

Food Metaphors: A Contrastive Approach

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Abstract

This paper demonstrates the pervasiveness of the food metaphor in Moroccan Arabic (MA) mundane interactions and deals with its rather limited exploitation in Classical Arabic (CA) Qur'anic discourse. The MA and CA data analysis provides further evidence that metaphor is a mode of thought, not a mere stylistic variation of what can be otherwise stated literally. The paper also predicts the mappings of food with ideas and temperament in many unrelated cultures, owing to the experiential basis of food, its vital importance for the survival and well-being of human beings, yet it argues that many of this conceptual metaphor linguistic manifestations remain culture specific, resist translation, and are not necessarily automatically processed.

Der Artikel zeigt die durchgängige Präsenz der Nahrungsmetaphorik im Marokkanischen Arabisch (MA), welche mit der eher geringen Nutzung in klassisch-arabischen (CA) Korantexten kontrastiert. Die MA und CA-Daten untermauern die Vorstellung von der Metapher als einer Denkfigur und nicht lediglich als stilistischer Abweichung von einem vermeintlich wörtlichen Gebrauch. Zudem wird gezeigt, dass – begründet durch die alltägliche Erfahrbarkeit und die im wahrsten Sinne Funktion als Lebensmittel – metaphorische Projektionen von Nahrung auf Ideen oder Stimmungslagen unabhängig voneinander in vielen unterschiedlichen Kulturen zu belegen sind, zahlreiche der konzeptuell-metaphorischen Implikationen jedoch kulturspezifisch und übersetzungs-resistent sind.

1. Introduction

Throughout centuries, metaphor was considered in the Western tradition as parasitic upon the *normal, ordinary* usage of the language, a garment of the thought, the sole function of which is to embellish the style. Recently, however, investigators belonging to various domains are increasingly interested in metaphor owing to their awareness of its vital importance not only in language but in our thought processes, as well. This vital conceptual view marks the present research on metaphor in everyday language interaction, religion, science, philosophy, law, among other domains of human thought, instead of being restrictedly regarded as the proper domain of literature (Johnson, 1995). As an important cognitive tool, metaphor equally manifests itself in other forms of human expression, such as music and pictures (cf. Poulain, 1996 and Forceville, in press).

The present paper exploits the cognitive approach to metaphor and its validity for accounting for food metaphors in a corpus consisting of informal MA and formal Qur'anic, CA data. The two varieties are closely related and stand in a diglossic situation: MA is the low variety and vernacular as opposed to CA, which enjoys the prestigious position of being the language of Qur'anic revelations. The paper adopts the fundamental tenets of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory: we conceptualize a lot of abstract and less delineated domains in terms of domains that are relatively better understood and more delineated in our physical and cultural environments (cf. Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). To put it in Lakoff and Johnson's more recent jargon (1999), metaphor involves cross-domain mappings: the source (more delineated) domain is mapped onto the target (less delineated) domain, and these metaphorical mappings are experientially grounded.

The general assumption to make at this juncture is that owing to the prominent importance of food in our life as a source of sustenance and pleasure, food is liable to be pervasively used in various related or unrelated cultures and languages as a source domain mapping ideas, virtue, conduct, human dispositions, sexual desire, and a host of other less delineated target domains. Yet the universality of such a conceptual metaphor is too strong a claim that awaits empirical validity, for the two domains are quite disparate. The way food is absorbed in the alimentary canal is dissimilar from the manner ideas are perceived to be assimilated in the mind: the first is a purely physical activity, and the second is a mental one. It is not improbable, therefore, that the food conceptual metaphor would not be part of the conceptual system of some given cultures and will not be manifested in their linguistic varieties.

Nevertheless, our aversion from distasteful foods and our attraction to tasty foods is an experiential ground for attributing *sweetness* to positive aspects and *tastelessness* and *bitterness* to aversive aspects. Thus, in the *Hans Wehr Dictionary of Modern Arabic* (Cowan, 1976), *ḥulwun*¹ means *sweet*, but it also signifies *delightful*, and *pleasant to the eye – charming*. Moreover, an entertaining

¹ Phonetic transcription will be provided for the MA and CA examples, and a key to the phonetic symbols is in the appendix. Qur'anic verses will not be transcribed: non-Arabic speakers may consult *transliteration.org*. The English translation of the Qur'anic verses included in the corpus is based on Yussuf Ali (1988).

person or gifted raconteur is perceived as someone who is *ḥulwu ḥadi* / (having *sweet speech*), and *ḥala:wa* (*sweetness*) also means *grace, refinement, and wittiness*. From the root word, we similarly derive *ḥulij* (*jewellery*).

To my mind, some of the MA and CA linguistic metaphorical similarities may be attributable to the genealogical link and direct language contact, especially when we bear in mind that many expressions continually filter from the high variety down to MA, the lower variety, as is the case with (1), which is often used in the context of ideas that have become old-fashioned.

- (1) hadši akala ddahru ṣalajhi wašarib
 Time has eaten and drunk upon this.

Nevertheless, similar linguistic metaphors are found in unrelated, non-Semitic languages, such as English. Thus, in *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, *sweet* is extended to *fragrance as well as pleasantness to the ear (a sweet smell, a sweet song, a sweet singer)*, or to *something agreeable or benign*, or as a complimentary form of address to a beloved (*sweetheart*), or to *amiable people, having pleasant inclinations and manners* (Onions, 1973).

However, by positing the existence of some cross-culturally shared perceptual mechanisms resulting in these apparent conceptual and linguistic similarities, our research may degenerate into hasty generalizations: though Arabic and English are not genetically related, we should not underestimate the mutual influence of the two languages resulting from the interaction of the Arabs and the English. At the time of Arab renaissance many books were translated into English and other European languages, resulting in loan words assimilated into English phonological and morphological systems, such as *alcohol* from *alkuḥul*, *algebra*, from *alžabr*, *banana*, from *bana:n*, originally meaning *finger* (before being metaphorically extended to designate this fruit), *checkmate* is originally borrowed from *ša:h ma:t*, *the king is dead* (cf. Rosenfelder, 2007 for a compiled list selected from the 900 loan words listed in *The Oxford English Dictionary*).

Not to be excluded from consideration are the loan metaphors arising from cultural contacts, such as *data bank*, *banque de données* (to include French), *banku almaḥduma:t*; *brainwashing*, *lavage de cerveau*, *ḡaslu ddima:ḡ*; *brain drain*, *fuite des cerveaux*, *hižratu lʔadmiga*; *money laundering*, *blanchiment de l'argent*, *tabji:du alamwa:l*; *the black market*, *le marché noir*, *assu:q assawda:ʔ*, etc. Moreover, I dare say, even some cross-cultural conceptual metaphors may be the by-product of

cultural contact instead of being simply imputed to some commonly shared perceptual mechanisms sanctioning the mappings of domains that are apparently disparate, such as: ideas, human mental and behavioural dispositions, and food.

That *IDEAS ARE FOOD* and *TEMPERAMENT IS FOOD* are conceptual metaphors we live by in various cultures is linguistically manifest across many languages, but we do not have as yet any theoretical and empirical evidence to claim the universality of such metaphors. To my knowledge, no contrastive attempt has been made to investigate food metaphors across a large number of unrelated languages. Moreover, when we address the issue of what motivates the existence of food metaphors similarities across related and unrelated cultures our answers seem to be largely based on conjectures rather than synchronic and diachronic evidence: we postulate the existence of common natural perceptive features that may give testimony to the universality of some of our cognitive processes, but we equally do not disregard the influential importance of cultural contacts behind the existence of these metaphors. These observations are not to be confined to contrastive studies on food metaphors. In this respect, Feng (1997:132) has resolved that cross-cultural research on metaphor remains “a vast piece of virgin land to be explored.” (cf. Al Jumah, 2007 for a review of the scarce, controversial research findings).

