁴ They grow continuously until now. The following table explains these three periods:

Table 3. Historical Periodization of Sundanese Qur'an Translation and Its Characteristics

Period	Translation Forms
1600s-1900s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The absorption of Arabic in Sundanese script manuscript, as in the <i>Carita Parahiyangan</i> and <i>Sri Ajnyana</i> manuscripts from the sixteenth century. – The manuscript of the old Qur'anic <i>mushaf</i>. – Three collections of the Qur'anic translation at the National Library of Jakarta (A 51; A 54; d. 277). – One collection of of the Qur'an translation at Banten Great mosque. – 13 manuscripts of the Qur'an and 6 manuscripts of Qur'an translation or <i>tafsir</i>. – Manuscript of the Qur'an at Museum Cangkuang, Garut.
1900s-1930s	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Old Sundanese translation of the Qur'an in <i>Pegon</i> and Roman scripts. – Polemic of the translation of the Qur'an. – From handwriting manuscript to lithograph. – Haji Hasan Mustapa's <i>Quranul Adhimi</i>. – Works of the Sundanese interlinear translation of the Qur'an by Ahmad Sanusi in his <i>Raudat al-'Irfan</i>. – R.H. Moehamad Moesa translated the Qur'an from Dutch to Sundanese.

22 Ervan Nurtawab, "Qur'anic Readings and Verse Divisions in 18th Century Banten Qur'ans A.51, W.277 and Ras Arabic 4," *Indonesia and the Malay World* 51:150 (2023): 119-142, DOI: 10.1080/13639811.2023.2213588

23 Taufiq Hanafi, "Contemporary Sundanese Qur'an; A departure or divine proximity?," *Wacana* 26:2 (2025), 218. DOI: 10.17510/wacana.v26i2.1758.

24 Rohmana, "Sundanese Translations of the Qur'an in West Java," 163-200.

1930s – present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The peak of the development of Sundanese translation of the Qur'an after the fatwas of Egyptian ulamas in the 1940s and the issue of Islamic reform in West Java. – Print publication of Sundanese translations of the Qur'an in Roman script. – Qur'an translations in Sundanese language standard (language levels) – Various translator of the Qur'an: individuals, teams, official and private. – Various translation techniques, from translations in the form of <i>dangding</i> and <i>pupujian</i> or <i>nadoman</i> poetry, the use of parentheses, footnotes, dictionary/literal techniques to the use of Roman transliteration. – The dominance of <i>tafsiriyya</i> translation over <i>harfiyya</i>, communicative translation over semantics translation. – Some translations also appear to include other translations in Indonesian as their source translations. – More and more Sundanese <i>tafsir</i> automatically include translations as well. – It is not only the whole translation of the surah, but also the translation of one <i>juz'</i> or one particular surah.
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As the table indicates, the publication of Sundanese translations from the pre-independence era to the present shows a fairly high level of diversity in terms of script (*pegon* and Roman), various translation sources, forms (literal or *harfiyya* and *tafsiriyya*, semantic and communicative), methods (poetry, prose, dictionary), translators' background (individuals, teams, institutions), translations' scope (selected surahs, complete translations, translations in *tafsir*) and dialects of translated languages. The diversity of translations is related to the translators' backgrounds (education, family, regional origin, and social environment) resulting in various translation works. However, from the many translated publications, only certain translations are then considered high quality and often used as references, both by other Sundanese translations and Sundanese *tafsir*.

Two Translations of the Bible and the Qur'an

This study describes two translations of the scriptures in Sundanese. Two translations of the Bible and two translations of the Qur'an. The following sections discuss all four translations in terms of the internal aspects of the text.

Kitab Soetji by S. Coolsma (1891)

This translation is written in Dutch entitled *De Heilige Schrift Alde Boeken*

Des Ouden en Nieuwen Testaments in het Soendaneesch. It consists of two parts: *Perdjangdjian Larwas hartosna Sadajana Kitab anoe kasebat Toret, Djaboer sareng Para Nabi* (pages 1-1012) and *Perdjangdjian Anjar hartosna Sadajana Kitab anoe Kasebat Indjil Goesti Oerang Jesoes Kristoes* (pages 1015-1351). The Book *Perdjangdjian Larwas* consists of 39 chapters. Meanwhile, the *Perdjangdjian Anjar* consists of 27 chapters.²⁵

This Bible was written in the old Sundanese language in Roman script. The language tends to be smooth and uses old vocabulary or *buhun* which is now rarely used by Sundanese people. The writing is made in two columns. Each book is divided into chapters. *Kitab Moesa* (the Book of Moses), for instance, consisted of 50 chapters. Each chapter consists of a number of verses. The paragraph number is placed to the left of the text column of the verse with a smaller number. Although Coolsma's *Kitab Soetji* is not the first Bible in Sundanese, it is considered one of the oldest Bibles among the others. Coolsma most likely used a Dutch translation of the Bible as a reference before it was later translated into Sundanese.

