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## **African Literary Writers on Women: An Examination of Selected Yorùbá Poets**

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### **Abstract**

*There is no doubt about the fact that African women are at disadvantage to their male counterparts in society. This is obvious in the works of some male writers who often ascribe negative stereotypes to women, presenting a biased picture of womanhood and neglecting aspects of their unique contributions to the development of the home front and society at large. The traditional African societies do not help matters as they portray women as voiceless and frail extensions of humanity. Therefore, this paper seeks to examine both the negative and positive images of women as they are depicted in literary works and the contribution women are making through their written work to the development of society. It also reveals that African women through their written works have proved that they are not secondary citizens to their male counterparts but the backbone of the society. Feminist theory which is germane to the topic of discussion is adopted. In the findings, the paper is able to reveal underrepresentation of women in leadership position, structural barriers, gender bias and societal norms. Although, in the recent times, some male writers have changed their narratives on how they portray African women in their writings, much is still expected to project the good image of African women in the face of society and national development. The paper suggests that literary artists should use their work of arts to correct the negative images of women in African society and bring to the fore the core value of women and their uniqueness in societal development.*

**Keyword:** African Women, Traditional African Society, Male, Literary, Feminism theory.

### **Introduction**

The African literary status has long been dominated by male writers whose works have in most cases presented women in a negative light leading to a charge of male chauvinism. This is obvious in the portrayal of women in a stereotyped manner, that the kitchen is the sole territory which women are voted to govern by divine ordination. African literature tends to reflect the interest of male members of the African intelligentsia, The traditional African societies do not help matters

as they portray women as voiceless and frail extensions of humanity this is reflected in most of their proverbs where women are portrayed in a negative manner. This view is echoed by Mentuye (1990:399) who says:

*In Yorùbá tradition, proverbs are largely misogynist.  
Directly or otherwise, they take women as their subjects  
Referring to their improper and evil behaviours as majority  
Of their proverbs see women as number one problem that men have.*

He says that some Yorùba men is of the view that women are the obstacle to their progress. Mentuye, through his explanation reveals the traditional perception of women as reflected in the proverbs below.

Èni tó da aṣo obìnrin bora, wèrèpè ló dà bora  
*The person who covers himself with a woman's cloth  
covers himself with the tormentingly itching wèrèpè fruit.*  
Obìnrin kò ní gògògò  
*Women have no Adam's apple (i.e women cannot keep secret)*  
Bòbìnrin pé nílè ọkọ, àjẹ níí yà.  
*If a woman stays in her husband's house for too long,  
She becomes a witch.*  
È má finú han fòbìnrin, abẹnu mímú bí abẹ  
*Don't confide in women, owners of the razor-sharp tongues.*  
Ta níí ṣòdòṣà lójú ọfọn-ọn, ta ló fẹẹ fojú obìnrin mawo.  
*Who dares initiates mice, who dares initiate women into the*

*cults*

These proverbs support Mentuye's view that most Yorùbá proverbs are derogatorily used to ridicule the women. The unfavourable reflection of women by some African male writers was ignited by the traditional African societies's depiction of women as secondary citizens to their male counterparts. In Opefeyintimi's opinion (1997), when it comes to child bearing, women have special power and which they equally use to dominate men. He says:

*..Majority of the causes of the death of men are traceable  
to women. Natural human desire for sex and societal  
demand for childbearing for the continuity of the human  
race partly constitute the fundamental factors why men  
play into the whims and caprices of women.*

From his view, women are the death killing men and that the special power created in them were used to control men in a bad manner. The pioneer African male writers mirrored patriarchy system in their works, where male extols supremacy and authority over the female in all spheres of life, male education is usually taken serious compare to the female education thereby subjecting the female folk to always be a follower while the men take leadership positions. On patriarchal system, Simeon (1998) has this to say:

*Patriarchal traditions are practices that make the woman*

*subordinate to the man in such a way that she may not be able to make her choices the way she wants. These traditions are as diverse as the cultures and the religions of the world. In African, practices like widowhood rites, laws of inheritance, religious taboos and career restrictions and so forth have constituted the main reasons for female subjugation and oppression.*

This observation is in line with the practices among the Yorùbá societies. For example, just like properties, women are inherited after the demise of their husband. There are roles that cannot be assign to women and positions which women should not occupy. This patriarchal system does not allow women to take leadership roles. In the past, some women have taken brave and prominent roles in the societies, such as Móremí of Ilé-ifè who faced the people fighting her community and taking them as slaves, Èfúnróyè Tinúbú and Èfúnšetán the women leader of Ibadan, despite their support and bravery the traditional African societies did not recognise women's roles in the society. Contrary to the traditional beliefs about women, in this contemporary society, we have seen some women that are much valuable in thoughts and ideas, who with their abilities have succeeded in contributing tremendously to the economy and political development of our nation. For instance, Ngozi Okonjo Iweala, a woman, is the Director General, World Trade Organization and Professor Iyabode Nwabueze also a woman who is the immediate past Dean of Faculty of Arts in National Open University of Nigeria and a host of other women who hold important positions in their fields. In spite of all these, however, some male writers presented women in a positive images. They view the women's role as supportive to the development of the home and society. Ilesanmi (1992:88) view women as strong and indispensable in the society. He says:

*They posses higher psychological, metaphysical and even material powers. Their beauty is power; their comportment can unbalance the seeming fixidity of man; their menstural phenomena can nullify the medicinal power of men; their feelings may be more effective than the reasoning of men; their love can melt a rock and their hatred can obliterate a nation.*

From Ilesanmi's view, women are endowed with a special power which they may not be aware of and they are loving in nature. Women take active part in the development and progress of the family, Stanley (1994:10) supports this when he says:

*Within households; black women perform a significant Portion of the social reproductive labour. The Socialisation of children and the cleaning, cooking and Nurturing functions are all disproportionately black*

### *Women's work.*

The quotation above reveals that women take active roles when it comes to taking caring of the children, cleaning the house and contributing to the development of the family. Their role can not be over emphasised. Okediji (1988:116) also has this to say on women's supportive roles to the society:

*Without the woman, there is no Yorùbá culture...the mere existence of the woman as an assistant at work, providing the meals, rearing children and satisfying that basic human need for companionship is quite remarkable, woman contribute to the community life...*

This means that women have a unique position they take when it comes to the development of the home and society. It is against this backdrop that this paper examines both the negative and positive images of the women as depicted by some Yorùba male poets and how women are changing the status through their poetry. The paper adopts the feminist theory.

### **Theoretical framework**

Feminism is derived from Latin word 'Femina' it has to do with everything that concerns women. To Ogini (1996:11) feminism can be viewed from two perspectives; first from ideological perspectives that both male and female should be equal in the society, and second, is to look at it as Women Liberation or Women's right Movement. Feminism has its origin in the struggle for women's right when women became conscious of their oppression and marginalization and took steps to redress this oppression, it began in Europe and America in the late eighteenth century. Foremost African woman critic and theorist, Omolara Ogunḍipe -Leslie (1994:3) in her 'STIWA' meaning Social Transformation Including Women of Africa posits that Africa as a whole needs transformation which is about creating an enabling environment in the society, where men and women can play individual but collaborative role. Sotunsa (2008:4) states that there are diversities of feminism, which arise as a result of differences in the methodologies, concept and practices of feminism. Cultural feminism is one of the varieties of feminism, and will be adopted in this paper because in Yorùba poetry, whether women are portrayed negatively or positively they are reflections of the African societies. The aim of the cultural feminism theorist is that women are to be respected and accorded with due respect in the society. Spencer (2002:50) defines cultural feminism thus:

*Cultural feminisim is a variety of the theory of feminism and is a reaction to male assumptions about the rating of women according to social, religious, cultural, political and ideological norms. Basically, cultural feminism insists that woman's responsibilities of nurturing, caring and sensitivity to others'*

*needs should never be downplayed but rather be highlighted because of their valuable contributions to every society.*

Again, one of the theorist of cultural feminist, Tong (1989:49) emphasizes that their concern is that women should be valued and appreciated for their contributions in the society. He says:

*Cultural feminism comments the positive aspects of what is seen as the female character or feminine personality. It is basically a theory that attempts to revalidate what cultural feminist consider undervalued female attributes.*

From the explanation of the theory above, it is pertinent to note that the Yorùbá and African societies at large failed to respect the fundamental rights of women in socio-cultural, religious and political settings. Moreso, the Yorùbá culture take cognizance of language usage, most importantly some of its cultural proverbs, are meant to ridicule women. Though it has been in existence for long. Using such pejorative proverbs on women is unpalatable. Apart from proverbs, it is also established but unpleasant literary tradition among male writers to portray the image of women negatively in literary works as will be seen later in this paper.

### **Negative portrayal of women by male poets**

Female are portrayed as being of lesser importance and valueless in the family and society, in the poem Ayé Obìnrin, Omolasoye compares women to rat and dog that they are only responsible to men who can feed them. This is revealed below:

Èkúté ilé lè mí fí wón wé,  
A jeni-fèni lèkúté ilé,  
Ajá ni wón,  
Olóúnjẹ ni wón n bá lọ,  
Bó bá di pẹkọ ò sí mó,  
Ajá á sùre padà sẹyìn,  
Ọrọ obinrin ni nńkan  
Nńkan lẹrọ atẹyìntọ,  
Ọbẹ tó jinná làwọn n fẹ,  
kájọ dána ẹran,  
Kì í sọrọ ohun tí wón fẹ ẹ ẹ se (Omolasoye:2011:40)  
*I compare them with the house rat,  
The house rat are deceitful  
They are dog  
They folowed the one with food  
Whenever there's no food  
The dog will run backward  
That is women's issue  
The one that urinates from behind is something else,*

*They are after already made soup  
To prepare the meat,  
Is not what they want to do.*

From the above, the poet sees women as someone whose submission and love to men is based on the man's ability to provide her daily needs. This notion is to ridicule women as it is an established fact that women are not lazy and not all are dependant. Despite the onerous responsibilities shouldered by the woman in the family, Fakunle in his poem, *Ìwèlẹ̀* says:

Abo sọra wọn dohun ẹlẹgẹ  
Wọn n gbáyé ẹ bí wọn ti fẹ  
Ìwà àbùkù kún ọwọ̀ iwèlẹ̀  
Bí wọn bá burú tán  
Ayé á ní sẹbí abo ni!  
Bí wọn bá huwà ìkà tán  
Ayé a ní ẹ bí iwèlẹ̀ ni

.....  
Ọgbón obìnrin ò tó nńkan  
Ète àlùpàidà tí n bẹ lówó abo nkó?  
E wá w'obìnrin lójú u pópó (Fakunle 2011:62)  
*Female gender turned themselves to weaker vessel  
They live life as it pleases them  
Females are full of evil character  
When they have done evil  
People will say they're mere women!  
When they behaved badly  
People will say they're women*

.....  
*Woman's wisdom is minor  
What about woman's cunning attitude  
Come to the street and see women.*

The African culture portrays woman as one who is cunning and has little or no wisdom, this notion is displayed by the poet when he portrays woman as someone who is full of evil and has little wisdom, these are how some male literary artist have reduced women to in the world that seems to be dominated and controlled by men. He goes further to say that when a woman holds a top position in her workplace, she becomes arrogant and pompous to the men under them; as seen in the excerpt below:

Bábo bá jólórí ilé iṣé  
Akọ wọn á gontíọ lóri ako  
Abo ẹ ẹ ẹ pẹlẹ, gáágáá yín pọ̀ (Fakunle: 2011:63)  
*If female is the head in an office  
Their domineering is much upon the male  
Female be careful, your dominance is much*

The African woman is seen as the subordinate in every aspect of life in African setting, but when it happens that woman is the head in an office or organization, the men under them always complain that they are not being respected. This view is reflected in the above where the poet shows that he is not in support of women being the head in a workplace because of the authority they exercise over male under them. Alade (2000:2) observe that the patriarchal system is meant to truckle the women, he says:

Women are seen as weak vessels in Yorùbá culture. They are regarded as second class citizens and not recognized as important in political, religious and legal matters and generally seen as subordinate to men...

From the above, it is established that dominating the woman comes from the African culture where women are portrayed as one who have no say in the society. The notion among some African male writers that females are not reliable, cannot keep secret, explosive and insensitive is seen in Ayé Obinrin where the poet described women thus:

Igi wọn ò ẹ̀e é fẹ̀yìntì,  
Torí pé wọn ò ní gbò-ń-gbò,  
Ọ̀rò obinrin ò lẹ̀pọ̀n-ọ̀n,  
Ó tọ́ ká mú wọn bí àwọn iyàngbò ni,  
Afẹ́fẹ́ bínńtí ní í gbé wọn lọ,  
Èdá tó rí wọn tí ò sá,  
Ó ń kọ̀ lẹ̀tà s'ábùkù,  
Ata ni wọn,  
Títa ní wọn ọ̀n tani lójú,  
Obinrin ò sì máa fiwà ẹ̀tàn kó ni sí wàhálà.

.....

Eni ó fábo ní kọ̀kọ̀ró awo  
Tó sọ kọ̀kọ̀ró sígba-n-gba  
Obinrin fọ̀gbọ̀n ẹ̀wẹ́ ná ọ̀ lówó tán  
Ó gbọ̀nà ẹ̀tàn, o sọ ọ̀ dì lẹ̀lẹ̀  
Ìlẹ́rí asán lo kọ̀kàn lé (Omolasoye 2011:41)

*You can not rely on them  
Because they can not keep secret  
Women's issue need not to be respected  
It is better to take them as the maize chaff  
They're driven by little wave  
Whoever sees them and do not run  
Such is inviting insult  
They're pepper,  
They can harm your eyes  
Women can put you in trouble with their deceit*

.....  
*Whoever keeps the initiate key with woman,  
She throws the key outside  
Woman trickly spends your money  
With trick she ruins you  
You rely on fake promises.*

The nauseating manner in which the poet presented woman from the above, is part of the feminist theorists campaign to put a stop to the negative and derogatory portrayal of African women. This was what prompted Hooks (1984:24) to say:

Feminist is a struggle to end sexist oppression.

In *Òyèkú méji*, Abimbola portrayed women as someone who is not truthful and trustworthy. It reads thus:

Obinrin lèké  
Obinrin lòdàlẹ̀  
Kéèyàn mọ́ finú han obinrin (Abimbola, 1975:33)  
*Woman is a liar  
Woman is treacheous  
Let no one keep secreet with a woman.*

Inspite of all these, however, the negative portrayal of women by the poets above is that of a timid and subservient feminine gender whose sole role should follow the stereotyped style. It is a known fact that African women are pillar of support to their families and the society, this we have read in history. In spite of all the negative images painted women in the works of the above poets, there are some male poets who presented women positively in their works. This would be discussed next.

### **Positive portrayal of women by male poets**

It is interesting to note that some noble male poets portray women in a positive and pleasing manner in their works. Raji (2004:4) posits that:

Women are indispensable, it is when you have an outing that you know the importance of cloth, when it comes to celebration, merriments, cooking, count on women. If the vulture refused the sacrifice, it would have stayed longer outside.

Rotimi (2000:33) also supports Raji's view when he says that women's role cannot be under estimated in Yorùbá society, his words:

From time immemorial, Yorùbá has placed women in high esteem they respect them, they pamper them, they placed them in the rightful position. At home, in the religious circle, in politics there is no man who can underrate woman, except for the man that wants to

eats his pounded yam as mere yam without pounding it. It is women that make the society delightful, they are the one that added to the society. Whoever wants to know how a town without a woman use to be, should visit the non existing women community.

From the above, it is noteworthy that some Yorùbá culture have regards for women despite how they are being portrayed in some of their proverbs. From the foregoing, we shall look at the positive images of some male poets. In *Òkan-òókù Obìnrì*, Raji described the beauty and loving nature that God bestowed on women thus:

Ká má purọ́;  
Èran ifẹ̀ràn n bẹ̀ fòbinrin;  
Ara ọ̀kùnrin a sù gàn-in  
Èrù a sì máa yọ̀ wọ̀n bà lálẹ̀ gbèsè  
Torí ẹ̀wà tỌ̀lọrun fún wọ̀n ni  
Adára-máa-dán tí gbogbo ayé n wò bi díngrí  
Lékélèké lobinrin;  
Èyẹ̀ tí ò fọ̀şẹ̀ wẹ̀rì tó fi n funfun  
Ọ̀kín ni wọ̀n  
Àwọ̀n ní í şọ̀lọ̀jà lówùjọ̀ ẹ̀yẹ̀ (Raji 2004:1)  
*To be truthful;*  
*Women are endowed with loving nature;*  
*Men are emotionally turned on*  
*They sometimes feel jittery without owing anyone;*  
*Because of the beauty God bestowed on women*  
*The beautiful one who's admired by everyone*  
*They're the egret bird*  
*The bird that is ever white without bathing*  
*They're like peacock*  
*They're the special breed among the birds.*

The poet elouglises the beauty that God gave to the woman by comparing them with the egret bird that is ever whitish without bathing and their special feature he compares with the peacock. Another male poet who portrays woman in a positive image is Olurankişẹ, in *Ayé n dayé Obìnrin* he says that women are capable of holding any sensitive position and that they are always excel in whatever they put their mind on. He says:

Obìnrín tí jọ̀ba ilú rí,  
Wọ̀n wí i fún mi gbọ̀;  
Obìnrin tí gbé odidi Orílẹ̀-èdè ka àyà rí,  
Ojú àwà isín yí nàà ló kúkú şe. (Olurankişẹ 2004:33)  
*Woman has ruled a town before,*  
*I was told;*  
*Woman has ruled a country as well,*

*It was during our youthful period.*

The poet did not followed the stereotyped manner which other male poets portrayed the woman but he acknowledges the successes and achievements made by women in the society as seen above. He goes further to say:

N kò jẹ sẹ ẹ rará  
N kò jẹ bényàn jiyàn-an rẹ  
Pé bí ọkùnrin  
Tó ju ọkùnrin lọ ti n bẹ,  
Bẹẹ gẹgẹ lobìnrin míràn wà  
Obìnrin bí ọkùnrin,  
Obìnrin tó ju obìnrin egbẹ rẹ lọ  
Àwọn ní í ẹ adájó,  
Tí wọn kì í gba àbẹ-ṣaájú  
Tí wọn n mú ọbàyéjẹ èniyàn  
Tí wọn kì í bá wọn wo ẹyin  
Irú wọn ní íṣe iyálé,  
Tí í to ilé ara wọn dáadáda  
*I can never disprove it  
I can never argue it with anyone  
That as there are men  
That are stronger than others  
Same way is applicable to women  
Woman like man  
A woman that is stronger than her mates  
They were the judges,  
They do not agreed to secret pleading before judgement  
They arrest the evil ones  
They do not join in evil dealings  
Their types are good mothers  
They put their homes in order*

Even though women were underrepresented in leadership and political position, the male poets above appreciated the efforts and contribution of women in the society. Women hold supportive roles in the Yorùbá society, over the years, female literary artist have tried to brake the perception that the kitchen is the sole territory which women are voted to govern by divine ordination and not to remain as political pawns.

African women through their written works have proved that they are not secondary citizens to their male counterparts as will be revealed in the works of two female poets that would be discussed next. Arinpe Adejumo a female academic poet in a poem *Alábòṣódó*, in the book *Rò òò re*, the poet, says that women are protection to the family even though the society did not see it that

way, she pointed out the efforts of women on their children right from pregnancy to delivery and their support to their husband in seeing that the man appears presentable outside. She commends women for their role in raising their children to be responsible adults. It reads:

Bọmọdẹ bá máa wí  
Wọn a lóbinrin wẹ  
Bágbà mí a fọ  
Wọn a lóbinrin ọ́ tó pọn  
.....  
È bá rẹyin wò woşé iyá  
È bá woşé iyá lóri omọ  
Iyá ló rẹrù oyún fún oşù mẹsàn-án  
Bó dojọ ikúnlẹ ọ̀pọ ọkọ a móri légbó  
Ní títa, ní ríro iyá a kúnlẹ  
Ó kúnlẹ, ó bímọ sáyé tán  
Işẹ tún wá peléke sí i  
Níbi baba tí n hanrun  
Iyá a máa şàisùn (Adejumo 2007:30)  
*When the younger ones talked  
He sasy who is a woman  
When the elderly talks too  
They say women's issue is trivial  
.....  
You should look back to see mother's efforts  
And see mother's support to their children  
It's mother that carried pregnancy for nine months  
On the day of delivery some men will run for fear  
In pain, in surffering she gave birth  
She goes to labour, gave birth  
Her work increases  
When the father is snoring  
The mother keeps vigil*

From the above, the poet reveals some of the women's roles in the home and the society. she goes further in revealing some of the risk and sacrifices mothers rendered to their children at the expense of their own safety:

Mo ti riyá tó torí omọ tó ríkú he  
Iyá kan iyá kàn níjósí  
Lológun jù látorí pẹtẹ̀ẹ̀sì  
Iyá ọ̀hún ọ́ kúkú jalẹ  
Ikú omọ nìyá n kú lọ  
Níjọ ilé gbiná lỌ̀jọ̀ọ̀ọ̀ níjósí  
Mo rí baba tó ta kété

Tó ta kété tó n wọmọ ẹ tí n jóná  
Ibẹ̀ nìyá ti kírí ọ́nà  
Tó fẹ̀ ọ̀lùgbàlà ọmọ  
Ìyá ọ̀hún kúkú ti gbàgbé ọ̀we  
Pé bíná bá n jóni tó n jómọ ẹni  
Tára ẹni làá kọ gbọ̀n dànù (Adejumọ 2007:31)  
*I have seen mothers who died because of children  
One mother sometimes ago  
Was threw from the story building by military men  
This mother was never a thief  
She was suffering because of her child  
When a house caught fire in Ọ̀jọ́ọ́ sometimes ago  
I saw a father watching from a distance  
He was at a distance watching his child burning  
There the mother ran into the inferno  
She wanted to save her child from burning  
She has forgotten the adage  
That says your safety is first before your child.*

She also berated women that are dependant on their husband for survival to get a job to do and stop being economically dependant in *Alábọ̀dọ́* It reads:

Ọ̀pọ̀ ọ̀bìnrin n bẹ̀ nílẹ̀ yí  
Tíṣẹ́ ọ̀un iyà ti wọ̀ lẹ̀wú  
Irú wọ̀n ní jọ̀bẹ̀ tí ọ̀ lépo  
Irú wọ̀n a sì jọ̀bẹ̀ tí ọ̀ níyọ̀  
Bọ̀mọ̀ bá béèrè kọ̀bọ̀  
Wọ̀n a ni dúró de dádì  
Bírú wọ̀n rí pátá tó wuyì  
Wọ̀n a ní ẹ̀ kírí wá tí baba bá dé (Adejumọ 2007:31)  
*There are some women in this land  
That poverty matched like cloth  
Their types eat soup without oil  
Their types eats soup without salt  
Should their child cry for anything  
They will say wait till daddy returns  
If they see beautiful paints to buy  
They will say come back when our husband is around*

Also in *Ààrẹ*, the poet castigated the men that do not want women to occupy leadership position because of gender bias and societal norms. Apart from the quoted poems above, there are several others in her book *RÒ Ọ̀Ó RE* where the poet talked about the contribution of women to the society, she also thanked God in *Orí Ló Dámi Lábo* for making her a woman. Adebowale Yemisi is

another female academic poet who has contributed in making the voice of women heard through her literary works. In her book, *Ìgbàlonìgbàákà*, in *Èkó Alẹ̀-Tì-Lẹ̀*, the poets praises women who attend adult education despite their busy schedule in the home but still strive to be educated so that they can contribute their quota to the development of their families and society and encouraged them to persevere to the end . It reads thus:

Èkó alẹ̀-tì-lẹ̀ ò lórúko méjì  
Èkó ká fọkọ sílé jọmọ sílé

.....

Mo kí yín ẹ kú ipakítímọra  
Ká pẹ láya ò pé ká má bímọ kankan;

.....

È múra, wàhálà èkó àgbà féréẹ̀ ditàn (Adebọwale 2003:51)  
*Adult education has no other name*  
*Its an education where husband and children are left at home*

.....

*I greet you for your edurance*  
*Late marriage does not mean you wont have children*

Also in *Ohun Èlẹ̀gẹ̀ Ni Àşẹ̀*, the poet faulted some male who use their authority to oppress their wives and any female that work under them. She goes further to say that whatever position anyone holds is for a period of time, hence, one should be cautious of how they treat those under them. This is revealed in the excerpt below:

Ọgá, emi lo ń fèèkù idà tiẹ şẹ?  
Èèkù idà t'Ólú fún ọ àìgbọdòmálò  
Àmọ àşẹ a bá fifẹ pa níí mórí ẹni yá

Ori Adé, orí ewu

Işẹ apàşẹ, işẹ ẹlẹ̀gẹ̀. (Adebọwale 2003:18)

*Boss, how do you exercise your authority?*

*The leadership role given to you by God must be use*

*Exercising your authority with love makes the subject happy*

*Leadership position, can be hazardous*

*To lead, is risky*

From the foregoing, it is interesting to note that it is not only women who are making a conscious efforts to build positive image for the women but also notable male literary artist in Africa. Women are also working tirelessly to change the voiceless and frailty images the society portrayed them. Abubakar (1997) supports this notion when he says:

The concentration of women in service jobs is  
Noticeable. They are also represented in high-ranking  
Urban white collar jobs, such as court judges,  
Lawyers, Doctors, Ambassadors, Senators and

University teachers.

Therefore, male writers need to appreciate their female counterparts, support them and should not see them as rival but colleagues in the development of the nation, as quoted by Chukwuma (1990:7)

(African) Feminism is not a question of superiority or inferiority. It is a question of complementary and recognition.

### Conclusion

The paper attempts the African literary perspectives on women by looking at the positive and negative portrayal of women by some male writers and how the women are making concrete efforts in their contributions to the family and the society. We have seen that some male writers are fond of painting the image of the female gender negatively and even some Yorùbá proverbs portrayed women in an unpleasant and nauseating manner such as betrayer, backbiters, ingrate, murderer etc. It is interesting to note that such description are changing as African women have shown that they are not only home managers but also they are into professions that have once been regarded as exclusively for men. The role of female gender in any society cannot be under estimated, therefore, the paper suggest that more male literary artist should use their work of arts to promote the female gender in African society and ignore the old tradition that a woman's place is in the kitchen. Also, women should be respected and accorded their fundamental rights in socio-cultural, religious and political settings. Women should be given the opportunity to aspire to any leadership position with the support of men so that women can equally contribute their quota to the development of the society. Society should reference the past efforts women have put in the development and growth of the family and society as well.

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## **A Historical Appraisal of an Articulated Kingship Institution in Isinland, Kwara State, Nigeria**

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### **Abstract**

*This work explores the historical evolution of a modular kingship system among three communities of Isin in Kwara State of Nigeria from the earliest times up to 2010. The paper examines the Olusin kingship and its influence on inter-communal relations. It also examines how the institution has been shaped by socio-political and cultural interactions over the centuries, particularly under the pressures of colonialism and modernity. By analysing the historical trajectory of the kingship institution, the study provides insights into its role as a unifying force within Isinland. The study highlights significant milestones in the development of the kingship, detailing major events and transitions that have shaped its trajectory. It underscores the role of the kingship in fostering cooperation and mutual understanding among the three communities of Isanlu-Isin, Ijara-Isin, and Iji-Isin; all in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State. The study adopts a multidisciplinary approach, utilising materials from both primary and secondary sources. Oral information from community elders offer first-hand accounts of customs, conflicts, and resolutions, providing valuable perspectives on the kingship's significance. Archival materials such as annual reports provide a comprehensive reconstruction of the institution's evolution. The study discovers that despite the challenges faced by the political institution such as succession disputes and external political influences, the kingship has played a pivotal role in maintaining the cultural identity and historical continuity of the three communities.*

**Keywords:** Kingship institution, colonialism, modernity, cultural identity, historical continuity, oral traditions.

## Introduction

This paper is a rich and intricately interwoven political history of Isinland in Kwara State of Nigeria from the earliest times of the community up to 2010 when the modularised kingship institution ceased to exist. The piece specifically focused on the transformation of the traditional political system in the three communities. Isinland, with its rich cultural heritage and deeply ingrained customs, witnessed a significant shift in its governance structure following the demise of *Olusin* Ajai Amuyunbola. While his period in power is unknown as there are diverse narrations to the monarch's reign, his pivotal period in office heralded the dawn of a new era characterised by the introduction of a rotational system within the *Olusin* kingship institution. This essay unravels the complexities surrounding the establishment and evolution of the rotational system in Isinland.

