The Translation of the Particle mā in the Holy Qur'an: A Comparative Study of Three Versions

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Abstract

This study is concerned with the particle mā in the holy Qur'an and how it is translated into English. The study might seem to be easy to deal with when viewed in terms of the face value of mā i.e. being a small word of just two letters, while it is much more complex than that. This is first because of its categorization i.e. being a two-category word: a particle and a noun; second, because each of its categories is of several different meanings. This of course aggravates the process of its translation, but at the same time it creates suspense in the reader to find out how it is translated. This is exactly the objective of this work that aims at finding out how mā is translated in the light of its complexities. The methodology adopted to attain this objective includes selecting three approved versions of translation of the holy Qur'an then comparing them in terms of how mā is translated. It has been detected through examining these three versions that mā is translated differently depending on its category and its meaning in the ayah. These complexities with which mā is characterized have in turned impacted its occurrence in the Qur'an i.e. making it occurred or repeated in almost every chapter of it. This has led to detect as well the significance of mā in the Qur'anic usage despite its simple form.

Keywords: particle categorization complexities translation verse.

ترجمة الحرف ما في القرآن الكريم : دراسة مقارنة لثلاث ترجمات

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المستخلص

تتناول هذه الدراسة أساساً ترجمة الحرف (ما) في القران الكريم. قد يبدو الامر سهلاً اذا ما نظرنا إليه من حيث بناء هذا الحرف أو تركيبه والمكون من حرفين فقط ،إلا إنَّ الأمر أكثر صعوبة من ذلك. والسبب في هذا يعود الى الدلالات المتعددة له والناشئة أساساً من حيث تصنيفه الذي لا ينحصر في قسم واحد من أقسام الكلام في العربية ،بل يتعداه الى قسم أخر ؛ فهو بالإضافة الى كونه حرفا كما يصنف اساسا، يمكنه ان يكون اسما أيضا. أضف الى هذا أنَّ كل قسم منه له دلالات متعددة تختلف كل واحدة منها عن الأخرى؛ ولهذا فأن ترجمته لن تكون سهلة اطلاقا. ان الصعوبة في ترجمة (ما), تخلق شوقا او حماسا لدى القارئ لمعرفة هذا الامر. وهذا هو الهدف الرئيسي من وراء هذه الدراسة. ومن أجل الوصول لهذا الهدف، اخترنا ثلاث ترجمات للقرآن الكريم وقارنا بينها: الاولى: *لعبدالله يوسف علي*، والثانية: *لمحمود حبيب شاكر*، والثالثة: *لمحمد مرمدوك بختال*. لقد اثبتت الدراسة من خلال المقارنة بين هذه الترجمات، ان مكافئات (ما) في الإنجليزية متعددة طبقا لدلالتها في الآية الكريمة ؛ وهذا مما يسهل فهمها لدى الدارسين للعربية من غير الناطقين بها. كما وأثبتت الدراسة ان هذا التعقيد في (ما) من حيث اقسامها ودلالاتها المنضوية تحت كل قسم منها, له الأثر في استعمالها في القران الكريم ، فهي كثيرة الاستعمال ، حيث لا تكاد تخلو صفحة من صفحاته منها ،أو للدقة أكثر نقول لا تخلو سورة من سوره منها الا في اثنتين أو ثلاث من سوره القصار؛ وهذا يظهر مدى أهميتها في الاستعمال القرآني بالرغم من بناءها أو تركيبها البسيط.

كلمات مفتاحية: الاداة أو الحرف ، التصنيف ، التعقيدات ، ترجمة ، اية .

1.Introduction

There are three main parts of speech in Arabic: noun, verb and particle (Ibn Al-Sarrāj, 1999: 36). While noun and verb are meaningful on their own, a particle is only meaningful when it is joined to any of the first two (Ibnʿṣfūr, 2008: 45-46). However, the particle is considered as a key towards understanding Arabic properly ---this explains why it has been the interest of scholars long ago.

There is of course more than one particle in Arabic, one of these particles which is by far the most important one is the particle *mā* (ما), which is figuratively described as a genuine jack-of-all-trades i.e. it causes the sentence in which it is used to change its meaning dramatically. This is because of the many types of mā that each indicates differently. There are approximately twelve types of (mā) in Arabic (Al-Sāqi, 1977:308-317). These twelve types have been reduced to seven main divisions due to their significance. These seven divisions of mā with which it is distinct from other particles is because of its categorization i.e.in addition to being a particle, as is essentially categorized, it can be a noun as well; also because each category of it includes several types and that each type functions differently (Ibn Hishām, 1979:390). Types of mā as a particle include *negative* mā *redundant* mā, and *infinitive* mā, and its types as a noun, include *relative* mā, *interrogative* mā, *conditional* mā, and *exclamatory mā* (IbnHishām, 1979:390-419).