Kitab Suci Nganggo Basa Sunda Sadidinten by LAI (1991)

This Sundanese Bible was compiled by the Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia (LAI, *Indonesian Bible Society*), the official institution established to compile and print various Bible translations in Indonesia. LAI is located in Jakarta. There is no mention of who harmonized the Sundanese language in the 1991 edition of the LAI Bible. *Kitab Suci Nganggo Basa Sunda Sadidinten* was compiled in 1991. The original title is *Kitab Suci nyaeta Kitab Perjangjian Larwas sareng Perjangjian Anyar Nganggo Basa Sunda Sadidinten* (The Holy Book is the Book of Old Testament and the New Testament uses daily Sundanese).

The term “daily Sundanese” most likely indicates that this version of the Sundanese translation is the result of aligning Coolsma's version of Sundanese with the contemporary daily Sundanese language commonly used by the Sundanese today.

Al-Qur'an Miwah Tarjamahna dina Basa Sunda by the Provincial Government of West Java (2001)

This is a Sundanese translation of the Qur'an compiled by a team of translators formed by the government with a much larger number of personnel. It was published by the Provincial Government of West Java in 2000.²⁶ Around 2001, the Tilawatil Qur'an Development Institute (*Lembaga Pengembangan Tilawatil Qur'an, LPTQ*)

25 S. Coolsma, *Kitab Soetji Hartosna Sadajana Kitab Anoe Kasebat Perdjangdjian Larwas Sareng Perdjangdjian Anjar* (Amsterdam: Uitgegeven door het Nederlandsch Bijbelgenootschap, 1891), vii–viii.

26 LPTQ Propinsi Jawa Barat and Handam Citamatra Studio, *Al-Qur'an Miwah Tarjamahna dina Basa Sunda* (Bandung: Kerjasama Pemprov Jabar, MUI, LPTQ, Kanwil Depag, 2002).

of West Java Province in collaboration with Handam Citamatra Studio began publishing *Al-Qur'an Miwah Tarjamahna*. This is the second official translation of the Qur'an produced by the West Java Provincial Government after the *Tarjamah Al-Qur'an Basa Sunda* as a result of the five years project (Pembangunan Lima Tahun, PELITA) 1974-1979.

This work is also based on the Sundawi Mushaf Qur'an Publishing Project 1995-2000 which highlights the beauty of illuminations derived from cultural richness in Sundanese region.²⁷ The collaboration made between these two works is then incarnated in this luxurious-impressed translation work. This work is recognized as evidence of the closeness of Sundanese people with the Qur'an. The personnel who compiled this work were determined under the direction of the Governor of West Java at that time, Danny Setiawan. While the expert forum consists of Sundanese commentator of the Qur'an (*mufassir*) and linguists. The position of the *Qur'an Miwah Tarjamahna* is considered to be the last official Sundanese translation compiled by a team of translators. Many of these translations still use old Sundanese or *buhun*.

Terjemahan Al-Qur'an Bahasa Sunda by MORA (2020)

This is Sundanese translation of the Qur'an which called *Terjemahan Lektur* published by the Research and Development and Training Agency of MORA in 2018-2019. This project was carried out by academics from the Faculty of Ushuluddin, UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and Padjadjaran University (Unpad). There are two categories of expert teams in the translation project, namely the Qur'an expert team and Sundanese linguists. The involvement of these two categories of expert teams is based on the complexity of translation of the Qur'an into Sundanese. The preparation of the Sundanese translation was then taken through a series of activities, from translation team meetings to validation through public testing and publishing. This latest Sundanese translation is part of a series projects to translate the Qur'an into regional languages in Indonesia.²⁸

Comparison of Sundanese Translations of Bible and Qur'an

As already explained, this section will explain the comparison of Sundanese translations of the Bible and the Qur'an in terms of the relationship between the