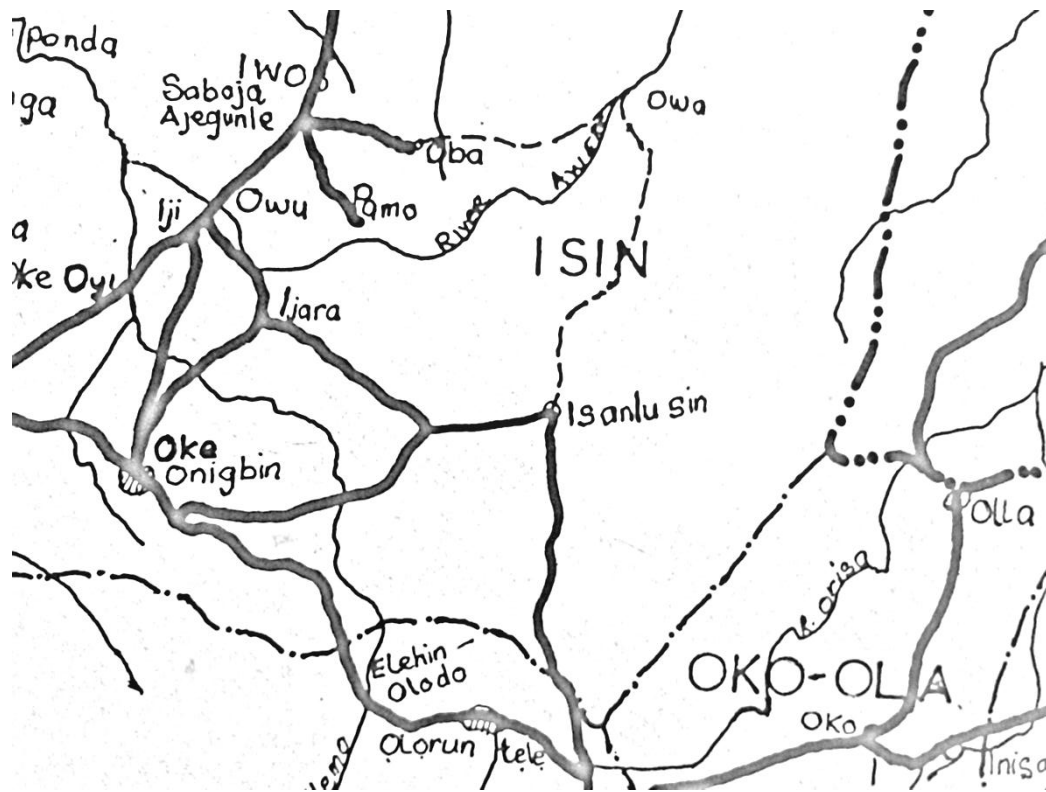
Historiographically, apart from a number of general works on African and Nigerian kingship institution; Boston (1962), Adegbulu (1993), and Nevadomsky (1993), and Yoruba kinship institution; Lloyd (1960), Ogunode (2021), Miles (1987), Biobaku (1987), and Pemberton and Afolayan (1996), academic literature specifically devoted to the *Olusin* and by extension, the Igbomina kinship institution is relatively sparse. Boston's work, *Origin of Igala Kingship* connected the kingship of the Igala with a group across the Niger from Idah linked with a Yoruba king. Boston's work is useful for this research effort as it laid a foundation for exploring cultural connections relevant to understanding the evolution of the *Olusin* kingship institution (1962: 373-383). Nevadomsky's work, *The Benin Kingdom: Rituals of Kingship and Their Social Meaning* is based on the axiom that African kings are sacred (1993: 65-77). Nevadomsky's work provided a theoretical foundation for understanding the sacred nature of kingship, which is a key consideration in the *Olusin* kingship institution.

On the historiography of the Yoruba kingship institution, Lloyd (1960: 221–237) opined that the Yoruba are best-known in West Africa with sacred kingship. The work also considered the issue of conflict occurrence over the installation of a new king which issue this research effort has addressed. Ogunode's thesis titled, "Kingship Institution in Post-Colonial Akokoland, 1960-1999," argued that kingship and power dynamics remain important in the African traditional governance. The work became important to this research effort as it examined the survival of a kingship institution in the postcolonial era in Yorubaland (2021: 48-72). Biobaku's work, *Sources of Yoruba History*, studied the political entities of the Yoruba, especially the Egba and Ekiti. He held forth that these entities employed sacred kingship that was hereditary only within the royal blood (1987: 206-210). This work has contributed to the research's effort at examining how the principles of sacred kingship and hereditary succession manifested in the Isin kingship institution.

The scrubby nature of cerebral literature on the *Olusin* kingship institution has made this research to thoroughly peruse the little available ones from some notable scholars. In addition, the research also relied heavily on archival materials obtained from provincial files, court injunction documents, some unpublished seminar papers, as well as newspaper reports, news magazine and articles in notable journals. Some of these materials made occasional references to Isinland in studies related to Igbomina or Kwara State in general. In making allusions to Isinland, these works majorly studied wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Ilorin domination of Igbominaland. The body of literature in this category include Aaron (2022), Aboyeji (2015), Afolabi (2006), Ibiloye (2012; 2011), and Ugwu (2016). Aaron's work is a historical analysis of how Isinland became part of the Ilorin emirate after a successful Ilorin military expedition of Isinland and other Igbomina towns. Aboyeji's thesis focused on the cultural and colonial history of Isinland with a rich insight into its kingship institution (2015: 64-80). Afolabi detailed the migration history of the Igbomina of which the subject of this study is a part to present day Kwara and Osun States as well as delving into the evolution of the *Olusin* kingship institution and the origin of its rotational system (Afolabi, 2006: 26-30). Also, the work of Ibiloye gave more insight into the evolution of the *Olusin* kingship institution and inter-community relations in Isinland before the rotational system of the stool (2011: 33-36). Another of Ibiloye's work discussed the dispersal of population within Igbomina land as a result of the 1804 Fulani Jihad. The population shifts affected parts of Isinland and the kingship institution (Ibiloye, 2012: 105-113). The relevance of the aforementioned works to the research efforts could not be overemphasised.

#### **Location and the Strategic Importance Isin in Yorubaland**

The land of Isin lies within the northern part of Yorubaland in the middle belt of Nigeria (Aleru 2006: 10). It is approximately between latitude 8°N and 8°25'N and between longitude 4°40'E and 5°30'E, within Isin Local Government of Kwara State of Nigeria. It shares boundaries with Agunji and Igbaja districts to the north, Oro-Ago and Ilere to the east, Omu-Aran and Arandun to the south, and Oro to the west. All these neighbouring communities fall within Ifelodun and Irepodun Local Government Areas of Kwara State. Isinland occupies an approximate area of 995 square kilometres. It is endowed with savannah and forest vegetation on a plain terrain with patches of rivers and streams that serve as verdant areas for easy crop cultivation and animal grazing. Isinland has an alternating climate of wet and dry seasons. The wet season lasts from April to November with about 1100mm-1500mm of rain. The rainy season starts in April and ends in November. The season is characterised by prevailing winds. The wet season is accompanied by south-westerly winds originating from the Atlantic Ocean, while the dry season is characterised by harmattan winds due to the tropical region (Aleru 2006: 10-20).



**Figure 1:** Map showing the three Isin communities of Ijara-Isin, Iji-Isin and Isanlu-Isin, in Isin Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria.

**Source:** Ilorin: Kwara State of Nigeria: Launching of the Local Government Reform, Pamphlet, 1976.

The vegetation of Isinland is nourished by the high rainfall, high temperature, and high relative humidity. The land is drained by short, swift-flowing streams that are mostly seasonal. Important among them are the Awere, Agbaa, Osin, and Oyi rivers. Awere is the most important to this research because it cuts across most of the towns in Isinland. The edaphic nature of the soil contains mineral resources such as granite, gravel, laterite, feldspar, tantalite, mica, kaolin, talc, quartzite, tourmaline and marble. Topographically, Isinland is craggy in nature and it is surrounded by some rugged hills and knolls, including: Jewo-Ese, Odo Ibu, Sangolopo, Okore, Alaguso, and Alawoji hills. The gradients of the hills are very steep, and their harsh topography served some historical purpose as they functioned as a defensive barrier against successive raids carried out in the country by the Nupe, Ilorin, and Ibadan invaders in the past (Aleru 2006: 11). Also present in Isinland are notable undeveloped waterfalls including; Atti, Ijoko, and Aise Falls at Isanlu-Isin. Other historical features present include Tiloye stone and image, and Alaguso hill at Ijara-Isin; Agbasin shrine at Isanlu-Isin;

Kooyi shrine at Olla; Alawoji hill and forest at Iwo; the Iron crown rod at Oba-Isin; Esii shrine at Oke-Oyi, and Akoyi at Edidi, among others. The presence of dolerite had played a significant role in the earlier centuries as materials for stone tools while the availability of soapstone was very important for the ancient stone carving in the area, especially at Esie and some other towns (Aleru 2006: 10-11). It is without doubt that Isinland has occupied a strategic position in Yorubaland; advantageously located in its northern tip and extremely rich in historical artefacts.

### **Theoretical and Conceptual Assumptions**

Some traditionalist theories and concepts are germane to this study. When behavioural theorists test for statistical correlation between two factors, they embark on a voyage of discovery of coincidental survey between the two factors. If they engage in a multivariate analysis they are determined in finding out which of the several factors is the most reliable forecaster of a particular aftermath (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 2001: 38). To the scientific analysts, this position is irresponsibly arrogant (Knorr and Sidney, 1961: 16). However, this research borrows a leave from the traditionalist theorists of multidisciplinary approach by performing a careful content analysis of the primary and secondary sources that are offered as evidence. These will not only include archival materials, but also speeches, press statements, government reports, personal memoirs, newspaper accounts and commentaries, interviews, oral histories, and scholarly studies.

The study of the *Olusin* rotational institution also fits into the concept of intuitive selection of what is deemed important and relevant, meticulously gathering, sifting, weighing, and interpreting evidence (Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff, 2001: 37). Since the use of judgement, intuition, and insight are essential in arriving at conclusions in this type of research, utilising oral traditions, archival records, and secondary sources are apropos. Oral histories from community elders offered first-hand accounts of customs, conflicts, and resolutions, providing valuable perspectives on the kingship's significance. Archival account, not excluding historical documents, colonial records, and previous scholarly works, enabled a comprehensive reconstruction of the evolution of the *Olusin* kinship institution situating it within broader socio-political and historical contexts. The essay also explored the impact of external pressures, such as invasions and colonialism, on the kingship's authority and adaptability. It has demonstrated how the institution was able to navigate these challenges, preserving its traditional authority while embracing changes that ensure its relevance in contemporary society.

### **Migration and peopling Isinland**

The Isin people are a stock of Igbomina, a sub-group of the Yoruba distinguished by a particular dialect of their own. The name 'Isin' connotes both the people and the land they occupy as most of the towns in Isinland bear the suffix, 'Isin.' The

dialect of the people concurs with the major Igbomina dialects. Isin settlements are comprised of thirty-six towns referred to as *Ekunmerindinlojoji* Isin, (the thirty-six communities of Isin) (Tinuoye, 2002). Some of the towns in Isinland include Isanlu-Isin, Ijara-Isin, Iji-Isin, Oke-Aba, Iwo, Odu-Ore, Owu, Oke-Onigbin, Pamo, Oba-Isin, Kudu-Owode, Alla, Igbesi, Oponda, Edidi, Sabaja, Opega, Odo-Eku, Olla, Oke-Oyi, etc. The people are divided into two groups: the Odo/Isale-Isin and Oke-Isin, (the upper and lower Isin). Tinuoye (2002) suggested that the people might have settled together at the same time since they had both filial and conjugal relationships at the time of their settlement. Moreover, the word 'Isin' points to people who are related linguistically, culturally, and geographically (Aleru, 2006: 53).

The word 'Isin' happened to have been coined from the ackee tree (*Blighia sapida*), a tree native to tropical West Africa and cultivated for its fruits. Under such trees meetings by the earlier progenitors might have held. The people might also have used the bark, the leaves and fruits of the tree to cure some certain diseases. Perhaps, the ackee apple tree might have provided some shade for the people under which they took their rest when on migration. The name could also have been derived from the name of an important cult god, *Agbasin*, prominent among the people. The various versions of derivation of the name, 'Isin' indicate that the people might have migrated together to their present place in large groups from their ancestral homes of Ile-Ife and Oyo-Ile. Perhaps the most probable of all the sources of the root of the name 'Isin' may be that version that linked the name to *Ile Isinmi*, meaning "the place of rest." Thus, the name may be the summary of the agony of war and attacks the people experienced on their way to their new abode from their ancestral homes in the hands of invading Nupe, Fulani, and most likely also, the Ibadan warriors (Dada, 1985: 9).

The migration of Isin people to their present place of abode is not unlike the ones that took place before or after their own in history. Migration is an aspect of human activities, and human beings changing locations has been a normal part of culture and civilisation. People moved from one place to another to settle permanently or for adventure; such movement always involved individuals or group of individuals depending on the motive behind the movement. Human migration, in a broad sense, refers to the relatively permanent movement of an individual or a group over a distance. Migration often resulted from the search for another permanent settlement for peaceful living and expansion. The reasons for migration differ from person to person or group to group (Ibiloye, 2011: 33-36). According to Ibiloye (2011), people voluntarily abandon their homeland under pressure from enemies and disputes over land and chieftaincy titles, as in the cases of many people in Isinland. According to the historical background of some of the towns, exploration and entertainment activities such as game (hunting), drumming, and masquerades like *Oje*, *Igunnu*, and *Egungun* also led to migration.

Some migrations occurred due to divine instruction from deities to change environment, or the outbreak of epidemics and diseases (Ibiloye, 2011: 33-36).

The Isin people have a diverse history of origin and migration. Some members of the group migrated from different places at different times and settled at different times and in different sites. However, majority of the people that arrived at their present place of abode came from two main sources at different times. The two principal sources of migration of the people were the old Oyo and Ile-Ife (Ibiloye, 2011: 33-36). Nevertheless, a fraction of the people claimed some irreconcilable source of origin and migration. For instance, the Oba-Isin people claimed that their progenitors emerged from the earth at a place called *Ojubo-Ere* shrine where rites were performed to the earth deity. Thus, the Oba-Isin people's cognomen today is, 'Oba, *omo ere*,' meaning 'Oba, children of the mud.' (Ibiloye, 2011: 33-36). It has been argued that the claim of descent from Oyo and Ile-Ife notably by the ruling classes among the people might be a ploy to legitimise the usurpation of power from the indigenous people. This also suggests that those immigrants would have met some people in the area they were supposed to have founded. According to Ibiloye, this argument has been supported by archaeological and historical records containing aspects of the people's culture. There is evidence of some ancient and abandoned settlement sites in Isinland, located in the forest enclosure very close to the hill tops (Ibiloye, 2011: 33-36).

In order to support this argument further, Ibiloye (2011) opined that the presence of stone walls at Isanlu-Isin, reported to have been there when the first immigrants arrived, as well as some stone figures in Ijara-Isin, are testimonies to the claim that indigenous people were already present in the area. Also, the overall redistribution of population in Isinland formed part of its migration history (Aleru, 2006: 53). Furthermore, it is noted that sections of the Esie refugees can be found in Ijara-Isin and Iji-Isin as parts of a paramount evidence of such movement and final relation with their former home. In addition, some Esie stone images can be found in Ijara-Isin today. Thus, there seemed to have been a continued formation of settlements in Isinland with the most recent recorded being after the 1804 Jihad. These events had actually affected Isinland's migration history, with new villages founded and old ones augmented by waves of refugees from neighbouring settlements (Ibiloye, 2011: 33-36).

The Isinland settlements of today appear to be a product of a complex intermingling of people through migration due to military conquest, political pressure, and personal decisions of some of the early settlers. Although, the Isin people have different stories of migration, the people are related linguistically, culturally, and geographically as oral evidence shows that some of their predecessors must have come together at the same time (S. Alade, personal communication, March 22, 2024). However, the conquest and integration of the

northern Igbomina by the Fulani under the Ilorin emirate system in the pre-colonial period separated them from the southern Igbomina, bringing Isinland (which was part of the northern Igbomina) and its people under Kwara State while their kith and kin, the southern Igbomina belong to Osun State today. The unholy separation of the people determined the type of colonial experience they had. Isinland under the Ilorin Emirate came under the Northern regional administration, while other parts of Igbomina were included in the boundary delimitation of 1894 between Captain Bower and Lord Lugard, based on the principle of local jurisdictions. This was a product of the 1830 event by which the Igbomina, including Isinland, was integrated under the Ilorin Emirate (ILOPROF/NAK 3663C).

The Fulani invasion greatly unsettled the region and the Ibadan marauders' raid led to Burnet's report that '...the area has been somewhat unsettled since the Fulani invasion and Ibadan marauders' incursion. In fact, so great was the physical dislocation that by 1900 no Igbomina village was on its pre-18<sup>th</sup> century site.' This report revealed the havoc done to the Igbomina, including Isinland (Ibiloye, 2012: 105-113). During the British occupation, Isinland was under Omu. Isanlu District villages like Isanlu, Ijara, and Iji were under the rule of Ali Balogun Gambari and Ajia after the Olomu had been conquered (ILOPROF/NAC/398). However, Omu-Aran, Isanlu, Ijara, and other villages remained until Isin was put under Ilorin Division in 1946. Isanlu-Isin, Iji, and Oke were merged under Ilorin Emirate, and there was an Isin Village Council. However, the local government reform of the Igbomina area of 1954 created each village with its own area or ward. Village groups and district councils were responsible for electing members to the native authority council. Between 1956 and 1957, a standing order located an Area council in Isanlu-Isin (ILOPROF/AC/30/C5).

Following the Igbomina local government reforms of 1968 and 1976, and intense pressure for change, the Igbomina were granted autonomy, and the majority of the settlements are now in the Ifelodun and Irepodun local government areas of Kwara State (Kwara State of Nigeria Launching of the Local Government Reform, 1976: 15). Isin local government was carved out of Irepodun local government in 1986, with Owu as the capital. Nevertheless, the traditional council established in the LGA reform of 1976 for Ifelodun and Irepodun, with headquarters in Ajase-Ipo and headed by chairman Olupo of Ajase-Ipo, still remains and the three *Olusins* are today members of the traditional council of Kwara State (Local Government Reform Inauguration of Emirate/Traditional Councils, June, 1977: 41).

### **The Rotational Kingship Institution in Isinland**

The transformation of Isinland's political system had many parts artfully combined. The land with its rich cultural heritage and deeply ingrained customs, witnessed a significant shift in its governance structure following the demise of *Olusin Ajai Amuyunbola*. The period of his reign is unknown as there are different narrations to the monarch's period in power. Notwithstanding, the reign of this particular monarch was very significant. It heralded the dawn of a new era that was characterised by the introduction of a rotational system within the *Olusin* kingship institution (S. Alade, personal communication, March 22, 2024). This part of the article will meticulously unravel and analyse the complexities surrounding the evolution and establishment of the rotational system in Isinland.

The *Olusin* kingship institution originated from the progenitor of Isanlu-Isin, *Olusin Aina*, who probably reigned between 1740 and 1766. Aina was one of the second-generation crowned princes from the *Agbedegbede* ruling family in Ile-Ife. Oral history testified to it that Aina was a king in a certain area of Ile-Ife before he left in frustration after being denied the opportunity to celebrate the *Egungun* festival, which he admired and wished to practice. (*Egungun* was neither practiced nor allowed in Ile-Ife, even to this day). Aina departed Ile-Ife with his crown and a deity known as Isin, symbolised by the *koro isin* (ackee fruit seed). Since this deity belonged to him, he kept it secret and made it a sacred god, worshipping and consulting it. It was from the use of this deity that he was referred to as the *Olu-Isin* 'owner of Isin,' which later evolved into the title *Olusin* (S. Alade, personal communication, March 22, 2024).

*Olusin Aina* most probably arrived in the present area around the 16<sup>th</sup> century and at a time, when there was no kingship institution in the entire region. He initially settled at Ajagbo and then moved to various locations before finally settling down at Oke-Agbon, near the present-day Isanlu-Isin. At Oke-Agbon, his first settlement, the *Olusin* kingship institution was established and ruled the land as the sole king. The Aina family was the only royal house entitled to the kingship from its inception. The Oke-Agbon settlement provided hiding places in times of emergency, hence settlements were located in close proximity to it. The *Olusin* soon became the political head of some thirty-six towns and villages, performing the role of a general overseer in the social, religious, and administrative affairs of Isinland. *Olusin Aina* established a centralised state over Isinland with a large political unit covering the thirty-six towns and villages, known as '*Ekunmerindinlogoji Isin*' (E. Aransiola, personal communication, March 20, 2024). The *Olusin* suzerainty was divided into the *Odo/Isale Isin* (lower Isin) and *Oke-Isin* (upper Isin), under his authority as the *Olusin of Isinland* with the headquarters at his palace in Oke-Agbon (Aleru, 2006: 53). The *Olusin* kingship was an absolute monarchy, with him as the supreme head wielding enormous power with *Baales* and chiefs under him (Afolabi, 2006: 188-189).

The leadership of Isinland was hierarchized with the *Olusin* as the head of the entire chain of communities followed by the *Baales* in some towns and the high chiefs in others. The *Baales* were the heads of the chiefs in other. The chiefs under the *Olusin* were categorised into the *Ìhàfà* (high chiefs), *Ihare*, *Ihawa*, *Ologun* (senior chiefs), and *Omo Ologun* (lesser chiefs). Each group of chiefs was headed by one of them as the leader. The number of chiefs was as many as over two hundred, according to oral tradition. All the *Baales* and chiefs worked hand in hand in accordance to the directive from the *Olusin* of Isinland (Awodele and Alabi, (unpublished): 10-24). The *Olusin's* palace welcomed the *Baales* and chiefs every seventeenth day (referred to as *Ipade Itadinlogun*) for general meetings and assemblies. At these meetings, the interests of Isinland were discussed; important activities such as rituals and festivals were planned, and disputes were settled. When *Olusin* Aina died and was succeeded, the activities remained the same up to the time of the *Olusin* Amuyunbole Ajai (Oba S. B. Aboyeji, personal communication, March 8, 2024).

According to some available records, *Olusin* Ajai Amuyunbole was either the second or fourth *Olusin* that reigned after the progenitor. It is recorded to have reigned between 1766 and 1790 (Dada, 1985: 8). Ajai's reign, (1766-1790) fell within the Nupe periods of incessant raids on Isinland. The Nupe invaded Isinland repeatedly between 1744 and 1795; and during one of such incursions, the Oke-Agbon palace was sacked, and the entire town razed. Citizens scampered for safety to escape captivity and enslavement by the Nupe invaders. Ajai managed to escape and hid himself in a forest but got lost. The escapees returned to the settlement to pack their v belongings and flee (NAK ILOR PROF/NAC 3663C). Ajai was still missing after five days. His daughters, married to men at Ijara-Isin and Iji-Isin, became agitated and together with other princes and princesses summoned courage to visit the settlement in search of their father. However, some of the children took their time to scavenge for treasures in the ruins of the burnt palace. It was the concerned daughters, sons-in-law, and their families who eventually organised a search party that found the *Olusin* in the forest (Suit No: KWS/399/2015).

The rescue team took *Olusin* Ajai from the forest back to his elder daughter's abode at Oke-Enifon compound, Ijara-Isin, for proper care. When the unconcerned princes got to know about their sisters' efforts and care for their father, they came to Ijara-Isin, with the motive of taking Ajai back home. However, the *Olusin* displeased by the uncaring attitudes of the princes refused to go with them. *Olusin* Aja informed his careless children that they and their generations after them would not partake in the *Olusin* kingship again after his death. After persistent entreaties from the the people of Isinland, Ajai agreed to return to Oke-Agbon but with the vow kept. Before his return to his former palace, *Olusin* Ajai pronounced the conferment of the right of ascension to the

throne of *Olusin* to the generations of his two daughters after his death on a rotational basis. This was to start with his elder daughter and followed by his younger daughter, in appreciation of their bravery and care for him during his travails. Ajai also invoked a curse on an attempt to revert his proclamation (Suit No: KWS/399/2015).

The rotation of the kingship institution in Isinland began with Ijara-Isin, and its candidature of the *Olusin*, Oba Pakuna Alejolokele in an unknown date. However, his authority was said to have extended to the various settlements in the entire lower and upper Isinland. The community chiefs were under his control as it was before the establishment of the rotational order (Suit No: KWS/399/2015). Pakuna's reign was short but peaceful, and was succeeded by *Olusin* Adesunloye from Iji-Isin. Adesunloye's period in office was neither recorded. He became the second *Olusin* in the rotational order and ruled from his newly established palace in Iji-Isin. Adesunloye was known to be a poet and was very popular. Much of his praise names (*oriki*) are still remembered and recited by the elders in Isinland today. His poems are said to be part of the Isin oral history today. Poetic eulogies about this monarch depicted him as bold, steadfast, effective, and self-effacing (L. Oyelowo, personal communication, March 22, 2024). When Adesunloye died, the stool went back to Oke-Agbon, where *Olusin* Atidimogun was crowned. *Olusin* Atidimogun reigned from 1796 to 1816 and his reign was faced by threats from the Nupe invaders. The incessancy of these invasions led the people to move to another site, Isanlu-Isin, some few kilometres away. Atidimogun had a personal army and was said to have been a slave merchant. His reign also saw the establishment of the Ilorin emirate rule over Isinland (A. J. Afolayan, personal communication, April 1, 2024). However, Isinland was never conquered by the Fulani Jihadists from Ilorin but was affected by the conquest of its neighbour, Omu (NAK ILOR PROF/NAC 3663C).

The rotational system continued with *Olusin* Jawaraniju Apoinbeletierin (1811-1836) from Ijara-Isin. His reign was marked by internal conflicts. He was succeeded by *Olusin* Apopolonipaesin I from Iji-Isin, who reigned for forty years, (1836-1876). Apopolonipaesin I's reign experienced external military attacks and the establishment of the Ilorin emirate rule over Isinland. He became a puppet king under the emirate. He was succeeded by *Olusin* Okandunmoye Agboluaje Lakanpo (1876-1906) from Isanlu-Isin, who became the first *Olusin* after the settlement at Isanlu-Isin. His reign was marked by the continuation of the emirate administration (NAK ILOR PROF/NAC 3663C). The rotational system faced a setback when *Olusin* Aniyunlogba Bankole succeeded Okandunmoye from the same Isanlu-Isin. Bankole's reign, (1906-1911) was marked by disobedience to tradition and the failure to follow the rotational system. His reign ended in chaos and civil war within Isinland. This period marked a turning point in the history of Isinland, leading to conflicts and instability. Despite this, the rotational system

continued, with subsequent rulers from Ijara-Isin and Iji-Isin (Suit No: KWS/399/2015)

The demise of Bankole in 1911 triggered a significant conflict in Isinland, disrupting the longstanding rotational kingship system. This period saw the breakdown of unity among the triumvirates and the eventual collapse of the traditional political system. The influence of external forces, including the Fulani conquest and British colonial administration, played a significant role in destabilising the traditional order. The introduction of a foreign judicial system and the appointment of village heads by the Ilorin emirate undermined the authority of the *Olusin* and traditional chiefs (NAK ILOR PROF/NAC 767<sup>A</sup> 3.8 1912-14). In 1912, a judiciary council was established in Isanlu-Isin, further eroding the traditional governance. This council, comprising local leaders and agents of the Ilorin emirate, managed legal and administrative affairs, collected tributes and settled disputes. The imposition of foreign administrative structures and the manipulation of traditional systems by external powers significantly altered the political landscape of Isinland, leading to a period of turmoil and instability (Dada, 1985: 11-12). Despite these challenges, the resilience of Isinland's traditional institutions and the commitment to maintain peace eventually led to the restoration of order. When Bankole died in 1911, the Ijara-Isin ruling house was expected to provide the next candidate for the position of the *Olusin*. The ruling house however presented a priest of the *Sango* deity, the *Baale Sango*, as its candidate. However, his candidature was opposed by the Ijara-Isin community and other settlements within the lower Isinland (Suit No: KWS/399/2015).

In a bid to break the stalemate, the Ijara-Isin ruling house was asked to produce another candidate or prevail on the *Sango* priest to relinquish his priesthood and ascend the stool or forgo the throne and hold onto his *Sango* priesthood. However, the ruling house in Ijara-Isin insisted on the *Sango* priest occupying both the *Olusin* stool and the *Sango* priesthood simultaneously. This position was against the point of view of the majority of Ijara-Isin and the entire lower Isinland citizens. In view of the fact that a *Sango* priest could not be crowned as an *Olusin* and since the ruling house in Ijara-Isin could not provide an alternative candidate, it suggested that the ruling house was not interested in the throne. Subsequently, the Ijara-Isin ruling house announced its apathy for the stool and expressed its readiness to return the stool to Isanlu-Isin for their exclusive occupation and control (Suit No: KWS/366/2015). The decision by the ruling house of Ijara-Isin infuriated other citizens of the town as well as those of Iji-Isin, and other members of communities within the lower Isinland. Consequently, the Isanlu-Isin community decided to break away from the age-old tradition and established a separate *Olusin* stool (Suit No: KWS/366/2015).