It is beyond the scope of the present paper to provide an answer to this intricate controversial issue. Yet it seems to me interesting to attempt a contrastive approach by considering how *IDEAS ARE FOOD* and *TEMPERAMENT IS FOOD* metaphors – instantiations of which pervade MA daily discourse and modern written Arabic discourse – are exploited in the Qur’an. What motivates this endeavour is the fact that the Qur’an is a book that has been extremely preserved against any alterations for over fourteen centuries (Allah has proclaimed the safeguarding of the Qur’an, sura 15:9). Not being subjected to any linguistic changes, the Qur’an is a text that authentically reflects the Arabic literal and metaphorical language of that period, including its underlying conceptual structures. Moreover, Qur’anic discourse, as we shall have occasion to demonstrate in the third section of the present paper, is replete with literal references to various sorts of food. The Qur’an being essentially a book with clear messages (ideas) about matters of

faith, and with clear references to various aspects of human nature, it is significant to consider the mappings – if any – of food with ideas, pertaining to creed, as well as with various aspects of human deportment, good and bad.

2. Food Metaphors in Moroccan Arabic

The present section is devoted to how Moroccans conceptualize their experience with perceiving and accepting ideas as well as learning and remembering facts in terms of the source domain of food. The section also deals with MA metaphorical data pertaining to the depiction of human good and bad behaviour and temperament. The data excludes other domains, such as the ones where food, its taste and shape, is metaphorically exploited to conceptualize female beauty and appeal, and human sexual lust. The choice of *ideas* and *human behaviour* as target domains is not fortuitous, for they serve, among other considerations, to be compared and contrasted to the CA metaphorical data extracted from Qur'anic discourse, since the major messages of the holy Qur'an pertain to the depiction of the nature of believers, who accept the Islamic precepts, as contrasted to the disbelievers, who refuse these religious teachings.

2.1 The Mappings of Food and Ideas

The conceptual metaphor we can advance is *IDEAS ARE FOOD*, systematic examples of which are found in MA daily intercourse. This general conceptual metaphor can be subdivided into more precise conceptual metaphors. Thus, we have, as the MA examples testify below, *LEARNING IS EATING*, *UNDERSTANDING IS TASTING*, *UNDERSTANDING IS DIGESTING*, *REMEMBERING IS REGURGITATING*, *OFFERING IDEAS IS COOKING*, *BELIEVING IS SWALLOWING*, and *PERSUADING IS EATING*.

LEARNING IS EATING

- (2) kajjakul ləktu:ba
He eats books.
- (3) makajšbačš mən lqraja
He is never satiated from learning.
- (4) maši ġir ħafd dak ddars waklu wšarbu ma
Not only have I learnt that lesson, but I have eaten it and drunk it (like) water.

UNDERSTANDING IS TASTING

- (5) duqni
Taste me. (i.e., try to understand me).
- (6) dəqtək wdəqt šnu gəlti
I tasted you and tasted what you said.
- (7) had lfikra ma fiha ṭiba
This idea is tasteless.

UNDERSTANDING IS DIGESTING

- (8) hdam lfikra
He digested the idea.
- (9) hadši likatgulli majəmkənš jəthdam lši wahəd
What you are saying cannot be digested by anyone.
- (10) hdəmt ddars məzja:n
I have digested the lesson very well.

REMEMBERING IS REGURGITATING

- (11) biḍaḡatuna ruddat ?ilajna / ma təbqaš tblaḡ ši haža maši məhduma məzjan
wəṭqajja ḡlijja
Our merchandise has come back to us. Do not swallow something that is not
well digested and vomit it on us.

OFFERING IDEAS IS COOKING

- (12) had l?iṣlah məṭbux fgijjab lməs?uli:n
This reform is cooked in the absence of those in charge.
- (13) mabqitš kanqəffal mḡah
I can't seal anything into the pot with him. (i.e., I can't understand anymore
what he says.)
- (14) šərmaltiha
You put a lot of spices in that idea.

(i.e., you decorated your speech with pompous or inflated words in order to
convince others.)

BELIEVING IS SWALLOWING

- (15) waxxa had lfikra ḡri:ba hi blaḡha bšwijja dəlma
Even if this idea is strange, just swallow it with a bit of water.
- (16) li blaḡ kəlma ma blaḡ ḡədma
He who has gulped an offensive word, hasn't swallowed a bone.
- (17) ma tṣərtatliš
I can't swallow (this idea).

- (18) kajəsrət ləkwağt
He swallows papers.

PERSUADING IS EATING

- (19) kajjakullu məxxu
He is eating his brain.

(i.e., he is trying to persuade him to accept his trend of thought.)

The systematic examples mentioned above show that the *IDEAS ARE FOOD* metaphor is conventional in MA. It is part of our daily conceptions of ideas, and, consequently, it is a metaphor we live by in our culture. It is also part of the way many cultures conceptualize ideas in terms of food, and some linguistic manifestations of this conceptual metaphor can be translated across many languages without loss in cognitive content. For example, for (8) above, we have:

- (20) hađama lfikra. (CA)
(21) He digested the idea. (English)
(22) Il a digéré l'idée. (French)
(23) Er verdaute die Idee. (German)

In fact, processing food in the body is variously regarded as internalizing or mentally absorbing an idea across many related or unrelated languages. Nevertheless, corpus examples (5), (6), (13), (14), (19) would not seem to be meaningful in other languages when translated literally. It is worthy of mention in this respect that despite the relatedness and closeness of MA and CA, these MA examples would hardly yield any meaning when literally translated into CA. This observation is equally tenable for the food metaphors that will be discussed below.

2.2 The Mappings of Food and Human Dispositions

Interestingly, human beings' temperaments, their feelings, mental states and behaviour, are also partially experienced in terms of food in many cultures. This springs from the fact that our feelings and mental states are not directly accessible to our understanding, and to have, at least, a partial understanding of them, we need to experience them in terms of other concepts that are concrete and more accessible to our comprehension. For instance, in English we *give somebody beans*, *we are in the soup*. Similarly, we speak of *to go cracker*, *to*

go nuts, to refer to disordered or deranged mental states, and a lover is perceived as *honey* or *sugar*.

In MA, the different kinds and tastes of food are applied to the human temperament for either a positive or a negative evaluation. The examples that we will cite below are systematic, not random. For this reason, we may postulate the conceptual metaphor *TEMPERAMENT IS FOOD*, whereby many metaphoric expressions are made possible. The observation to make at the outset is that many sweet, tasty foods are associated with good temperament, positive mental qualities and values, as is shown from the following MA examples, which are often encountered in everyday interactions.

GOOD TEMPERAMENT IS SWEET

- (24) ħlu šəhda
He is sweet (like) a hive.
- (25) habəṭlu ləçsal mən fəmmu
Honey is flowing out of his mouth.
- (26) klamu ħlu səkkar
His speech is sweet (like) sugar.
- (27) həlwa
He is a cake.
- (28) ldid / katšuf ffih whuwwa kajəhla bin çajnik.
He is so tasty. When you look at him, he becomes sweet in your eyes.
- (29) hadak ssəjjad həjəl bəzzaf
That person is much mellowed.

This expression is typical of the Northern MA variety. The word *həjəl* is literally used for old honey or oil; it is believed that the older they are, the tastier they become. Here it is used figuratively to refer to nobility of character.

- (30) lləsan ləħlu kajtəçta fəddijja
The sweet tongue is given as compensation for indemnity.