These two main categories of mā besides the variety of types of each make it necessary to identify which type of it you are dealing with as it is an essential skill of both grammar and comprehension; hence, the failure to identify which of its types you are dealing with will naturally lead to major errors in reading and comprehension. In the light of this, it is necessary to find out how mā with all these complexities have been rendered by translators of the Qur'an. To achieve this, three approved and prominent versions of translation of the Qur'an have therefore been examined for this purpose: one is by *Abdullah Yusuf Ali*, another by *Mohammad Marmaduke Pickthall*, and still another one by *Muhammad Habib Shakir*.

To cover all these complexities pertained to mā, the work has therefore been divided into five main sections: the first three sections deal with the

introduction, the literature review and the meaning of particle respectively. Section four which is the core of the study deals with the categories of mā and the types of each category along with its translations; it also includes a table with the occurrence of each type of it within the last two parts of the holy Qur'an. Section five which is the last section of the study deals with the conclusions that have been arrived at by the study.

2. Literature Review

The studies reviewed that make good literature available on the particle mā are represented in the following :*Types of* ما *in Arabic with numerous Qur'anic examples*. The study provides a list of the types of mā in Arabic with a brief explanation of each supported by example ayahs from the Quran. Another study is called: *mu'liml l-Qur'an- The particle* mā. This study deals only with negative mā and pronominal mā (i.e. relative mā) due to their importance and frequency of occurrence. The study shows how each of these two types is translated within the ayahs in which it is mentioned. However, the work which is most related to our study, though it is written in Arabic, is entitled: *dilālāt mā filqurānil karīm watarjamataha'il lughatil'inglīziyyah*, *The Meanings of (mā) in the Holy Qur'an and its translation into English*. The study gives six types of mā: four as nouns including relative mā, conditional mā, interrogative mā, and exclamatory mā and two as particles including negative mā and infinitive mā. The study then shows how each type of mā is translated by examining three renowned translations selected for this purpose: *Saheeh International*, *Abdulla Yusuf Ali's*, and Pickthall's. The study concludes that translators of the holy Quran face a difficulty in finding equivalents to the types of mā , especially exclamatory mā and redundant mā. It also concludes that *Saheeh International* is the best of these translations as far as mā is concerned , followed by *Abdullah Yusuf Ali*, and then *Pickthall*.

3. The meaning of particle

Particles (the plural form of particle) are defined as" words which have a meaning by virtue of referring to something else" (Owens, 1988: 128). This definition is almost the same definition given to prepositions with the difference is that the term particles is used by followers of the Kufa school of grammar, while their counterparts of the Basra school of

grammar call them ḥurūfl mʿānī 'meaningful letters/ sounds (i.e. as opposed to the letters of the alphabet which singly or individually have no meaning) (Owens, 1988:288).

4. The categories of mā

mā is categorized into a particle and a noun (Ibn Hishām,1979:390-419).This is largely determined by the way it behaves in the sentence and (consequently) by the word with which it is replaced or substituted (Ibn Hishām,1979:390-419). For example in the sentence: ما سافر محمد (Muhammad didn't travel) mā is a particle since it can be replaced by the negative particle لم and thus saying: لم يسافر محمد (Muhammad didn't travel),while in the example: ما قاله الرجل صحيحا (That which the man said is correct), it is a noun since it can be replaced by the relative pronoun الذي due to which the sentence reads: الذي قاله الرجل صحيحا (That which the man said is correct). Hence mā is of dual categories i.e. being a particle and a noun --- several types are subsumed under each main category as illustrated below.

4. 1. mā as a particle

mā as a particle can be of several types as shown below.

4.1.1. Negative mā (ما النافية)

Negative mā is one of a group of particles such as laysa ليس, len, لن, lem/lamma لم/لما, lā لا and others that are used in the negation of the sentence (Al-Makhzūmī, 1964: 247-48).