S/N	Name of Olusin	Compound	Town	Date
1	AjaiAmuyunbole (The founder of Rotational Order)	-	Isanlu-Isin (Oke-Agbon)	Unknown
2	PakunaAlejolokele	Oke-Enifon (now Ile-Olusin)	Ijara-Isin	Unknown
3	AdesunloyeAwonnibiagbon Gidigidiakoko	Ile-Loke (Now Ile-Olusin)	Iji-Isin	Unknown
4	Atidimogun	-	Isanlu-Isin (Oke-Agbon)	1790-1811
5	JawaranijuAponbelelerin	Oke-Enifon (now Ile-Olusin)	Ijara-Isin	1811-1836
6	Apopolonipaesin I	Isale-Ode (Now Ile-Oba)	Iji-Isin	1836-1906
7	OlakanpoAgboluaje	-	Isanlu-Isin (New Site)	1876-1906
8	AniyunlogbaBankole	-	Isanlu-Isin (New Site)	1906-1911

**Table 1:** Showing the list of *Olusin* of in the rotational order from inception to 1911.

**Source:** NAK ILOR PROF/NAC 3663C ‘Omu/Isanlu Succession District Head and Village, Area Heads.’

The breaking of the established tradition by Isanlu-Isin resulted in Ijara-Isin and Iji-Isin continuing with the rotational order. Citizens of settlements within the lower Isin regarded the Ijara-Isin ruling house’s decision to return the stool of the *Olusin* to Isanlu-Isin as an act of betrayal. This led to the ruling house for being banned from ascending the throne of the *Olusin* by the entire Ijara-Isin and other communities in the lower Isin with a curse placed (Suit No: KWS/366/2015). Given that the Ile-Olusin ruling house shared full percentage with other existing sister compounds in Ijara-Isin, Odo-Ijara, and Okegunsin, they were recognised through Yoruba tradition and customary practices. The common paternal and fraternal rights among children of the same parentage were subsequently applied in treating both Odo-Ijara and Okegunsin compounds as equal with the Ile-Olusin ruling house. This allowed them to enjoy the right of ascension to the throne and the stool of the *Olusin*. Therefore, Odo-Ijara and Okegunsin were presented as a solution to the ban placed on the other ruling house, leading to the emergence of two new ruling houses in Ijara-Isin in 1911 (Suit No: KWS/366/2015).

The dispute over disruption in the age-long traditional rotational order of the *Olusin* stool devastated the whole of Isinland so much so that the colonial authority had to intervene. The Resident Officer, Dawyer, intervened and settled the dispute by separating the existing four sub-districts and appointing one Adebayo as the *Olusin* of Isanlu-Isin. The staff of office of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, which had been given to *Olusin* Bankole (1906-1911), was recalled by the Ilorin emirate (Suit No: KWS/366/2015). Another rotational order between Ijara-Isin and its sister community, Iji-Isin subsequently began by 1911. Consequently, *Olusin* Awolowo Banigbe ascended the throne as the first *Olusin* for the rump of both Iji-Isin and Ijara-Isin by 1911 (Dada, 1985: 11-12). Upon the enthronement of Banigbe, Ile-Olusin, the royal house in Ijara-Isin continued agitating and causing violence throughout the land, leading to destruction of lives and properties in Isinland. The situation was so tense that the native authority reported the situation to the governing body, and the Emir of Ilorin intervened, the Emir directed that Isanlu-Isin should continue with its own stool while Ijara-Isin and Iji-Isin should continue with their newly jointly established stool (Suit No: KWS/366/2015).

Following the breakaway of Isanlu-Isin from the tripartite arrangement in 1911, the two other sister communities of Iji-Isin and Ijara-Isin solidified their mutual agreement to continue to rotate the *Olusin* stool between them. The first joint-*Olusin* for them emerged from Ijara-Isin, with *Olusin* Awolowo Banigbe as the king. The unbroken rotational agreement between the two communities continued until 2010 (Dada, 1985: 8-9). Despite occasional chieftaincy tussles, the rotational system of the *Olusin* kingship institution between them was very peaceful for ninety-nine until it ended amicably in 2010. The main reason for an agreement to establish separate stools for the two towns was to seek for better development for the two communities similar to their neighbouring communities (Oba S. B. Aboyeji, personal communication, March 8, 2024).

S/N	Name of <i>Olusin</i>	Town	Date
1	<i>Olusin</i> Awolowo Banigbe (AtobateleOyebimpe I)	Ijara-Isin	1911 – 1918
2	<i>Olusin</i> Ayinla	Iji-Isin	1918 – 1921
3	<i>Olusin</i> Awoyinka	Ijara-Isin	1922 – 1940
4	<i>Olusin</i> Aworinde	Iji-Isin	1941 – 1946
5	<i>Olusin</i> Yusuf Madandola	Ijara-Isin	1947 – 1966
6	<i>Olusin</i> Olayioye Omiyale (Apopolo II)	Iji-Isin	1967 – 1992
7	<i>Olusin</i> Omoniyi Banigbe (AtobateleOyebimpe II)	Ijara-Isin	1993 - 2010

**Table 2:** Showing the list of *Olusin* of Ijara-Isin/Iji-Isin in the rotational order from 1911- 2010.

**Source:** Compiled by the researcher.

## Conclusion

The foregoing has interrogated the evolution of kingship institution in Isinland in Kwara State of Nigeria. It detailed major events and transitions that shaped the traditional political history of Isinland. It is a study of the role of kingship as a unifying force, fostering cooperation and mutual understanding among three sister communities. Despite the challenges faced such as occasional succession disputes and external political and economic influences like Ilorin Emirate system, the British colonialism and modern economic systems, the kingship institution had played a pivotal role in maintaining the cultural identity and historical continuity of the communities studied. In spite external pressures, the institution navigated its way through the challenges and preserved its traditional authority while embracing changes that ensured its relevance in contemporary society.

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## **BEYOND THE MOUND**

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You live in my heart every second in pernicious tremor. I can no longer hold back the flood of thoughts about you in my heart. These thoughts are like droplets of words from the ink of my pen. I use 'pen' here as a metonym of computer I'm using this very moment to put in black and white; words in the painful memory of our friendship. If only I can find my way to cross over to see you; to behold your sleek, slim, energetic and enigmatic personality, I will now. If only I can close my eyes and assume death in the garment of its sackcloth, I will now. If I can find my way on the narrow passage rite to wake you up from your long slumber in your watery grave, I will now. If only I can grow wings to befriend wind to fly me into the world of the dead to bring you home, I will now. If only I can find you beside me in this gay mood to share with you joy and happiness of coming this far in the struggles to live my dreams, our dreams, I will now. Eni, do you know today, I'm bagged with a Doctorate in Performance Theory from Howard University? I'm still in my academic gown, I wish to sleep in it for you, and perhaps you can still share in this thrilling joy from the great beyond. Besides, I had earned a degree in Law, at University of Maryland, and I have an NGO to fight for the victims of human trafficking and to help immigrants get their resident permit.

We decided finally to relocate after five years of searching for the unavailable jobs of our dreams. None was forth coming. What was alive on our minds was to further our studies and afterwards, work- we considered that as the only way to be out of poverty. We're determined to search for the Golden Fleece in a saner space and to grace on a greener pasture- and United States of America was a land of our dreams. Having tried all possibilities to get scholarships or visas to travel to America failed, we resulted to go through the unconventional tedious means. We found out about an agency that helped people travel abroad, without necessarily procuring certified documents. This was our last result. It worked! We embarked on this fortuitous journey without informing anyone, especially my parents and siblings knowing that they would disapprove of such venture. We went through Ghana to Libya. It was late and regrettably sad enough, Eni, that we put the cart before the horse, and our reasoning dove- tailed our dreams without weighing how depraved, this assault would have on our human dignity. Our

education was meaningless by reasoning through our anuses. We failed on our own part. I failed you, Eniola; I ought to have disagreed to your suggestion that we should leave Nigeria. No doubt, I had greater influence on you and you always respected my candid opinions. We knew that our leaders, all the past leaders in our nation had failed us, but couldn't we have used our brains to be patient to secure a legitimate process to travel abroad rather than this obnoxious way of subjecting ourselves to such grievous harm? It was in Libya we knew we had taken a wrong decision. We got stranded! And we were subjected to highest indignity anyone could think off. We knew early enough that we had become victims of human trafficking, yet played along so that we would get our freedom.

Remembered? We moved under the cover of the nights on the coiled streets of Tripoli, writhing like serpents to confound ghosts of time as we sneaked out of our new abode: The coal mine. We worked as supervisors in grime, blazing fiery oven for two wasted years, to foster our dreams to America. By then, we had got rid of our agent by involving police and the Anti-Human-Trafficking Committee to dare the indelicate, having possessed our identity and travel documents. However, sojourning here had the imprints with marked of time as to familiarize ourselves with, and to learn through the tropes of escape. We visited beer gardens, yet you would not drink. We befriended brothels to endear with sex workers, at initial negotiations, you're reluctant, but by now you needed to quench urge of your libido; you finally obliged. By our encounters, we knew so many of these innocent ladies were lured, tricked, deceived, coaxed and forced into this profession and un-dignifying labour under the pretext of going abroad from their mother countries. Maybe we should pardon them that many did not have sound education and were ignorant of the intricacies of the venture they were being dragged into, but could we forgive ourselves? Their agents ripped them off. Forced them into debt they found difficult to wriggle themselves out and remained perpetually slavish until our moment of interventions. So were many of our co-workers at the coal mine. It was painful and drudgery to slave out to the point of death in the fiery tunnels; wherein hands became darkened and crooked, bodies were contoured and disfigured by the burden of labour. What's more lethal was having one's psyche decimated each moment the past was viewed against the present, and the future became uncertain. We were not better than them, rather worst. We came to the realization that the balloon of our dreams had been punctured and plummeted, especially, you became so despondent. You began to regret for suggesting the idea to japa abroad. 'Cheer up, Eni, cheer up', saying that with a stick of cigarette within my fingers, held it gingerly, while its flame burnt, and smoke coiled into your nostrils, I gave it a long draw, then, puffed into the sky. 'Cheer up, Eni, cheer up; we shall survive and have good tales to tell', I said. 'Common, you bloody son of the devil, you dragged me into sins; and these are the consequences', you said regrettably. 'But you know our Lord loved sinners, he came purposely for people like me and, I'm sure I'm

going to find favours with him. I'm the thief on his right, I shall be with him in his father's Kingdom', saying this, you just slapped my face. Suddenly you began to cry. I was astounded you did this to me. Well, I had long forgiven you. While you were losing your mind, I found mine and began to use my brain to find the meaning for our common purpose. One night I met a guy who offered to help us get across to the Americas through Mediterranean and there after we could sneak through the porous border of Spain, and later into the United States of America. I informed you, and you felt reasonable in the recent time. You suddenly became lively and full of hopes. I could see that in you, it glossed on your skin, and eye balls were drained of blood shots, sparkling once again as a very handsome dud I had known. We ventured into this, and our fates were stamped with zeal. You told me one thing: 'I shall spend my God given resources and talents to fight and defend the plights of the victims of human trafficking, when I'm permanently settled in the United States of America, by His Grace', those were your words, Eniola.

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To go back to the memory lane, the moment we met; we just became twinned. That's the time we fresh students were in the queue to register at the registry. One guy aimed to jump the queue, then Eniola and I simultaneously decried the attempt and forced him to rescind it, shortly afterwards we look at each other, since that very moment we became friends. We were done with registration, we both agreed to have something to eat, because we were so famished, having been standing for some hours in the scorching sun. We placed our orders at the cafeteria. While eating, we got talking about our lives, families and education. One thing that was common, perhaps a binding factor was poverty; and this we vowed to overcome. We made a solid solemnity to work hard, play a little and pray hard for success. Eniola was in Philosophy, while I was in Theatre Arts. We both aimed to graduate with first class degree from our respective course of studies. I remember what you told me about your parents: 'My father, a carpenter, and mother a petty trader. Life is difficult for all us. The economy is too bad', you once told me. What made life more difficult was the result of the economic policy of the military government of the "Maradona". This appellation, "Maradona", was given to the Military President Ibrahim Badamosi Babangida. Who could have coined that name for him, journalists or who? No one can say. But I'm sure the name could have come from his attribute of inconsistent promises made and promises failed. He was regarded a dribbler after the Argentine football hero, Diego Maradona, who was greatly regarded on the pitch of football as maverick dribbler. Before his government would take a decision, he would have thrown out a public debate on such a policy, but deceitfully, it would have taken that decision earlier on; what came out or suggestions made in the public debates would be sharp contrast of government policy. Such debates were

sheer waste of resources, time and energy! For instance, his policy on Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) on economy, this the public decried that it would amount to hoodwink or economic enslavement by the World Bank to embark on such dehumanizing programme, yet his government keyed into that foreign order. ‘That’s the period things went awry for my parents’, you once lamented.

As for me and my family, the story was not different, only it remained sour taste in the palate of my memory; each time I remembered the past, each moment I shuddered, and I always felt I should vomit it. ‘My both parents are school teachers: My mother teaches in a public primary school, while father teaches in a public secondary school’, this I told you. ‘I was the last born of five in the family- three girls, two boys, but I missed the goodies my brother and sisters enjoyed’, unlike you the first born, you had it raw and despicable. ‘Before my birth, the family could afford to fill the pantry with different sorts of food: Raw, cans, provisions, drinks and other assorted, but when I was growing up; it became so difficult and life was ebbing out and unbearable. My father had to use his car as a cab in the evenings after school and weekends to support his family, while mother turned to a compere in wedding ceremonies; because salaries were not paid for several months. In fact, we could not afford using cooking gas or ordinary stove, we resulted into using coals, later fire woods and finally saw-dusts’, so I narrated again.

How do I curtail the flow of this turbulent flood of sad memory, and how do I live on without you? We both decided to stay together at Mellanby Hall. I had opportunity to get a bed space; it was a joyous thing to share it, just as we shared all we had from rice, beans, bread and all we could afford. We hardly slept in the bed, especially in the nights. We turned the Library of the Department of Theatre Arts to our reading and bed room. Your Department was just at the ground floor, yet many people thought you were in Theatre Arts. You were always coming to see me. We both had our dreams; we wanted to be successful in our chosen careers. We determined to live our spelt-out principles. I was just a book-warm, you were too; but you were all round talented. You were a good footballer and a dexterous swimmer. Ah, I wonder if any fish in waters could beat you in all strokes; back or front, you were super. Each time you represented the Premier University in the Nigerian Universities Games (NUGA), in swimming; you always coveted gold medal.

In dreams, we were one. In determination, we found our strength. In hard work, we had a purpose. But different in so many degrees of nature and social and emotional fluidities, because you were calmer, more handsome, deep seated thinker, but contrarily, I was the other side of the coin. You never smoked cigarettes, I did and still do; you never liked drinking beer, I loved my bottles, I still drink beers, but lately I’ve chosen to take wine; red or white and occasionally

brandy. You weren't a ladies' man. You wouldn't want to hurt a fly perching on the sleeve of a beautiful lady, not to talk of rupturing her emotional vitiation. No doubt, you were very kinder with them, then, little wonder they tagged you "Bobo Nice". To me that's an insult. I knew they took advantage of your kindheartedness without you feeling offended by it, when they subtly derided you. I read between the lines of their seemingly innocuous, but rude action; I rebuffed occasionally. Only you wouldn't let me redress such hideous emotional drive. Why? Your Christian indoctrination always heeded your consideration to say, 'let it be Segun, let it be. Christ wanted us to be kind and loving without prejudice'. I had to find a way out; anyway, it's a paradoxical situation, when I lured you into it against your will. I remembered, that's when we were in 300 Level, I can't find her name now... yes, I can now remember, Tunmise, that beautiful Law Student. We met the tradition that's called "October Rush". Despite that when the new students resumed; as we did, weren't in October, but August; this was as a result of the constant industrial dispute between University Academic Staff Union and the government. Yet, the act of guys' adumbrating serious lover boys to make quick catch amongst new female entrants was still known as "October Rush". For me, I wouldn't let such tradition elude me, I keyed into it, but you; you were very unyielding, not until I had to lure you into it. Incredibly, serendipitously, it worked like a magic. The picture of that night loomed large now; that was the day Femi Kuti came to perform in the Trenchard Hall- the University of Ibadan Main Auditorium. Femi needs no introduction anyway, the scion of the maverick, philosopher, iconic social crusader, a gadfly on the iridescent flesh of the Military Juntas and the nefarious civil libertine in democratic gabs; Fela Anikulapo! It was a night. We wore our best. Sprayed the perfume I stole from my elder sister, when last time I was in Lagos to see her, she was a banker.

I knew why we needed to attend the show; you would not want us to. You preferred us going to study, but I had my way. 'Eni, do not forget our cardinal principles: Hard work; play a little and pray hard, now we need to play a little'. We shall resume to our books tomorrow. Is that okay?' I was able to convince you, so we went. The informal arrangement seemed to add some extra sparkling hues; some expected exhilaration, pepping up our spirits and humorous conviviality to the general mood to our gist with our babes over popcorns and drinks. You had Tunmise, I had Folakemi. We quickly returned to our room, knowing that other roommates would still be hanging out at the show. We got back to our room, bolted the door and locked it. You used our bed; I occupied Lanre's bed, having turned off the lights. So, our show began. It didn't take long time for me and Folakemi to swim in the stream of emotions. I knew the tricks, but I feared for you, because I knew it was your first time. While we were floating, after the fore-runs, I had Folakemi's breasts right in my mouth, using my teeth first, then tip of my tongue, gently to suck its nipples; she began to groan as I went on pumping her. Then, I had forgotten about you and Tunmise.

However, I later learnt she was the one that taught you the tricks practically; all I was able to teach before then was mere theory. The night turned out to be a marvelous success, more than we had actually anticipated. Since then, Tunmise and Folakemi were constant visitors. Folakemi was in to study medicine. She had control of me, and succeeded in fencing off, using sign and its cognitive meanings to ensure that my other girlfriends stopped coming. Each time I teased you, you never wanted to talk about it. Well, I understood, you did not want to fornicate, yet you had sex with Tunmise on the regular bases; only you were pretending that fucking a girl was a sin, unless your wife. I knew you would have married her, because you loved her and she loved you too. Tunmise is a now successful lawyer in Nigeria, happily married with two kids, while Folakemi is now in bed with our son, Eniola, named after your memory.

Another thing about you and I; apart from being avid readers and brilliant budding scholars, was that we were highly argumentative. We argued on so many things: Social issues, politics, religion, literature, culture, nature, society, history and economy. By your look, one may perceive you an introvert, unlike me. Then, I was too playful, but you were bright, taciturn and easy going. No one could detect fire of ideas in you, unless you're being sparked and drawn into intellectual discussions. Then, you would be discovered as an orator. In our arguments, we might start off from religions, in this regard, I was always insisting that most religions were instruments of deceits and oppressions created by man, for man and against man. To this you would stoutly disagree. And you posited that religions, especially, Christianity was not originally created as religion; but a way of life. 'The reason Christ said, I'm the way and the life, whoever comes through me, would not perish but have everlasting life'. Before any of us knew it, we would drift into politics. Eni, you sincerely loved politics, this I hated with passion. I called politicians liars, ruffians and corrupt individuals. In defence, you argued and strengthened it with what Plato or Aristotle said about politics and politicians. 'We're all political animals and, whoever feels unconcerned shall give room to be ruled by rogues'. You even went to say that Christ our Lord recognized politics and politicians the reason he told his disciples that 'give on to Cesar what's Cesar's. You strongly supported this by arguing that 'society has its valence of realities in our existence, and that is what the philosophy of existentialism explores'. And you went on to say as 'Nietzsche's observation, the account of this given by Franklin Frazer in the *Pathology of Race Prejudice*', "that insanity in individuals is something rare, but in groups, parties, nations, and epochs; it is the rule", and that there's no way anyone can circumvent it'. I would counter you that 'life is very absurd, and that what any reasonable individual could do is to find its meaning in the mire of nothingness. That's what your religion, Christianity, in fact all religions are seeking to find'. We would go on this manner for a long hours, whenever we felt the need to cool off the steam from reading. It's always the opportunity for both of us to display

our knowledge, philosophical ideas; by giving examples from Literatures, Economics, Political Science, Sociology, Philosophy, Cultural Studies, Performances, etc.

We commonly dissected nature and society; on this we couldn't agree more. African society is still at the state of her "crude" nature', I intoned. 'How do you mean?' In my characteristic manner of a budding scholar, just like you, I understood the sense in your interrogation; and I said, 'it's been a long period of manifestation in negligence, this history affords us to know. You may agree with me, Eni, our forebears were naïve, ignorant, and equally docile from pre-slavery era to the colonial period and postcolonial time. We remained perpetually unconcerned about man and his relationship with nature. We refused to explore, intervene, and subdue it, unlike our enslavers, colonialists and neo-colonialists. Today, African leaders are corrupt so are the led. It's important to note that the ecology of our society contains extra ordinary amount of human history- through this there is always social reflections about man and his relations with nature', I submitted. On the account of corrupt nature of African leaders, I decided to narrate *Play of the Giants*, by Wole Soyinka. The next day you read the play at Africana section of the University main library. In your disputations, you said that 'if our society was devoid of intrusions and subjugations by the West, perhaps we would be leading the world as it was in the past. Don't forget that Egypt was the cradle of civilization, and that science of pyramid remains a mystery to the superior imaginative capacity of the West'. 'Then, why do we remain undeveloped?' We both had our answers in *The Wretched of the Earth* by Frantz Fanon and *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* by Walter Rodney. I remembered I ended our arguments, especially on that night by saying that, 'you know, we're fixated as a people in an unbridled common agreement to be ineptitude to think in the spirit of service, and this remains "the form into which our African society has been cast", paraphrasing Raymond Williams from his *Ideas of Nature*.

Our bound was unique: My parents were your parents, and my siblings were yours; so were all yours mine. I sincerely wish to fill the vacuum you left in their hearts, and I promise I shall do that to the best of my ability. They are fine. I spoke with them yesterday, and I promised to send them money soonest. We're like twins born by different mothers not only in the manner we conducted ourselves, but largely the way people perceived us. To some, we weren't just friends, but lovers. Some insinuations were making rounds in this wise, without us knowing it, that we were homos. How did they come this horrifying assumption was astonishing to you and I? Perhaps, it was because of the borderless intimacy between us that signaled to them a sensual bond beyond friendship. Although it crossed my mind at a grinding moment of emotional stupor that I wished you were my wife. You couldn't have imagined your picture

on the template of my mind. How could you? I have had enough of sexual escapades with some female friends, this experience you lacked, if not until that night's experience you had with Tunmise that served your first journey to Eldorado. The fear I had was how you would understand me without me losing our friendship that I so much cherished. However, I know how to put strokes of fire under you. We nearly had it; that night when I pressed my erected rod on to your "bombom", you were charged as well and yours also shot out. I held it and you held mine, but suddenly something came up on you, and you shouted 'Jesus', I rebuke the spirit of Sodom'. That's the end of that attempt, before Tunmise and Folakemi came into our lives, since then I have never thought of it again.

Eni, why did you move the idea that we should relocate to America? This idea was a precursor to the eventual realization of our individual destiny, as we both agreed to relocate after searching for jobs in futility. We had worked hard to make good grades. You came on top of your class with a First-Class degree and I made Second Class Upper, in fact I was just less than 0.02 from making First Class grade too, even at that I still led my class. We're both happy thinking to secure good jobs in the highly competitive market would not be so difficult. Initially we had thought we would be retained by our individual Departments as Graduate Assistants, but nay; it wasn't so. We trudged and combed streets and offices looking for vacancies. We lost so many opportunities to the so-called Federal Character Policy, or to the lack of social connections. I remember now, one day we're at Oyingbo at the motor park, it was customary on Saturday mornings to steal time to read newspapers at the news stand, where there was always a crowd of free readers which they called "Free Readers' Association". We gladly joined them without procuring a license, or membership card. We weren't there to look for political news or whatever news really, but to check vacancy adverts in the newspapers, especially The Guardian. At the moment you pointed my attention to one particular advert of Wema Bank, Plc., while trying to figure out the details from the advert, one man fired a salvo, 'These yeye politishians, self, dey too corrupt, one man, come steal three hundred million naira only from Port Authority accounts, thunder go strike dem all!'. Another man said, 'na that one de worry una, you? You don hiar about late Abacha, who don become ATM, as him dey give Federal Government money, our own money, wey him pack commort to foreign banks? The first man responded; let's thank OBJ, who dey use his international connections, to get our money back, that man na bulldozer, the *Ebora* himself'. Which kin baboon OBJ, which kin President he be? Dey no be the same thing, as Fela talk am? Aba, you don forget that Wind Fall Gulf money about 12b naira wey come vamoose, abi you forget 2.8 billion naira, oiel money during OBJ, as the military Head of State? I tell you, all of them be rogues....them be same of same!' We really enjoined their arguments, actually without paying keen attention to their debates, because we meant business with our focus.

Three years rolling by, nothing was forthcoming, apart from odd jobs here and there. We're grossly under-employed. Life was at its ebb. Actually, I didn't feel for myself than I did for you. I knew pressure was on you as the first born in the family of seven, seven children with some other dependents. As for me, it wasn't as such, not only because of being the last born, all my older brother and sisters were graduates and gainfully employed. We had a Banker who studied economics, the first child, and a Pharmacist, she was working in a Pharmaceutical Company, a Medical Doctor, he worked in LUTH, Idi Aba, Yaba, Lagos, a Nurse working in a private clinic and I, jobless. Our parents toiled for us indeed. Really, because of their financial assistance I got from them; our lives were bearable, yet unfulfilling. We kept the faith. This was your courage. You believed in the norm that 'God's time is the best'. Could you remember, aha, Eni, I wish you can, one day we had to be in Ikeja, at one advertising agency on Oba Akran Road, for an interview? There're two occasions that I would never forget, each time I remember the past, the play back of those two events are always magnifying and humorous. We chose to board a *molue* going through Maryland to Ikeja. *Molue* is a type of commercial vehicles that plied highways in the Lagos metropolis constructed by the indigenous fabricators and painted in yellow with black stripes in the middle. Many of these buses were supposed to be off the road, because there were so rickety, yet the crowd of passengers was in the picture of apt description made by maverick Fela Anikulapo-Kuti as "'69 sitting and 99 standing'". However, as I'm writing now, those *molues* are no more on the Lagos highways, guess what, is democracy at work? Well, without sounding pessimistic, one day, Nigeria would become a better country; just mark my words. The world in the yellow bus was a microscopic entity of the nation, Nigeria- a society that all was chaotic, unruly, disorganized and tragic. It was a society where you could find all that were disgusting and horrible, yet laughable: drug peddlers, religious charlatans, business icons, corporate individual, students, teachers, women and children and the driver as head of the government. In this environment I was standing and sand-witched between two beautiful young ladies. Right there I had forgotten I was going for an interview. It was a burning situation as the one behind me placed her big breasts on me and the one in front intentionally, I guessed, rested her buttocks on my turgid penis. At that moment was a commotion erupted from outside as the vehicle maneuvered to park at a bus-stop. I couldn't know what engendered the fight; I only tried to look through the window as I took advantage of the situation to touch the breasts of the lady in front of me. It was as if she was waiting for me to do that, she just hanged on it for a while. The two guys were just fighting with their mouths, but not with their hands, and they were making noise, parrying feeble fists in shadowy moves, fretting and guiding in vacuity, rained abuses and curses on each other. We left them in their acts, when our bus zoomed off, and enveloped all in the dark sooth sprawling from its exhaust.

On the eve of our departure to be on board of a boat to take us across the Mediterranean, we were wantonly exposed to horrific violence as we're trapped in the conflicts between the forces of government and the rebels exchanging shoot-outs in the city. We walked with gripping fears under the cover of the night. We blindly found our way through, while bullets were flying above and all around us; it was beyond assumption of being literarily dead, but not clinically yet, we had our hearts pounding as we breathed. Eni, I could hear your heart beats, you're nearly betrayed your emotions as you began to mutter some inaudible words, I could feel you, I saw it in your eyes; I had to pinch your side to keep calm, then, you held your lips firmly with the grip of your teeth. We became so forlorn, especially you. I could discern your palpable throbbing pulsations underneath your now pallid skin and exasperations in you were like atoms in a glass of beer colliding in fear with each other, through the slit open of your teeth holding your lips, as we hid behind the dark strong tank, and said, 'Cheesus, Cheesus'. Then, I quickly interjected to enthralling your mind, 'be strong, be positive; we shall overcome'.