Here *sweet tongue* is a synecdoche which designates a *sweet tempered person*, who does not show anger. By mastering his temper, his opponents may calm down and become *cool like cucumber* – to use an idiomatic expression from English, which illustrates the conceptual metaphor we are tackling. By his being good-tempered, the opponents are believed to pardon the loss inflicted on them, instead of claiming a fine to be paid.

It is also noticeable that some sorts of juicy or sweet fruits, such as apples, bananas, grapes, raisins, dates, nuts, etc., may be used to refer to good tempered people – though they are primarily used in slangy speech in the context of physical beauty and sexual appeal. In addition, such expressions serve occasionally for endearment purposes, especially when they are rendered into diminutives.

If *sweet*, *tasty* foods are consistently employed to refer to good and positive mental qualities, foods which are tasteless or which have *sour* or *bitter* taste are systematically used for negative evaluation of character, and they are specifically employed to refer to ill-tempered people. This gives rise to the conceptual metaphor *BAD TEMPERAMENT IS SOUR / UNSWEET*, some examples of which are of the following sort in the Moroccan vernacular:

- (31) ḥmād mən llimun wḥərr mən lbəsla
He is sourer than lemon and more bitter than onion.
- (32) malk basəl
You are so tasteless.
- (33) klamu məssus
His speech is not salty / sweet.

The word *məssus* is not lexicalized in English, and it is variously used to refer to food that contains little or no sugar or salt.

- (34) khib nhib laṭiba wla lədda fih
He is so ugly, with no taste or flavour.

The word *nhi:b* has no meaning; it is simply used to rhyme with *khi:b*.

- (35) lməzgu:b ḥarr wəḥarrar çliha lçiša
Damn him! He is bitter, and made her life bitter.

Apart from taste, some metaphors are based on the smell of food or spices to describe human behaviour; consider:

- (36) nta kamuni

I could not find a literal translation in English because the noun *cumin* is not adjectivized in English. By this expression, the speaker implies that the addressee is as if made of cumin. The metaphor is experientially grounded as cumin will not give off scent unless it is ground or crushed. Therefore, the addressee is described as belonging to the sort of people who do not behave properly and become peaceful unless they are put under pressure or awkward predicaments.

- (37) sir ?albəṣla lɣamʒa
Go, you rotten onion!

The stinking smell of raw or cooked food is a source domain that gives birth to numerous metaphors describing character and temperament. This expression is, in fact, a very poignant insult for people with repulsive behaviour.

Moreover, it is commonplace in the Moroccan culture to conceptualize definite states of character in terms of different forms of cooked food.

- (38) hada zaɣlu:k hada
He is really the sort of food prepared from aubergine.

- (39) ɣla ħrira / ɣṣida
What a soup he is!

ħrira and *ɣṣida* are kinds of Moroccan soup. The food terms in (38) and (39) apply to boisterous or very spoiled people, who are very difficult to deal with: they get on people's nerves rapidly, and they are very difficult to get rid of. The linguistic metaphors in these instances are again experientially grounded. These sorts of cooked foods are applied fancifully to describe these states of character because the prepared dishes become very sticky, once cold. Similarly, the people referred to may be imaginatively seen as *sticky*. What is interesting about these expressions is that I could not find in MA any non-metaphoric expressions which may describe these mental states properly. This means that the expressions in question satisfy a semantic need in the language. Due to their hackneyed use, they have become almost entirely fixed expressions in MA. Hence from the substantives *zaɣlu:k*, *ħrira*, *ɣṣi:da*, we find derived verbs: *kajtzaɣlak*, *kajtharħar*, *kajtɣassad*, or derived adjectives: *mzaɣlak*, *mħarħar*, *mɣassad*. This may show that these expressions have ceased to breathe as live metaphors, and, therefore, have passed on to the realm of the literal.

The shape of food or degree of its cooking is further exploited in the examples cited below:

- (40) Ifəggus ləɣwəʒ ɣamru majətɡad
Curved cucumber can never be rendered straight.

If we attempt to straighten cucumber, it will simply break into pieces. The metaphor means that crooked people can never become honest or trustworthy. Moreover, to refer to spoiled children, with an unnerving character, we often hear:

- (41) mdaqgas
He is too fermented.

More imaginatively, we sometimes hear:

- (42) ḷxubz x̣ṃər ẉṭallal ẉəhbaṭ ɟ̣la ẓ̌nab ḷəẉsali
Bread has fermented; it has peeped out and bent on the fringes of the tray.

A person with insidious behaviour or blurred feelings may be

- (43) ṃəlẉijja ṃəṭẉijja
A folded pancake,
(44) ṛəmmana ṃg̣amda
A closed pomegranate.

We do not see what is inside them unless we open them. This is fancifully applied to people whose feelings or intentions cannot be detected easily. We need to probe into their personality in order to have a partial awareness of their true intentions.

In addition, a person whose behaviour may be associated with that of lunatics or mentally deranged people is said to be:

- (45) naqs ṭəbxa
He is half cooked (still raw).

These examples constitute a sample of the profuse systematic metaphors that entail the conceptual metaphor *TEMPERAMENT IS FOOD*. They show clearly that food – its taste, odour, and shape – is a source domain in terms of which we partly understand some aspects of the target domain of temperament. Another remark about these expressions is that they illustrate clearly one of the most important functions of metaphor, notably to state in a vivid and concise manner what should otherwise be often stated by circumlocutions. Moreover, they are specific instantiations of marked cultural Moroccan experience with food and cooking. For example, (29), (30), (34), (36), (38), (39), (40), (43), (44) are not encountered at least in the languages I am acquainted with. Example (42) must also be emphasized as a good instance of a special imaginative way of regarding children as too *fermented* – a conventional expression to refer to children that are treated with excessive indulgence.

In the next section, I will essentially deal with food metaphors in the Qur'an. The implications of the food metaphors corpus provided in the second and third section of the present paper will be discussed in some detail in the fourth section.

3. Food metaphors in the Qur'an

My assumption is that owing to the prevalence of food in the various Qur'anic suras, one should find correspondingly a large corpus of food metaphoric data, especially pertinent to the conceptualization of understanding and accepting the Qur'anic principles, and to the conceptualization of human dispositions. Behind this assumption is an attempt to find possible replications of the interesting findings I reported in some previous studies on Qur'anic metaphors (Berrada 2002, 2006). In fact, I demonstrated, on the basis of a large corpus of linguistic metaphors extracted from Qur'anic verses, that the pervasive linguistic instances of certain conceptual metaphors are experientially based and reflect the major concerns of the people at the time. For instance, in (Berrada 2002), I demonstrated how the Qur'an resorts to reific metaphors – using concepts pertaining to some domains that were very familiar to the people who first received the Qur'anic revelations in order to delineate the less accessible notions of faith and the eschaton.

I particularly dealt with one of the most dominant conceptual metaphors in the Qur'an: the metaphors of trade. I observed that expressions like *trade, balance, weigh, weight, hire or wage, account, reckon, reckoner or accountant, reckoning, earn, share, pledge, usury, purchase, sell, price, exchange or barter, profitable, unprofitable, win, winner, lose, loser*, which are conventionally used in the context of commercial activities, are equally employed reifically in Qur'anic discourse, to render faith and eschatology partially accessible to our understanding. These conceptual metaphors enable us to partially understand the sphere of religious belief and disbelief, reward and chastisement in terms of trade.