27 Tim Pelaksana Penulisan Al-Qur'an Mushaf Sundawi, *Al-Qur'an Al-Karim Mushaf Sundawi* (Bandung, 1997), 3.

28 Jajang A Rohmana, "Negosiasi, Ideologi, dan Batas Kesarjanaan: Pengalaman Penerjemah dalam Proyek Terjemahan Al-Qur'an Bahasa Sunda," *Subuf* 12, no. 1 (2019): 21-55. <https://doi.org/10.22548/shf.v12i1.407>.

source and target languages. There is an assumption that the translation of the Bible, because it was not written in the original language (Hebrew) but from the Greek translation and then into an European language. This Bible translation is structurally tends to be oriented towards the target language, while translations of the Qur'an sourced from Arabic tend to refer to the source language. We uses a translation of the Bible compiled by S. Coolsma (1891), LAI (1991), *Al-Qur'an Miwah Tarjamahna* published by the Provincial Government of West Java (2001) and *Terjemahan Al-Qur'an Bahasa Sunda* published by MORA (2020).

Target Language Orientation in the Bible Translation

In the history of Bible translation, history began in the third century when the Jews began translating the Hebrew Old Testament into Greek. This translation was intended for Greek-speaking Jews. Since then, Greek translations of the Bible have continued to emerge as Christianity spread to various regions of the world. Generally, Bible translations were done from Greek into other languages in Europe, such as Roman, Dutch, English, German, and many others.

In the first two decades of the third period of Bible translation in Indonesia (1950-present) become a new type of Bible translation emerged called colloquial version or Bible translation which is communicative with translation and explaining at the same time.²⁹ However, if we see it from the style of translation, the Sundanese translation of the Bible has not given rise to a communicative translation style. These Bible translations (Coolsma and LAI) tend to be influenced by Greek, English, Dutch, and Indonesian structures. However, the translation tends not to be literal, but rather refers to the message to be conveyed. This is because the Sundanese translation of the Bible does not refer to the first language of the Bible, Hebrew, but to the translation of the Bible into these non-Hebrew languages.

This is partly related to the so-called Skopos, in which the social and cultural functions referred to or expected from a text in the target congregation, play a decisive role in the patterns of choice that translators take.³⁰ The Sundanese translation of the Bible emphasizes the skopos. This, for instance, is seen in the limitations of the Coolsma and LAI's translations to translate the source language into Greek then into Dutch/English/Indonesian and then into Sundanese. These translations was also carried out from Greek to Sundanese.

This is based on the impossibility of absolute synonymous between one language and another, including Greek to Sundanese. The universal fact of language

29 Vries, "Ikhtisar Sejarah Penerjemahan Alkitab di Indonesia," 459, 479-480.

30 Hans J. Vermeer, "Skopos and Commission in Translational Action," 1992.

about the absence of absolute synonyms between two words in one language led to the belief that inequality in the translation of different languages is a linguistic phenomenon that it can be predicted. It is often found that no word is exactly the same in one language and much less with words in another language. The absence of a truly equal language at the lexical, textual, syntactic, grammatical or pragmatic level is a common fact and a problem that translators always deal with.³¹

Here are some examples of limitations of Greek, English, Indonesian, and Sundanese Bible translations that tend to be freer and unlimited by only its source language than the Qur'an. An example of a Sundanese Bible translation in Genesis verse 1 shows significant differences between one Sundanese translation and another in Sundanese as an indicator of free translation of the source language:

English Bible	Genesis 1:1 In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. Genesis 1:2 And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. ³²
LAI's Indonesian Translation	"1. Pada mulanya Allah menciptakan langit dan bumi. 2. Bumi belum berbentuk dan kosong; gelap gulita menutupi samudera raya, dan Roh Allah melayang-layang di atas permukaan air". ³³
S. Coolsma's Sundanese translation	1. Dina mimiti Allah ngajadikeun langit djeung boemi. 2. Demi Boemi teja asalna soewoeng sarta kosong, djeung poek di loehoereun sagara, sarta Roh Allah ngalajang di loehoereun tjai teja. ³⁴
LAI 1991's Sundanese translation	1. Nalika Allah nyiptakeun jagat raya, 2. harita bumi teh teu puguh wangunna, kaayaanana kacida matak geueumeunana. Sagara motah ngaliputan satangkaraking jagat. Alam poek ngejumleng. Pangarwasa Allah murba saluhureun sagara. ³⁵

The translation shows the basic difference between Sundanese translations of the Bible with English and Indonesian. The Sundanese translation of LAI 1991, for instance, uses vocabulary that does not exist in other languages, such as the word *nalika Allah nyiptakeun jagat raya* (when God creates the universe). The English

31 Husein Abdul-Raof, *Qur'an Translation, Discourse, Texture and Exegesis* (London and New York: Routledge, 2001), 9.

32 *The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments (King James Version)* (Washington: University Place, n.d.), 9.