However, within me, irreverent thoughts were sauntering in, the more I fought to keep them at bay, and the more they bounced against the strong wall of my heart. Then, I sensed the ghost of George lurking, a Ghanaian whose image loomed large in me with a sad memory. A young man of twenty-five felt that he needed a change for better life; met an agent named Dakwah who promised to assist him transit abroad to realize his dreams. Getting to Libya, he was in dire straits, felt abandoned and was forced to do mania jobs under a boss, and later subjected to debase sexual abuse against his consent; and eventually made mess of his anus with his big dangerous turgid erected phallus. He spoke with me about it, I promised to help, but unfortunately, in his attempt to start the process of returning to Ghana, he was caught in the web of furious air strikes which reduced him to mince of meats, his brain spattered on the old window of an old widow who had lost her only two sons in the same conflicts. It was a gory picture of a body to behold, and seeing it melting with fuses of dreams lost to the inglorious moment. We're living in the difficult period that constantly leaves me in a bitter taste to a virulent imagination of a cruel world, where we wade through the horror and rigours of survival- a festering sore space to breed the naked blood sucking predators. Nowhere is safe for humanity, nowhere, because the more you run the closer you get to the dungeon of doom- a hole of depression! While I was still fighting tooth and nail against caustic thoughts that sprang suicide spikes in me, then I felt your tears drenched my sleeves as you hanged on me, Eni. Yet the thought of Mary, whom Mrs. Ata deceived to believing that she, would find a better life in Spain; I left her in the brothel, came banging on my sensations of

love and hate. I loved her, but I hated the world, the world that pushed her to the brink of ruins. Mary, a young lady of nineteen two years ago from Uyo, fell into a deep ditch of deceit, a con woman lured her into believing that her life could be better abroad, because Nigeria was already in nauseating economic mess. On getting here, she was made to believe she had to work for two years in Libya, then, later to her final destination in Spain, but she got to work in the brothel as a prostitute... Suddenly, we're jolted alive by the strident airstrikes. We quickly moved. I dragged you, Eniola along with me as we ran into a safe tunnel; suddenly we heard a loud bang. The strong dark tank was shattered to shards, and gutted into flame as it was hit by a bomb from the air strikes. We both became numbed. I could hear farts thundering out from you, and you began to shiver; I held you tightly with my right hand wrapped around you with air of assurance. You were muttering away something, I hardly heard, but faintly as you said in mist of lamentations, 'I'm waiting no more, I need to go home'. 'Home, home you mean?' 'Are you kidding?' 'Or you mad?' I whispered. I could see your face, as beam of light from a far shone aslant into it; you wore a mask of dejection, I gazed through it across time to your fading spirit. 'Common, Eni, we ain't going back any home. No home anywhere now. With God, you know brother, all things are possible. America is our destination, no home nonsense!' You held your peace.

A moment of reprieve came; we found our way to a dark snaky narrow road. I could walk around many roads; I knew I would need street knowledge of web structure network of Tripoli, if we must survival. This I immediately put into use, as we joined one street to another, hoping to find our way to the brothel, until we got to a popular junction not too far from it. At the brothel, Mary was waiting for me. She served us cups of tea, from which you hardly took some sips, before you started snoring. I promised Mary that as soon as we settled down, I shall invite her to join us in the US.

. We're now on board of a boat taking us across the Mediterranean. You were still not cheerful as a man hoping to realize his dreams. Then, I needed to take you on memory lane: I reminded you how we met, and we became two inseparable kinds; and we indulged in so many things together. I spoke to you about expectations of your parents, your siblings and society. I wanted you to see reason why we should be positive and dream higher as soon as we settled in the United States. Then, I could see on you wearing a mask of forced smile, which quickly vanished as soon as it came. I held your hand that God would make our dreams come true. Right in the heart of the sea, we saw a boat on our left; that was the MSF search and rescue boat, and another one almost at our right; that was the boat of the Libyan Coast Guard, unfortunately, colluding with human traffickers. Before we knew it, both boats were moving at athwart along our boat. Everyone began to panic as soon there were shoot-outs between the rescue team

and the Libyan Coast guards who were working in collaboration with the traffickers. It was as if nature was in connivance with “war” going on. Waves began to rise and it became turbulent. Our boat lost control. That was the last I could say, until I was submerged in the sea. Then, you came for me; you came for your friend. You helped as you assured me in the sea as we swum on to ensure I was in the good hand of a diver among the rescue team. You went for others and you saved so many. You put into good use your talent as dexterous active swimmer for the sake of me and others, but unfortunately you couldn’t survive this. What really happened remained a painful memory of the past. One of the rescue guards told me you had over exerted yourself in saving others and became weak, unfortunately you fell into the trap of a basket of crocodiles, and in their bellies lied your grave.

## **Challenges and Methodologies in Translating Islamic Texts from Arabic into Other Languages**

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### **Abstract**

*The translation of Islamic texts from Arabic into other languages is a critical and multifaceted endeavour, essential for fostering understanding among diverse global audiences. This study explores the challenges and methodologies involved in translating the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh). It highlights the linguistic intricacies of Arabic, including its morphology, syntax, and rhetorical devices, and examines cultural and theological complexities such as the preservation of sacredness and the risk of misrepresentation. Poor translations can lead to doctrinal inconsistencies, interfaith misunderstandings, and the erosion of theological integrity. Methodologies discussed include literal and interpretative translations, dynamic equivalence approaches, collaborative interdisciplinary strategies, and the integration of modern technological tools. Each approach offers unique strengths and limitations, with literal translations ensuring fidelity to the original text, while interpretative and dynamic equivalence approaches enhance accessibility and relevance. Collaborative efforts between linguists, theologians, and cultural experts, as well as the judicious use of AI tools, are identified as critical for addressing the complexities of this task. The implications of translation extend beyond linguistic challenges to include the promotion of interfaith dialogue, the application of Islamic principles in contemporary contexts, and the enrichment of global discourse on Islam. Ultimately, the study underscores the need for nuanced and interdisciplinary approaches to ensure translations maintain both linguistic precision and theological fidelity, fostering deeper understanding and unity across cultures and faiths.*

### **Introduction**

The translation of Islamic texts from Arabic into other languages represents a critical and multifaceted endeavour. Islamic texts, particularly the Quran and Hadith, form the cornerstone of Muslim faith and practice, influencing spiritual, legal, and ethical frameworks. These texts are deeply embedded in the Arabic language, which itself is characterized by unique linguistic, stylistic, and rhetorical features. As Islam continues to spread globally, translating these sacred

texts has become an essential task for fostering understanding among non-Arabic-speaking populations. However, the process of translation is fraught with challenges that go beyond mere linguistic barriers, encompassing cultural, theological, and technical complexities.

The Arabic language holds a privileged status in Islam, often referred to as the "language of revelation." This designation stems from the belief that the Quran was revealed in Arabic as the divine and eternal word of God, with its linguistic structure considered a miracle in itself. The eloquence, complexity, and rhetorical style of Arabic are seen as unparalleled, forming an intrinsic part of the Quran's inimitability (*i'jaz*). Furthermore, Arabic serves not only as a medium for divine communication but also as a unifying factor for the global Muslim community, providing a standardized language for worship and religious discourse.<sup>1</sup> These attributes of Arabic present unique implications for translation, as translators must grapple with preserving the Quran's linguistic beauty and theological depth while making it accessible to non-Arabic-speaking audiences. The challenge lies in balancing the linguistic precision required to maintain the sanctity of the text with the cultural adaptability needed to convey its meanings effectively across diverse contexts. Its role is not merely communicative but also intrinsic to the faith's sacred texts. The Quran, believed to be the literal word of God, exemplifies the depth and eloquence of Arabic, making it central to Muslim identity and religious practice.<sup>2</sup> Beyond its linguistic significance, the Quran's message serves as a source of guidance for all aspects of life, from spirituality to governance. Similarly, the Hadith—records of the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad—convey practical applications of Islamic principles, enriching the interpretative framework of the Quran.

Despite this centrality, Arabic is not the native language of the majority of Muslims worldwide. As Islam spread to regions as diverse as Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Europe, the necessity for translating Islamic texts grew exponentially. These translations aim to bridge linguistic divides and enable non-Arabic-speaking Muslims to access the foundational teachings of their faith. For example, in Southeast Asia, translations of the Quran into languages such as Bahasa Indonesia and Malay have been instrumental in shaping Islamic education and religious practice among local communities. Similarly, in Sub-Saharan Africa, translations into Swahili and Hausa have enabled millions to engage with Islamic teachings in their native tongues, fostering a deeper connection to the faith. In Europe, translations into English, French, and German have not only catered to Muslim diaspora communities but have also facilitated interfaith dialogue and a broader understanding of Islam among non-Muslims. Moreover, they provide non-Muslims with an opportunity to understand Islamic principles, promoting intercultural dialogue and reducing misunderstandings about the religion.

However, translation is not a neutral act; it is inherently influenced by the translator's cultural, theological, and personal biases.<sup>3</sup> This dynamic is particularly significant in the context of sacred texts, where inaccuracies or misinterpretations can have profound implications. For example, translating the Quran requires not only linguistic precision but also a deep understanding of its theological and rhetorical dimensions. Missteps in this process risk distorting the intended meanings and undermining the sanctity of the text.<sup>4</sup> These challenges underscore the complexity of translating Islamic texts, necessitating a careful and methodical approach.

The purpose of translating Islamic texts is multifaceted, encompassing religious, educational, and intercultural objectives. For instance, religiously, translations of the Quran and Hadith allow non-Arabic-speaking Muslims to engage with foundational teachings, fostering spiritual growth and practice. Educationally, examples such as the widespread use of translated Islamic texts in Southeast Asian madrasahs demonstrate how translations contribute to structured religious education.<sup>5</sup> Interculturally, translations have played a key role in bridging gaps between Muslims and non-Muslims, as seen in European contexts where translated Islamic works are used in academic and interfaith dialogue settings to challenge stereotypes and promote mutual respect. These examples illustrate how translations serve multiple purposes, enriching individual faith while contributing to broader societal understanding. At its core, translation serves to make the teachings of Islam accessible to a global audience. For non-Arabic-speaking Muslims, translations provide a means to engage with their faith, fostering spiritual growth and understanding. For non-Muslims, translations offer insights into Islamic beliefs and practices, challenging stereotypes and facilitating mutual respect.<sup>6</sup>

The scope of this endeavor extends beyond the Quran and Hadith to include jurisprudential works (Fiqh), theological treatises, and historical narratives. Each category of text presents its unique challenges. For instance, translating Fiqh involves interpreting complex legal arguments that are deeply rooted in specific historical and cultural contexts.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, theological texts often contain nuanced philosophical discussions that require a sophisticated grasp of both the source and target languages. These variations in scope demand a range of methodologies and expertise to ensure accurate and meaningful translations.

Furthermore, the implications of translation extend into contemporary issues such as interfaith dialogue and the application of Islamic principles in modern contexts. By making Islamic texts accessible, translations can contribute to resolving ethical dilemmas, fostering social cohesion, and addressing misconceptions about Islam. However, the success of these efforts depends on the quality and integrity

of the translation process, highlighting the need for rigorous scholarly engagement.<sup>8</sup>

### **Thesis Statement**

The translation of Islamic texts from Arabic into other languages is a complex and essential endeavor that requires balancing linguistic fidelity, cultural sensitivity, and theological accuracy. By examining the unique challenges posed by the Arabic language and the cultural and doctrinal specificity of Islamic texts, this study explores the methodologies employed to address these issues. Ultimately, it underscores the critical role of translation in fostering understanding and dialogue among diverse cultures and faiths.

This thesis is grounded in the recognition that translation is both a technical and an interpretative act. Unlike secular texts, Islamic texts carry a spiritual and theological weight that demands a meticulous approach. Literal translations, while preserving the formal structure of the text, often fail to convey its deeper meanings. For example, the translation of the Arabic term *taqwa* into English as "fear" often misrepresents its broader spiritual connotations, which include consciousness of God, piety, and moral mindfulness. Such translations strip away the rich semantic layers embedded in the original Arabic, leading to potential misunderstandings of the text's intent and depth.<sup>9</sup> Interpretative translations, on the other hand, risk introducing subjective biases but may provide greater accessibility for contemporary audiences. This tension highlights the need for a balanced methodology that prioritizes both fidelity and accessibility.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to addressing linguistic and theological challenges, this study emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity. Terms such as *taqwa* (piety) and *sharia* (Islamic law) often defy direct equivalence in other languages, reflecting the profound interconnectedness of language and culture. Translators must navigate these complexities with care, employing strategies such as explanatory notes and collaborative consultation with scholars. By doing so, they can ensure that the translated text retains its original essence while resonating with the target audience.<sup>11</sup>

The thesis also highlights the evolving nature of translation methodologies. In recent years, collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches have gained prominence, involving linguists, theologians, and cultural experts in the translation process. This model recognizes the multifaceted nature of Islamic texts and the diverse skills required to translate them effectively. Additionally, advancements in technology, such as artificial intelligence and machine translation, offer new tools for addressing linguistic challenges, though their limitations underscore the continued need for human expertise.<sup>12</sup>

By situating these discussions within the broader context of globalization and intercultural dialogue, this thesis underscores the relevance of translating Islamic texts in today's interconnected world. Accurate and accessible translations not

only enable Muslims to engage with their faith but also foster mutual understanding among different cultures and religions. As such, this study advocates for a nuanced and interdisciplinary approach to translation, recognizing its potential to bridge divides and enrich global discourse on Islam.

## **Literature Review**

Translating Islamic texts from Arabic into other languages presents intricate challenges rooted in linguistic, cultural, theological, and technical dimensions. These texts, encompassing the Quran, Hadith, and classical Islamic jurisprudence, are revered for their spiritual significance and linguistic depth. The task of translation demands not only technical skill but also an appreciation of the texts' multifaceted meanings. This discussion explores the key challenges translators face in these domains, supported by scholarly insights and literature.

### **1. Linguistic Challenges**

Arabic, as the language of the Quran and primary Islamic texts, poses significant linguistic challenges for translators. Its unique features, including complex morphology, syntax, rhetorical devices, and semantic richness, often defy direct translation. Arabic's morphological and syntactical structures differ markedly from most target languages. For instance, Arabic verbs convey nuanced meanings through triliteral roots and derived patterns, while its syntax often employs ellipsis and rhetorical questions for emphasis. Translators struggle to retain these nuances in languages where equivalent structures may not exist.

Abdel Haleem notes that the Quran's syntax often intertwines multiple layers of meaning, making it challenging to convey all aspects in translation. The rhetorical style, including devices like *tajnis* (paronomasia) and *iltifāt* (grammatical shifts), enriches the text but complicates translation efforts. These elements risk being diluted or lost in target languages, especially when linguistic equivalents are unavailable.<sup>13</sup> Arabic is characterized by polysemy, where a single word holds multiple meanings based on context. Terms like *taqwa* and *fitna* encompass spiritual, social, and theological connotations that vary according to their usage. Ghazala argues that translating such terms requires not only linguistic precision but also a deep understanding of Islamic theology and context.<sup>14</sup> For instance, the term *taqwa* is often translated as "piety" or "god-consciousness," yet these words fail to capture its full spiritual and ethical dimensions. Untranslatable terms often require explanatory notes, which can disrupt the flow of the translated text.<sup>15</sup>

The Quran's stylistic devices, such as rhyme, rhythm, and metaphor, are integral to its impact. However, preserving these features in translation often leads to a trade-off between form and content. Ghazala underscores the difficulty of retaining the Quran's unique stylistic harmony, where rhetorical and aesthetic

elements reinforce its message. Literal translations may preserve surface meanings but fail to evoke the emotive and spiritual resonance of the original text.  
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## 2. Cultural Challenges

Islamic texts are deeply embedded within the cultural and historical milieu of 7th-century Arabia. Translators face significant challenges in bridging the cultural gap between the source language and the diverse target audiences worldwide. Certain concepts central to Islamic thought, such as *sharia* (Islamic law) or *jihad* (striving), carry connotations shaped by their cultural and religious contexts. Translating these terms without adequate explanation can lead to misinterpretation. Baker observes that some translators opt for domestication—adapting terms to fit the cultural framework of the target audience—while others use foreignization, retaining the original term and adding footnotes. Each approach has its limitations, as domestication risks distorting the original meaning, while foreignization may alienate readers unfamiliar with Islamic concepts.<sup>17</sup>

Languages reflect the worldviews of their speakers, making it difficult to convey ideas that lack direct equivalents in the target language. For instance, Arabic words like *barakah* (divine blessing) and *halal* (permissible) are rooted in Islamic theology and culture, and their translations often fail to capture their full depth. Hassan notes that the lack of cultural equivalence can result in translations that are either overly simplistic or burdened with extensive commentary, reducing their accessibility to readers.<sup>18</sup> In contemporary contexts, certain Islamic terms have been politicized or misrepresented, further complicating their translation. For example, *jihad* is often mistranslated as “holy war” despite its broader meanings, which include personal struggle for self-improvement. Baker argues that accurate translations must address such misconceptions without compromising the integrity of the original text.<sup>19</sup>

## 3. Theological Challenges

Translating Islamic texts involves significant theological challenges, particularly when dealing with the Quran and Hadith, which are considered sacred by Muslims. Ensuring theological fidelity while making the texts accessible to non-Arabic-speaking audiences requires careful deliberation. The Quran is regarded as the literal word of God, making its translation a sensitive undertaking. The theological implications of translation, as any deviation from the original meaning could be perceived as altering divine revelation. Translators must balance literalism, which preserves the text’s exact wording, with interpretive approaches that clarify its meaning.<sup>20</sup>

Kidwai critiques various Quran translations for their doctrinal inconsistencies, noting that differences in translators' theological perspectives can lead to significant variations. For instance, terms like *rahma* (mercy) and *azab* (punishment) carry profound theological implications that can be interpreted differently based on the translator's framework.<sup>21</sup> Literal translations often fail to convey the Quran's contextual meanings, while interpretive translations risk introducing subjective biases. Badawi and Abdel Haleem advocate for a middle ground, where translators provide interpretive notes to explain theological concepts without altering the text's core message. However, this approach requires a high degree of scholarly expertise, as well as sensitivity to the theological diversity within Islam.<sup>22</sup>

The translation of Hadith (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad) poses additional challenges due to their contextual nature. Siddiqui notes that Hadith are often tied to specific historical and cultural circumstances, making it difficult to convey their relevance in contemporary settings. Similarly, translating Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) requires an understanding of both legal principles and cultural nuances, as these texts often reflect the societal norms of their time.<sup>23</sup>

#### **4. Technical and Practical Challenges**

In addition to linguistic, cultural, and theological challenges, translators face technical and practical obstacles that hinder the production of accurate and accessible translations. One of the most significant technical challenges is the absence of standardized terminologies for Islamic concepts. Al-Said highlights the inconsistency in translating terms like *ummah* (community) and *salat* (prayer), which can lead to confusion among readers. Developing a universal lexicon for Islamic terminology would help address this issue, but such efforts require consensus among scholars from diverse linguistic and theological backgrounds.<sup>24</sup> The qualifications of translators vary widely, with some lacking the linguistic or theological expertise needed to handle sacred texts. The ethical responsibility of translators to ensure accuracy and respect for the source material. However, many translations are undertaken by individuals or organizations without sufficient scholarly oversight, resulting in errors and inconsistencies. Translators must navigate ethical dilemmas, such as deciding whether to prioritize readability or fidelity. Translations of sacred texts require a high degree of impartiality, yet personal or institutional biases often influence the final product. For instance, translations commissioned by religious or political organizations may reflect specific agendas, affecting their credibility.<sup>25</sup>

The advent of AI and software-assisted translation tools has introduced new possibilities for translating Islamic texts. However, these tools have been criticized for their inability to account for the cultural and theological nuances inherent in sacred texts. Machine translations often produce literal renderings that

fail to convey the intended meanings, underscoring the need for human expertise.  
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### **Method in Translating Islamic Texts**

Translating Islamic texts from Arabic into other languages is a highly intricate task, requiring a blend of linguistic precision, cultural sensitivity, and theological awareness. To address the challenges inherent in such translations, scholars and practitioners have developed various methodologies.

#### **1. Literal Translation**

Literal translation focuses on rendering the original text as closely as possible to its word-for-word meaning. This method seeks to preserve the structure, vocabulary, and syntax of the source language, often at the expense of readability in the target language. Literal translation is often employed in translating the Quran and other sacred Islamic texts to ensure fidelity to the original wording. Proponents argue that this approach safeguards the sanctity and divine authority of the text. The significance of literal translation in preserving the Quran's sacredness, even though it may reduce its accessibility to general readers.<sup>27</sup>

While literal translation ensures linguistic accuracy, it often fails to capture the nuanced meanings and rhetorical beauty of the source text. Abdel Haleem critiques this approach for oversimplifying the Quran's complexities. Translating the Arabic term *rahma* as "mercy" neglects its broader connotations of compassion and divine grace. Furthermore, the rigid adherence to the source language structure can result in awkward or incomprehensible renderings in the target language. Literal translation has its place in academic and theological contexts where exact wording is paramount. However, he argue that this methodology is less effective for conveying the Quran's deeper meanings and stylistic nuances to lay audiences.<sup>28</sup>

#### **2. Interpretative Translation**

Interpretative translation prioritizes the conveyance of meaning and context over linguistic form. This method recognizes that some elements of the source text are untranslatable and instead focuses on communicating the intended message to the target audience. Interpretative translation is particularly useful for texts that are culturally or theologically complex. It allows translators to adapt content in ways that resonate with the target audience's cultural and linguistic norms. Mustafa advocates for this approach to bridge cultural gaps and provide readers with a clearer understanding of Islamic concepts. This approach facilitates a more accessible and relatable translation, making Islamic texts understandable to non-Arabic-speaking audiences.<sup>29</sup> However, it also introduces the risk of subjective interpretation, where translators' biases may influence the text's presentation. Khalidi warns that interpretative methods must be guided by scholarly expertise to avoid misrepresentation of the original message.<sup>30</sup> Interpretative translation has

gained traction in modern contexts where cultural and linguistic diversity necessitates a more flexible approach. Its potential to address the limitations of literal translation, particularly in conveying the Quran's theological and ethical teachings.

### **3. Dynamic Equivalence Approach**

The dynamic equivalence approach, rooted in the principles of Nida and Taber, focuses on achieving functional equivalence between the source and target texts. This method emphasizes the intended effect of the text on the target audience rather than its linguistic form.<sup>31</sup> Dynamic equivalence strives to make Islamic texts accessible and relevant to modern readers by adapting cultural references and idiomatic expressions. For example, translating *salat* (prayer) as “prayer ritual” provides non-Muslim readers with a clearer understanding of its significance in Islamic worship. This approach ensures that the text's message is effectively communicated, fostering cross-cultural understanding. However, it risks oversimplifying or distorting theological nuances. Hassan argues that while dynamic equivalence enhances readability, it may compromise the text's theological fidelity.<sup>32</sup>

Nida and Taber's principles have been influential in shaping this approach, but its application to Islamic texts remains contentious. Meanwhile, there is a need for careful balance to ensure that the text remains both accessible and faithful to its original meaning.

### **4. Collaborative and Interdisciplinary Approaches**

Collaboration between linguists, theologians, and cultural experts has emerged as a critical methodology for translating Islamic texts. This approach leverages diverse expertise to address the multifaceted challenges of translation. Collaborative translation projects involve teams of specialists who work together to ensure linguistic accuracy, theological fidelity, and cultural relevance. Ahmad stresses the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in achieving balanced translations that cater to diverse audiences.<sup>33</sup>

This methodology minimizes errors and biases by incorporating multiple perspectives. It also fosters a more comprehensive understanding of the source text's linguistic, cultural, and theological dimensions. For example, collaborative efforts have been instrumental in producing widely respected translations of the Quran. Abdel Haleem underscores the effectiveness of collaborative approaches, noting their potential to produce translations that are both accurate and culturally sensitive. However, such projects require significant resources and coordination, which can pose practical challenges.<sup>34</sup>

### **5. Modern Technological Tools**

The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) and software-assisted translation tools has transformed the field of translation, including the translation of Islamic texts. Technological tools, such as machine translation software and AI algorithms, can assist in processing large volumes of text quickly and efficiently. They are particularly useful for preliminary translations and for creating standardized glossaries of Islamic terminology. Al-Yousef notes that these tools have the potential to enhance accuracy and consistency in translations. Despite their advantages, technological tools have significant limitations when applied to Islamic texts. They often fail to account for the cultural and theological nuances that are critical to accurate translation. Machine translations may produce literal renderings that are devoid of context and meaning, leading to misinterpretations.<sup>35</sup> He critiques these tools for their inability to replicate the depth and sophistication of human expertise. While modern tools have expanded the possibilities for translation, he further emphasize the need for human oversight to ensure that the nuances of Islamic texts are preserved. Integrating technology with expert review processes can mitigate some of these limitations.

### **Translating Islamic Texts**

Translating Islamic texts is a challenging endeavour that requires balancing linguistic precision, theological fidelity, and cultural sensitivity. The Quran, regarded as the literal word of God by Muslims, poses unparalleled challenges for translators. Its divine origin, intricate linguistic style, and profound theological content demand a meticulous approach. One of the most widely read English translations of the Quran is by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, first published in 1934.<sup>36</sup> His work is notable for its extensive footnotes and poetic style, aiming to capture the Quran's rhythm and eloquence. Yusuf Ali adopted a blend of literal and interpretative methodologies, striving to maintain the text's sanctity while making it accessible to English-speaking audiences. Yusuf Ali's translation has been praised for its literary elegance and theological insights. His explanatory notes provide valuable context for readers unfamiliar with Islamic culture and theology. This approach made his work a popular choice among both Muslims and non-Muslims seeking to understand the Quran. Despite its popularity, Yusuf Ali's translation has faced criticism for incorporating his personal theological interpretations, which some argue deviate from the original meanings. Abdel Haleem notes that his use of archaic English, such as "thou" and "thine," may alienate modern readers. Additionally, his footnotes, while informative, can overwhelm readers seeking a straightforward understanding of the text.<sup>37</sup>

More recent translations, prioritize clarity and modern language. Abdel Haleem adopts a dynamic equivalence approach, emphasizing readability and contextual understanding. His translation has been praised for bridging linguistic and cultural gaps, making the Quran accessible to contemporary audiences without compromising its core message. Translating the Quran requires a balance

between literal fidelity and interpretative clarity. Successful translations often involve interdisciplinary collaboration and a deep understanding of the Quran's linguistic, cultural, and theological dimensions.<sup>38</sup>

### **Translation of Hadith**

Hadith, the recorded sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, form a critical component of Islamic tradition. Their translation is challenging due to their historical and cultural specificity, as well as their theological significance. Sahih al-Bukhari, one of the most authentic Hadith collections, has been translated into multiple languages. A notable English translation by Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali exemplifies the challenges and complexities of this genre. Khan and Hilali employed a literal translation approach, accompanied by extensive commentary to explain cultural and theological nuances. Their work also includes transliterations of key Arabic terms, such as *sunnah* and *sharia*, to preserve their original meanings. This translation has been lauded for its meticulous attention to detail and the inclusion of explanatory notes, which help readers contextualize the Hadith within Islamic tradition. The translators' efforts to provide direct access to the original Arabic terms enhance the text's authenticity.<sup>39</sup>

Critics argue that the translation's literal approach sometimes results in awkward phrasing and a lack of fluency in English. Additionally, the heavy reliance on commentary can detract from the readability of the text. Hassan points out that the translators' Salafi orientation influenced their interpretations, potentially limiting the work's appeal to a broader Muslim audience. Other translations, such as those by Aisha Bewley and Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, adopt a more interpretative approach, striving for greater readability and accessibility.<sup>40</sup> These works demonstrate the diversity of methodologies in translating Hadith and highlight the importance of catering to different audiences. The translation of Hadith requires a careful balance between literal accuracy and contextual interpretation. Translators must navigate cultural and theological complexities to ensure that the Prophet's teachings are conveyed accurately and comprehensibly.

### **Translation of Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh)**

Fiqh, the body of Islamic law, is deeply rooted in the Quran, Hadith, and the scholarly interpretations of jurists. Translating Fiqh texts involves unique challenges due to their technical terminology, legal intricacies, and cultural context. One of the most prominent translations of Fiqh literature is *The Reliance of the Traveller*, a classic manual of Shafi'i jurisprudence translated by Nuh Ha Mim Keller. This work provides a comprehensive overview of Islamic legal rulings and has become a key reference for English-speaking Muslims.

Keller's translation combines literal and interpretative approaches, striving to preserve the original text's legal precision while making it accessible to contemporary readers. His use of footnotes and appendices provides additional context and clarifications for complex legal concepts. Keller's translation has been praised for its scholarly rigor and accessibility. His efforts to bridge classical Islamic law with modern legal frameworks have made the text relevant to both traditional scholars and lay readers.<sup>41</sup> The inclusion of Arabic terms alongside their translations ensures fidelity to the source text.

Critics argue that Keller's translation reflects a traditionalist perspective that may not resonate with Muslims from other jurisprudential schools. Additionally, the complexity of Fiqh terminology poses challenges for readers without a background in Islamic law.<sup>42</sup> Translation's reliance on classical legal frameworks may limit its applicability in modern contexts. Translations of Fiqh works, such as *Al-Muwatta* by Malik ibn Anas, have also highlighted the challenges of rendering Islamic legal texts into other languages. Translators must grapple with the diversity of legal opinions within Islam and the need to adapt these rulings to contemporary contexts. Translating Fiqh requires a deep understanding of Islamic legal principles, as well as the ability to convey technical terms and concepts in an accessible manner. Collaborative efforts between legal scholars and linguists can enhance the quality and relevance of such translations.