Negative mā is of two main types: one is with the signification of laysa ليس, used only with nominal sentences, and another is not with the signification of laysa, which is used only with verbal sentences (Ibn Al-Sarrāj, 1999: 300).The one with the signification of laysa can be either ḥijāzī or tamīmī; these two types of mā with this signification differ in respect to their governing power i.e. changing the case ending of the noun they govern--- only ḥijāzī mā has such a power, but not the tamīmī one, i.e. the noun that comes after it keeps its case ending (Al-Makhzūmī,1964: 250). Such a difference, however, is not significant in translation i.e. whether or not the noun they govern retains or changes its case ending is not represented in translation. One more thing concerning these two types of mā is that only ḥijāzī mā is used in the Holy Qur'an (Udhaymah, 2004: 96) as in the following verses.

ما هذا بَشَراً إنْ هذا إلاَّ مَلَكٌ كَرِيمٌ (يوسف \ ٣١) (1)

Shakir	This is <u>not</u> a mortal; this is but a noble angel.
Pickthall	This is <u>not</u> a human being. This is no other than a gracious angel.
Yusuf Ali	<u>No</u> mortal is this! This is none other than a Nobel angel!

ما هُنَّ أُمَّهاتِهِمْ (المجادلة ٢١) (2)

Shakir	They can<u>not</u> be their mothers.
Pickthall	They are <u>not</u> their mothers.
Yusuf Ali	They can<u>not</u> be their mothers.

It is clear that in (1) & (2) the particle mā with the signification of laysa is translated into **not** as underlined; it is also translated into **no**; this is particularly used by Ali as in (1).

Let us now turn to the second main type of mā , that is, the one which is not in the signification of laysa as in (3) and (4).

مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَى (النجم \ 11) (3)

<u>Shakir</u>	The heart was <u>not</u> untrue in (making him see) what he saw.
<u>Pickthall</u>	The heart lied <u>not</u> (in seeing) what it saw.
Yusuf Ali	The (Prophet's) (mind and) heart in <u>no</u> way falsified that which he saw.

وَما تَسْقُطُ مِنْ وَرَقَةٍ إلاَّ يَعْلَمُها (الانعام\ ٥٩) (4)

Shakir	And there falls <u>not</u> a leaf but He knows it.
Pickthall	<u>Not</u> a leaf falleth but He knowth it.
Yusuf Ali	<u>Not</u> a leaf doth fall but with His knowledge.

It is obvious that the scenario of translating negative mā into **not** or **no** in (1) & (2) is repeated in (3) & (4), though it is not with the signification of laysa as it is used with verbal sentences. This consequently means that the distinction between these two types of negative mā in respect to the availability or non-availability of the sense of laysa is not significant in translation.

4.1.2. Redundant mā(ما الزائدة)

Redundant mā is of two types: *preventative* and *non-preventative* (Al Samarā'ī,1987:352). Preventative mā prevents the governors with which it is used such as the particle ('inna \ إنَّ) and its sisters from being

effective. This means that these particles lose their governing power of changing the case marker of the noun which they are exclusively used with (Wright, 1995: 81). Non-preventative mā, on the other hand, does not prevent those particles, nor the prepositions such as من (*min*), رب (*ruba*), (ʿan) عن,and (ʾlbāʾ) ألباء ,with which it is also used from such effect; this consequently means that the noun that comes after any of these particles or prepositions changes its case marker (Al Samarāʾī, 1991: 97-8). There is, however, another difference between preventative and non-preventative mā, that is, non-preventative mā is especially added for the sake of corroboration (IbnYaʿīsh,(nd):47).

Non-preventative mā is generally added to the particle إِنَّ (ʾinna) (one among other particles known in Arabic as *Particles assimilated to the verb*) (see Al-Daḥdāḥ,1989) giving the form إِنَّمَا that indicates restrictiveness, which is an aspect of corroboration (IbnHishām, ١٩٧٩:405). This is well exemplified in the two ensuing ayahs.

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ إِخْوَةٌ (الحجرات/١٠) (5)

Shakir	The believers are <u>but</u> brethren.
Pickthall	The believers are <u>naught else</u> than brothers.
Yusuf Ali	The Believers are <u>but</u> a single Brotherhood.

The particle إِنَّمَا in (5) is translated into *but* which is in the sense of *only* as in Shakir's and Ali's and into *naught else* in pickthall's as underlined for clarity. These two words into which the particle إِنَّمَا is translated best represent the sense of restrictiveness which إِنَّمَا indicates; this is verified by their meanings---*but*, for example, is not used in the sense of a coordinating conjunction indicating contrast, but in the sense of *only*, and so is the word *naught else* which is in the sense of *nothing else*. The fact that *but* is used in the sense of *only* and not as a coordinating conjunction indicating contrast is that they are both used in the translation of the particle إِنَّمَا as in (6).