Equally, in (Berrada 2002), I discussed some striking linguistic metaphors which are cognitively – not simply ornamentally – motivated. In fact, I provided ample evidence on the basis of systematic linguistic data from Qur'anic discourse, that the numerous metaphors invoking *journey* should not be studied superficially by just emphasizing their aesthetic merit. I demonstrated that what appear to be unrelated linguistic metaphors scattered in various suras (i.e., Qur'anic chapters) are systematic linguistic instances underlying the general conceptual metaphor *LIFE IS A JOURNEY*. I argued that the journey metaphor helps us express our relation to the Divine in more palpable terms. It conceptualizes people as *travellers* along a *path*. The

righteous are *guided* by Allah, their ultimate *destination*, through His *straight path*, which *narrows* the *distance* to Him, to His Grace. The unrighteous, on the opposite pole, are those that the devil *hinders* from the *path of guidance*, the *straight path*, and *leads astray*, because they wrongly *follow Satan's steps*, along his *crooked ways*. This journey is not a physical journey; it is a metaphoric, spiritual journey, which is rendered palpable to our understanding via the systematic use of the vocabulary of actual physical journey. In other words, people's good and bad demeanour, their ultimate destination, their reward and chastisement are conceived through the notion of the physical journey, which is perfectly familiar to them (cf. also Shokr, 2006 for a cognitive approach to the journey metaphor in the Qur'an).

Analogously, I demonstrated (Berrada 2006) that the conceptual metaphors of *light* and *darkness* permeate Qur'anic verses. In the Holy Qur'an, reference is made to Allah in terms of *light* (sura 24:35). The prophet (sura 33:45-46) is a *light that illuminates* the path to those who follow his guidance; the Qur'an is *a light radiating into the darkness of delusion and uncertainty* (suras 2:258, 4:82, 6:76, 10:38, 17:42, 21:22, 21:63). The previous celestial books, the Torah (suras 5:44, 6:91) and the Gospel (sura 5:46), are equally designated by the term *light*. Moreover, there is a recurrent metaphorical use of *light* to stand for *faith*, the *truth*, *knowledge*, *conviction*, *peace of mind*, *tranquillity* and *blessing* as opposed to *darkness*, which is symbolic of the opposed negative qualities: *disbelief* and *heresy*, *falsehood*, *ignorance*, *hesitation*, *doubt*, *apprehension*, *damnation* and *curse* (suras 5:16, 6:122, 10:27, 33:43, 39:22, 57:12, 57:13, 57:19, 57:28, 59:9). In addition, *death* and its *darkness* are repeatedly mapped in Qur'anic verses into the domain of *misguidance* and *ignorance*, and the dichotomy of *light* and *darkness* is further pursued in the analogy drawn between the contrasted elements of *blind people* and *those who see*. Blind people live in obscurity, for they cannot see the light, which, nonetheless, surrounds them (suras 1:7, 1:15, 1:18, 2:7, 5:71, 6:50, 6:104, 6:110, 7:64, 10:43, 11:24, 13:16, 17:72, 17:97).

One expects the findings concerning the conceptual metaphors of trade, journey, and light and darkness, which are experientially motivated and reflect the major concerns of the people who first received the Qur'anic revelations to be also valid for the Qur'anic metaphoric conceptualizations of food. Accordingly, since the domain of food is equally pervasively invoked in Qur'anic discourse, it is expected to commensurate, in a similar fashion, as a

source domain via which many aspects related to human nature and credence in Islam and other target domains will be non-literally experienced.

For the reader that peruses the Holy Qur'an, the pervasive verses on food cannot pass unnoticed: the Qur'an persistently stresses the preponderant importance of food for Man. Human beings – including Mohammed, peace be upon him, (sura 25:7) and other apostles of Allah (sura 25:20) – are not created with bodies that can survive with no food (sura 21:8). They should eat of the good things He has provided for them and they should be grateful to Him (suras 2:172, 26:79). In many Qur'anic verses, people are incited to ponder over food as a gift and supernal provision and sign of the greatness of the divine creator (cf., for example, suras 13:4, 16:67, 32:27, 80:24, and 106:4). Consider also sura (6:99):

- (46) It is He Who sendeth down rain from the skies: with it We produce vegetation of all kinds: From some We produce close compounded grain. Out of the date-palm and its sheaths (or spathes) come clusters of dates hanging low and near: And then there are gardens of grapes and olives, and pomegranates, each similar (in kind) yet different in variety. When they begin to bear fruit, feast your eyes with the fruit and the ripeness thereof. Behold! In these things there are Signs for people who believe.

In this verse, people are asked to behold the vegetable realm and the luscious, wholesome fruits – grapes, dates, pomegranates, and olives – which gratify the taste. In other verses, we have references to delectable banana trees with piled fruits (sura 56:29), and lote trees (sura 56:28), a symbol of paradisiacal bliss, awaiting the faithful believers. We similarly find an allusion to fig, to which the title of sura (95) is assigned, and to specific kinds of vegetables, such as pot-herbs, cucumber, garlic, onions, lentils (sura 2:61), and grain crops, such as corn (suras 2:261, 16:11, 80:27) and fodder (sura 80:31).

Among animals whose flesh is lawful as food, cattle are underscored in various Qur'anic verses. The special importance given to cattle flesh and milk as a source of sustenance is not granted to other four-footed beasts, whose flesh is not forbidden, but whose names – to my knowledge – are not directly invoked in Qur'anic discourse in the context of food. Among the verses tackling the virtues of cattle, suras (6:142, 16:66, 36:72-73, 40:79-80) are noteworthy for emphasizing the value of cattle for riding and nourishment and as a sign of the wonderfully fashioned creation of Allah so that we may believe in His existence and show due gratitude. Consider also sura (23:21):

- (47) And in cattle (too) ye have an instructive example: from within their bodies We produce milk for you to drink; there are in them (besides) numerous (other) benefits for you, and of their (meat) ye eat.

Interestingly enough, I have not found any Qur'anic verse prohibiting vegetable food; however, Qur'anic suras are replete with verses specifying, in plain, unambiguous wordings, the animal food that is strictly unlawful for consumption except under compulsion of necessity. In this respect, the reader may consult suras (2:173, 5:1-4, 5:62-63, 6:119, 6:138-150, 16:115). Note the direct, literal, unequivocal language in sura (5: 3), below:

- (48) Forbidden to you (for food) are: dead meat, blood, the flesh of swine and that on which hath been invoked the name of other than Allah, that which has been killed by strangling or by a violent blow or by a headlong fall or by being gored to death; that which hath been (partly) eaten by a wild animal; unless ye are able to slaughter it (in due form); that which is sacrificed on stone (altars); (forbidden) also is the division of meat by raffling with arrows: that is impiety. This day have those who reject faith given up all hope of your religion: yet fear them not but fear Me. This day have I perfected your religion for you completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion. But if any forced by hunger with no inclination to transgression Allah is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.

Of equal significance is the observation that although there is no Qur'anic reference to vegetal food as unlawful or distasteful in earthly life, there are specific references to certain plants reserved in the afterlife to the sinful disbelievers. Thus, specific allusion is made to *Dhari* (sura, 88:6-7) as food reserved to the wrongdoers in Hellfire. According to Ali (1988), *Dhari* is an unsightly, inedible plant that has a repugnant smell and that will neither nourish the unbelievers nor satisfy their hunger. The unbelievers are similarly promised the tree of *Zaqqum* (sura 43-46), a foul plant which will boil in their bellies like the seething of scalding water. This disgusting, non-nourishing, painful plant is immediately contrasted to the pleasant, luscious celestial fruits whereby the believers will be rewarded as true recompense for their patience, endurance, and righteousness in earthly life.

Thus far, we have observed the importance of food in Qur'anic discourse in various contexts. We have particularly noted the emphasis of the Qur'an on lawful and unlawful food in earthly life, on the delightful food awaiting the righteous in the Hereafter and the foul, repugnant food awaiting the sinful, who are condemned to eternal perdition. We have equally noted the appeal of ripe, tasteful, juicy fruits and luscious food Allah has bestowed us so that we

may reflect on His creation and be thankful. Accordingly, we expect profuse instances of food metaphors in the Qur'an, the Holy Book the style of which is most celebrated for its abundant use of rhetorical devices, including metaphoric language.