### **Implications in Translating Islamic Texts**

Poorly translated Islamic texts can distort the original message, leading to widespread misunderstandings about Islamic beliefs and practices. For instance, theological terms like *sharia* and *jihad* are often mistranslated or stripped of their nuanced meanings, contributing to negative stereotypes about Islam. Such inaccuracies undermine the integrity of Islamic teachings and perpetuate misconceptions, especially in non-Muslim societies. Translation errors can create barriers to productive interfaith and intercultural discussions. Misinterpretations of foundational concepts in the Quran or Hadith may result in unnecessary conflicts or alienation. Mistranslations can exacerbate tensions between communities by fostering erroneous assumptions about Islamic doctrine.

Inaccurate translations of Fiqh texts can lead to flawed legal interpretations and misapplication of Islamic laws. Translators who fail to account for contextual differences between source and target languages risk introducing legal ambiguities or inconsistencies. This is particularly concerning in multicultural settings where Islamic jurisprudence informs personal or communal decision-making. Sacred texts like the Quran demand linguistic precision and theological fidelity. Poor translations compromise these qualities, resulting in a loss of trust among readers.

## Conclusion

The translation of Islamic texts plays a critical role in fostering understanding, unity, and dialogue across cultures and faiths. However, the complexity of these texts demands nuanced methodologies that balance linguistic, cultural, and theological considerations. From linguistic intricacies and cultural sensitivities to theological fidelity, translators face numerous challenges when rendering Islamic texts into other languages. Poor translations can lead to misrepresentation, interfaith conflicts, and the erosion of theological integrity. To address these issues, recommendations include specialized training, the development of standardized glossaries, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the judicious use of technology.

Accurate and accessible translations of Islamic texts are essential for preserving the sanctity of Islam's teachings and promoting mutual understanding among diverse communities. Translators must approach their work with humility, diligence, and respect for the sacredness of the texts they interpret. To further enhance the quality of Islamic text translations, scholars, institutions, and technology developers must collaborate to create innovative tools and methodologies. By bridging linguistic and cultural divides, such efforts can contribute to a more harmonious and informed global discourse on Islam.

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## **Durbar Festival in Ilorin Emirate: A Metaphor for Peaceful Co-Existence**

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines intrinsic cultural heritage in Ilorin Durbar festival. The study descriptively analyses the festival with focus on the subsisting people's patrimonies that includes music, dances, costumes and the horses as show-cased in the durbar. The aim of the study is to examine how Durbar festival in Ilorin promotes peaceful co-existence. Among others, the objective of the study is to assess the impact of Ilorin Durbar festival on fostering peaceful co-existence among different ethnic groups in Ilorin. The modern Ilorin was constituted in 1807 by Shehu Alimi and reconstituted into an Emirate by Oba Abdulsalami who eventually got the territory integrated into the Sokoto Caliphate in 1828 ( Jimoh 1994, p.). The Emirate is a medley of many cultures which show-case different cultural heritages. The study noted that Durbar festival is characterised with social-economic, religious and political activities. The findings of research revealed that: Indigenes and few non-indigenes participated in the festival. Also, Women actively participated in the festival as Islam allowed. The people in the Emirate exhibited love and understanding for one another. The Emir is being regarded and revered as the traditional and spiritual head of Ilorin Emirate. The study concluded that for any society to develop meaningfully in a diverse cultural environment there must be a collective effort at promoting people's cultural heritage.*

**217 Words**

**Keywords:** Durbar, Festival, Peaceful-co-existence

### **Introduction**

This study examines intrinsic cultural heritage in Durbar with particular attention on the restructured Ilorin Durbar festival. The aim of the study is to examine how Durbar festival in Ilorin promotes peaceful co-existence. The objectives of the study are: (i) to examine the impact of Ilorin Durbar festival on fostering peaceful co-existence among different ethnic groups in Ilorin. (ii). To assess the level of participation by the people in Ilorin Emirate and (iii) to examine the prospect of the festival and draw the conclusion. The study employs descriptive analysis method in examining the festival with focus on the subsisting people's patrimonies that includes music, dances, costumes and the horses as show-cased in the durbar.

The modern Ilorin was constituted in 1807 by Shehu Alimi. Consequently, the town was reconstituted into an Emirate by Oba Abdulsalami who eventually got the territory integrated into the Sokoto Caliphate in 1828 (Jimoh, 1994). Presently, the Emirate is geographically constituted by five Local Government Areas that comprises: Ilorin West; Ilorin South; Ilorin East; Asa and Moro Local Government Areas. The Emirate is a medley of many cultures which show-case different cultural heritages that are being nurtured by the people and traditional institution leadership. However, the strength and weakness of Ilorin people lies in their diverse descent. This was attested to by Jimoh (1994.) when he stated that: “It was a massive influx of people of assorted cultural background, after Islamic governance had been firmly established, that conditioned the demographic size, composition and texture of Ilorin” which according to him, resulted to ethnic and cultural heterogeneity that is subsisting under “Islamic influence that could be considered to be the common denominator and the only unifying factor which further facilitated inter-mingling, socialization and integration among the various peoples.” Jimoh’s submission find credence in the earlier work by Johnson (1921, p.) who also stated that people’s movement into Ilorin was “increasing in number and in rapacity.” Despite the heterogeneity nature of Ilorin Township and political, social and economical challenges in Nigeria; Ilorin remains one of the most peaceful State capitals in Nigeria.

Every individuals, groups and societies from primordial do have a special medium through which they commune with the creator and this medium is commonly referred to as religion. Instinctively, “religion as a belief can be subjectively and objectively regarded”. (Arinze1978, p.8). Therefore, subjectively, religion could be “the consciousness of one’s dependence on a transcendent being and the tendency to worship him.” And objectively, “religion is the body of truths, laws and rites by which man is subordinated to the transcendent being.”(Arinze 1978, p. 11). This notion of religion encapsulates the Ilorin people’s conception of religion and beliefs which is highly influenced by Islam. Shedding light on his people’s worldview, the Emir of Ilorin, Alhaji Dr. Ibrahim Zulu Gambari often states that, his people worships Supreme Being (Allah) through prophet Mohammed (S.A.W.) who serves as the intercessor between the purity (God) and the impious (people). For the record, as been recorded in 1990 census, 98 percent of Ilorin indigenes are Muslims.

There are many festivals across Nigeria, ranging from social to religious and political embedded ones. However, as much as different scholars from different academic fields such as Gregory, R. (2008), Ogunba, O. (1978), Buratai, U. (1999) and Cole, H. M. (2000) did try to classify festival, they only succeeded in identifying the point of divergence and convergence because a parallel classification is a difficult one to do. Anthropologically, festival can be described as an act of showcasing the intrinsic value of cultural heritage of a given people

through the media of creative arts such as crafts and performances which its exhibits take the on-lookers to the state of catharsis; religion, that includes beliefs and ritual; folklore and language with which people communicate and socialise. As credence to this, at different period of human developments, festival has been described differently by various scholars. For instance, Cole (2000, p.339) holistically described festival as he stated that:

A festival is a relatively rare climatic event in the life of any community. It is bounded by a definite beginning and end, and is unified thereby, as well as in being set apart from and above daily life. Its structure is built up on a core or armature of ritual. The festival brings about a suspension of ordinary time, a transformation of ordinary space, a formalization of ordinary behaviour. It is as if a community becomes a stage set and its people actors with a battery of seldom-seen props and costumes—the festival is an elaborated and stylized phenomenon which far surpasses ritual necessity. It often becomes the social, ritual and political apotheosis of community life in a year. At festival time one level of reality—the common and everyday—gives way to another, a more intense, symbolic and expressive level of reality.

Also, King (2008, p.8) opined that this cultural heritage “comprises a big, complex, intricate mosaic of things and institutions and values, beliefs and perceptions, customs and traditions, symbols and social structures.” Apart from general overview, another scholar, Ogunba (1978, p.13) broadly describes festival within the purview of his cultural environment when he posited that: “A festival is an indigenous cultural institution, an art form culturally nurtured on the African soil with distinct features, and a framework for coordinating virtually all art forms of the community.” Speaking further, Ogunba emphasises that: Festival “expresses a relish of life and preference for this life rather than the life to come, and this is expressed in the stories and myths performed which each has a particular dramatic style.” We therefore infer that, these scholars’ position succinctly described what Durbar festival in Ilorin Emirate represents. That is, the festival exhibits religion belief and all other cultural heritage of the people. Therefore, the story of Durbar is the story of human kind because in its essential form, it belongs to a given people, age or culture. In view of the above exposition on festival from different scholars, there is a need to categorise festivals. However, a clear-cut categorisation may not be possible because all share common features. For this exercise, we may categorise them into three types (i) Religious festival (ii) Social festival and (iii) Political festival.

### **Religious Festival**

Religious festivals are the festivals put in place by a given people to celebrate a superior power that controls affairs of man spiritually. This superior power was

accurately described by Frazer (1983, p.65) as “appropriation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the courses of nature and human life.” Religious festivals are not distinctively religious but most times display traits of social or political festivals. However, religious activities dominate the event. Examples are the Sango festival among the Ede people of Osun state in the Western part of Nigeria. The festival is in honour of Sango the god of thunder. The festival takes place every year towards the end of rainy season. It spans a period of seven days. It is characterised with ritual worships, musical and dance performances by the worshippers, with the community and tourists as spectators. There is also Egungun Ofiro festival among Obo people of Kwara state. Ofiro comes out after ritual worships. Ofiro ushers in the beginning of Egungun festival that involves other smaller egungun that entertains the spectators. The festival lasted for seven days in every month of December.

### **Social Festival**

Social festivals can be described as festive activities, either formal or informal, put together by a group of people, associations, communities or government in order to bring together people of common or diverse cultures in celebration of humanity (life). Sometimes, these festivals may display or exhibit the traits or elements of either religious or political festival, and in some cases it depends on what the observer can see. Importantly, social festivals entertain and educate the audience. Examples are Argungun festival of Argungun people of Kebbi state, National Festival of Arts and Culture (NAFEST) of Nigeria and Aribidara festival of Ogbomosho in Oyo state.

Argungun festival is celebrated either yearly or when it is appropriate, but certainly not during the rainy season. It is a social festival among the Argungun people of Kebbi State of Northern Nigeria. It is a celebration of people’s cultural aesthetics and values, climaxed with a fishing competition that usually attracts prizes for winners. It is a big festival that always attracts tourists.

NAFEST is a national festival in Nigeria where people’s cultural heritages and traditions are celebrated. According to Jahman Anikulapo in The Guardian Newspaper of 16<sup>th</sup> August, 2002: “The festival had begun in 1970 as an initiative of a group of young Nigerian culture workers and intelligentsia who, moved by a patriotic zeal, thought that the pains, sorrow and tensions unleashed on the national psyche by the 30 months (1967 - 70) civil war could be assuaged through the balm of artistic expression steeped in the divergent peoples of the country.” From the reasons given for the birth of the festival, we can infer that NAFEST is a socio- political event put in place by the Federal Government of Nigeria to re-integrate Nigerians after the sordid civil war to

promote peaceful co-existence and harmony among the different ethnic nationalities that constitutes Nigeria.

### **Political Festivals**

Political festivals are festivals that celebrate the political prowess, exploits or wellbeing of a group of people in a given community. These festivals are usually put in place to appraise the social, economic and political prevailing situation of a given people in comparison to the past experience in order to make adjustments where necessary and plan for the future. These festivals are politically inclined, but we cannot rule out the elements of social and religious under tones that are visible in uniting the participants as a people with common destiny. Government usually takes part in the organisation of these festivals. A good example is “Durbar” festival in the Northern part of Nigeria.

Durbar festival, “is a performance of power in the Northern Nigeria.” (Umar, Buratai. 1999, p.89). Durbar is the celebration of history, with the re-enactment of the pre-colonial military power of the Northern region of Nigeria before the advent of the colonial masters that amalgamated the Northern with the Southern parts of Nigeria in 1914. As political as Durbar is, it is also referred to by Buratai (1999, p. 104) as, “a social organisation of the emirate society”. However, it is said to have religious connotations as well from its origin, which is characterized with ritual court arts especially the martial art displays associated with the “Bilad Al-Sudan”. In Bornu of former Bornu empire, for example, ritual display in Durbar went by the twin names “Bata and Fawur” and “Barga and Askar”. (Umar, Buratai 1999, p. 109).

We can deduce from the efforts to classify festivals into different types that festivals are not easily classified into distinctive types. This summation is applicable to all traditional festivals. This is so because they are activities or performances that celebrate the totality of human experiences that connotes social, economical, religious and political well-being, with one of these playing a prominent role and the others complementing interchangeably at a given occasion. Therefore, traditional festivals are celebration of people’s cultural heritages.

### **Historical Overview of Durbar**

Historically, Apter (2000, p.214) stated that “British colonial officers invented the tradition of Durbar first in Victorian India and later deploy in West Africa, particularly in Northern Nigeria.” In line with Apter’s assertion, Sanusi (2016, p.16) also claimed that Durbar was “introduced to Kano about 500 years ago by Sarki Muhammed Rumfa of Kano in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century as a demonstration of military might—it can be said that Sarki Muhammed Rumfa formalized it as part

of the readiness of his forces before going into battle. However, Labadibi (2016, p.24) has different date as he also observed that: “In Nigeria the Durbar dates back to the late 200years when horses were used in warfare to protect the Emirate. Each noble household was expected to defend the Emirate by forming a regiment.” In spite of different account of dating, “the fear of expansionist tendencies by neighbours and other groups necessitated the maintenance of a strong standing army for both defensive and offensive purposes. (Ododo 2016, p.24). Speaking further, Ododo (2016, p.24) emphasised that: “Every Northern Emirate used to have a standing military formation to defend towns, districts and wage wars against weaker States. A common component of such military formations was the Calvary which was suitable for warfare in the Savannah. To ascertain the war readiness of the standing army, the Emir used to invite the war lords with their regiments once or twice in a year for assessment. This military parade for assessment is referred to today as the Durbar”.

Consequently, as a result of Fulani conquest of Kano and introduction of Islam as a State religion, the Durbar apart from its initial martial use metamorphosed to become important event in Eids’ (Fitr and Kabir) celebrations. It also came to reflect the singular sense of unity between the community, Emir and his representatives in the districts. Eventually, the introduction of colonial administration in Nigeria greatly undermined the authority of the Emirs and Durbar was reduced to a mere socio-cultural event staged during the Sallah, the installation of a new Sarki, other court official, at the visit of dignitaries. (Sanusi 2016, p. 20) Consequent upon this, Durbar has developed to become a carnival as people from all parts of the country and abroad come to watch the performances.

As much as horses are major ridding animal for the Durbar, camels too could be used as it was attested to by the Emir of Kano, Alhaji Sanusi Muhammad when he stated that: “Last year, during a special Durbar, after my return to Nigeria from Hajj, I rode on a camel called “tagwa” in Hausa language. He also recalled that, Sanusi (1), who happened to be his grandfather in 1956, rode a “tagwa” for a Durbar when Queen Elizabeth (11) visited Nigeria. Today, Durbar has transformed from a martial art to assume a status of an international carnival which boosts cultural diplomacy. (Sanusi 2016, p.21).

Durbar festival is strictly men affairs. This chauvinistic tendency was underscored by Buratai (2000, p.16) when he described Durbar as “a performance of power in the Northern region.” Apart from this sentiment, Durbar is the celebration of history, characterised with the re-enactment of great events in the life of the people, especially, the military prowess and crusades. However, as political as Durbar is, Buratai (2000, p.16) also refers to it as a “social organisation of the Emirate society” which also accommodates women to play a limited role as religiously allowed.

### **Durbar in Ilorin**

Registration of principal participants and invitation of different personalities by the organisers began long before the durbar day. Durbar in Ilorin is held every second day of Eid-ul-Adha. The organising committee for the first reformed durbar in 2018 tagged the festival as: "Ilorin 2018 Grand Durbar." The appearance of the Emir immediately signaled official opening of the festival. The venue of the festival is the frontage of Emir's palace and by extension, Ilorin Township as performance arena where participants have fun-fare, characterised with pulsating drumming and trumpeting from the royal bard and other traditional musical ensembles. It is one day event that involve thousand of participants that includes the indigenes and non indigenes. At the festival arena and Ilorin township horse riders are seen gallivanting on elegantly costumed stallion-like horses. The horse racers are clad in traditional costumes such as: Lawani, fila Aburo, Alikimba, fila tajia, sanyan clothe and body adornments that reveal their social, economic and political status in the society. They entertained the spectators with their performances as they exhibit their skills and people appreciated them with encomiums and different gifts.



Ilorin Durbar, 2023 - Photo Source: The Researcher



*The Durbar Procession moves around Ilorin Metropolis in 2022*

*Photo Source: The Researcher:*



Emir of Ilorin in Durbar's Procession, 2022

Photo Source: The researcher.

As part of the festival, Emir led a procession through Ilorin Township with his retinues that included: Balogun Fulani, Balogun Gambari, Balogun Ajikobi, Balogun Alanamun, Magaji Are, other chiefs and the people. The tour of Ilorin Township by the Emir was regarded by some people as a test of popularity and acceptance for the Emir. Accordingly, the tour afforded the Emir yet another opportunity to renew the bond between him and his people. He was not disappointed as people in thousands trooped out, lined the streets in different traditional attires to exhibits and affirm their unflinching love and loyalty to the Emir.



Ilorin Women at the Durbar 2022

Photo Source: The Researcher -



Performers re-enacting Jihad War at the Durbar, 2023

Photo Source: The Researcher

This synergy becomes necessary if Ilorin must continue to witness meaningful social, economic and political development towards well being of the people that resides in Ilorin and Kwara State as a whole. The procession was of great festivities which include royal trumpeting and drumming to entertain the teeming crowd that lined the streets to pay homage to their King who was clad in royal costume and rode in his Russian-like Troika-chariot. It was a spectacle to behold as people have their fun. Music in Ilorin durbar festival is a metaphor for historical, religious, sociological and political repository of Ilorin people. It treads the line of thought of Blacking (1973, p.60) who posits that: “Music is a product of the behaviour of human groups whether formal or informal.” In content and context, Ilorin music is didactic; it helps in highlighting the intrinsic value of the festival to the people because it embodies imagery, symbolism and metaphors that evoke catharsis.

### **Importance of Durbar to Ilorin People**

- i. The Durbar gives the people of the Emirate the opportunity to see the Emir physically as he rejoices with them at this period. Importantly, people witnessed unity of purpose as Kwara State Governor and other political, religion and traditional Chiefs rode horse with the Emir of Ilorin at the 2023 Durbar festival.
- ii. The Durbar is the window through which the on-lookers experience the social, religion and political apotheosis of Ilorin Emirate.

- iii. The Durbar also represents the intrinsic values of Ilorin people's cultural heritage.
- iv. The Durbar contains the repertoire of people's customs and traditions.
- v. The Durbar embodies all forms of creative arts to entertain the whole community.
- vi. The Durbar helps in promoting and preserving people's cultural heritage
- vii. The Durbar boost economic activities at this period
- viii. The Durbar period affords the Emir the opportunity to assess the state of relationship between him and his subjects and when necessary make amendments.

### **Findings**

- i. Most indigenes and few non-indigenes participated in the festival
- ii. Indigenes and other sponsors were financially responsible for the organisation and management of the festival
- iii. Neighbouring communities as guests participated in the festival
- iv. Women actively participated in the festival as Islam allowed
- v. Federal, State, Local governments and Vigilante groups provided security at the venues of the festival.
- vi. The people in the Emirate exhibited love and understanding for one another.
- vii. The Emir is being regarded and revered as the traditional and spiritual head of Ilorin Emirate.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, for any society to witness meaningful human development there must be concerted efforts towards promoting people's cultural heritage. Notably, since the bells of newly invigorated durbar started in Ilorin in 2018, the good cause has prospered and advanced as witnessed in 2019, 2022, 2023 and 2024 episodes. We commend the Ilorin durbar organising committee members for the administration and management of the festival. What remains now is for the Emirate to keep one another strong and focused on peaceful co-existence of the people and the communities that constitute the Emirate. There is also dire need to renew our commitments to our collective future. Love, care and tolerance must not be compromised in our communities. All these become necessary if we as a people must experience meaningful human developments.

### **Recommendations**

- i. The venue should be moved to a more spacious arena to accommodate more participants.
- ii. The Durbar should be made more attractive to bring more tourists to the state

- iii. The study also recommends that the Durbar should be given more publicity to attract the public participation.
- iv. People should be allowed to construct make-shift shops to display different items to sell to the participants as this will boost economic activities in the state
- v. The two tiers of government, State and Local government should participate logistically and financially in the organisation of the Durbar for its credibility and sustainability
- vi. Simultaneous transmission of the durbar on television stations should be carried out to reach more people

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## **Exemplification And Enumeration as Ideological Tools in Chika Unigwe's Selected Short Stories**

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### **Abstract**

*The study aims at uncovering stylistic devices such as exemplification and enumeration and the ideological functions they carry out in texts. Exemplification and Enumeration as CS tools serve to give more details to elements and characters in texts and ultimately uncover ideologies in texts, creating specific types of meaning in several different ways and manner. The study is anchored on Critical Stylistics, which serves as both a multidisciplinary field of study, as well as a theoretical framework. Excerpts for the study were selected from three short stories written by Chika Unigwe. They include: "Borrowed Smile", "The Secret" and "Hope". The findings show that exemplification and enumeration as Textual Conceptual functions (TCF) in Unigwe's Short Stories are not merely elements of stylistic choices/devices, but are integral to the ideological messages of the texts, as they contribute to the unraveling of ideologies in the construction of social realities, challenging or affirming power structures and ideologies within Unigwe's exploration of African women's experiences. They do more than structure the narrative as they help to navigate the pathways for the critic to engage with ideologies bordering on gender, sexual exploitation, power, and migration.*

**Keywords:** Critical Stylistics, Exemplification and Enumeration, ideological function, feminist ideology,

### **Introduction**

One of the vehicles through which ideologies are articulated is language. Adugbe (2021:2) holds that language "provides a finely articulated vehicle for differences in discourse, power and social structures". Creative writers have, therefore, continued to explore and deploy the power of language to accentuate social concerns and articulate ideologies. For, while Woodak (2002; cited in Adugbe, 2021:2) seems to advance that ideologies are manifested in a discourse through language, Thompson (1990; cited in Adugbe, 2021:2) views ideology as social

forms and processes within which, and by means of which symbolic forms circulate in the world. Central to critical stylistics, therefore, is ideology, which is interrogated through language. For Teo (2000:1), language can be viewed as “the primary instrument through which ideology is transmitted, enacted and reproduced.” In another instance, Hodges (2015:15) is of the view that ideology represents “systems of thoughts and ideas that represent the world from a particular perspective and provide a framework for organizing meaning, guiding actions and legitimating positions.”

Critical Stylistics, which could be viewed as both a multi-disciplinary study and a conceptual framework, draws from both the traditional Stylistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). Arguably, critical stylistics is a fairly new coined branch of stylistics proposed by Lesley Jeffries, who attempts to integrate critical stylistics from stylistics and critical discourse analysis. Adugbe (2021:4) argues that critical stylistics provides models which give insights into contextual features of ideological meanings in the text. That is, it draws out ideologies that underpin the ideational meaning of text. This seems to align with the position of Jeffries (2010, cited in Adugbe, 2021:4), who holds that Critical Stylistics analyses the contextual and technical use of linguistic features in texts; hence, her model for Critical Stylistics is to:

to provide tools to analyse the different ways in which texts allows/ask us conceptualise those topics they are addressing, and provide some means of accessing this representational practice through the linguistic features that are already well-described in very many semantic-grammatical theories and models (Jeffries, 2010:6).

The study explores a set of ten tools for analysing the ideological implications of language use in literary texts. These tools are: Naming and Describing, Representing Actions/State and Events, Equating and Contrasting, Exemplifying and Enumerating, Prioritising, Assuming and Implying, Negating, Hypothesising, Presenting the speech and thoughts of other participants, and Representing Time, Space and Society. Of these ten tools, five are selected for content analysis. These are: Naming and Describing, Representing Actions/States and Events, Equating and Contrasting, Exemplifying and Enumerating and finally, Assuming and Implying. These tools are called Textual Conceptual Framework and they are used to examine how textual features, including exemplification and enumeration, embed ideologies and power relations in texts. Through the lens of Critical Stylistics, therefore, the study investigates how Unigwe’s exemplification and enumeration strategies either reinforce or subvert dominant social narratives

about African women's experiences, especially in diaspora and within the context of sexual exploitation.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The study adopts the use of Critical Stylistics (CS) as postulated by Lesley Jeffries on the grounds that it provides a more robust set of analytical tools for uncovering language use and ideologies. Arguably, Critical Stylistics emerged as a response to the perceived limitations of Critical Discourse Analysis, which some scholars felt did not provide sufficient tools for a systematic and rigorous analysis of text. Jeffries, a key proponent of Critical Stylistics, developed ten tools for the analysis of text, which serve as a bridge between Stylistics and Discourse analysis.

Accordingly, the study explores the use of one of the ten tools; specifically, exemplification and enumeration. According to Jeffries (2013:409), CS tools are known as Textual Conceptual Functions (TCF). This suggests a combination of textual features (triggers) and ideational functions. They are so named because they can create specific types of meaning in several different ways and manner. Jeffries (2013:409) argues that,

The idea of textual-conceptual functions in general is that they try to capture what a text is doing conceptually in presenting the world (or a fictional world in the case of literature) in a particular way. In doing so, they also explain how resources of the linguistic system are being used to produce this conceptual meaning – this is the textual part of the process and is what defines this approach as essentially stylistic. Thus, for example, linguistic features of texts ‘name’ items in the text world in certain ways or ‘hypothesise’ about the world being presented, and they do so through a variety of naming mechanisms in the first case (including, for example, the use of nominalisation) and through a variety of modal and other structures in the second case.

As the terms exemplification and enumeration suggest, these tools refer to two related or overlapping functions TCF. That is, exemplification and enumeration in textual practices. Jeffries (2015:164) notes exemplifying for example to be; a situation where not all cases of a list are mentioned and enumerating; where they are all listed. To determine any of the two textual functions, pragmatic inferencing is usually required to establish which is which and which of the functions is relevant. These terms, however, overlap structurally and semantically, thereby making it difficult to have clear cut boundaries. Whereas exemplification is made explicit by phrases like ‘for example’, ‘for instance’, and to ‘exemplify’,

enumeration in English usually involves listing, a reasonably straightforward structure being made up of a set of similar structures which are separated by commas, colons or semi-colons in the written language or identified by intonation in the spoken language (Jeffries 2010:69). It is interesting to note that, this tool may also deploy the use of conjunctions to separate the linguistic items. Jeffries (2010:71) observes that although, the analysis of exemplification and enumeration is more structurally defined and easier to identify, there are possibilities of structural ambiguities which make the textual practice of enumerating (listing) difficult to identify from the construction of equivalence via *apposition*. *Apposition* here is the textual practice of putting two or more elements (words), usually noun phrases or clauses side by side where one further explains the other. They are grammatically parallel and points to the same referent. Again, Jeffries (2010:71) gave the following as examples.

- (i) My aunt, the Countess of Buckinghamshire, is coming to tea.
- (ii) The music is sublime, heavenly.
- (iii) They wanted to sleep all day, to refresh their tired bodies

Therefore, CS as a theoretical framework looks at how language embodies the world and the way the author depicts what he/she views in a linguistic form. To Jeffries, all kinds of texts have ideological basis. Thus, it is not impossible to spell out the ideologies a text constructs as an acceptance or a disproof by its readers using the provisions of the CS analytical tools.

The Study thus applies this approach in the textual analysis of selected excerpts using one of the ten analytic tools provided by this theoretical framework. The application of the exemplification and enumeration tool allows the paper to make out meanings and uncover hidden ideologies and their functions in the selected texts. This framework also helps to bring to the fore, some of the thematic concerns of the texts, as captured in selected excerpts; aligning them with the critical stylistic approach to expose ideological dimensions of exemplification and enumeration in the selected short stories.

### **Literature Review and Texts Analysis**

Describing Unigwe's writings, Bekers (2015:27) holds that her "novels deal with universal issues such as love, illness and death, loneliness and belonging, but also with the concrete circumstances of her African characters: migration, prostitution, single motherhood, and slavery. Thematically, Africa takes an increasingly centre place in her first three novels". In another instance, as cited in Eze (2014:89) Chika Unigwe belongs to what has been identified as the third generation of Nigerian writers (Adesanmi & Dunton). Arguing further, Eze (2014:89) affirms that "Unlike the generation before them, they embrace feminism without apologies. They are also historically informed about their place in their struggle to right the wrongs done to women's bodies in their culture". Accordingly,

Ladele and Omotayo (2017:53-54) affirm that “she has used her novels not merely for the purpose of entertainment; but through them, she engages constructively with the social conditions of women of her race in the diaspora”. This highlights Eze’s (2014:91) position that she is “interested in African women’s human rights”, and also confirmed by Ladele and Omotayo (2017: 53-54), who opine that “Unigwe is also interested in the conditions occasioned by physical, social and psychological relocation from the continent of Africa to other spaces”.