يا قَوْمِ إِنَّما هذِهِ الْحَياةُ الدُّنْيا مَتاعٌ (غافر/٣٩) (6)

Shakir	O My people this life of the world is <u>only</u> a (passing) enjoyment.
Pickthall	O My people! Lo! This life of the world is <u>but</u> a passing comfort.
Yusuf Ali	O My people! This life of the present is <u>nothing but</u> temporary convenience.

It is obvious that إِنَّمَا in (6) is translated into *only* rather than *but* by Shakir, and into *but* rather than *naught else* by Pickthall ,and into *nothing but* rather than just *but* by Ali. These words into which the particle إِنَّمَا is translated suggest that they are similar in meaning to those in (5).

The sense of restrictiveness indicated by إِنَّمَا as in (5) and (6) can as well be represented in the form بما which is a combination of the preposition ('lbā') ألباء and non-preventative mā (Al-Kirbāsī,2010:٥٩٥) as in (7).

(7)   (عمران/ ١٥٩) فَبِما رَحْمَةٍ مِنَ اللَّهِ لِنْتَ لَهُمْ

Shakir	Thus, <u>it's due to mercy from Allah</u> that you deal with them gently.
Pickthall	<u>It was by the mercy of Allah</u> that thou wast lenient with them.
Yusuf Ali	<u>It's part of the mercy of Allah</u> that thou dost deal gently with them.

In (7) the sense of restrictiveness indicated by the particle بما is not rendered as a single word or phrase as in (5) & (6) , but can be perceived via the cleft sentence which is used by the three translators as underlined. "A cleft sentence is a grammatical device similar to, and associated with, information focus: it enables the user to select which element will be highlighted" (Quirk, et al.1985: 89). It is clear that the focus or emphasis in the ayah in (7) is on the phrase *the mercy of God* as it comes within a cleft sentence.

4.1.3.Infinitive mā (ما المصدرية)

Infinitive mā is of two main divisions: (*temporal*) *adverbial* and *non-adverbial*, (Ibn Hishām, 1979:٣٩٩-٤٠0). As the name of each implies, the former indicates time besides infinitive (Al- Samarā'i, 1991: 153), while the latter is just infinitive used "to introduce a clause which is equivalent to the maṣdar or infinitive of the verb" (Wright,1995:221). Hence the key difference between these two main divisions of infinitive mā is in the notion of time which is indicated by just the temporal one. Having known this, let us now see how each is translated.

إِنَّ أَبِي يَدْعُوكَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ أَجْرَ مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا (القصص/ ٢٥) (8)

Shakir	My father invites you that he may give you the reward of your having watered for us.
Pickthall	Low! my father biddeth thee, that he may reward thee with a payment for that thou didst water (the flock) for us.
Yusuf Ali	" My father invites thee that he may reward thee for having watered (our flock) for us."

لِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَىٰ (طه /١٥) (9)

Shakir	So that every soul may be rewarded as it strives.
Pickthall	That every soul may be rewarded for that which it striveth (to achieve).
Yusuf Ali	For every soul to receive its reward by the measure of its endeavour.

Carefully examining the translations of the two ayahs in (8) and (9) reveals two things: first, the type of infinitive mā used in the two ayahs is a non-adverbial one i.e. the one which is purely infinitive; second, infinitive mā is translated in two ways: either a complementizer i.e. being an introducer to the finite clause it introduces and with which it makes what is called *interpreted original infinitive* (مصدر مؤول) in Arabic or of zero representation as it merges into the clause after it , making what is called (مصدر صريح) an *explicit original infinitive* (see Al-Daḥdāḥ,1989). mā as a comlementizer, is translated into either *that* as in Pickthall's in (8) and (9) or into *as* as in Shakir's in (9), or of zero representation as it merged into the clause coming after it with which it makes what is called the –*ing participle* clause (see Quirk, et al 1985); this is particularly used in Shakir's and Ali's translations in (8). Another aspect of mā being of zero representation appears in the infinitive form of the verb or its maṣdar (endeavour) that results in the same way as the –ing participle clause; this is especially used in Ali's in (9); all these forms of translation of infinitive mā have been underlined for clarity.

Let us now turn to the translation of infinitive mā of the temporal adverbial type.

وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا (مريم\٣١) (10)

Shakir	And He has enjoined on me prayer and poor-rate so long as I live.
Pickthall	And hath enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving so long as I remain alive.
Yusuf Ali	And hath enjoined on me Prayer and Charity as long as I live.

