An Exploration in Contemporary Islamic Discourse in Western Communities: A Study of Semantic Markers as Displayed in the Translation of Religious Terms

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1.1. Introduction

The significance of the topic of this research can hardly be overestimated in our age. It is quite common, nowadays, to find articles, speeches and even books that call for the reconsideration of the Islamic religious discourse that is widespread in Arab countries, often referred to as Wahabi or fundamentalist thought and usually affiliated with the political Islamist trend/s. If this is the case within Muslim societies or, at least, societies that have a majority of Muslims, there is even a more dire need for the refinement of Islamic religious discourse that addresses communities where Muslims are only a minority. Hence, the present research focuses on Islamic discourse in western societies, with two examples under study: articles of Imam Yahya Hendi, who is the spiritual leader of the Islamic Society of Frederick on the one hand, and articles that belong to the Islamic Da’wah Centre of Australia on the other hand. It is by no means an attempt to issue value judgments on the content of the examples under study from the two types of Islamic religious discourse. This research, instead, aspires to underline and identify the semantic markers of each of the two types of religious discourse in question with particular reference to lexical features.