Arguably, therefore, Unigwe, in her short stories could be said to have delved into interrogating the social issues that characterise the daily living of young girls, especially those whose poor socio-economic backgrounds have exposed them to the option of trading their bodies for a living. For instance, “Borrowed Smile”, reveals the plight of the main protagonist who subsequently finds herself at *the red light district* of Antwerp, Belgium, the city with the cathedral. It describes how young girls from poor backgrounds become easy preys of pimps, who promise them the good life in exchange for the vending of their bodies. In another instance, “The Secret” highlights themes conflict of culture, loneliness, neglect of cultural heritages, among others, as well as how women neglect their babies, who in turn grow up to become detached from their roots and social values, thereby exposing them to a lifestyle of lose moral value. Accordingly, in the story titled, “Hope”, Unigwe brings to light, the adverse effects of migration on Africans, and questions Africans for opting to migrate without proper investigation. The story, thus, subtly challenges the mindset of some Africans, who hold that traveling abroad is the key to prosperity.

**“Borrowed Smile”**

- i. *He tells you of places close to the sky. Way beyond this environment riddled with the smell of dead and decaying things: rats. Mice. Cockroaches. Dogs. Cats. Pungent smells rolling into each other (p.31)*

The interlocutor here refers to a referent named Bob, who is renowned for being a sex trafficker, who recruits young girls and sends them to Europe. The CS exemplification tool helps to give more details to the excerpt above and this can be seen in the picture of sophisticated and highly developed places painted, which is a stark opposite to the environment the interlocutor is accustomed to. The enumerating tool is used also to list *dead and decaying things* that characterise the ghetto where the narrator/protagonist lives. These are: *rats; mice; cockroaches; dogs and cats*. These dead and decaying animals are described as *oozing pungent smells rolling into each other (p.31)*. In view of this, one could infer that Bob is projected as one who takes advantage of the poverty of his victims, especially young girls, to lure and ‘sweet-talk’ them into prostitution. By this, therefore, one could argue that text uses this situation to advance the feminist ideology, where the female character is projected as being oppressed and

viewed as an object of sexual exploitation. Similarly, through the same avenue, the issue of transnational sex trafficking, for which the female child is the victim, is subtly uncovered.

ii. *He kisses your ears and tells you to choose. Antwerp. Brussels. Milan. Madrid. Barcelona. Amsterdam. Berlin. Frankfurt. The world is your oyster* (p.31)

Again, from the excerpt above, one could further argue that the enumerating tool is used by the narrator/protagonist to point to the referent, Bob, a pimp, as he lists a number of countries in Europe where he claims he can get the young naïve narrator/protagonist into; provided she can make a choice of one. His enumeration of different countries in Europe could be seen as a subtle way to expose the issue of international sex trafficking; for which girls are major victims. He caps this list by telling the narrator that “the world is your oyster”. There is an underlying deception in Bob’s expression, as he pretends to be concern with the wellbeing and success of the narrator; whereas, he truly does not mean what he is saying. What matters to Bob, deductively, is how to take every advantage at his disposal to commercialise and commoditise the body of his victim. Conversely, he uses the power of words to deceive her into thinking she will make a success of her life by commoditising her body in Europe. Enumeration, therefore, as a CS tool could be said to have been deployed in the listing of places in Europe such as, Antwerp, Brussels, Milan, Madrid, Barcelona, and Amsterdam, as places where sex trade thrives and where young unsuspecting African female migrants are deceived to. Accordingly, while one could argue that there is a subtle indictment on men like Bob, whose stock-in-trade is to deceive gullible young girls into commercialising their bodies, one can also observe that the indictment is couched in the feminist ideology.

iii. *To be different things to different men. A slave. A mistress. A dog. To listen to those who want to talk* (p.31)

Although, the excerpt does not use the colon to list, but from the knowledge of pragmatic inferencing, it is clear that the enumerating tool is deployed. The list includes the narrator/protagonist taking on the roles of: *a slave; a mistress; a dog;* and *to listen to those who want to talk* respectively. The textual choice of the use of unusual capitalisations to signify enumerating can be seen in the excerpt. This may be considered a stylistic deviation from the expected norm of using colon and semi-colon or commas to separate the items in the list. The phrases *a slave; a mistress; a dog* can be seen as apposition, referring to the same referent in the text, whose job descriptions includes all of that and more. Enumeration as a tool serves the ideological function of giving more details to the kind of life and or job description the referent is engaged in. It can be inferred that while the CS tool is deployed to illustrate the feminist ideology, where the female character is

projected as a victim of sexual exploitation and manipulation, it uses the metaphors of “a slave”, “a mistress” and “a dog” to describe the job schedule of trafficked victims of transnational sex trade. In fact, all these metaphors enumerated are reflective of the fact that the victim is not only being introduced into international prostitution; she equally does not have an opinion or a mind of her own, as she becomes “different things to different men”.

#### **“The Secret”**

- i. *He marveled at the list of presents he was expected to give out: Bales of cloth for Eby’s mother. A live goat for Eby’s father. Two cartons of maltina for Eby’s paternal aunts. Three cartons of beer for her paternal uncles... (p.79-80)*

Employing the enumerating tool, one observes the writer’s use of the colon in itemising or introducing the items in the list. Again, Unigwe, in her characteristic display of idiolectal peculiarities or linguistic finger print, uses capitalisation to separate these items instead of a semi-colon or a comma. This, probably, is in order to emphasise the importance of each of the item as compulsory requirements in meeting marriage in Eby’s culture. In another light, one may argue that while the CS tool is used to periscope the writer’s viewpoints and ideology, the excerpt depicts the writer’s observation on inter-marriage, especially along intercontinental and cross-cultural lines. As observed, Gunter could not hide his surprise at the list of items he is required and requested to provide as part of his marriage proposal to Eby. He does not seem to have experienced such as a requirement for marriage; hence, the writer’s description that “He marveled at the list of presents he was expected to give out”. Gunter’s expression seems to subtly indict the traditional practices in Africa, especially during marriage ceremonies, which some assume have become avenues to extort potential suitors. In fact, this is heightened by his expression as captured, thus, “He said it was robbery but he laughed and presented the gifts with a smile that did not waver” (p. 80). The list, one may argue, could be seen as a metaphor used in depicting two different cultural ideologies across two different continents, as represented by Gunter, a Belgian and Eby, a Nigerian.

- ii. *You wish life were like that: predictable with a sweet smell (p.81)*

The above excerpt could be said to be a demonstration of the use of enumerating tool. The interlocutor, Eby wishes that life was predictable with a sweet smell like the perfume she was given as a gift on Christmas day by Tante Miet instead of the unpredictability life throws up sometimes. Her expression underscores the philosophy that life does not go exactly as planned all the time. One minute, things are going well, another minute, one’s world can just come crashing for instance, the protagonist’s cancer diagnosis. Accordingly, one may also argue that the expression underscores the writer’s feminist ideology, where she

probably projects her female character, Eby, as being somewhat unsatisfied with her expectation and experience in marriage, as well as her experience in the West, where she now realises the loneliness that characterises it; the detachment one feels from one's cultural environment, as well as the detachment of women from their children, especially at child-birth, under an anonymous arrangement termed X, among others.

iii. *He no longer noticed her lingerie, her hair, her eyes* (p.82)

As observed, the writer deploys the CS tool to illustrate the somewhat sour relationship that now exists between Gunter and his wife, Eby. Also, through this angle, one could observe the comparison between the past and present state of things in their relationship. In other words, while their relationship seemed to have been cordial in the past, the present state of things does not seem to show any iota of cordiality. This could be gleaned from the writer's observation, as captured: "he no longer noticed her..." The statement shows that Gunter has suddenly changed, to the extent that he no longer shows/showers affection to/on his wife. In another fashion, one can observe how, using the CS tool, the writer uses metaphors, such as, "her lingerie, her hair, her eyes" to not only heighten the level of neglect that Eby now suffers in the hand of her husband, but to also register her feminist ideology.

#### **"Hope"**

i. *You live here, she thought, and you get used to a lot of things: eating cornflakes in cold milk; missing your family; being followed around in shops. But the flip side of getting used to things is forgetting things you used to know* (SE, p.19)

Jeffries (2010:72) suggests that the biggest ideological issue with enumeration is that it overlaps structurally and semantically with exemplification, making the boundaries somewhat ambiguous. However, pragmatic referencing helps the linguist to determine which of the tool functions in the selected text. Thus, the excerpt from "Hope" demonstrates enumerating as seen with this list: *eating cornflakes in cold milk; missing your family; and being followed around in shops.*

As seen in the above excerpt, one could say that the writer, using the CS tool, shows how migrants quickly abandon their former way of life to embrace an entirely new way of life. While the CS tool as used here subtly projects two different cultural environments (Africa and Europe), it also reveals how African migrants, being far away from their families, are lonely and nostalgic; hence, the expression: "...eating cornflakes in cold milk; missing your family". Arguably also, the writer, through this angle seems to be projecting the communal value

Africans attach to the family system, as against the individualistic tendencies that characterise the Western socio-cultural milieu.

ii. *His voice was gentle. It had lost the gruffness it had acquired from living here in Belgium, working in a bread factory all night, getting in only in the early hours of the morning to sleep, building up a new life on the ruins of the one that they had lost in Jos: their home, their careers blown up in the three days of religious riots that sent southerners scuttling back to the south of the country, and this new life constantly being reflected against the old and always, naturally, falling short (p.22)*

The excerpt can be argued to contain both textual conceptual functions of exemplifying and enumerating. In the case of exemplifying, it can be deduced that Agu's gentle voice, as compared to the initial gruffness (harshness) it had when they first came into Belgium is an example of the change he is been through. The other textual function is enumerating, as seen in the lists which are accentuated with the use of commas. The following from the list buttresses the use of enumerating. These are: *working in a bread factory all night, getting in only in the early hours of the morning to sleep, building up a new life on the ruins of the one that they had lost in Jos: their home, their careers blown up in the three days of religious riots that sent southerners scuttling back to the south of the country.*

Using the CS tools of exemplification and enumerating, therefore, one may contend that the writer draws a comparison between the struggles and challenges encountered by the protagonist while in Africa (Jos, Nigeria) and the struggles he is going through as a migrant in Belgium. One central point that this seems to have unveiled in her comparison is that, life is a tissue of struggles.

Similarly, through the use of the CS tool, one could further advance that the writer traces the present difficulty faced by Agu to the incessant religious crisis that constantly ravage his home-state in Jos, as he is now struggling to build "...a new life on the ruins of the one that they had lost in Jos". Accordingly, life in Belgium, for the migrant is not all bed of roses, as Agu is depicted to be "*working in a bread factory all night, getting in only in the early hours of the morning to sleep...*" The writer, through this comparison, evokes a sense of caution to would-be African migrants to know that life in the West may not be as rosy as they perceive.

### **Conclusion**

The study demonstrates how exemplification and enumeration as Textual Conceptual functions (TCF) in Unigwe's Short Stories are not merely elements of stylistic choices/devices, but are integral to the ideological messages of the texts. By applying the methods of CS, the analysis shows how these devices contribute to the unraveling of ideologies in the construction of social realities, challenging

or affirming power structures and ideologies within Unigwe's exploration of African women's experiences. Interrogating these stories through this lens illuminates the complex interplay between language, ideology, and power in Chika Unigwe's Short Stories.

Exemplification and enumeration, as Critical Stylistic analytical tools, do more than structure the narrative; they also perform crucial ideological functions as can be seen in selected excerpts from "Borrowed Smile", "The Secret", and "Hope". These CS tools known also as Textual Conceptual Function (TCF) help the linguist to engage with ideologies bordering on gender, power, and migration in the selected Short Stories. This TCF tool demonstrates specific acts of sexual manipulation and exploitation of African women in "Borrowed Smile" as can be seen from the excerpts. In "The Secret", the protagonist's internal struggle especially as it relates to her cancer is enumerated to emphasise the overwhelming nature of her hidden burdens as she would have wished otherwise. She would have wished that life was *predictable with a sweet smell* like the perfume she was given as gift for Christmas (Unigwe 81). In the last selected short story, "Hope", the enumerating TCF lists a myriad of challenges faced by migrants, which include hardship as a result of relocation, racism, culture shock, and longing for stability. It also details the protagonist's struggles as a migrant in a foreign land, highlighting the systemic barriers and personal sacrifices faced by Africans in Europe, challenging the notion of migration as a path to freedom or success. Finally, in "The Secret" and "Hope", enumeration often highlights the emotional and psychological states of the protagonists.

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## Metaphoric advertising and the challenges of group identity

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### Abstract

*While studies on metaphoric advertising and its socio-cultural implications permeate Western and Asian countries, there is a dearth of knowledge regarding the Nigerian perspective. Hence, this study examined metaphor mapping in controversial advertising in the Nigerian context. It adopted a qualitative descriptive design and used conceptual metaphor and multimodal metaphor as theoretical paradigms to analyse metaphoric modes in eight purposively selected advertisements. Findings showed that the data included unconventional meaning negotiations indexed with religious narratives, societal ethos, and gender mainstreaming. The intended audience, however, rejected them because they believed that the figurative association of their identities with the target domains was offensive and insensitive, rather than growing fond of the associated brands. The study concludes, therefore, that though thought-provoking advertisements are a valid strategy to attract attention, they could miss the mark when their inherent ambiguity and subtlety are considered insensitive and cross the line of group identity.*

**Keywords:** Metaphor, advertising, metaphoric advertising, conceptual metaphor, multimodal analysis

### 1. Introduction

A good number of the advertisements (ads) that have the greatest enduring impact use metaphor in some capacity (Bonilla 2018; Rodríguez 2016). These advertisements contain pictures, words, and references that seize the attention of viewers and keep them captivated. In modern advertising, metaphors are used in order to convey the unique selling proposition of a product or attract the attention of viewers. As Ortony (1993) and Gentner and Bowdle (2008) observed, metaphor incorporates a concept and conveys meaning in a way that cannot be effectively articulated using straightforward language. Al-Heety and Rajab (2019), in the same vein, justified this, saying that metaphor is a type of linguistic

device that can be found in everyday speech. In the context of cognitive-linguistics, metaphor is seen as the relationship that exists between two different conceptual domains (Dalamu 2020; Indurkha 1992). Thus, Barcelona (1997, 3) defined it as “a cognitive mechanism by which one domain is partially ‘mapped’ or projected onto another domain, so that the second domain is partially understood in terms of the first domain.” The source domain refers to the mental world or space from which metaphorical terms are produced to comprehend a different conceptual realm - the target domain. These domains are mapped to aid in the comprehension of a concept or idea and make it more visualizable.

For example, a metaphor like Olasoji Adagunodo was a lion has to be interpreted within the context of its metaphorical meaning because the meaning is not grammar-based but within an underlying conceptual system. The individual serves as the conceptual frame or target domain, which is the domain we aim to comprehend (Lakoff 1993). Conversely, the word "lion" serves as the conceptual realm or source domain, which we employ to facilitate our understanding of the abstract or target domain (Lakoff 2008). By employing the conceptual metaphor in use, we are able to grasp a particular realm of human endowments, namely power and strength, by relating them to an entirely distinct realm of experience, one that is characterised by the might and authority of the sovereign ruler of the animal kingdom. The rationale behind this blending can be attributed to the inherent conceptual nature of the named human qualities, which have to be mapped onto a familiar domain to be better understood.

Furthermore, studies by Cook (1992), Croft and Cruse (2004), Forceville (1998; 2005b; 2008; 2009; 2013), Lundmark (2005), Maalej (2001), Messaris (1997), Svaziene (2010), Toncar and Munch (2001), Vestergaard and Schroder (1985), Urios-Aparisi (2009) and Xiaqing (2017) have acknowledged the impact of conceptual metaphor and its use in advertising. As a vital aspect of mass communication, advertising is an essential source of information for consumers due to the fact that it “provides the most coherent and persistent models for their needs, values, tastes, and behaviour” (Fairclough 1989, 207; Ling et al. 1999, 129). However, due to the intense rivalry for a small portion of the market, it is apparent that modern businesses and organisations need more than just advertising to stand out; they also have to be daring in order to be heard and seen.

As a consequence, in order to generate engaging content that could connect with customers across the board, many now rely on metaphor mapping without taking cognizance of the complexity of the different cultures and religious beliefs of the target audience (Aguirre-Rodriguez, 2014; Aaker and Bruzzone 1985; Barnes and Dotson 1990; Frank and Meyer, 2002; Shao, 1993; Paek, Nelson and Vilela 2011; Waller and Fam, 2000). This is essentially problematic in societies like Nigeria, where group identity, including social background, age, ethnicity, religious views,

gender, and livelihood, is somewhat indispensable and highly revered. Owing to this reality, a growing clash of interests and resistance towards controversial commercials stemming from the perceived misalliance of metaphoric realms is fast becoming the norm (De-Run and Ting 2014; Dahl, Frankenberger, and Manchanda 2003; Prendergast and Hwa, 2003; Maglajlic et al., 2015; Waller, 1999). This matter is of considerable concern and calls for scholarly attention, specifically within the Nigerian setting, given its high secularity and assortment of socio-cultural beliefs. This investigation, therefore, holds promise for highlighting compelling observations regarding the lean yet consequential boundary that should not be violated between advertisements and individuals' identities, using the Nigerian context and sociolinguistic perspective. The study was founded on the hypothesis that a well-selected metaphor can do wonders for the marketing of a product's sale, whereas a poorly chosen metaphor can have the opposite effect and backfire.

## **2. Literature review**

The principal aim of advertising is to persuade the envisioned audience to develop familiarity with the products being marketed, ultimately prompting them to engage in purchasing activity. Routinely, it is illustrated through textual elements and the use of figurative language (Ritson and Elliott 1999). According to Scott (1994), the concept has been so extensively advanced that many commercial graphics do not merely serve as straightforward depictions of reality. Instead, they depend on a complex symbolic system of visual rhetoric, which allows the use of images as part of the mode of textual communication. Among others, the use of visual metaphors holds great importance as a rhetorical tool in the field of advertising. This is primarily because visual metaphors have the ability to elicit positive emotions and pleasure, effectively communicate substantial information, and prompt significant inferences about the goods or services being promoted (Chang and Yen 2013). According to Callow and Schiffman (1999), pictorial metaphors play a significant role as a visual medium in global marketing, as they are universally understood and decoded by customers. As further described by Feinstein (1985, 26):

Metaphor has been considered at best an ornamental linguistic device and at worst a deviant use of grammar and semantics. By extension, metaphoric thinking has been regarded as unclear thinking, a shield that impedes the search for truth.

One of the prominent views of metaphor within the linguistic framework suggests that it is a cognitive mechanism — a method of thought that may be utilised in several disciplines (Lakoff and Johnson 2003) — and entails the deliberate placement of two apparently unrelated ideas in order to generate symbolic significance. A landmark study by McQuarrie and Phillips (2004) posited that the

use of metaphor (extended metaphor) enables humans to deduce a parallel between two entities that may exhibit resemblances in their structure or physical attributes. Also, metaphor is often defined as an implied analogy (implied metaphor) between two disparate entities that possess a shared attribute. They are frequently employed as a means to render abstract concepts more tangible and comprehensible (ontological metaphor) (Corbett, 1990; Lakoff and Johnson 1980).

Numerous academics have undertaken scholarly investigations on the use of metaphors or tropes in advertising or brand communication. Studies by Levy (1959), McQuarrie and Phillips (2004), Scott (1994), and Zaltman (2016), to mention but a few, were examples of such scholarly inquiries. They all declared that metaphoric advertising augments the intensity and novelty of advertisements while simultaneously expanding the imaginative capabilities of the audience through their various rhetorical functions and expressive impacts. In a study conducted by Burgers et al. (2015), it was found that the incorporation of metaphoric advertising enhances the understandability and tangibility of intangible product features for consumers. The study further postulated that metaphoric advertising possesses the potential to assist customers in their intuitive understanding of abstract qualities associated with products or services, which may present challenges when conveyed through alternative methods. This suggests that advertising serves as an effective means of imparting symbolic implications to brands, establishing and managing brand personality (Ang and Lim 2006), or situating brands within the realm of commerce (Alden et al. 1999).

Furthermore, a study conducted by Delbaere et al. (2011) particularly confirmed this and also highlighted that the practise of personifying a brand, which involves depicting a product in an advertisement as exhibiting human-like behaviour, not only influences the transmission of explicit brand personality traits but also has the potential to foster a feeling of connectivity and positively impact brand preference. Aggarwal and McGill (2007) supported this claim, adding that the use of metaphoric advertising has the potential to exploit the advantageous results of brand anthropomorphism. In a related study, Hawkins (1973) observed the significance of metaphoric advertising in establishing a vital connection between brands and consumers and effectively achieving the basic goal of marketing communications. The paper remarked that metaphoric advertising is characterised by distinctions and connotative variations between the source and target elements and that the connection between the listed entities, specifically the source and target, is hypothesised to be based on an underlying similarity or conceptual similarity, as also noted by McQuarrie and Mick (1999). Therefore, to comprehend a metaphorical advertisement, consumers must first identify the shared structures between the source and the target domains. Subsequently, they

have to employ their knowledge of both domains to determine if and how they align.

Interestingly, McQuarrie and Mick's (1999) investigation added further substantial insights on the use of metaphor in advertising. It admitted that metaphors possess inherent limitations and require readers to actively fill in the gaps in order to fully grasp the intended metaphorical meaning. The study observed that the use of metaphors in advertising generally entails the depiction of a divergence from the expected conventions of the target audience and might be accomplished by integrating unconventional or non-conventional visual or language elements to achieve a diverse range of positive cognitive effects. In part, Toncar and Munch (2001) consented to the limitations of metaphorical use of words in advertising or tropes but further claimed that their integration has the potential to mitigate consumers' inclination to resist the claims being advertised owing to the greater difficulty consumers face in scrutinising and interrogating the underlying connotations of metaphoric advertisements, in contrast to statements that are more straightforward and explicit.

Like McQuarrie and Mick (1999) and Toncar and Munch (2001), Lakoff and Johnson (2003) had clearly admitted that metaphoric advertising is deep-rooted in intrinsic ambiguity and subtlety with a disguised abundance of meaning. All in all, while advertising has the capacity to augment the vibrancy and ingenuity of promotional content, the use of metaphors in the process fulfils a specific rhetorical function and generates distinctive expressive results. This is the conclusion that can be drawn from the reviewed studies. However, the most pressing gap in the examined literature, which this study seeks to fill, is the Nigerian experience or perspective.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

The main theoretical frameworks used in the current study for data analysis are Forceville's (2008) Multimodal Metaphor Theory and the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) developed by Lakoff and Johnson (2003). One of the fundamental tenets of Conceptual Metaphor Theory is the idea that people use idealised cognitive models, including image schemas, to order and express their thoughts based on certain social, cultural, and personal experiences (Lakoff 1987b, 68; Stockwell 2002, 32–33). This is made possible by the use of conceptual metaphor and mapping. A conceptual map is a collection of connections made between components in two different domains. In this mapping, there is a contrast between the source domain, which has concrete or tangible concepts, and the target domain, which has abstract or intangible concepts. By creating a conceptual link between the two domains, knowledge is transferred (Lakoff 1993, 207), and the target could be understood in light of the mapped source domain.

On the other hand, multimodal metaphor, according to Forceville and Urios-Aparisi (2009, 4), is one that expresses the primary or exclusive representation of both the target and source domains using two or more modes, while monomodal metaphor uses one mode, such as the verbal mode, to express both domains. The numerous modes or modalities that could be combined and demand thorough analysis are outlined by Forceville (2009a, 23) and include gestures, sounds, music, scents, tastes, and touch, in addition to visual, written, and spoken signs. According to Forceville (2008, 469), there must be a clear distinction between the two phenomena, which can be classified as the target and source, respectively, in order to be labelled a multimodal metaphor. Since the focus of the current paper is on controversial advertising, which entails both the source and target domains and includes the use of multiple modes such as images, text, speech, gestures, sounds, and music, the multimodal metaphor and conceptual metaphor theoretical frameworks were considered appropriate for the study.

#### **4. Materials and method**

The materials for this study consist of advertisements that were gathered based on the level of attention they garnered subsequent to their dissemination within the Nigerian context. The selection process involved the purposive identification of controversial advertisements and brand communications with extended circulation and recognition across various national communication platforms, particularly online and on television. During the course of the selection process, our main aim was to find samples that exhibited provocative elements, specifically those that encompassed either a traditional metaphorical phrase or the use of a pictorial metaphor, which was further reinforced by imaginative or debatable elaborations. The choice was made to harvest a controlled number of ads that aligned with the scope of the study, leading to the identification of only eight commercials deemed adequate for qualitative analysis. According to Low (1999, 49 cited in Lundmark 2005), the primary approach utilised to discover metaphors is the unilateral decision methodology, wherein the researcher is responsible for establishing the criteria for inclusion and exclusion. As Lundmark (2005) further observed, the apparent advantages of this approach outweigh any potential disadvantages posed by the underlying subjectivity involved in the data collection. The analysis was based on a qualitative descriptive approach and insights from the aforementioned Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) Conceptual Metaphor and Forceville's (2008) Multimodal Metaphor analytical paradigm

#### **5. Data presentation and discussion**

In this section, the eight assembled data sets are presented. For a better reading and understanding of the metaphor system under investigation and why it did not go down well with the envisioned audience, the data are foregrounded, while the religious, social, cultural, and personal identities associated with the conceptual mapping are also descriptively presented and discussed.

**5.1 Plates one and two: Trophy ads in Ilorin, Kwara State**  
Theme: Marketing of Alcoholic Drink – Trophy



Plate one

Plate two

The ads on Plates one and two appeared on two sides of a massive billboard erected along Offa Garage Road, Ilorin, Kwara State. They combined pictorial, gestural, and written signs on a predominantly black background to deliver an off-track metaphorical note. In Plate one, the pictographic part contains two men, one of whom is blurred and in the background. The unembroidered and superimposed one could be seen holding a half-filled glass cup containing an alcoholic drink popular among socialites and beer lovers. He beheld the liquor with admiration, and the look on his face signalled the relief and pleasure he had derived from gulping the visibly cold drink. Similarly, in Plate two, four cheerful men could be seen cooling off on the beer with contagious smiles and gesticulations.

The third multimodal element in the Plates is the textual component. A Yoruba word, *Atunilara* (meaning a reliever in English), was boldly positioned underneath the brand name of the beer; Trophy. The striking expression was formed from a combined process of concatenation and contraction of Yoruba first-person pronoun (plural) "a", "tu" (meaning comfort in English), "ni" (a focus marker in the Yoruba language), and "ara" (meaning body). The third deck of the textual elements also contains two interesting phrases. First, *tó si ẹ gégé bi* and the second, *omo Ilorin*. The latter translates to an Ilorin indigene, while the former means 'that is restful like...'

These ads included a combination of personification and extended metaphor. The advertised beer is the target domain. *Omo Ilorin* is the source domain, while the restfulness and serenity associated with the ancient city are the purportedly shared features and the basis of the conceptual mapping. The rationale behind such mapping may be unconnected to the attributes and calm depositions of Ilorin and her people. The people pride the city as a town that is far from hell and closer to paradise and themselves as children of 'alfa' meaning Islamic priests. The brand possibly wanted the beer to be so understood and perceived by the core values of the town and the people so as to foster a feeling of connectivity and positively impact brand preference. Hence, the use of personification and extended metaphor; Trophy is *Omo Ilorin*; *Omo Ilorin is Trophy*.

Obviously, the socio-cultural experience and identity of the people and the fact that Ilorin operates an emirate system and has a strong religious affiliation were either not considered or completely overlooked in the execution of the ad, and this was justified by the protests and condemnations that trailed the metaphoric advertising until it was eventually pulled down. For instance, the Ilorin Emirate Descendants Progressive Union (IEDPU) described the metaphoric ads as liberty taken too far and contended that the message on the billboard attaching alcohol to the people of Ilorin, a predominantly Muslim community, was a deliberate confrontational act. A Facebook post by a media and public analyst who hails

from Ilorin and the dearth of studies in this area within the context of Nigeria when the researcher attempted to probe further into the controversy generated by this *Omo Ilorin* mapping stimulated his interest in this work. The said analyst remarked:

This is an insult to Ilorites. I don't expect anyone to say that there are drunkards in Ilorin to justify this nonsense. I'm an Ilorite, I don't drink beer. People at the authority should sue them, please.