قَالُوا يا مُوسى إِنَّا لَنْ نَدْخُلَها أَبَداً ما داموا فِيها (المائدة\ 24) (11)

Shakir	O Musa! we shall never enter it <u>so long as they are in it</u>.
Pickthall	O Moses! We will never enter (the land) <u>while they are in it</u>.
Yusuf Ali	O "Moses! <u>while they remain there</u> never shall we be able to enter, to the end of time.

A moment of reflection on the translations of the ayahs in (10) and (11) soon reveals that infinitive mā with the temporal adverbial sense is rendered into *'as long as'* , *'so long as'* or *'while'* which are time subordinators. In (10), for example, mā is rendered into 'so long as', as in Shakir's and Picktall's and into 'as long as' in Ali's with the difference is that 'so long as' is much preferred as it is more formal than 'as long as'(Cambridge dictionary). In (11) mā is rendered into 'so long as' in Shakir's and into 'while' in Picktall's and Ali's. It is noticed that Shakir's translation of (mā) sticks to the time subordinator*'so long as'*, while Pickthall and Ali used *while* as well.

The sense of time carried by adverbial mā in (10) & (11) is maintained by using the verb دَامَ meaning 'to last', which is always preceded by temporal adverbial mā, to give the sense of an on-going time. Hence, in (10) (ما دُمْتُ حَيًّا) means that he (in reference to prophet Issa) is enjoined to pray so long as he is alive, and that in (11) (ما داموا فيها) indicates that the Israelites refuse to go to the land of Palestine as long as there are mighty people in it (Al-Zemakhasharī,2001: 313).

4. 2. mā as a noun

mā as a noun is of four common divisions as given below.

4. 2.1. Relative mā (ما الموصولة)

 Relative pronouns in Arabic are of two types: definite and indefinite (Al-Ghalāyinī, 2004:91). A definite relative pronoun is specific in reference i.e. it refers to (one) particular person(s) or thing(s), unlike an indefinite relative pronoun which is generic (Hassan,1966:307-8). In view of this, relative mā falls within the second type because it is generic i.e. it can be used with singular, dual, and plural and with both masculine and feminine as well (Al-Samarā'ī,1987: 141). Moreover, it is sensitive to humanity i.e. it is used only with things. (Bergsträsser, 2003: 55-56).These two key features of relative mā have their impact on how it is rendered as in (12).

رَبَّنا وَلا تُحَمِّلْنا ما لا طاقَةَ لَنا بِهِ (البقرة\٢٨٦) (12)

Shakir	Our Lord do not impose upon us <u>that which</u> we have not the strength to bear.
Pickthall	Our Lord! Impose not on us <u>that which</u> we have not the strength to bear!
Yusef Ali	Our Lord! lay not on us a burden greater than we have strength to bear.

In (12), Relative mā is translated into the relative pronoun *that which* as in Shakir's and Pickthall's and so is in Abdullah's though not expressed, but it is still understood like this. The relative pronoun *that which* into which relative mā is translated indicates that it is generic in reference or else it would have been translated into either the relative pronoun *that* or *which* which are specific or definite in reference. What makes relative mā generic in reference is because it is used only *substantively* unlike *allathi* (who, that, or which) which can be used either *substantively* or *adjectively* (Wright, 1995: 318-319).The difference between these two kinds of usage of relative pronouns is in whether they refer to a definite or an indefinite noun: a relative pronoun is used adjectively when it refers to a definite noun, and substantively when it refers to an indefinite noun, or ,say, generic (Al-Ghalāyinī, 2004:91-92). Since relative mā is never used adjectively, therefore, it is translated into *that which* as in (12).This type of relative pronoun into which relative mā is rendered best signifies that relative mā is both generic and sensitive to humanity.

These two key features of relative mā can as well be manifested in the relative pronoun *what* into which it is also translated as in (13).

مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ (النحل: ٩٦) (13)

Shakir	<u>What</u> is with you passes away and <u>what</u> is with Allah is enduring.
Pickthall	<u>That which</u> ye have wasteth away and <u>that which</u> Allah hath remaineth.
Yusuf Ali	<u>What</u> is with you must vanish: <u>what</u> is with God will endure.