The patent observation to make at this juncture is that – contrary to my prior expectations – the food metaphors data I could extract from the Qur'anic verses is far from matching the abundant metaphoric data on trade metaphors, journey metaphors, and light and darkness metaphors. Nevertheless, before advancing any possible accounts to justify the blatant disproportion between the literal and non-literal uses of food in Qur'anic discourse, and before attempting to reach any conclusions drawn from contrasting the MA and the Qur'anic data on food metaphors, let us consider the instances of food metaphors and images I could find in the Holy Book.

In the Holy Qur'an, we find some linguistic instantiations of the conceptual metaphor that can be expressed as: *MAKING MONEY UNLAWFULLY IS DEVOURING IT*. Thus, in some Qur'anic verses, we are warned against the *greed* of reaching wealth and acquiring property by devious, evil ways. Consider:

(49) And do not eat up your property among yourselves for vanities, nor use it as bait for the judges, with intent that ye may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of (other) people's property. (sura 2:188)

Here the excessive urge of acquisitiveness via unlawful, abhorrent means – including embezzlement and corruption of the people in authority to obtain material gain, is conceptualized as inordinate or *insatiate desire for food – gluttony*. This ravenousness is equally exploited in the Qur'anic depictions of those who *devour assuht* (translated by Ali, 1988 as any prohibited thing, both in the literal and metaphorical sense). The metaphor applies more specifically to those who *devour* people's wealth by false means (sura 9:34), those who *devour* usury, doubled and multiplied (sura 3:130), or *devour* inheritance greedily (sura 89:19). As to those who inequitably *eat up* the property of orphans, they are but *eating up* a fire into their own bellies and they are promised quick chastisement in Hellfire (sura 4:10).

Most instances of the food metaphors in the Qur'an are noticeable with respect to the target domains of punishment and reward. Wrongdoers are depicted as tasting various forms of chastisement in this earthly life, and this may be

metaphorically conceptualized as: *UNDERGOING CHASTISEMENT IS TASTING IT*. Consider:

- (50) Like those who lately preceded them, they have tasted the evil result of their conduct. (sura 59:15)
- (51) So Allah made it (i.e., the city) taste of hunger and terror (in extremes) (Closing on it) like a garment (from every side), because of the (evil) which (its people) wrought. (sura 16:112)
- (52) And indeed We will make them taste of the lighter chastisement before the greater chastisement in order that they may (repent and) return. (sura 32:21)

The final chastisement is reserved for the Hereafter. In this life, wrongdoers undergo minor penalty, which might give them a chance to turn from sin. (cf. also suras 5:95, 6:65, 6:148, 16:94, 30:41, 41:16, 54:37, 54:39, 59:15, and 64:5). The punishment awaiting the wrongdoers, however, is much intolerable: they will *taste* the unendurable suffering of Hell-fire (?anna:r, žahannam, saqar). Instances of this conventional metaphor abound in the Qur'an. In addition to the examples listed below, the reader may consult suras (3:181, 9:35, 10:52, 22:9, 22:22, 32:14, 32:20, 34:42, 35:37, 38:8, 38:57, 51:15, 78:24), among others.

- (53) Those who reject Our signs, We shall soon cast into the Fire: As often as their skins are roasted through We shall change them for fresh skins, that they may taste the chastisement. (sura 55: 56)
- (54) The Day they will be dragged through the fire. On their faces, (they will hear) "Taste ye the touch of Hell ! " (sura 54:48)

If pain and chastisement are conceptualized in terms of taste, Allah's mercy, bounty, and forgiveness are equally reified via the food metaphor, as the examples testify below. For additional linguistic manifestations of what we may term *REVELLING IS TASTING*, see suras (10:21, 30:33, 30:46, 41:50, and 42:48).

- (55) When We give men a taste of mercy, they exult thereat. (sura 30:36)
- (56) If We give man a taste of mercy from Ourselves, and then withdraw it from him, behold! he is in despair and falls into ingratitude. But if We give him a taste of Our favours after adversity hath touched him, he is sure to say, "All evil has departed from me:" Behold! he falls into exultation and pride. (sura 11: 9-10)

It is worthy of mention that despite the recurrence of this conceptual metaphor in the Holy Book, the taste of food is not specified. In the Holy Qur'an, there is, to my knowledge, only one specific reference to the taste of food used

metaphorically for the target domain of retribution, where the chastisement of Doomsday is perceived in terms of *bitter* taste.

(57) Nay, the Hour (of judgement) is the time promised them (For their full recompense): and that Hour will be most grievous and most bitter. (sura 54:46)

The reader of the above-mentioned Qur'anic verses may feel that the sweetness of savoury food as contrasted to the repugnance of tasteless food are implied with reference to punishment and reward. Yet the fact that the various forms of worldly and otherworldly food, elaborately depicted throughout the Qur'anic discourse, are not exploited as sources of tactile metaphoric images remains a mystery to me and warrants some consideration. This observation is among the major concerns of the next section.

4. Comparative and Interpretative Considerations

In this section, I will deal with the major similarities and differences between the corpus data concerning the MA linguistic manifestations of the food conceptual metaphors examined in the second section and the Qur'anic metaphoric data mentioned in the third section of the present paper. Moreover, I will discuss, on the basis of the collected data, the adequacy of the theory of conceptual mappings to account for the use and processing of these metaphors.

4.1 Some Comparative Considerations

To begin with, I would like to note that the conceptual metaphor *MAKING MONEY UNLAWFULLY IS DEVOURING IT* – linguistic examples of which we extracted from the Qur'anic text – is prevalent in the Moroccan culture nowadays, as the MA examples testify below.

(58) klawlih flusu
They ate his money.

(59) klawlih ḥəqqu
They ate his right.

(60) klawlih rəzqu/ ?arḍu
They ate up his fortune/ his land.

The three examples above contain instances of *eat*, in the narrow sense of using devious means to dispossess others of their money or to take property deceptively. The word *ḥadəm* (digest) and *kla* (eat) are interchangeable in

example (59), but curiously *hadəm* does not collocate with *money*, *fortune*, or *land*. It seems that the metaphoric collocative range of *digest* is circumscribed to abstract notions, *rights* rather than tangible properties in such contexts. Moreover, the word *kla* is a metaphoric extension of *consuming rapidly*, or *consuming extravagantly – squandering*, as in:

- (61) *kla gaç lli xallalih bbah*
He ate up all that he inherited from his father.

Similarly, the word *kla* (MA) is used in the context of checkerboard games: such as chess and draughts to refer to winning pieces, the same meaning applies to winning cards.

As to the proposed conceptual metaphors advanced in the context of conceptualizing punishment and reward in terms of *taste*, it is worth emphasizing that the use of the MA word *duq* (taste) when applied to revelling, or delighting in something, tends to be derogatory or contiguous to something negative, as in:

- (62) *tgul çamru madaq lxi:r*
He appears as though he had never tasted (anything) good.
- (63) *llah jnažžik mən lməštaq jla da:q*
May Allah save you from the deprived when he tastes (good).

Interestingly, this observation is also applicable to the verses where *taste* co-occurs with inviting or pleasant sensations. Not unlike (62) and (63), suras (10:21, 30:33, 30:46, 41:50, and 42:48) contain images of experiencing delight via taste, yet they are consistently contrasted to contiguous negative images, such as ungratefulness and excessive self-pride.

