

- [Home](#) | [News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Travel](#) | [Entertainment](#) | [Homes](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Cars](#) | [Shopping](#) | [Place ads](#) | [Newspaper services](#)



And that's just the plane ride.

A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER

www.austrian.com

Top headlines

[Chicago is U.S. candidate for '16 Olympics](#)

[2016 or bust](#)

[37 dead in Iraq blast](#)

[Kids' cell phones growing up fast](#)

[New: Man slain in Aurora](#)

Images in the news



- [The week](#) | [Photo page](#)
- [Penguin love](#)
- [A Maori welcome](#)

Sponsored by [Ritz Camera](#)

The latest from ChicagoSports.com

- [Cubs](#) | [Sox](#) | [Bears](#)
- [Bulls](#) | [Fire](#) | [Blackhawks](#) | [Columnists](#) | [Forums](#)

Please [register](#) or [log in](#) Subscribers: [Get the Advantage](#)

Search:

chicagotribune.com >> [Editorials](#)

Translating Quran for today

By **Laleh Bakhtiar**
Published April 15, 2007

After spending 40 years studying, writing and translating books related to the Quran, I realized that something was missing: an objective, universal and inclusive translation of the Quran from its classical Arabic into contemporary English. Most of the 17 English translations I had seen included some interpretation of the verses—making a direct comparison between the English and Arabic extremely difficult. Plus, many of the English translations continue to use Arabic words and names, such as Allah for God, which can be confusing or even off-putting to new readers.

I wanted an English translation that would be readily understood regardless of a person's faith, perhaps because mine had evolved over time. I grew up in America with a Protestant mother while my father, a Muslim, lived in Iran. She brought me to America when I was 6 months old and sent me to Catholic school in Washington, where for years I worshiped as a Catholic. It was many years later when I went to Iran that I met my mentor, the author and professor Seyyed Hossein Nasr. He asked me what religion I practiced. I said that I had grown up as a Catholic and admitted that I knew nothing about Islam. He said: "Well, learn!"

[E-mail this story](#)

[Printable format](#)

[Search archives](#)

[RSS](#)

That encouragement to learn has spanned more than four decades. I eventually earned a master's degree in religious studies, studied classical Quranic grammar, taught Islam at the Lutheran School of Theology (part of the University of Chicago). I wrote 20 books on Islam, and translated 25 books about Islam and the Quran from Persian to English. The method I used for this new translation of the Quran is actually the same method used by

the translators of the King James Version of the Bible. Like them, I looked at each instance of a word in context throughout the text before determining the most appropriate English translation. Unlike my 17th Century counterparts, however, I had the benefit of a computer, and I used it to create a database containing the 40,000 nouns and verbs of the Quran (known as the Arabic Concordance) and the 50,000 particles of speech. This helped me to be accurate and consistent.

When news of my English translation of the Quran spread, I wasn't surprised that some Islamic scholars dismissed me as lacking in academic scholarship. It is interesting that the translation by Yusuf Ali is one of the most popular in English while, according to his only biographer, he was not a scholar of Islamic studies, but, rather, a leading

Ads by Google

[Hemorrhoid Removal](#)
As seen in the Chicago Tribune Call Dr. Drost
312-640-1740
www.crhcenter.com

CHICAGO top jobs

[Dispatcher](#) [Registered Pharmacist](#)
[read more & apply](#) [read more & apply](#)

[Architect](#) [Process Engineer](#)
[read more & apply](#) [read more & apply](#)

[Purchasing](#) [Sales/Marketing Manager](#)
[read more & apply](#) [read more & apply](#)

Search Chicago jobs

[All Chicago jobs](#)
[Post resume](#)
[Post a job](#)

powered by **careerbuilder**

Indian Muslim who represented British India on the world stage. Another popular translation is by (Mohammed) Marmaduke William Pickthall, a famous English writer and Muslim convert. Could it be that the issue wasn't one of academic rigor but related to my gender instead?

I also wasn't surprised when people asked me if mine was a "feminist" translation of the Quran. Actually, it is the translation of a "spiritual advocate" (*fatat* in Arabic). A spiritual advocate is someone who rises above gender issues seeking fairness and justice for all, constantly striving for the sake of others and struggling to replace vices like jealousy, greed, lust and anger with virtues of mercy, compassion and forgiveness.