It is clear that relative mā in (13) is translated into the relative pronoun *what* as in Shakir's and Ali's, while Pickthall keeps using *that which* as underlined for clarity. Hence, by the same token that relative mā is translated into *that which*, it can also be translated into *what* which is both generic and sensitive to humanity. The relative pronoun *what* into which relative mā is translated as in (13) is distinguished from other relative pronouns such as *who*, *whom*, *that* etc., in that these relative pronouns are used within relative clauses or adjectival clauses , while *what* is used within *nominal relative clauses* (see Quirk & Greenbaum (1973). The difference between these two types of relative clauses is in the existence of a head noun in the former type of clauses and its absence in the latter. Quirk & Greenbaum (1973: 359) illustrate that why a *nominal relative clause* does not need a head noun is because such a clause is much closer to a noun phrase status which can be paraphrase by a noun phrase containing a postmodiyfying relative clause. Applying this, for example, to Shakir's translation of the ayah in (13), it would be paraphrased as : *The thing that is with you passes away and the thing that is with Allah is enduring*. By the same token, the other two translations are paraphrased similarly .

4. 2. 2. Interrogative mā (ما الاستفهامية)

As the name indicates interrogative mā can be used in forming questions asking about things (Al-Ghalāyinī, 2004: 98). With this meaning, it is like the interrogative pronoun 'what' in English into which it is translated as prominent in (14) and (15):

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يَٰمُوسَى (طه\١٧) (14)

Shakir	And <u>what</u> is this in your right hand, O Musa!
Pickthall	And <u>what</u> is that in thy right hand, O Moses?
Yusuf Ali	And <u>what</u> is that in the right hand, O Moses?

قَالَ ما مَنَعَكَ أَلاَّ تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ (الأعراف\١٢) (15)

Shakir	He said: <u>What</u> hindered you so that you did not prostrate when I commanded you?
Pickthall	He said : <u>What</u> hindered thee that thou didst not fall prostrate when I bade thee?
Yusuf Ali	God said: "<u>What</u> prevented thee from bowing down when I commanded thee?"

It is obvious that mā in (14) and (15) is translated into "what" which asks about things. However, in (16):

(16) وما رب العالمين (الشعراء\٢٣)

Shakir	Firon said: And <u>what</u> is the Lord of the worlds?
Pickthall	Pharaoh said: And <u>what</u> is the Lord of the worlds?
Yusuf Ali	Pharaoh said: And <u>what</u> is the Lord and cherisher of the worlds?

mā here is still translated into *what* though it is referring to Allah (Lord of the worlds). As explicators of the Qur'an express is that the question in (16) is in fact raised by Pharaoh in which he is mockingly asking about Allah (God forbid) as being among the other things whom he falsely believed as being their lord rather than Allah whom he denies (Al-Zemakhasharī, 2001:313).

Sometimes, interrogative (mā) appears in its short form عَمَّ in which it loses its *ʾalif* (ألف) when added to the preposition (عن) (about) (Hassan, 1966:240).This of course has its impact on how it is rendered as in (17).

(17) عَمَّ يَتَسَاءَلُونَ (النبأ\١)

Shakir	<u>Of what</u> do they ask one another?
Pickthall	<u>Where of</u> do they question one another?
Yusuf Ali	<u>Concerning what</u> are they disputing?

It is well noticed that mā in (17) is translated into *of what* by Shakir, *where of* (with the sense of *what*) (*Oxford dictionary*), by Pickthall, and into *concerning what* by Ali; these forms into which interrogative mā is translated is due to its new form عَمَّ that results from the preposition (عن) to which it is added. All of these equivalents of mā have been underlined for clarity.

4. 2. 3. Conditional mā (ما الشرطية)

As the name indicates, mā can work as a conditional particle used in a conditional sentence. With this meaning, conditional mā is like the conditional particles(إن إذا) (if) which are used in conditional sentences

of the fulfillable type (Hassan,1966:٢٣٦). However, conditional mā takes different forms of translation rather than *if* as true below.

وَما تُنْفِقُوا مِنْ شَيْءٍ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ يُوَفَّ إِلَيْكُمْ (الانفال\ ٦٠) (18)

Shakir	And <u>whatever</u> thing you will spend in Allah's way, it will be paid back to you fully.
Pickthall	<u>Whatsoever</u> ye spend in the way of Allah it will be repaid to you in full.
Yusuf Ali	<u>Whatever</u> ye shall spend in the Cause of God, shall be repaid unto you.

 It is obvious that conditional mā in (18) is translated into *whatever* by Shakir and Ali and into *whatsoever* by Pickthall. These two wh-words into which conditional mā is translated are nonspecific in meaning due to the existence of the *–ever suffix* unlike their counterparts which are empty of the *–ever suffix* and thus being specific as illustrated by Quirk et al (1985: 1059): "the wh-element may express either a specific meaning (generally indicated by the absence of the *–ever suffix*) or a nonspecific meaning (generally indicated by the presence of the – ever suffix". With this distinction, conditional mā is of a nonspecific meaning due to the existence of the *ever-suffix* on the end of the wh-element into which it is translated , namely *whatever or whatsoever*. The same holds true in (19).