In fact, in Qur'anic discourse, the expression *taste* is more frequently used in the context of undergoing suffering (cf. suras 3:181, 9:35,10:52, 22:9, 22:22, 32:14, 32:20, 34:42, 35:37, 38:8, 38:57, 51:15, 55:56, and 78:24, among others). The same remark applies to the MA data concerning daily interactions as well as modern, standard Arabic:

- (64) *du:q lli žbædti çla rask* (MA)
Taste what you have incurred upon yourself.
- (65) *ðəq taçma lhazi:mati* (CA)
Taste (the taste of) defeat/ failure.

duwwaq (tasteful) is, however, restricted in MA to positive usage of displaying good taste, appreciation of things. This sense is close to examples (5) and (6), with reference to *understanding*.

It would be illuminating to investigate whether the various metaphorical instances of *ḍuq* in the Holy Qur'an were live and not already hackneyed in the Arabic used more than fourteen centuries ago. I conjecture that even at the time of Qur'anic revelations, *ḍuq* (taste) had ceased to breathe as a live metaphor, and the dominant meaning related to food may not have been necessarily intended. (Unfortunately, this remains mere conjecture awaiting empirical validity from adequate study of the literature contemporary to the time of Qur'anic revelations.) In fact, in CA current usage, *ḍuq* is literally polysemous for *experience*, *undergo*, or *endure*, as well as *enjoy*, *relish*, or *derive pleasure* (Cowan, 1976).

The English word *to taste* has acquired more polysemous extensions than *duq* (MA) and *ḍuq*(CA). *To taste* means also *to try or examine by touch*, *to experience or distinguish flavour*, as well as *to perceive by some other sense*, and more abstractly *to take pleasure in*, *to appreciate*, and *to partake of the nature, character or quality of...*," among other polysemous senses (cf. Onions, 1973).

So far, we have noted some major similarities pertaining to the linguistic instantiations of the food conceptual metaphors we have tackled. Yet the examination of the MA and CA Qur'anic corpus also reveals some pronounced differences. Contrary to my expectations, I have not been able to detect a single instance of *TEMPERAMENT IS FOOD* in the Qur'anic data. By contrast I have underscored the ubiquity of this conceptual metaphor in MA (cf. the illustrations of this metaphor in section 2.). Moreover, this metaphor is extensively exploited in the languages I know: Modern Standard Arabic, French, and English, and I will not be surprised to find reports of pervasive use of this metaphor in other genealogically related or unrelated languages.

What is striking, however, is the fact that the metaphor in question seems inexistent in the Qur'an, a book whose suras are replete with references to food as well as references to various attributes of human nature. In fact, various metaphoric images are used in the Qur'an to depict the sinful or wrong doers and their human inclinations. Wrongdoers are metaphorically viewed as having *diseases* in their hearts (suras 2:10, 9:125, 17:72, 22:53), and as being *blind* (suras 2:71, 6:50, 5:71, 22:46), *mute* (sura 2:17) and *deaf* (sura 5:71) to

Qur'anic revelations. Moreover, they are likened to stubborn *asses* fleeing from a lion (sura 74:50) or to donkeys that carry books, full of wisdom on their backs but do not benefit from them (sura 31:19). Similarly, they are viewed as *living in darkness* (cf. the light and darkness metaphor in section 3.), and as *unrighteously following the crooked path* of Satan, and *going astray* when ignoring the *straight path* of Islam (cf. the journey metaphor in section 3.), as well as *bartering faith for disbelief* or engaged in an *unprofitable trade* (cf. trade metaphors in section 3.). Yet the disbelievers are not depicted as being *bitter*, or having an awful smell reminiscent of *decaying food*, or being likened to *carrion*, which is strongly prohibited in the Qur'an, or having a poisonous *taste* tantamount to *Dhari* or *Zakkum*, etc. And by contrast, the believers, to my knowledge, are not depicted as having *sweet* dispositions, and they are not viewed in terms of *honey*, the virtue of which is stressed in the Qur'an (sura 16:68-69).

Analogously, the Qur'anic text does not seem to include instantiations of the *IDEAS ARE FOOD* metaphor. I have not been able to find linguistic evidence for conceptualizing the internalization of Qur'anic messages via the food metaphor. Thus, conceptual metaphors such as *LEARNING IS EATING*, *UNDERSTANDING IS TASTING*, *UNDERSTANDING IS DIGESTING*, and *BELIEVING IS SWALLOWING*, which are recurrent in many related and unrelated languages, are not instantiated in Qur'anic discourse.

Why can't we find systematic mappings of *food* and *ideas* to conceptualize the understanding and acceptance of the veracity of the Qur'anic messages, and why can't we find mappings of *food* and *human dispositions* the way trade and journey, other common source domains, are extensively exploited to conceptualize aspects of human drives? A possible answer to these questions is that these mappings were part of the conceptual system of Arabs and were manifested in the language used at that time, yet these metaphors were simply not exploited in Qur'anic discourse. Another conclusion, based on the examination of the data extracted from the Qur'an, is that there are no surface linguistic manifestations of these mappings because the mappings in question were not part of the conceptual system of the people addressed at that time, for the Qur'an, it is worth stressing, addressed the people who first received the revelations, using the language they were familiar with.

Unfortunately, we have to confess that no hard evidence can be provided to account for the inexistence of these mappings in the Qur'an. A judicious step would be to study the Arabic records that were contemporary to the Qur'anic revelations, records that largely consist of prophetic sayings and poetry. Unfortunately, this is beyond the scope of the present paper, but it is interesting stimulus for future research I intend to embark on. This is no easy task since unlike the Qur'an, some Hadiths (prophetic sayings) are notoriously weak. The fact that they may be fabrications, or containing additions, is not to be discarded (cf. Rippin, 1990). Moreover, some scholars suspect the authenticity of the bulk of pre-Islamic poetry that has reached us. For instance, Taha Hussein in the 1920's after an examination of this poetry concluded that it is largely fabricated (cf. Iqbal and Saifullah, 1999).

In the next section, we shall be concerned with the relevance of the theory of conceptual structure for accounting for the data proposed in this study.

4.2 Some Interpretative Considerations:

In this section, I would like to mainly consider the relevance of the theory of conceptual structure for accounting for our capacity to produce and understand metaphor. In fact, not unlike our observations with regard to *IDEAS ARE FOOD*, *TEMPERAMENT IS FOOD* is a conceptual metaphor experienced across many unrelated cultures, some linguistic instantiations of which may be recurrent across unrelated languages, yet many metaphoric expressions underlying this conceptual metaphor, I conjecture, remain culture specific and seem to resist literal translation, for when literally rendered into other languages, these unexpected collocations simply result in semantic oddities. I have in mind, examples of the sort (1), (5), (6), (13), (19), (29), (30), (34), (36), (38), (39), (40), (42), (43), (44), among others.

Consider also,

(66) lħamm lbagri wəllaft lmħfur (MA)
Beef and turnip

This expression is also an instantiation of the *TEMPERAMENT IS FOOD* metaphor. When I first heard it with reference to a particular family member, I understood it, from the particular context of utterance, as targeting an aversive aspect of his character. Nonetheless, I remained at pains to understand what particular negative traits of character were meant, and I had to ask the

utterance user to be more informative. In fact, I have now come to understand that (66) is a culinary metaphor that has become quite conventionally used, especially among females, to refer to stubborn, inflexible people, who are hard to convince. Even after having been informed about the conveyed meaning, I admit that I had to seek further illumination concerning the experiential motivation for the metaphor, the ground of the perceived similarity. A plausible answer is that this special dish requires considerable time to cook, and analogically stubborn people are hard, or take longer, to convince.