Meanwhile, a study conducted by Delbaere et al. (2011) particularly emphasised that the practise of personifying a brand, which involves depicting a product in an advertisement as exhibiting human-like behaviour, does not only influence the transmission of explicit brand personality traits but also extends to fostering a sense of togetherness and potentially yielding beneficial effects. While this may be the case in some instances, the Ilorin scenario presented and discussed above is an exception and is instead considered offensive and insensitive in what could be regarded as lean tolerance for the subtlety of the employed metaphor system (van Mulken, le Pair, and Forceville 2010; van Hooft, van Mulken, and Nedertigt 2013).

## 5.2 Plate three: Dove body wash ad

Theme: four-in-one slide showing skin lighting



This quadrilateral image was from Dove's implied metaphoric ad designed to spark sales for its body wash. The anger-evoking advertisement consisted of a static combination of four photographs rolled into one. It was positioned on a plain background. In the opening frame, a Nigerian model, Lola Ogunyemi, could be seen transforming into a white lady. The dark-skinned lady was depicted in a bathroom setting, where a bottle of Dove body wash could also be seen in the

lower right-hand corner of the frame. In the ensuing frames, she lowers her hand and lifts up her brown blouse and ostensibly the rest of her skin, only to turn out to be a smiling white woman in a lighter-coloured shirt.

Though the company contended that this ad was projected to show that Dove body wash is for everyone and be a celebration of diversity, the visual metaphor leaves much to be desired and was met with objections in Nigeria and among other women of colour who perceived the comparatively "before and after" shots to be racially insensitive.

After the backlash, the brand later admitted it missed the mark in representing women of colour thoughtfully and restated its commitment to representing beauty in diversity (Astor 2017). But there is obviously more to this. Though the ad is not explicit, by using pictures and gesticulations, the ad could be said to be a multimodal metaphor and evoke a long-running stereotype and trope in soap advertising: black is dirty, White is clean. This metaphor is implied because the theme of the product, "(body) wash", apparently belongs to the same metaphoric frame as cleanliness and purity, which are shared attributes of the metaphor for "white". The representations therefore implied a metaphor between black (the source domain) and white (the target domain) and let out an identity bias or disorientation in the frame at the lower right-hand corner of the picture in favour of the target domain.

### 5.3 Plate four: Starling bank and *agege* bread mapping

Theme: Easter Celebration



The irk-inducing ad in Plate four was circulated by Sterling Bank to felicitate Nigerian Christians for the Easter celebration. However, it generated furor as a result of its assumed misrepresentation of the group's identity and the

resurrection of Jesus Christ. The multimodal ad combined elements of visual metaphor and written signs to pass its intended metaphoric message, which was received in a bad light and seen as a derogatory remark on the Christian faith and insensitive to Jesus Christ, whom the people hold sacred. The public and the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), who insisted that the advertisement misrepresented Christianity, then responded negatively to this.

The advertisement's textual component reads, "Like Agege Bread, He Rose. Happy Easter". This was accompanied by a picture of a locally made bread in Nigeria called "Agege Bread," divided into two halves. This conceptual mapping or association of Easter with the Agege brand of bread may not be unconnected to an attempt to imitate the words of Jesus proclaiming Himself as the 'bread of Life' and the usual nature of bread to transform from its previous shape and evolve once heated with fire or baked. The choice of Agege bread and not any other kind of bread is due largely to the usually fattened nature of the bread compared to others, making it a household food in Nigeria.

So, since resurrection is rooted in reawakening and baked bread is associated with regeneration, Agege Bread was used here as a source domain for a better reading and understanding of the target domain, which is intangible and linked with regeneration or reawakening from death or a previous state of being. In this ontological metaphor, the proclivity of Agege bread to rise is accentuated, and it is the concrete basis for us to understand the abstract concept of resurrection. The metaphor here is that Agege bread is resurrection. Resurrection is Agege bread. Meanwhile, given the context-sensitive nature of pronouns, the binding principle governing their use, and their indexical nature, the capitalised one included in the ad clearly referred to Jesus Christ, the symbol of Easter celebration.

As a result, the Christian community found it insulting, lacking in sensitivity, and derogatory to link the sacred resurrection of Jesus Christ with Agege bread during a period when the global Christian community was observing Easter. Within the realm of ontological metaphors, there exists a conceptualization wherein abstract entities, such as ideas, emotions, and psychological activities, are regarded as tangible entities or concrete objects. This notion is aptly illustrated in Plate four. The hypothesised relationship between the things mentioned, particularly the source and goal, is postulated to be rooted in an underlying likeness or mental similarity (Rise, +tns). Nevertheless, the advertisement was ultimately unsuccessful in fulfilling its intended objective and encountered obstacles due to the inherent limitations imposed by group identification.

#### **5.4 Plates five, six and seven: Peak Milk and Jesus' crucifixion-themed ads**

Theme: Easter-focused ads

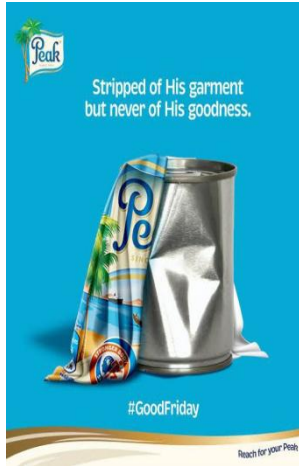


Plate five



Plate six



Plateseven

In what has been widely described as a desecration of the Easter moment and the huge sacrifice of Jesus Christ, Plates five, six and seven above were circulated on social media by Peak Milk to promote their product during the Easter Celebration. However, the metaphoric ads sparked backlash from Nigerians because, like in many other countries of the world, Easter has a serious religious connotation in Nigeria. From the early days of Christianity, good Friday marked the day Jesus Christ was crucified and entombed.

The Roman leader, Pontius Pilate, reluctantly sentenced Him to execution following His proclamation of being the Son of God, which caused dissatisfaction among the Jewish decision makers. During the day of His crucifixion, Jesus' attire was tattered and shared into four and catered away. Thereafter, He was adorned with a woven crown of thorns and affixed to a cross, with nails driven into His palms and feet at Calvary. With blood gushing out from His head, palms, and feet, He passed on on the cross, after which His remains were subsequently detached from the cross and entombed.

The easter-focused ads employed multimodal metaphors combining visual and textual modes. Tagged #Goodfriday, Plates five and six featured the picture of a dented tin of Peak Milk, a metaphor for the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and illustration of the phases of the tribulations leading to His eventual passing at Calvary. Particularly, Plate five featured a textual mode that reads, "stripped of His garment but never of His goodness," a metaphor for the shredding of Jesus' cloth and His widely acclaimed goodness. The dented tin of the milk on Plate six was pierced on two sides with a nail and also included a textual mode that read, "Bruised and pierced for us," a metaphor for the persecution and piercing of Jesus' palms and feet while nailing Him to the cross and the belief held by

Christians that He died so that their sins could be forgiven. Hence, the use of the personal pronoun “us”. The spilt milk from the two sides where the tin was pierced, and the one on the body and left side of the milk, was an extended metaphor for the blood that gushed out from Jesus’ head, palms, and feet as a result of the injuries from the crown of thorns planted on His head and the nails with which He was pinned to the cross. Plate seven featured an undented but bent tin of the milk pierced on two sides and a textual mode that reads, “...and they met it empty”, a metaphor for Jesus’ transformation and rise from death and his miraculous departure from where he was entombed. The second of the textual modes reads, ‘Happy Easter’, as a mark of the celebration of the religious event with Christian adherents.

Clearly, the ads captured the not-so-pleasant phases of the crucifixion of Jesus and intended to leverage the same to reach the consumers of the brand across the board during the important moment of reflection and celebration, but Christians and the leadership of the religious body in Nigeria found the ads offensive and disrespectful to their faith. They subsequently called for a boycott of Peak Milk products and demanded a public apology from the brand. The conceptual metaphor used in the ads was criticised and rejected for religious insensitivity and divisive messaging.

### **5.5 Plate eight: MTN and "Mama, na boy" video ad**

Theme: Male child-focused ad



Plate eight

MTN, whose logo appeared on the left side of Plate eight, is a leading telecommunications company and network service provider in Nigeria with aggressive promotion and thought-provoking commercials. One of its outstanding yet controversial ads was the 49-second "mama, na boy" trope, which combined elements of visual, gesticulation, sound, and root metaphors.

The phone-holding discussant on the right side of the Plate was the man at the centre of the ad. The commercial started off with the man moving nervously in front of the door of a delivery room. Shortly after, a female doctor came out and told him that his wife had just given birth. The man was overjoyed and reached for his cellphone. Immediately, he called his mother in the village and delivered the news, saying, "Mama, na boy!" The excitement about the baby's sex was obvious from his body language and put a question to the worth of a female child (Beauvoir 1953; Courtney and Lockeretz 1971; Eisend, 2010; Klonoff and Landrine 1995) within the depicted traditional Nigerian society.

As if that was not enough, on hearing the news, his mother, who was seated, swiftly rose to her feet, jubilated profoundly, and shared the perceptibly good news with the villagers. She started singing a folk song, and the villagers joined her in the celebration immediately. Disturbed from his sleep by the noise coming from the rejoicing women and following a prompt by his friends, the father of the latest dad asked what was happening, and on hearing the news too, he collected the phone, spoke to the new dad, and was later joined by his friends in the celebration.

Even though the ad mirrors the overriding preference and socio-cultural bias for male children in the Nigerian setting, it still comes off as sexist and controversial on account of the assumed discrimination against a girl child. The root metaphor in use is boy is MTN, MTN is a boy, while their shared and mapped features include social acceptance and celebration-worthy. In the multimodal ad, boy represents the source and concrete domain. The mapped entity, MTN, is the target or abstract domain and was strategically positioned as the conveyor of the good news and treasured to behold in the same manner as a highly cherished boy child.

The root metaphors in use here are directly related to a person's culture, identity, or perception of life. They are able to make sweeping or philosophical statements that tell us more about an idea, a character, or an entity. If the main character could say to his mother, 'na boy', and the whole village square erupted in joy, then one could tell that they all have a deep-rooted belief in a male child and regard the birth of one as a prized gift. Even though the ad was very entertaining and communicated the communal ethos, it was also controversial and did not promote gender equality (Artz, Munger and Purdy, 1999), which is the in-thing and the best practise now. Hence the public outcry that greeted the commercial, particularly from women's rights groups and some religious organisations.

## **6. Conclusion and recommendations**

This study examined selected metaphoric ads and the boundary of group identity in the Nigerian context. It was couched in Lakoff and Johnson's (2003) Conceptual Metaphor and Forceville's (2008) Multimodal Metaphor frameworks.

The examined data contained visual, textual, implied, extended, and ontological metaphors that were stylistically deployed to garner maximum publicity and spiced with religious narratives, societal ethos, and gender mainstreaming. However, they were considered controversial and insensitive representations of groups' identities and social realities and therefore rejected.

In light of these deductions, it is noteworthy to allude to Aristotle's postulation on the correlation between metaphor and language, along with his stance on the importance of metaphor in communication. Aristotle perceived metaphors as implicit comparisons, rooted in the principles of analogy, and clearly cautioned against the potential for ambiguity and obscurity in their usage (Evans and Green, 2006, 293). This postulation holds true for this study given that the controversial ads were enmeshed or rooted in ambiguity and obscurity. Hence, their deafening rejections. According to Singh and Chahal (2020), controversial advertising refers to the promotion of products or the execution of advertising campaigns that have the potential to provoke feelings of shame, aversion, disgust, offence, or anger among a specific group of individuals when they are presented. Kovecses (2010, 65) understood the consequences of such unaccustomed and insensitive mapping and had forewarned that:

A major manifestation of conceptual metaphors is advertising. Part of the selling power of an advertisement depends on how well chosen the conceptual metaphor is that the picture and the word used in the advertisement attempt to evoke in people. An appropriately selected metaphor may work wonders in promoting the sale of an item.

Going by Kovecses' assertion and conclusions from other landmark studies on the use of metaphor in advertising (especially, DeRosia, 2008; García-Madariaga et al., 2020; Morgan and Reichert, 1999; Norris et al., 2012; Rehman and Brooks, 1987; Stamenković, Ichien, and Holyoak, 2019; Pilelienė and Grigaliūnaitė, 2016; Vezina and Paul, 1997; Wang, 2022), it is clear that an inappropriately selected metaphor may look good but cannot work and could result in backlash instead of promoting the sale of an item, as seen in the examined cases, characterised by distinctions and connotative variations between the source and target elements due to the perceived misrepresentation in the mapping and idiosyncratic perception of the bearers of the identities associated with the source domains. In all, this study further highlights the importance of sensitivity in advertising and concludes that brands have a responsibility to ensure that their ads and brand communication are not only engaging and/or touch on matters that people can relate to in order to make sense of their conceptual products and services but are also respectful to all consumers and group identities.

From the foregoing, the study inferred that the use of controversial advertising tactics that incorporate offensive conceptual metaphors and surpass the limits of collective identity can lead to a variety of adverse consequences. This study acknowledges that this form of advertising possesses the capacity to elicit robust adverse responses and engender outrage within the intended recipient group. This situation has the potential to elicit a retaliatory reaction from the offended group, leading to the implementation of boycotts, adverse media attention, and detrimental consequences for the brand's standing and perception.

Moreover, the use of controversial advertising, including insensitive conceptual metaphors, possesses the capacity to evoke emotional distress and unease among customers who come across such advertisements. This phenomenon possesses the capacity to link the brand with undesirable connotations and develop an enduring bad perception. Finally, rigorous vetting of ads by companies and regulatory bodies is recommended and no pun should be used in strategic events that touch on a group's identity and representation. After all, effective communication is not achieved only by being concrete but also by being concise, correct, coherent, clear, and, most importantly, courteous.

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## The Representation of Social Decay in Samuel Obikoya's *Imura*

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### **Abstract**

*Social decay remains a pressing issue in postcolonial African societies, manifesting in corruption, crime, moral depravity, drunkenness, and hypocrisy. Samuel Obikoya's Imura offers a critical examination of these societal flaws through a satirical yet realistic portrayal of urban life in Old Lagos. This study analyses the representation of social decay in Imura, focusing on key themes such as corruption, crime, moral and sexual depravity, drunkenness, and social hypocrisy. The objective is to uncover how these themes reflect broader societal dysfunctions and to evaluate the consequences of moral collapse on individuals and communities. The study employs a qualitative textual analysis of the play, extracting relevant dialogues and interactions that highlight its thematic concerns. The findings reveal that Imura critiques a society where unethical behaviors are not only widespread but also normalized. Corrupt leaders are blamed for societal failures, yet the ordinary citizens actively partake in dishonesty and self-destruction. Crime is rationalised, immorality is excused, and hypocrisy governs interpersonal relationships. The study concludes that the play serves as a moral mirror, urging individuals to confront their own complicity in societal decay. The unique contribution of this study lies in its in-depth exploration of Imura as a microcosm of African socio-political struggles, emphasizing that societal reform begins with personal responsibility. The key recommendation is the need for moral reawakening, ethical leadership, and a rejection of the culture of blame-shifting and escapism. Without such interventions, the cycle of social decay will persist.*

**Keywords:** Social decay, corruption, hypocrisy, moral depravity, African literature

### **Introduction**

The concept of social decay has been a recurring motif in literature, serving as a critical lens through which writers interrogate the gradual disintegration of moral, social, and political structures within society. Across different historical and cultural contexts, literary works have illuminated the consequences of corruption, crime, and moral degeneration, offering both reflections on and warnings against the dangers of societal decline. Social decay often manifests through the erosion

of ethical values, the breakdown of communal bonds, and the normalisation of deviant behaviours, all of which contribute to the destabilisation of society (Ziprebo & Obi, 2024). Literature not only documents these issues but also serves as a powerful tool for social critique and advocacy, calling for urgent reforms and a return to ethical principles. By exposing the realities of societal dysfunction, literature acts as a mirror through which societies confront their failures and seek pathways to renewal.

In African literature, particularly in postcolonial and contemporary narratives, the theme of social decay remains prominent as writers grapple with the harsh realities of political corruption, economic hardship, and urban degeneration. The disillusionment that followed the failure of post-independence governments has provided fertile ground for exploring how greed, hypocrisy, and power struggles perpetuate societal collapse. Lekubu & Sibanda (2021) contends that the primary impediment to African societies' progress is the moral bankruptcy of both leaders and citizens. This sentiment is vocally dismissed in Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born* (1968), where the pervasive corruption and selfishness of political elites are condemned as emblematic of the broader moral decay of society. Similarly, Soyinka's *The Trials of Brother Jero* (1964) satirizes religious hypocrisy, while *Madmen and Specialists* (1971) critiques the ethical disintegration that follows political violence and instability. These works illustrate how social decay permeates different spheres of life, from politics and religion to family and interpersonal relationships.

Moreover, the urban setting plays a significant role in the portrayal of social decay in African literature. The chaotic, overcrowded, and crime-ridden cities often symbolise the disintegration of communal values and the rise of individualistic, self-serving attitudes. Braga & Clarke (2017) describes contemporary African cities as sites of both economic opportunity and social dysfunction, where the quest for survival often overrides ethical considerations. This spatial representation highlights how poverty, corruption, and violence converge in urban spaces, accelerating the erosion of moral standards. The city becomes a microcosm of broader societal decay, reflecting both the structural failures of the state and the moral compromises of its citizens.

Within this literary discourse, Samuel Obikoya's play *Imura* presents a compelling dramatisation of social decay, offering a damning critique of a society where corruption, crime, hypocrisy, drunkenness, and moral depravity thrive unchecked. Set in Old Lagos, *Imura* captures the chaotic and morally bankrupt realities of urban life, where individuals struggle to navigate a system riddled with corruption and moral contradictions. The play exposes a society where individuals justify their immoral behaviours while simultaneously condemning others for similar or lesser offenses. This portrayal aligns with Soyinka's satirical

approach to societal ills but extends the critique to everyday citizens, not just the ruling elite. The objective of this study is to examine the representation of social decay in *Imura*, analysing how the play uses its characters and plot to depict the normalisation of theft, ritual killings, sexual promiscuity, excessive drinking, and self-righteousness. By focusing on the everyday manifestations of social decay, the play highlights how both systemic failures and individual choices contribute to the broader societal crisis.

This study is necessitated by the increasing prevalence of social decay in contemporary African societies, a reality also reflected in the play's thematic concern with corruption, moral laxity, and crime as obstacles to societal progress. Despite widespread acknowledgment of these issues, public discourse often focuses on political leaders and institutional failures, neglecting the role of individual complicity in perpetuating social decay. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring how *Imura* shifts the focus from leadership failure to the everyday actions and attitudes that sustain moral degeneration.

### **Methodology and Theoretical Framework**

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to examine the representation of social decay in Samuel Obikoya's *Imura*. Qualitative research is particularly suited for literary analysis as it emphasises meanings, themes, and interpretations within texts (Aspers & Corte, 2019). The study employs textual analysis, focusing on dialogues, character interactions, and narrative structure to uncover portrayals of social decay. This method enables an in-depth examination of thematic concerns, highlighting aspects of moral degeneration such as corruption, hypocrisy, crime, drunkenness, and sexual immorality.

The analysis identifies recurring motifs, symbols, and character behaviours that reflect broader societal issues. Selected scenes and dialogues are critically examined to reveal how the playwright employs satire, irony, and dramatic conflict to expose moral contradictions. The socio-historical context of the play, particularly the urban setting of Old Lagos, is also considered in analysing the interplay between environment and moral decay.

This study is anchored on two key theoretical frameworks: Marxist Theory and Moral Criticism Theory. These theories provide a critical lens for understanding the dynamics of social decay in *Imura* and its broader implications for African societies. Marxist Theory, developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, examines the relationship between economic structures and social realities. It posits that corruption, crime, and moral decay stem from class struggles, economic exploitation, and power imbalances (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2021). In *Imura*, both the ruling class and ordinary citizens contribute to social decay. The characters' engagement in theft, ritual killings, and other immoral acts reflects the

harsh economic realities of urban life. However, the play challenges the notion that economic hardship alone is responsible for moral degeneration, emphasising individual agency in ethical decision-making.

Moral Criticism Theory, rooted in Aristotle and later developed by critics like Matthew Arnold, evaluates literature based on its ethical implications (Caufield, 2016). *Imura* functions as a moral mirror, exposing ethical failings and encouraging reflection on personal and societal morality. Through satire and critique of blame-shifting, the play underscores individual accountability as essential for societal reform. By combining Marxist theory and moral criticism, this study offers a comprehensive understanding of social decay in *Imura*, emphasising both systemic conditions and personal responsibility in fostering or challenging moral degeneration.

### **Synopsis of *Imura***

Samuel Obikoya's *Imura* is a satirical play that exposes the deep-rooted social decay in contemporary Nigerian society. Set in Old Lagos, the play follows the interactions of various characters whose lives reflect corruption, crime, hypocrisy, moral depravity, and irresponsibility. The story unfolds primarily in a barbing salon, which serves as a microcosm of the larger society, capturing the everyday struggles, conflicts, and moral contradictions of the characters.

At the centre of the play is Jayesimi, a young man who steals a phone but justifies his actions by arguing that stealing is better than committing murder. His self-righteousness is mirrored by Dasola, a rice peddler engaged in illicit relationships, who condemns others while failing to acknowledge her own immorality. Ijagbemi, an elder in the community, complains about political corruption but is rumoured to be involved in ritual killings. Fayedun, a notorious drunkard, spends his days intoxicated and stirring up trouble, reinforcing the theme of escapism and irresponsibility.

The play's climax occurs when a messenger from the Baale invites only the righteous to a grand feast, leaving the corrupt characters behind to reflect on their moral failings. Through humour and irony, *Imura* critiques a society where people condemn others while engaging in similar or worse acts.

### **Analysis and Discussion**

#### **The Theme of Corruption in *Imura***

Corruption is one of the most pervasive themes in Samuel Obikoya's *Imura*. It manifests in various forms, from political corruption to moral depravity and economic exploitation. The play presents corruption as a systemic issue deeply embedded in both leadership and everyday society, showing how it distorts governance, morality, and social interactions. Through characters such as

Ijagbemi, the Barber, Dasola, and Jayesimi, Obikoya critiques the erosion of ethical values, illustrating how corruption is both a cause and a consequence of societal decay.

The play strongly implicates the political elite as the root of corruption in society. Ijagbemi's outburst in the barbing salon underscores how the failure of governance pushes citizens into desperation:

**IJAGBEMI:** *"If not for the animal on Agbádá giving us maladministration, I know where I should be, and of course not in the midst of you these insane and jobless youths."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 115).

The phrase "animal on Agbádá" is a thinly veiled metaphor for corrupt politicians who, despite wearing traditional or formal attire that symbolises leadership, behave like beasts, prioritising personal gain over public welfare. Ijagbemi's statement reflects a widely held sentiment in many African nations, where political leaders embezzle resources meant for development, leaving citizens to fend for themselves in an economy plagued by unemployment and poverty. His anger toward the political system is justified, yet it is ironic that he, too, participates in corruption rather than challenging it.

Ijagbemi is suspected of ritual killings, a form of corruption deeply tied to power and wealth acquisition. Jayesimi and Juwon expose his alleged involvement in human sacrifices:

**JAYESIMI:** *"You, fire? You mean the one Baba ewénjé muje muje gave you? Or do you think we don't know, or because we pretended like we don't know you?"*

**JUWON:** *"Mr. Ijagbemi, you think we don't know how you patronize Baba ewénjé muje muje with body parts of different sizes?"* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 116).

This exchange suggests that Ijagbemi, rather than being an innocent victim of political corruption, is himself complicit in a sinister system. Ritual killings for wealth and influence are an extreme form of corruption where individuals, in their desperation for power, exploit the lives of others. This mirrors real-world cases where politicians and business elites are accused of ritual murders, reinforcing the idea that corruption permeates multiple levels of society.

Economic corruption is another major focus in *Imura*. Due to economic hardship, individuals resort to theft and deception to survive. Jayesimi's theft of Fayedun's phone is emblematic of this reality:

**JAYESIMI:** *"How do we survive in this hard economy, how? At least, is stealing not better than killing innocent children all around?"* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 122).

Jayesimi's justification for theft highlights how corruption is normalised as a coping mechanism in a failing system. His rhetorical question suggests that because there are worse crimes, such as ritual killings, his own act of theft should be considered minor. This type of moral relativism is common in societies where corruption is endemic, where people rationalise their wrongdoings by comparing them to more heinous acts.

Fayedun, who is portrayed as a notorious drunkard, also engages in deceptive practices. When he arrives to reclaim his stolen phone, he is too intoxicated to recognize it:

**FAYEDUN:** *"No... This is not my phone jooo, this doesn't look like my phone. Though I can see that the body is colour red, yes, my phone is colour red. The screen is colour black, yes, my phone screen is colour black. This is me in the wallpaper, yes, I used my picture as the wallpaper but this does not look like my phone."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 127).

Corruption in *Imura* is portrayed not merely as the abuse of public power for personal gain, but more broadly as a breakdown of ethical and moral standards across all levels of society. This includes political, economic, and social forms of corruption such as bribery, theft, moral hypocrisy, and the misuse of authority. The play foregrounds both systemic and interpersonal corruption, highlighting how it infiltrates everyday interactions and undermines accountability.

This is evident in a scene where a character is unable to identify his own phone. A comical moment that nevertheless reflects a deeper issue: the erosion of responsibility in a corrupt society. Fayedun's dependence on alcohol symbolises escapism, a psychological retreat common among those who feel powerless in the face of entrenched systemic rot. This form of corruption is not limited to political elites; it manifests in incompetence and a collective disregard for truth, even when it is self-evident.

One of the most striking manifestations of corruption in *Imura* is moral hypocrisy. Characters who vocally criticise corruption are themselves entangled in unethical behaviours. For example, Dasola, a local rice peddler, condemns Jayesimi for theft while secretly engaging in extramarital affairs:

**BARBER:** "So Dasola, you support this agbaya to burn my shop abi? I can't blame you now, I can't blame you, just know that if this shop goes down, then the five thousand naira you receive regularly at the motel has stopped."  
**DASOLA:** "Well, there are many ways to the market. If you carry your mat, there are plenty rugs seeking Dasola's attention." (Obikoya, 2025, p. 125).

Dasola's statement, "there are many ways to the market," suggests that she is unbothered by the loss of one source of illicit income because she has multiple means of sustaining herself. This mindset epitomises the adaptability of corrupt individuals, that they always find alternative ways to exploit the system.

Similarly, the barber, who presents himself as a hardworking man, is also engaged in infidelity and deception. He criticises Dasola's promiscuity while failing to acknowledge his own moral failures. This type of double standard is common in corrupt societies where people selectively judge others while ignoring their own faults.

The failure of law enforcement is another aspect of corruption in *Imura*. When Fayedun calls for authorities to arrest Jayesimi for stealing his phone, he does not summon real police officers but rather his equally drunk friends:

**FAYEDUN:** "I am coming now with policemen, soldiers, and navy. They will know no one ever messes with Fayedun."  
**FAYEDUN:** "Who... is that foo...lish foo...l that stole my extre...me.ly ex...pensive phone?"  
**DASOLA:** "Ahh Fayedun, you are drunk already, where are the police men that you said you were bringing?"  
**FAYEDUN:** "I said these are the police men, tell me who stole my phone and tell me who beat you we will arrest them and throw them into Kirikiri prison now." (Obikoya, 2025, pp. 124, 126).

This humorous yet tragic scene symbolically critiques societal mechanisms of justice. The reliance on drunken vigilantes in place of competent law enforcement serves as an allegory for the broader dysfunction within state institutions, highlighting how corruption and ineffectiveness leave citizens to fend for themselves in matters of justice.

### **The Theme of Crime in *Imura***

Crime is an ever-present theme in Samuel Obikoya's *Imura*, functioning as both a symptom and a consequence of societal decay. The play captures how individuals, driven by desperation, greed, and moral bankruptcy, resort to various forms of

criminal activities. From petty theft to ritual killings, from deception to lawlessness, *Imura* portrays crime as deeply entrenched in society, making it difficult to separate criminal behaviour from everyday survival. The setting of the play, Old Lagos, serves as an archetypal urban environment where economic hardship and societal failures push individuals into illegitimate means of sustenance.

The most explicit representation of crime in *Imura* is seen in the theft of Fayedun's phone by Jayesimi. Initially, Jayesimi attempts to evade suspicion, but Dasola's sharp observation exposes him:

**DASOLA:** *"Tarmac? No be the same Tarmac wey Fayedun talk say them steal him phone be that?"*  
**JAYESIMI:** *"Ahh what is the meaning of that?"*  
**DASOLA:** *"Nothing ooo. I talk am! It is the same phone now. Nokia Express Music. In fact, Jayesimi you did not even change the wallpaper, is this not Fayedun on the screen?"* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 121).

Jayesimi's crime is emblematic of economic desperation. The play does not present him as an inherently evil person but rather as a product of his environment. One where crime is often the only available means of survival. His reaction upon being confronted reinforces this:

**JAYESIMI:** *"How do we survive in this hard economy, how? At least, is stealing not better than killing innocent children all around?"* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 122).