وَمَا تَفْعَلُوا مِنْ خَيْرٍ يَعْلَمْهُ اللَّهُ .(البقرة ١٩٧) (١٩)

Shakir	And <u>whatever</u> good you do, Allah knows it.
Pickthall	And <u>whatsoever</u> good ye do Allah knoweth it.
Yusuf Ali	And <u>whatever</u> good ye do, (be sure) God knowth it.

There is, however, a type of conditional mā called *temporal conditional mā* which implies time in addition to condition as in (20).

فَمَا اسْتَقامُوا لَكُمْ فَاسْتَقِيمُوا لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُتَّقِينَ   (التوبة\٧) (20)

Shakir	So <u>as long as </u>they are true to you, be true to them; surely Allah loves those who are careful (of their duty)
Pickthall	<u>So long as</u> they are true to you, be true to them, Allah loveth those who keep their duty
Yusuf Ali	<u>As long as</u> these stand true to you, stand ye true to them, for Allah doth love the righteous

Conditional mā in (20) is translated into the subordinators *as long as* or *so long as* rather than any of its equivalents in (18) & (19) ; this is because it indicates time besides condition which it essentially implies. Such a meaning of conditional mā has its impact on the meaning of the ayah in which it is used . The ayah means that as long as the people of Makah keep the terms of the treaty which the prophet (pbuh) signed with and stand true to him, he and the believers should stand true to them, but the time they violate any of its terms, he (the prophet) and the believers will react accordingly (Al-Undulusī, 2002:17).

Conditional mā as well can be in the form of (مهما) which is in fact a combination of conditional mā to which redundant mā is added and thus giving the form (ماما); however, many scholars found it difficult to pronounce, so they replaced the (الف) (ʾlif) of the first mā with hāʾ (هاء) resulting in the form (مهما) (Al- Farāhidī(2001: 927), as evident in (21).

(21) (الاعراف\١٣٢) ...مَهْمَا تَأْتِنَا بِهِ مِنْ آيَةٍ لِتَسْحَرَنَا بِهَا فَمَا نَحْنُ لَكَ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ

Shakir	<u>Whatever</u> sign you may bring to us to charm us with it-- we will not believe in you.
Pickthall	<u>Whatever</u> portent thou bringest where with to bewitch us, we shall not put faith in thee.
Yusuf Ali	<u>Whatever</u> be the signs thou bringest, to work therewith thy sorcery on us, we shall never believe in thee.

This new form of conditional mā ,however, does not change its form of translation, viz. it is still translated into *whatever* as in (18) & (19) albeit its different form.

4. 2.4. Exclamatory mā (ما التعجبية)

Exclamatory mā is a noun that can be either definite or indefinite used to express surprise, or wonder (Ibn Hishām, 1979:٣٩٢).These two meanings which exclamatory mā indicate are expressed in combination with a type of a verb called *verb of surprise or wonder* فعل التعجب which is a 3d pers. sing. masc. perfect ماضي followed by the accusative of the object; these three elements give an exclamatory sentence as: ما أفضل زيداً, *what an excellent man Zaid is*! (Wright, 1995: 98). The example given by *Wright* shows that exclamatory mā is translated into *what* that indicates exclamation supported by the exclamation mark that appears on the end of the sentence in which it is used. Exclamatory mā can as

well be translated into *how* that indicates exclamation like *what* as manifested in the translation of the following two ayahs.

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ اشْتَرَوُا الضَّلالَةَ بِالْهُدى وَالْعَذابَ بِالْمَغْفِرَةِ فَما أَصْبَرَهُمْ عَلَى النَّارِ (البقرة \١٧٥) (22)

Shakir	These are they who buy error for the right direction and chastisement for forgiveness; <u>how bold they are to encounter fire</u>!
Pickthall	Those are they who purchase error at the price of guidance and torment at the price of pardon. <u>How constant are they in their strife to reach the fire</u>!
Yusuf Ali	They are the ones who buy Error in place of Guidance and Torment in place of Forgiveness. Ah! <u>What boldness</u> (They show) for the fire!