33 Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, *Alkitab: Perjanjian Lama dan Perjanjian Baru dalam Terjemahan Baru* (Jakarta: Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, 2000), 1.

34 S. Coolsma, *Kitab Soetji*, 1.

35 Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, *Kitab Suci Nganggo Basa Sunda Sadidinten* (Jakarta: Lembaga Alkitab Indonesia, 1991), 2.

translation of the Bible (King James), the Indonesian translation of LAI and the Coolsma's Sundanese translation mention the words "heaven and the earth," not the universe. It is also with the sentence "Bumi belum berbentuk dan kosong; gelap gulita menutupi samudera raya" (*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep of ocean*) from the Indonesian edition of LAI and the English King James similarly translated by Coolsma into *Demi boemi teja asalna soewoeng sarta kosong, djeung poek di loehoereun sagara*. However, these translations are very different from the sentence structure of LAI 1991's translation: *harita bumi, teu puguh wangunna, kaayaanana kacida matak geueumanana* (*And the earth was without form. It is frighten and unearthy*).

This shows that the Sundanese translation of LAI 1991 choose words that are more focused on the target language, rather than following the source language as the English, Indonesian, and Sundanese translations of Coolsma. One of the reasons why the LAI 1991 is different from Coolsma's translation is because it is influenced not only by the difference in translation sources but also by the style of translation that uses daily language style (*basa sadidinten*).³⁶ The LAI 1991 may have used the Greek Bible and compared it with other languages, such as Dutch, English, and Indonesian. In addition, the use of daily Sundanese style makes the structure of the language not obedient to the source language, but in line with the tendency of the target language to be more communicative. Therefore, the Sundanese translation of LAI 1991 looks different from Coolsma's translation. The later translation tends to be the same as the English and Indonesian translations that adhere to the source language.

In addition, this is also related to the tradition of Bible translation in the Christian in Indonesia which recognizes the existence of formal equivalent translation methods and dynamic or functional equivalents. Until the late 1960s, most Bible translations were based on the Formal Equivalent translation method, which preserved the original forms of the languages as much as possible. It is likely that Coolsma's translation refers to this formal equivalent method. However, this changed after the introduction of a new translation method by Eugene A. Nida in the form of Dynamic Matching (later known as Functional Equivalent). This dynamic matching method emphasizes shifting meaning and function away from the original languages of scripture rather than maintaining their original form. This new method of Bible translation was applied to both Malay and Indonesian translations of the Bible.³⁷ Most likely the translation of the LAI 1991 refers to the method of

36 Sonny Hermawan, "Interview by Roni Nugraha" (Bandung: 5 February, 2023).

37 Daud Soesilo, "Terjemahan Alkitab ke dalam Bahasa Melayu dan Indonesia: Masa Lalu dan Kini," in Henri Chambert-Loir (ed.), *Sadur: Sejarah Terjemahan di Indonesia dan Malaysia* (Jakarta: Kepustakaan

dynamic translation or functional equivalents, so the translation refers to the transfer of meaning from on preserving the original language forms of the Bible.

Source Language Orientation in the Qur'an Translation

Unlike the Sundanese translation of the Bible, the Sundanese translation of the Qur'an shows its tendency towards the source language rather than the target language. Although it is also inseparable from language limitations between the source language and the target language. Here are some examples of the limits of Sundanese translation that can be easily obtained, especially seen in lexical changes, changes in word types and semantic units and changes in sentence structure:

Types of words and semantic units

The trend in the source language is seen in the translator's attempts to follow the structure of the Qur'anic Arabic syllable and semantic units. For example, it can be seen in the translation of the verse in QS. Al-Rum/30:42 in *the Qur'an Miwabah Tarjamahna* and MORA's translation:

“... Most of them are people who consider another as an ally (of God) or polytheists.” (QS. Al-Rum/30:42). ³⁸	
<i>Miwabah Tarjamahna</i>	... <i>kapan nyata lolobana maranehna teh musrik.</i> ³⁹
MORA's translation	... <i>Kalolobaan maranehna téh nya éta jalma-jalma musrik.</i> ⁴⁰
<i>Alkitabul Mubin</i>	... <i>apan kalolobaanana maranehna teh jelema-jelema nu malalusyrik.</i> ⁴¹

At the end of the Arabic verse, the source language uses a plural noun (*musbrikīn*, polytheists). However, both Sundanese translations use singular nouns (*musyrik*, polytheist). This shows that there are differences in the selection of different word structures between the source language and the target language that the translator may not be aware of. Translators prefer the word *musyrik* to follow the tendency of the target language that does not recognize the term *musyrik*.

Populer Gramedia, 2009), 498.

38 *Al-Qur'an Dan Terjemahnya* (Jakarta: Departemen Agama RI, 1971), 647.

39 LPTQ Propinsi Jawa Barat and Handam Citamatra Studio, *Al-Qur'an Miwabah Tarjamahna*, 644.

40 *Terjemahan Al-Qur'an Babasa Sunda* (Jakarta: Pusat Penelitian dan Pengembangan Lektur, Khazanah Keagamaan dan Manajemen Organisasi Badan Litbang dan Diklat Kementerian Agama, 2020), 592.

41 K H Muhammad Romli, “Al-Kitabul Mubin Tafsir Basa Sunda Jilid 2” (Bandung: PT. Al-Ma'arif, 1991), 901.

However, the MORA's translation recognizes the use of plural words in the source language, so it uses the word *jalma-jalma musrik* (people who polytheists), not individual *musrik*. This indicates a translator awareness of the source language on the translation. Interestingly, there are even translations that attempt to translate it into the target language from *mushrikīn* to "*malusyrik*" (with *al* inserts), as seen in *Alkitabul al-Mubin*, another Sundanese translation of the Qur'an by M. Romli. This reinforces the tendency of the orientation of choosing formal equivalents in Sundanese translations of the Qur'an that follow the form of the source language.

Sentence Structure

The tendency in the source language is also seen in the attempts of translators to follow the grammatical structure (word rules) of the source language and tend to ignore the grammatical structure of the target language in Sundanese. Sundanese translations are also often overly saturated with formal translations resulting from the complexity of rarely used words. The translation is characterized by being too adherent to the syntax of the source language and oriented towards the source language. Most of these translations use the same source text rules by breaking down word elements that should be placed in front, so that the translation arrangement can be more accurately understood by users of the target language. Here is an example of how Sundanese translators are very obedient to the source language when translation *min nutfah khalaqah* (QS. Abasa/80:19).

"From a drop of semen, God created it..." ⁴²	
<i>Miwah Tarjamahna</i>	<i>Tina mani sakeclak. Mantenna ngayugakeun...</i> ⁴³
MORA's translation	<i>Mantenna nyiptakeunana tina sakeclak cai mani, terus nangtukeun (takdir)na.</i> ⁴⁴

The Sundanese translation above appears to follow the structure of the source language. Translators use uncommon Sundanese structures by putting the word *tina nutfah* (from a drop of semen) at the beginning of sentences, although the sentence structure may still be understandable to the reader.

42 *Al-Qur'an dan Terjemahnya*, 1025.

43 LPTQ Propinsi Jawa Barat and Handam Citamatra Studio, *Al-Qur'an Miwah Tarjamahna*, 1036.

44 *Terjemahan Al-Qur'an Bahasa Sunda*, 1024.