I contend that the above-mentioned metaphor may be a good example, among others, to emphasize the fact that many novel and imaginative uses of these mappings between apparently disparate domains (*temperament* and *food*, *ideas* and *food*) cannot be comprehended instantly – contrary to what Lakoff (1993) may maintain. My aim is not to cast doubt on the theory of conceptual structure at large (but see McGlone, 1996, who, on the basis of psycholinguistic laboratory findings, reports that subjects do not essentially resort to conceptual metaphor as a modal strategy to process metaphor). Here I would simply like to draw the reader's attention to the patent reality that although, for example, (13), (14), (19), (36) and (42) are clearly surface manifestations of the underlying conceptual metaphor *TEMPERAMENT IS FOOD*, which may facilitate their processing, this is not sufficient for granting them the status of being instantly comprehended. Without extensive, pragmatic contextual provision, much of the intended meaning would remain non-communicated.

Metaphors trade heavily on cultural associations, which also may vary considerably with time. This means that in addition to the literal referential meaning of words, we often need context, in its broader sense – including the cultural and spatio-temporal parameters – in order to decipher the meaning of certain metaphors. For instance, to cite the stimulating work of Stoh (1996), the connotative meaning of *lemon* has undergone historical changes. In mid 19th century Britain, it metaphorically designated a person with a *tart inclination*, then *lemon* came to be associated with a *gullible* person, a *sucker*. The metaphor, I surmise, would mean different things to English people belonging to different historical periods, and interestingly when translated literally into other languages it may yield arrant nonsense if there is no literal equivalent in the target language, or it may result in a different meaning according to the associations imputed to the particular fruit in question. Thus,

(67) ḥamḍ limu:n
He is sour (like) lemon,

means *bad tempered*, as in example (31), but it can also be associated with a *boring person*, unlike the one whose *mouth overflows with honey*, mentioned in example (25). Similarly,

(68) ta:jb
He is cooked,

metaphorically refers to a person who is *pestered*, but in a different context, it may designate someone who is ready to make concessions. For an English speaker who translates (68) into English, the expression will echo the English conventional meaning of *being caught red handed*, or plainly *being responsible for wrongdoing*.

To recapitulate, some linguistic metaphors seem to be translatable cross-culturally and retain analogous meanings (e.g., (3), (8), (10), (11), (17), (24), (26)); some metaphors convey different meanings when rendered into other languages (cf. (67), (68)), and others may prove to be merely nonsensical (e.g., (1), (13), (36), (38), (39), (42)). In addition, even within the same language, the same linguistic metaphor may result in different paraphrases from a historical period to another (cf. the different diachronic associations of *lemon* in English). That all these instances of linguistic metaphors may be governed by *one* conventional cross-cultural conceptual metaphor, say *IDEAS ARE FOOD*, or *TEMPERAMENT IS FOOD*, can by no means justify the contention that they will be automatically processed by the language user.

It is noteworthy, on the other hand, that writers reputed for their highly poetic imagination may produce instances of linguistic metaphors that may be innovatively tensive, yet much easier to understand than the hackneyed ones mentioned above. These poetic instances of what may appear to be highly fresh metaphors are indeed expressions that clearly obey the conventional conceptual metaphors. Consider, as a matter of fact, Bacon's example:

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly and with diligence and attention. (1953: 217)

In this quotation, Francis Bacon exploits this conceptual metaphor, which is prevalent in the English culture, more innovatively by creatively introducing

tasting, and *chewing*, to conceptualize degrees of internalizing ideas, instead of being simply contented with the conventional, everyday linguistic metaphorical expression of *digesting ideas*. Yet the writer's metaphorical expressions in the quotation above still observe the common conceptual metaphor *IDEAS ARE FOOD*. In this context, we may sense the validity of Lakoff's (1993) assertion that the study of poetic metaphors is an extension of the study of conventional, mundane metaphors. And we feel that the food metaphors mentioned in the quotation above do not really warrant the paraphrasing Bacon has suggested for them, for their interpretation is easily accessible to the reader.

Another piece of evidence to this contention may be illustrated in (69), extracted from the poetry of Nizar Kabbani, a contemporary Arab poet:

- (69) wa?ana: muqtani?un bi?anna šši?ra ra?i:fun juxbazu lil?umhu:r (Kabani, 1978)
I am convinced that poetry is bread baked to the general public.

Although we should not exclude our general knowledge of the world in order to understand it, the verse above does not seem to require extensive contextual specifications. The verse simply means that poetry is not intended just for the distinguished, cultivated people: it should target the general public. It should be accessible to all people the way *bread* is the baked food that is most accessible, in terms of its availability and price. Consider also:

- (70) sabi:ħatum dasima (CA)
a fat / creasy morning

This utterance is produced by a chairman in a literary debate while commenting on the richness of a lecture delivered in the morning. (70) seems to reverberate the *meaty book*, and *meaty lecture*, which are conventionally used in English, but are, to my knowledge, unconventional in MA and CA. Thus, (70) will be strikingly novel to an Arabic speaker although it is clearly structured by the *IDEAS ARE FOOD* metaphor. Innovative as it may seem, its interpretation, nevertheless, is straightforward: the lecture in question is rich; it contains a lot of very interesting ideas.

More importantly, however, although innovative language users extensively rely on conventional conceptual metaphors to produce new linguistic metaphors, they equally produce metaphors that are idiosyncratic and unsystematic, and that do not seem to be subsumed within any conceptual metaphors they are acquainted with in their cultures. Unconventional

metaphors are not uncommon in creative writings, and they seem to resist incorporation within any conventional conceptual metaphors we live by in our culture. Lakoff and Johnson (1980:145) suggest that novel metaphors may be integrated in our conceptual system, and they have the power “to create a new reality”.

It is a blatant truth that a large number of strikingly novel metaphors are conventionalized in the language owing to their hackneyed use through the passing of time, and they may be integrated in the ordinary thoughts and perceptions of the community. But this does not mean that many new metaphors do not remain constantly striking and may never get conventionalized. When we consider Qur’anic discourse, we notice that the unconventional metaphors of this sort are very limited in number if compared to the pervasive metaphors that are dominated by conceptual metaphors, some examples of which have already been provided in section 3. Yet unlike the above-mentioned conceptual metaphors, there are some sporadic instances of Qur’anic metaphors that seem idiosyncratic and resist conventionality. Examples of this sort are mentioned below:

(71) Praying: “O my Lord! Infirm indeed are my bones, and the hair of my head does glisten with grey.” (sura 19:4)

This verse is a depiction of the negative effect of old age on the prophet Zakariya. Here, *grey hair*, which is symptomatic of old age, is imaginatively viewed in terms of *fire*. The spreading of grey hair in the head is viewed in terms of the image of the spreading of fire, and the rapidity and destructiveness of fire is used as an image to portray the swiftness whereby grey hair spreads in the head. This apt metaphor, it seems to me, although it was coined more than fourteen centuries ago, still appears strikingly fresh and innovative, and it does not seem to obey any conventional conceptual metaphor. Consider also:

(72) And the Dawn as it breathes away the darkness, (sura 81:18)

The example above is a novel idiosyncratic way of conceiving the light of dawn and its dissipation of darkness. Here *dawn* is innovatively and unconventionally depicted as a living being that dissipates the darkness of the night by breathing it away. The two poetic metaphors discussed above do not seem to obey any conceptual metaphors, and are, thus, to be accounted for

differently, for Lakoff and Johnson's framework does not seem to capture them.

In short, the linguistic metaphors that can be clearly subsumed under conventional conceptual metaphors may not be necessarily easy to understand. Some hackneyed as well as poetic metaphors obeying these conceptual mappings may be intricately hard to process; other mundane and fresh instantiations of the same conceptual metaphors may prove easy to understand. As to idiosyncratic metaphors, they remain a stumbling block for the theory of conceptual structure.