(عبس\١٧ قُتِلَ الْإِنْسانُ ما أَكْفَرَهَ.) (23)

Shakir	Curse be man! <u>how ungrateful</u> is he!
Pickthall	Man is (self-) destroyed: <u>how ungrateful</u>!
Yusuf Ali	Woe to man! <u>What hath made him reject God</u>!

It is obvious that exclamatory mā in (22) and (23) is translated into either *how!* as in Shakir's and Pickthall's and into *what!* as in Ali's.

The wh-words into which exclamatory mā is translated, especially *what* might be confused with interrogative mā; the two, however, are totally different in that exclamatory *what!* or *how*!   starts an exclamatory sentence and retains the regular declarative order, unlike wh-questions. (Quirk, et al, 1985: 88). This is in addition to the exclamatory mark (!) used at the end of an exclamatory sentence to indicate the emphasis or emotion it expresses (Forlini, et al,1987: 330).

By now, we have finished the translation of mā, let us now turn to its occurrence i.e. finding out whether or not its seven main types occur equally in the Qur'an. According to a statistic by Amāyrah and Al-Sayed (1998: 527) on the occurrence of mā, it is revealed that mā is mentioned (3852) times in the Qur'an; this great number of occurrence makes it difficult to specify how many times each type occurred. Instead of this, this study has surveyed the occurrence of mā within the last two parts of the Qur'an known respectively as: *juzu' tabārak* and *juzu'ʿamah*. Through this survey, it has been found that the particle mā occurred 138

times which are then categorized in terms of its main divisions and the occurrence of each as illustrated in the table below.

Types of Mā	Frequency of occurrence in number	Frequency of occurrence in percentage %
1. Relative mā	44	31.8%
2. Negative mā	36	26.08%
3. Interrogative mā	36	26.08%
4. Infinitive mā	9	6.5%
5. Redundant mā	9	6.5%
6. Conditional mā	3	2.17%
7. Exclamatory mā	1	0.7%

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A quick glance at the table above reveals that relative mā is the most frequently occurred type, followed by both negative and interrogative mā which are equally occurred, then infinitive mā and redundant mā, which are also equally occurred, then conditional mā, and finally exclamatory mā which is the least occurred one. Based on this, it is expected that the same results will be obtained, that is, relative mā is the most frequently occurred type in the Qur'an followed by the other six types as illustrated in the table above.

5. Conclusions

This study has come out with a number of conclusions. One of these conclusions is that the particle mā (around which it revolves) is not easy to deal with despite its very simple form. This is largely attributed to the duality of its categorization i.e. being a particle and a noun as well and to the types or divisions subsumed under each. mā as a particle is divided into negative mā, infinitive mā, and redundant mā, and as a noun it is divided into relative mā, interrogative mā, conditional mā, and exclamatory mā. The study has also concluded that each type of mā is translated differently depending on its meaning in the ayah. For example, negative mā, is translated differently from redundant mā --- the former is translated into either *no* or *not* as in (1), (2), (3) & (4), while the latter is translated into either *but*, or *only*, or *nothing but* as in (5) & (6) or of zero

representation that can be perceived via a cleft sentence as in (7); the same holds true for its remaining types.

One more conclusion is that these main types of mā seem to have impacted its occurrence in the holy Qur'an i.e. making it to be the most frequently occurred particle; this is verified via its occurrence which is repeated in every page of the holy Quran or more accurately in almost every chapter of it; this is further verified by the survey made by both Amayrah and Al-Sayed (1998) in which it is stated that the particle mā is mentioned (3852) times in the holy Qur'an.

The amazing discovery of the study is that relative mā could be the most occurred type in the Qur'an followed by negative mā, interrogative mā, infinitive mā, redundant mā, conditional mā, and finally by exclamatory mā, which is the least occurred one. This discovery is built on the survey made by the study as expressed in the table above.

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Appendix
Library of Congress Arabic Transliteration System

CONSONATS　　　　　VOWEL

ʾ	ء
B	ب
T	ت
Th	ث
J	ج
ḥ	ح
Kh	خ
D	د
Dh	ذ
R	ر
Z	ز
S	س
sh	ش
ṣ	ص
ḍ	ض
ṭ	ط
ẓ	ظ
ʿ	ع
gh	غ
F	ف
Q	ق
K	ك
L	ل
m	م
N	ن
H	ه
w	و
y	ي

Long vowels	
ا	Ā
و	Ū
ي	ī

Doubled	
ي	iyy (final form = /ī/)
و	uww (final form = /ū/)

Diphthongs	
وَ!	○̈○aw
ىَ!	○̈○ay
Short	
○̈	a
○̈	u
○̣	i