Lexical

The orientations of the source language are also seen in aspects of the internal system of the language, such as the presence of plural lexical items in the source language (*aṣwāf*, *awbār*, *ash'ār*) that are not loaded into the the same form in the lexical of the target language. See the translation QS. Al-Nahl/16:80:

“... and (He also) made of sheep’s hair, camel’s hair, and goat’s hair, household utensils...”(QS. Al-Nahl/16:80). ⁴⁵	
<i>Miwah Tarjamahna</i>	... sarta papaes imah jeung parabot (nu dijieun) tina bulu-bulu domba, onta, jeung embe.... ⁴⁶
MORA’s translation	(Mantenna oge ngajantenkeun) tina bulu-bulu domba, onta, jeung embe parabot oge papaes nepika waktu (anu tangtu). ⁴⁷

In the source language, the words used (*aṣwāf*, *awbār*, *ash'ār*) are all plural. In the target language system of Sundanese, translators should use singular noun forms (*bulu domba*, *bulu onta*, *bulu embé*). However, the *Miwah Tarjamahna* translation has an awareness of the use of the plural word, *bulu-bulu domba, onta, jeung embé*, although the translation has become somewhat less common due to the word “bulu” in Sundanese is definitely plural and there is almost never the word “bulu-bulu” for animals because all their bodies are covered with “bulu”. In addition, the orientation of the source language in Sundanese translations of the Qur’an is also seen in a number of Arabic vocabulary words that are believed to be special words with language style (*uslub*) and sentence structure (*tartib*) which cannot be fully represented by Sundanese.

The Sundanese translation of the Qur’an follows the peculiarities of the Arabic character of the Qur’an which has high standards cannot be ignored and even must be prioritized, because of its position as the word of God. Theologically, it is believed that there is a certain purpose why God chose Arabic which are similar and have such close meanings. Here the position of Qur’anic Arabic is considered higher than Sundanese. Zimmer calls it a diglossia between Qur’anic Arabic and Sundanese. Therefore, the Sundanese language must conform to the distinctive character of the Arabic Qur’an.⁴⁸ This is in contrast to Bible translations which tend to be more free and unfettered by the source language than the Qur’an. From the Sundanese

45 *Al-Qur’an dan Terjemahnya*, 414.

46 LPTQ Propinsi Jawa Barat and Handam Citamatra Studio, *Al-Qur’an Miwah Tarjamahna*, 418.

47 *Terjemahan Al-Qur’an Bahasa Sunda*, 441.

48 Zimmer, “Al-‘Arabiyyah and Basa Sunda,” 38–39.

translation of the Bible, it appears that the translation of the Bible is more diverse, freer and unfettered by the source language.

This shows that the problem of Sundanese translation, both in the Bible and the Qur'an, cannot be separated from the problem of tug-of-war between the source and target languages, between foreignization and domestication.⁴⁹ Bible translations that tend to the target language use the domestication approach. This is different from the Sundanese translation of the Qur'an which tends to use a foreignization approach.

The influence of Arabic, which is considered the language of scripture, has a greater influence on the issue of foreignization of the Sundanese translation of the Qur'an, compared to the influence of Hebrew and Greek in translation Bible into the lives of Sundanese Muslims. Until now, Sundanese people are more influenced by the Arab Islamic tradition that is increasingly strengthened. This is not widely seen in Hebrew and Greek in the culture of Sundanese Christians in West Java.

Conclusion

The above explanation shows that the comparison of two Bible and Qur'an translations shows some characteristics of translation that are not much different in Sundanese language usage. The most prominent characteristic in these translations is seen in the use of Sundanese language levels, the confirmation words, and idiomatic expressions. However, there are differences in translation orientation. Sundanese translations of the Bible tend to be in target languages. This is different from translations of the Qur'an that tend to be in the source language. Bible translations use the approach of domestication of the word structure of the source language (Greek) directed on the word structure of the target language (Sundanese). This is different from the translation of the Qur'an, which tends to use a foreignization approach, because the translation is directed at the Arabic structure of the Qur'an. The reason why these scripture translations are different is because they are influenced by the translation sources and the style of translation that uses colloquial language, and are also related to the shift from formal equivalent translation to dynamic or functional.

However, there are limitations in this study. It is limited only to textual analysis of the Bible and the Qur'an in Sundanese without empirical validation. It is necessary to conduct further research into the practice of translating these two scriptures in daily Sundanese worship. It also needs to explore the impact of translation choices on reader comprehension or conduct comparisons with translations in other languages

49 Venuti, *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation*, 5–20.

in Indonesia and Southeast Asia.

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Author Contributions

All listed authors contributed to this study. R.N. drafted the original manuscript, conducted the formal analysis, compiled the resources, conceptualized the study, and managed the project administration. I.P. was responsible for the methodology and validation. J.A.R. reviewed and edited the manuscript and supervised the project.

Data Availability Statement

All data underlying the results are available as part of the article and no additional source data are required.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest related to this research

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