My vision, ultimately, is to see my database used by publishers throughout the world, so that other translators can go through the same process I did to bring the Quran fully into their own language and culture. Then we shall have the resources for a true, cross-cultural understanding of Islam. And we shall, I hope, have a better basis for understanding each other, Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Laleh Bakhtiar is a former lecturer at the University of Chicago. Her translation of the Quran from classical Arabic to contemporary English will be in bookstores this week.

Copyright © 2007, [Chicago Tribune](#)

SHOP CHICAGO FASHION



ZIP Code: powered by [shopLocal.com](#)

Most viewed Most e-mailed

In the past hour

1. [Chicago is U.S. candidate for '16 Olympics](#)
2. [2016 or bust](#)
3. [Obama returns more than \\$50,000 in lobbyists' contributions](#)
4. [Principal, teacher resign after racy DVD made public](#)
5. [Restroom-video case stuns parents of Highland Park pupils](#)

[More most viewed](#)



Find places and events on [metromix.com](#).

quick clicks:

[Music](#) | [Movies](#) | [Events/Best Bets](#) | [Reader Reviews](#)

Videos from CNN, Tribune, CLTV and WGN:

Ads by Google

Get Quran Ringtones
10 Complimentary Ringtones No Credit Card Required.
[www.ReliableRingtones.com](#)

Is Osama Bin Laden Dead?
Full story and analysis on rumours of Bin Laden dying of typhoid
[www.thefirstpost.co.uk](#)

Quran Ringtones
Send 10 Complimentary Ringtones to your cell. Let us show you how.
[MobileContentPlus.com](#)

Leading a Spiritual Life
Christian, Jewish, Muslim & Buddhist perspectives.
[www.explorefaith.org](#)

Christians & Muslims
Discussion On the Type of Religions Its Connectivity Between Each Other
[www.EachStudent.com](#)

Site index

News

- Local news
- Nation/world news
- Opinion
- Columnists
- Politics
- Religion
- Special reports
- Photos
- Video
- Multimedia
- Obituaries
- Health
- Education
- Weather
- Traffic

Business

- Your money
- Stocks
- The Digital Page
- What's ahead
- Business tech
- Technology
- Wireless/ Networking
- Columnists

Sports

- Chicago Bears
- Super Bowl coverage
- Bears
- Bulls
- Blackhawks
- Cubs
- White Sox
- Colleges
- High school
- Golf
- Soccer
- Columnists

Travel

- Flight tracker
- Travel deals
- Fall colors
- Midwest getaways
- Follow the sun
- Skiing
- Cruising
- National Parks
- Resourceful traveler
- 10 for the road
- GeoQuiz

Entertainment

- Arts
- Critics' reviews
- Dining
- Food
- Horoscope
- Leisure
- Lottery
- Movies
- Music
- Theater
- Shopping
- Television

Today's paper

- In the community
- Registration
- Subscription
- Contact us
- Send a news tip
- What's in it for you?

Classified

- Find a job
- Find a car
- Find real estate
- Find an apartment
- Shopping
- Find a mortgage
- Dating
- Pets
- Place an ad
- How to advertise

[metromix.com](#) | [ChicagoSports.com](#) | [Subscriber Advantage](#) | [Site tour](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

Classifieds partners: [Jobs: Careerbuilder.com](#) | [Autos: Cars.com](#) | [FSBO](#) | [Homes: Homescape.com](#) | [Rentals: Apartments.com](#)
[Open Houses: Openhouses.com](#) | [Houses for Rent: rentalhomesplus.com](#) | [Shopping: Shoplocal.com](#) | [Grocery Coupons: boodle.com](#)

Local Tribune sites: [Chicago Magazine](#) | [CLTV](#) | [Hoy Chicago](#) | [RedEye](#) | [Satisfaction Magazine](#) | [WGN Radio](#) | [WGN TV](#)



FREE to subscribers!
[Sign up now!](#)

Daywatch

The day's top stories e-mailed to you each weekday.

365 Day Archive

A free archive search of a year's worth of Chicago Tribune stories.

The Info Desk

Exclusive access to Tribune experts for help with homework or research

The Entertainment Expert

Advice for making the most of a special night out.

This month's featured offers include:

Subscriber Advantage members can enjoy special offers such as **save \$30 off a pair of Camelot tickets with Michael York** and receive **FREE Child Admission** to the Nature Museum and *Robots + Us*, courtesy of Chicago Tribune Subscriber Advantage.

STATE OF ILLINOIS UNCLAIMED PROPERTY LISTINGS



What's in it for you?