5. Conclusion

I would like to briefly reiterate some significant observations, most of which were discussed in the fourth section. It has been common practice in many cultures to perceive a similarity – though not an objective one – between ideas and food: the various mental processes involved in assimilating ideas are partly understood and experienced in terms of the more concrete transformations that happen in the digestive system when absorbing food. Moreover, some expressions describing temperament via the food metaphor are strikingly analogous across different cultures. For instance, at least in the languages I am acquainted with, MA, CA, English, and French, a well-behaved person is said to be *sweet* or *succulent*. Yet the concepts of sweetness and good behaviour are not underlain by any literal objective similarity.

To account for this similarity, we putatively suggest that, as human beings, we share some common natural perceptive features and this may give testimony to the universality of some of our cognitive processes (cf. section 1.). However, as Kovecses (2000) maintains, there are pronounced cultural disparities which render the argument of universally valid conceptual metaphors improbable. We run the risk of “digging up rather marked phenomena typical of a single language instead of retrieving universal features of the human mind” (Neuman, 2001:142). So it seems to me that, in the quasi absence of large scale cross-cultural empirical research, we should refrain from positing unnecessary, simplistic generalizations about the universality of some conceptual metaphors.

We also postulate that the recurrence of such expressions across some unrelated languages may be due to borrowings through cultural contacts (cf. section 1.), but this awaits empirical validity by tracing the extent to which new conceptual metaphors are adopted by other cultures through cultural contacts. If my observations concerning the apparent inexistence of *IDEAS ARE FOOD* and *HUMAN DISPOSITIONS ARE FOOD* in the Qur'an are validated by similar results on the basis of comparative approaches to the CA literature contemporary to the revelation of the Qur'an, they will have interesting implications. Any absence of these metaphors from the literature concomitant to the Qur'an may lead us to some plausible conclusions pertaining to the contention that the above-mentioned conceptual metaphors, which are highly manifested in MA daily expressions as well as modern standard Arabic, are the by-product of cultural borrowings – i.e., they may be deemed as mere loan conceptual metaphors, resulting essentially from cultural contact rather than from any universally shared conceptualizing faculties.

The adoption of the Lakoffian cognitive theory as a framework for the analysis of MA and Qur'anic CA food metaphors data strongly confirms the view of metaphor as a mode of thought rather than a mere figure of speech, a view that is equally finding increasing support on the basis of non-linguistic metaphoric manifestations of our conceptual system, such as music and pictures (cf. Forceville in press). Considerable research on metaphor in the Qur'an seems to have been restricted to the appreciative level – singling out linguistic metaphors and commenting on their aesthetic role to embellish the Qur'anic style (cf. Berrada 2002). What fundamentally motivates these metaphors, however, are conceptual considerations: the metaphors that may appear to be disconnectedly scattered throughout the Qur'anic text can be readily classified into themes, obeying general and more specific conceptual metaphors, such as *UNDERGOING CHASTISEMENT IS TASTING IT*, *REVELLING IS TASTING*, *MAKING MONEY UNLAWFULLY IS DEVOURING IT*, and *FAITH IN ISLAM IS A PROFITABLE TRADE*, *EXCHANGING FAITH FOR DISBELIEF IS AN UNPROFITABLE TRADE*, *PEOPLE RECEIVE THEIR ACCOUNTS*, *PEOPLE'S DEEDS ARE RECORDED IN A LEDGER*, *HUMAN DEEDS ARE WEIGHED*, as well as *LIFE IS A JOURNEY*, *BELIEVERS ARE ON THE RIGHT PATH*, *DISBELIEVERS FOLLOW THE CROOKED PATH*, *BELIEVERS ARE HEADING TOWARDS THE ETERNAL ABODE OF PEACE*, and *DISBELIEVERS ARE HEADING TOWARDS HELLFIRE*. Like a lot of

mundane MA metaphors, Qur'anic metaphors are not mere isolated linguistic instances: they are vivid manifestations of the conceptual metaphors that govern them.

Similarly, we have corroborated Lakoff's (1993) observation that highly poetic or creative metaphors are mostly produced along the lines of the conceptual mappings that we are familiar with in our culture. Yet this does not preclude the existence of highly creative metaphors that are idiosyncratic and unsystematic, and do not seem to be subsumed within any conceptual metaphors we are acquainted with in our culture. These fresh, innovative metaphors may be the by-product of the personal experience or fanciful perception of the creative poet or language user, in general, and they seem to defy our conventional perception of things, since these linguistic metaphors seem to resist their incorporation within any customary conceptual metaphors we live by in our culture.

More significantly, we have argued that the fact of tracing linguistic metaphors, hackneyed and new, to pre-existing conceptual metaphors is not *sine qua non* to their automatic retrieval or ease of comprehension. We have demonstrated (cf. section 4.2) that whereas some poetic metaphors obeying the conceptual metaphor *IDEAS ARE FOOD* may be relatively easy to understand, many mundane, conventional metaphors, nonetheless, cannot be processed prior to extensive contextual provision. Moreover, the examination of *TEMPERAMENT IS FOOD* metaphor in MA has revealed that though this conceptual metaphor is familiar across related and unrelated cultures, its instantiations can be widely different depending on the specific cultural associations or connotations pertaining to our dissimilar, culture specific experiences with food, taste, and cooking traditions.

Metaphor, it is worth stressing, trades on cultural associations that are not similarly experienced cross-culturally and that vary or change with time. It seems to me that these associations, together with matters of contextual specifications, necessary to metaphoric comprehension, are the proper domain of pragmatics, not cognitive semantics.

6. References

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7. Key to Phonetic Transcription

Consonants

ʔ	<i>glottal stop</i>	ʔardun	land
b	voiced bilabial stop	ba:bun	door
t	voiceless alveolar stop	bajtun	room
θ	voiceless dental fricative	θaçlabun	fox
ʒ	voiced palato-alveolar fricative	ʒamalun	camel
ħ	voiceless pharyngeal fricative	ħani:nun	nostalgia
x	voiceless velar fricative	xa:lid	eternal
d	voiced alveolar stop	da:run	house
◌	voiced dental fricative	◌anbun	sin
r	voiced alveolar trill	raħmatun	mercy
z	voiced alveolar fricative	zallatun	lapse
s	voiceless alveolar fricative	samakun	fish
š	voiceless palato-alveolar fricative	ša:hidun	a witness
ɣ	voiceless pharyngealized alveolar fricative	ɣawmun	fasting
ɖ	voiced pharyngealized alveolar stop	na:ɖiratun	beaming
ɗ	voiced pharyngealized alveolar stop	ta:ʔirun	a bird
ç	voiced pharyngeal fricative	çilmun	science
ğ	voiced uvular fricative	ğari:bun	strange
f	voiceless bilabial fricative	fanna:nun	artist
q	voiceless uvular stop	qalbun	heart
k	voiceless velar stop	kabi:run	big
l	voiced dental lateral	lajlun	night
g	voiced velar stop	gləs (MA)	sit down
m	voiced bilabial stop	maža:zun	trope
n	voiced alveolar nasal	naħnu	we
h	voiceless glottal fricative	huna:ka	there
w	voiced labio-velar semi-vowel	waladun	a boy
j	voiced palatal semi-vowel	jawmun	a day

Vowels

i	short close front unrounded	çilmun	science
i:	long close front unrounded	çali:mun	omniscient
ə	short half close central	fənn (MA)	nice
u	short close back rounded	ɖulm	injustice
u:	long close back rounded	raʔu:fun	merciful
a	short open back unrounded	ʔardun	earth
a:	long open back unrounded	ça:limun	scientist