This statement illustrates a moral dilemma frequently encountered in impoverished societies. Jayesimi does not deny that stealing is wrong, but he attempts to justify it by comparing it to more severe crimes. His reasoning aligns with Robert Merton's strain theory, which argues that when people lack legitimate means to achieve societal goals, they turn to illegitimate ones (Agnew, 2020; Murphy & Robinson, 2008). In a society where honest labour fails to provide basic necessities, crime becomes a rationalised alternative.

The theft of Fayedun's phone also highlights the normalisation of crime in *Imura*. Instead of condemning Jayesimi outright, some characters treat the situation with humour, while others focus more on how the crime affects them personally rather than its moral implications. For example, when Juwon realises that Jayesimi failed to change the phone's wallpaper, his response is not one of outrage but rather disappointment at his friend's carelessness:

**JUWON:** *"Guy, why didn't you change the wallpaper now?"*  
(Obikoya, 2025, p. 122).

This reaction reveals a broader societal issue: crime is not always seen as inherently wrong but rather as something that should be done smartly to avoid getting caught. This normalisation is common in corrupt societies, where individuals justify small crimes by pointing to larger ones committed by the elite.

Crime in *Imura* is not limited to theft, it also manifests in the form of violence and lawlessness. Throughout the play, conflicts frequently escalate into physical altercations. One example is the fight between Ijagbemi and the Barber, which begins over a badly executed haircut:

**IJAGBEMI:** *"Ah ah, o ma ba je o, you this small boy, you want to fight me, Ijagbemi? I will surely beat the hell out of you."*

**BARBER:** *"Ijagbemi, oò tó bẹ, ten thousand of you cannot do anything, I will beat the old man out of you."*

**IJAGBEMI:** *"Do you just call me old man? I will show you that I still have bones in me, iwo omo alaileko yii, you must be out of your mind."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 115).

The escalation of a trivial matter into a full-blown fight illustrates the culture of violence in the play's society. The quickness with which people resort to aggression suggests a breakdown in social order. Instead of resolving disputes peacefully, individuals see physical confrontation as the most effective way to assert dominance. This situation reflects both Marxist concerns about institutional failure driven by economic and class-based inequalities, and the perspective of moral criticism, which sees such lawlessness as indicative of a broader ethical collapse within society (Ritzer & Stepnisky, 2021; Caufield, 2016).

Another example of unchecked violence occurs when Jayesimi and Juwon threaten Ijagbemi after he insults them:

**JAYESIMI:** *"Point of correction Mr. Ijagbemi or what is your name, yes we are youths but not jobless. See, if you don't mind your choice of words, we will gather hands to beat you."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 116).

This statement highlights how crime and violence are deeply embedded in the daily interactions of the characters. Instead of addressing issues through dialogue or legal means, individuals rely on intimidation and brute force.

### **The Theme of Moral and Sexual Depravity in *Imura***

Moral and sexual depravity are central themes in *Imura*, reflecting the erosion of ethical values in a corrupt and economically strained society. The play presents a world where transactional sex, infidelity, deception, and the objectification of women are commonplace, further reinforcing the moral collapse of the community. While economic hardship is a driving force behind much of this depravity, the play does not excuse the characters' actions but rather critiques their complicity in perpetuating moral corruption. Through the character of Dasola, as well as the Barber and other male characters, *Imura* exposes the intersection of sexual immorality and societal decay.

Dasola, a local rice peddler, represents a woman who, despite her occupation, is deeply entangled in transactional sex and illicit affairs. While she is quick to criticise others for their wrongdoings, she is also deeply complicit in the moral decay that permeates the society. Her relationship with the Barber is a prime example of this. When confronted about her affair, she does not deny it outright but rather defends her actions:

**BARBER:** *"So Dasola, you support this agbaya to burn my shop abi, I can't blame you now, I can't blame you, just know that if this shop goes down then the five thousand naira you receive regularly at the motel has stopped."*

**DASOLA:** *"Well, there are many ways to the market. If you carry your mat, there are plenty rugs seeking Dasola's attention."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 125).

This conversation exposes the transactional nature of relationships in *Imura*. The Barber openly states that Dasola receives money from him for their meetings at the motel, implying that their relationship is more of a financial arrangement than an emotional connection. Dasola's response further reinforces this, as she casually dismisses the loss of one financial sponsor by implying that she has other options.

Beyond her relationship with the Barber, Dasola is also accused of having multiple affairs, reinforcing her reputation as a woman who uses sex as a means of economic survival. This is highlighted in Ijagbemi's insult:

**IJAGBEMI:** *"If you carry your mat, there are plenty rugs seeking Dasola's attention."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 125).

Here, Ijagbemi crudely suggests that Dasola is promiscuous, equating her to a woman who moves from one lover to another in exchange for financial gain. His statement is not merely an attack on her character but also an exposure of the

sexual economy that thrives in the society, where relationships are often transactional rather than built on mutual love and respect.

One of the most striking aspects of moral depravity in *Imura* is the hypocrisy that accompanies it. While many characters engage in immoral behaviour, they are quick to judge others for the same actions. This is evident in the way Dasola reacts to Jayesimi's theft. She is the first to call attention to the crime:

**DASOLA:** *"Tarmac? No be the same Tarmac wey Fayedun talk say them steal him phone be that?"* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 121).

She exposes Jayesimi's wrongdoing with moral outrage, yet she fails to acknowledge her own moral failings. This mirrors a broader societal trend where individuals criticise others while engaging in equally unethical behaviours themselves.

Similarly, the Barber, who is engaged in an extramarital affair with Dasola, is quick to judge her when their relationship is exposed. Rather than accepting responsibility for his part in the affair, he attempts to shift the blame onto Dasola, emphasising her promiscuity while downplaying his own actions. This dynamic highlights the gender bias in *Imura*, where women face harsher condemnation for sexual misconduct, while men are excused or even praised for similar behaviour.

While Dasola is the most explicit representation of sexual depravity in *Imura*, the male characters are equally, if not more, complicit in this moral decline. The Barber, in particular, embodies the sexual recklessness that pervades the society. Despite being married, he actively engages in an affair with Dasola and even objectifies women based on their physical attributes:

**BARBER:** *"You mean those old cargos, they are old school, Dasola has fresh blood, eje tutu."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 119).

His derogatory description of his wives as "old cargos" suggests that he sees women as disposable objects, valuable only for their youth and physical appeal. His preference for Dasola, whom he describes as having "fresh blood," further emphasises the commodification of women in *Imura*. In this society, a woman's worth is often tied to her physical desirability, reducing her to an object of male pleasure.

The prevalence of moral and sexual corruption in *Imura* has significant consequences for the society it depicts. One of the most immediate effects is the erosion of trust and stability in relationships. Instead of genuine connections, relationships are built on deceit, financial transactions, and self-interest. This is

evident in the way characters interact with one another. Rather than forming meaningful bonds, they engage in exploitative arrangements that ultimately leave them unfulfilled and disconnected.

Another consequence of this depravity is the normalisation of infidelity and transactional sex. When behaviours like those exhibited by Dasola and the Barber become widespread, they set a dangerous precedent where young people grow up believing that deception, promiscuity, and exploitation are acceptable means of survival. Moreover, the gender dynamics in *Imura* reflect the broader societal inequalities that allow men to engage in immoral behaviour with minimal repercussions while women are harshly judged. While the Barber is free to insult his wives and pursue younger women, Dasola is constantly reminded of her promiscuity, reinforcing the double standards that govern morality in patriarchal societies.

### **The Theme of Drunkenness and Irresponsibility in *Imura***

Drunkenness and irresponsibility are dominant themes in Samuel Obikoya's *Imura*, functioning as both a comic relief and a scathing critique of a society plagued by escapism and self-destruction. In the play, characters like Fayedun and his companions embody the culture of excessive drinking, which not only clouds judgment but also exacerbates societal decay. Alcoholism serves as a symbol of moral weakness, irresponsibility, and the refusal to confront reality, leading to a cycle of poor decision-making, violence, and social dysfunction. Through the exaggerated drunken antics of Fayedun, the play presents a sharp condemnation of how excessive drinking has become an accepted norm among men.

Fayedun, one of the most ridiculous yet tragically symbolic characters in *Imura*, is the embodiment of alcoholism and its consequences. His excessive drinking renders him incapable of recognising his own stolen phone, leading to an absurd and comical exchange that underscores the depth of his irresponsibility:

**FAYEDUN:** *"No... This is not my phone jooo, this doesn't look like my phone. Though I can see that the body is colour red, yes, my phone is colour red. The screen is colour black, yes, my phone screen is colour black. This is me in the wallpaper, yes, I used my picture as the wallpaper but this does not look like my phone."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 127).

His incoherent insistence that the phone in his hands does not belong to him highlights the cognitive impairment caused by excessive drinking. Rather than confronting the reality of his situation, Fayedun becomes confused, unable to process simple logic. This reflects a broader societal issue where people,

overwhelmed by life's struggles, turn to alcohol as a means of escape, further worsening their condition (Wittgens et al., 2022).

The failure of Fayedun and his friends to act responsibly reinforces the idea that drunkenness has become an epidemic in their community. Instead of holding themselves accountable or striving for progress, they drown in alcohol, leading to lawlessness and chaos. The play suggests that such unchecked indulgence in drinking is one of the factors contributing to the breakdown of discipline and responsibility in the society of *Imura*.

A major critique in *Imura* is how alcoholism contributes to irresponsibility. Fayedun and his friends, who are presumably adults with responsibilities, abandon all sense of duty in favour of drinking. Instead of engaging in productive activities, they waste their time drinking and creating disorder. This is evident in how Fayedun reacts to the theft of his phone. Not by taking decisive action, but by stumbling through drunken confusion.

Additionally, the Barber, while not as explicitly drunken as Fayedun, is another representation of irresponsibility. His obsession with women, despite having multiple wives, reflects his lack of discipline. His affairs and disregard for his responsibilities as a husband mirror the recklessness of Fayedun's drunken behaviour. Both characters prioritise short-term pleasure over long-term responsibility, contributing to the moral decay of the community.

**BARBER:** *"You mean those old cargos, they are old school, Dasola has fresh blood, eje tutu."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 119).

This statement reveals his utter disregard for commitment, as he devalues his wives while seeking new sexual conquests. His irresponsibility, much like Fayedun's, stems from self-indulgence and an inability to exercise restraint.

Another key aspect of drunkenness in *Imura* is its role in escalating conflicts. Throughout the play, drunken characters contribute to unnecessary fights and altercations. Fayedun, in his drunken aggression, challenges Jayesimi and threatens to unleash his drunken "officers" on him:

**FAYEDUN:** *"So na you steal my phone? The phone I bought with all my investment. And you see, the money for that phone is beyond the bride price your father paid for your mother. Where is my phone? Bring it out! I say bring it out!"* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 126).

His statement is not only insulting but also provocative, demonstrating how alcohol fuels reckless speech and conflict. Instead of addressing the situation rationally, Fayedun resorts to personal attacks, further escalating the tension.

Similarly, the drunken state of his friends, Aiyeyemi and Ayedunje, makes them easy to manipulate. When they are called upon to serve as "policemen," they blindly follow Fayedun's lead, despite their own intoxicated state:

**AYEYEMI & AYEDUNJE:** *"This does not look like your phone ooo, your phone is finer than this."* (Obikoya, 2025, p. 127).

Their response, despite the obvious evidence in front of them, highlights how alcohol impairs reasoning. Rather than thinking critically, they mimic Fayedun's confusion, reinforcing the play's critique of how drunkenness makes people susceptible to manipulation and poor decision-making.

Beyond its literal representation, drunkenness in *Imura* functions as a metaphor for the larger dysfunction in society. The characters' excessive drinking symbolises their refusal to confront reality, choosing instead to escape into a state of oblivion. In a corrupt and economically unstable environment, alcohol becomes a coping mechanism, yet it only serves to deepen the problems of those who indulge in it.

Moreover, Fayedun's inability to recognise his own phone is symbolic of how societal values have become distorted. In the same way that he cannot see the truth despite holding it in his hands, society in *Imura* is blinded by its indulgences, unable to recognize its own self-destructive path.

### **Conclusion**

The conclusion of this study is that *Imura* presents a damning critique of a decaying society where corruption, crime, moral depravity, drunkenness, and hypocrisy thrive unchecked. Through the actions of its characters, the play exposes a system in which individuals justify their immoral behaviours while condemning others for similar or lesser offenses. The normalisation of theft, ritual killings, sexual promiscuity, excessive drinking, and self-righteousness highlights a society that has lost its ethical foundation. The study finds that the key driver of this decay is the failure of individuals to take responsibility for their actions, choosing instead to engage in blame-shifting, escapism, and moral relativism.

To address this, the study recommends a shift toward individual accountability and moral reawakening. Society must reject the culture of justifying wrongdoing and instead uphold ethical standards. Leadership should be transparent and just,

while individuals should embrace self-discipline and integrity. Without such reforms, *Imura* warns that society will continue its downward spiral into lawlessness and dysfunction.

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## **Social and Cultural Resistance in Yorùbá Novels: A Literary Reflection of Identity and Resilience**

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### **Abstract**

*The Yoruba people in West Africa, Nigeria, is a unique tribe with a rich culture. Despite colonisation, civilisation and westernisation, which aimed to erase cultural identity, Yorùbá culture has remarkably survived and thrived globally. This study, therefore explores the depiction of social and cultural resistance in Yorùbá novels, uncovering how written literature reflects, and shapes cultural identity. Through a critical analysis of selected novels - Olabimtan's *Kékeré Èkùn* and *Àyànmọ*, Işòlá's *Ó Le Kú* and *Şaworoide*, and Gbenro's *Lofúrufú* – This study examines how Yorùbá novelists employ literary elements to convey the resilience of their cultural heritage in the face of colonialism, globalisation, and cultural erasure. The novels were selected based on the relevance of their thematic pre-occupation. The study is premised on Lev Vigotsky's sociocultural theory, which posits that knowledge and understanding are constructed through social interaction. This study reveals that Yorùbá novels serve as a powerful medium for cultural preservation, subverting dominant narratives and amplifying marginalised voices. Resistance in these novels takes many forms, including the celebration of traditional practices, the reclaiming of cultural symbols, and the challenging of oppressive systems. This study contributes to the understanding of literature as a tool for cultural resistance and highlights the significance of Yorùbá novels in preserving and promoting the rich cultural heritage of the Yorùbá people. Ultimately, this research demonstrates that literature can function as a potent form of cultural resistance, inspiring future generation to embrace and honour their cultural identity.*

**Keywords:** Resistance, Yorùbá novel, Culture, Identity.

Word Count: 246

### **Introduction**

Nigeria, like many other countries, was colonised by the British Colonial forces in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Therefore, Yorùbá people, a prominent tribe in Nigeria, due to colonisation, experienced significant cultural transformation as a result. The colonisation had significant effect on their indigenous governance structure, occupational patterns, and ways of life, including their worldview, thoughts and

beliefs. For example, colonialism severely affected the Yorùbá language, as English was favoured and imposed over it in most formal settings. For instance, the introduction of western education brought about cultural shifts, thus, Yorùbá's contact with foreign language and religion through missionary schools, greatly eroded some of the Yorùbá traditional values and practices. Aberuagba (2023) corroborates this assertion as he avers that many Christian converts forsook the traditional ways of life and values.

Prior to colonisation, the Yoruba people had a monarchical system of governance, a hereditary structure in which the 'Ọba' (King) was the paramount leader of his kingdom. The people referenced him as a god, who is next to the Orìṣà (divinities). To the Yorùbá people, he is next to the divinities and that is why they refer to him as 'Áláṣẹ̀ ikejì Ọ̀rìṣà' (Commander, the next to the divinities). The Ọba's crown, adorned with beads and veils, symbolised his authority and spirituality. However, with the arrival of British colonisers in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the power and the authority of the Ọba began to diminish. Simply put, the power and authority of Yorùbá kings were weakened (Johnson, 1964).

The colonial administrators introduced indirect rule, which altered the political landscape and created tension within Yorùbá society (Aberuagba, 2023). The effect of colonialism on Yorùbá culture transcends the aforementioned as it also led to a change in economic activities. For example, the agrarian Yorùbá economy which thrived on various agricultural crops in the pre-literate era was later streamlined to cash crops and this consequently challenged traditional agricultural practices. Additionally, colonisation influenced traditional attires, ways of dressing, marriage customs, religious practices and many other aspects of Yorùbá culture. Meanwhile, we cannot ignore various efforts of Yorùbá natives in the areas of cultural rebirth, propagation of Yorùbá values and identity, right from the colonial era till the post-colonial period.

However, in the contemporary era, it is evident that Yorùbá culture urgently needs revitalisation for it to reclaim its lost glory. So, one of the key agents of Yorùbá cultural revitalisation is the literary artistes, who utilise literary media to inform, educate, entertain, and remind the society about the history, culture, philosophies, ethics, religion, values, beliefs and other aspects of Yorùbá cultural heritage through creative works. Through this, Yorùbá cultural heritage is helped and preserved.

### **Writers' Acts of intervention on Culture Revitalisation**

As Sangotoye (2021) notes, literature is a universal means of communicating humanity's emotional, spiritual and intellectual concerns. Literary artistes therefore play a vital role in the socio-political, socio-cultural, and socio-economic progress of their societies, through portrayal of thepast, present and

future events. As members of society, literary artistes are concerned about the happenings around them, addressing the ills of society and proposing solutions to make it a better place. Indubitably, literary works reveal the lifestyle, philosophy and every aspect of a particular group of people or society, and Yorùbá novels are not exception.

Yorùbá novelists play a vital role in cultural revival by examining the Yorùbá chronicles that shape peoples' memory and identity. They write about the rich history and cultural practices of the Yorùbá people, including their experiences related to social issues such as gender, family, occupations, governance and philosophy. Through these, they adopt and adapt the diverse Yorùbá orality and maxims that have been passed down through generations. These creative writers celebrate the heroic deeds of their ancestors, inspiring readers with themes of resilience and courage. Moreover, they expose the cultural basis of Yorùbá homes and families, highlighting the importance of individuals' roles, which they play in their various family units. In their creative works, they use Yorùbá language as a medium to assert their identity and heritage, contributing significantly to the revitalisation of Yorùbá culture. They ensure that the customs, traditions and values of the Yorùbá people continue to thrive for generations to come.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Sociocultural Theory**

Sociocultural theory was propounded by Lev Vygotsky as a response to Behaviourism. The core idea of this theory is on people's interactions, the way people interact with others in the society and the culture they adopt and live in, help to shape their mindset. This means, when people live together, they develop social and cultural competence. Vygotsky believes that, immediate relatives' interaction has a lot to do in growing cultural and mental abilities. Sociocultural theory is an emerging theory in psychology that expresses the important contribution that a society makes to an individual development, stressing the interaction between developing people and the culture in which they live. For someone to develop cultural ability, he must interact with the people of the culture. This theory caters for both individual differences and cross-cultural differences in development, therefore making it relevant to this study.

### **The Portrayal of social and cultural resilience in Yorùbá novels.**

#### **Religious Resilience**

The Yorùbá have historically been devoted to their traditional religion, and this is evident in their belief in the importance of divination and seeking guidance from Ifá oracle, regardless of whatever traditional religious sect they belong. Simply put, regardless of the religious denominations they belong, they usually consulted Ifá oracle on their major life affairs or decisions. It is customary for a Yorùbá

man/woman to consult the oracle whom according to belief is the voice of Olódùmarè, the Supreme Being (Femi-Amao 2022).

According to Jégédé (2013), Ifá is central to the Yorùbá philosophical system of thought, and to the Yorùbá, the world is dynamic and unpredictable. Therefore, divination is essential in assisting human beings find solutions to the challenges and uncertainties of life. When foreign religions came to Yorùbá land, the missionaries and Islamic clerics observed that Yorùbá people are curious species, who always want to know the reasons and solutions to all what happened to them. They are also curious to know what the future holds for them, so as to prepare. The Yorùbá people were really entangled in their Ifá belief and divination system, as they obediently offered any sacrifices or propitiations, as prescribed by Ifá through the Ifá priests. This reflects in one of the Yorùbá axioms that says ‘Bí òní tí rí, ọ̀lẹ́ ọ̀ rí bẹ̀ẹ́ ló mú kí babaláwo máa dífá ojoojúmọ́’ meaning, what today holds is different from what tomorrow will bring, that is why the oraculist engages in daily divination. By implication, any religion that will not predict or grant knowledge of what tomorrow brings might not thrive among the Yorùbá people.

The foreign religion adherents observed that despite the peoples’ conviction in the new religion, some of them still believed in the idea of making enquiry from Ifá. They transferred this idea into their newly accepted religion; the Christians see visions and deliver prophetic words to people, while the Islamic clerics, use similar objects to that of Ifá divination tray, divining on the sand which they called ‘Yanrìn tíṭẹ̀’. The Yorùbá literary artistes, in many of their works, projected the aforementioned and they are still doing so in the contemporary era. The Yorùbá people still believe and patronise traditional religion alongside whichever foreign religion they practice, showing the traditional religion resistance and resilience. In Gbénró’s *Lófúrufú*, religious resilience is evident when Ọmọ́dẹ̀rẹ feels reluctant to marry Fádélé, her fiancé, on the excuse that Fádélé is an herbalist’s son. She is sad and will not talk to anyone about it, but her father, persuades her to mention what is troubling her. Surprisingly, Àgbàògún, Ọmọ́dẹ̀rẹ’s father does not see anything wrong in her daughter’s marriage with an herbalist son. So, to convince his daughter that nothing is wrong with Fádélé, Àgbàògún reveals to his daughter about his involvement in traditional religion despite the fact that he openly professes to be a Christian. His daughter is amazed with this new revelation. To lend credence to his claim, Àgbàògún further confirms to her that, he has an oraculist that he consults whenever he has any challenge or when there is need to take a critical decision concerning life affairs. To convince her daughter beyond doubt, he said this to say to his daughter:

Èmi bàbá ẹ̀ tí ò ń wò yìí, Àgbàògún  
Mo ní babaláwo tí ó ń bá mi dífá. Pàgà ni

Omódéere lanu tí kò lè pa á dé. Ó ní'Bàbá mi,  
Sòṣòṣì tí a wá n lẹ̀ nkó? O kú omódé tí n ẹ̀ ṣe ó  
Wón gbódò mọ̀ èniyàn mọ̀ ẹ̀sin igbálódé kan  
Şebí agbo ilem ológùn-ún ni agbo ilé wa.  
Oḍoḍún ni a máa n ẹ̀ ṣe ṣún Ogun. Ojúbo  
Ògún n bẹ̀ ní agbo ilé wa ní Òkè-Odò di  
bí a ti n sọ̀rọ̀ yí. *Lofúrufú 49*

I your father, Àgbàogún that you are looking at  
I have an oraculist that cast divination for me  
Omódéere opens her mouth with surprise,  
Unable to close it. She said 'Daddy, what about  
the church we are going?' You are naïve. One  
must be known as a devotee of one foreign  
religion. Are we not from Ògún's family, we  
celebrate Ogun's festival yearly. The shrine of  
Ogun is in our family house at Òkè-Odò as we speak.

The above excerpt confirms that the Yorùbá traditional religion is still in practice, so it is evident that Yorùbá novelists are social realists. In our society today, both old and young still patronise the traditional soothsayers for clarifications or directives on their life issues whenever they are confused, even the youths are not left out. There is a common saying among some Christians who still celebrate their family divinities. To justify their action, which some of their critics usually refer to as a lukewarm act, they would say: 'Ìgbàgbó ò sọ̀ pé kí á má sọ̀rọ̀ (Christianity does not prevent us from practising our rituals). Although such utterance negates Christian tenets and doctrine, they use it to justify their lingering interest in the traditional religion. In the same vein, the Yorùbá Islamists usually say 'Ọlórún ò kọ̀ aájò' meaning, God does not go against using traditional/fetish means in solving one's life difficulties. All these are pointing to the fact that in the contemporary era, traditional religion still thrives. In Olábímtán's *Kékeré Ekùn*, although Àlàbí is a lay preacher in the church, he still partakes in the egúngún festival to the extent of putting on mask of a masquerade. As an offspring from the clan of masquerades (Egúngún cult), Olábímtán aptly describes Alabi thus:

Odún náà kò délẹ̀ tí wón sọ̀ ó di ọkan nínú àwọn  
oníwààsù kékeré. Ọjọ̀ tí ó bá fẹ̀ wààsù gbogbo ọ̀jọ̀  
ni ó máa n fẹ̀ lẹ̀ sí sòṣòṣì..... síbẹ̀síbẹ̀ Àlàbí kò lè  
fi ita eégún şeré o.i 65

The year did not end before he is made one of the  
lay preachers. Any day it is his turn to preach,  
every church member always wants to be there .....

in spite of this, Àlàbí still attends masquerade festivals.

Through the above excerpt, we could observe that Yorùbá religion still resists foreign religion. It is evident that the Yorùbá religion continues to demonstrate resilience and resistance to foreign influences in the face of imposition of western beliefs. Àlàbí's action in the above excerpt reveals Yorùbá people's commitment to their ancestral traditions.

### **Governance resilience**

Yorùba people have an organised ruling structure. In Yorùbá culture, governance is entrenched in traditional institutions and practices which respect people's rights and privileges. For instance, the head of a family and clan is known as Baálé, the head of a village is Baálè. At the peak of the structure is the Ọba known as the King. Yorùbá kingdoms and cities are led by monarchs, who serves as the spiritual and political leader. The monarch has council of chiefs, that supports him in ruling the kingdom. Although the chiefs advised the king on political and other matters, the king's words and authority are final. Despite the fact that the traditional governance structures of the Yorùbá people have undergone transformation, due to the western political system brought about by colonisation and modernisation, the Yorùbá monarchical structure still plays a significant role in the cultural and social life of the people as well as spiritual role in their various towns and cities. The monarch's spiritual role is very important, as he is expected to perform some traditional rites during traditional festivals. Oladumiye and Adiji (2014: 4) reveal that before selection of the king, Ifá oracle has to be consulted to know the right person to the throne, and before the installation, the King is empowered with various kinds of supernatural power, which transform him beyond an ordinary man. This is exactly what Akinwùmi Ìṣòla reveals in *Şaworoide* about the king of Jogbo town. Just like Yorùbá traditional coronation rites, Ifá oracle is consulted before anyone is brought to the throne of Oníjogbo, also anyone who wants to be crowned as Oníjogbo must go through a ritual rite before ascending the throne. When it is king Lápitè's turn to ascend the throne of his father, coronation rites which takes months to complete is observed:

Léyìn bí oṣù méta tí wọn ti ñ ṣoríṣiríṣi orò fún  
Lápitè, ọba tuntun, ojú pé tí wọn yóó ṣe orò  
ìgbèyìn tíí sọ ni di ọba. Amawomárò àti Àyàngalú  
ti ñ dúró de ọba nínú yàrá orò náà. Wọn ti kó gbogbo  
ohun orò sílẹ. o.i 20-21

After about three months that they have started various rites to the throne, for Lápitè, the new king, the day for the final ritual for the king is here. Amawomárò and Àyàngalú is waiting for the king in the ritual room

All the items for the ritual have been on ground.

King Lápité, is a modern-day king, yet he has to undergo the mandatory ritual for the coronation based on Ifá oracle's ordinance mandated for the ancestors of Oníjogbo's dynasty. Although Oníjogbo refuses to undergo the ritual, he later faces the bitter consequences. The issue of ritual performance for Yorùbá king is an open secret, everyone knows it is customary for a king in most Yorùbá towns to be chosen by the oracle, and the ritual for the ascension to the throne must be carried out. A typical example is the coronation rites of Ọ̀ni of Ilé-Ife and Aláàfin of Ọ̀yó.

As part of resilience, Yorùbá monarchs, have gained international recognition for their cultural significance and authority. They serve as symbols of Yorùbá identity, harmony, and pride. They are revered for their roles in spiritual matters; thus, they are recognised as divine rulers. Many Yorùbá monarchs are actively working to revitalise traditional practices, language and customs. A notable example is the annual Şàngó Day in Ọ̀yó town and Ojúde Ọ̀ba festival in Ijebu-Òde, which attract people from all over the globe. Example of this is seen in Isola's *Saworoide* when King Lapite wants to celebrate his tenth year on the throne, so many social activities are organized for the day, such as dancing competition, and poem rendition as revealed below:

Mo gbó kiní kan lórí rédíò, wón ní kí gbogbo àwọn  
Omódé tó bá mò ọ̀n jó wá fún idíje, wón fẹ́ mú díẹ̀  
nínú wón tí yóò jó nígbà àjòdún ọ̀ba.....  
Wón ní àwọn tó bá mò ọ̀n jó yóó gba èbùn tó jojú o.  
o.i 95

I heard something over the radio, that all the teenagers  
who knows how to dance should come for dancing  
competition, the best dancer would be picked to dance  
during the king's anniversary.....  
All the best dancers shall be bountifully rewarded.

The Yorùbá monarchs are demonstrating the ability to evolve and innovate, by embracing modernity while preserving traditions. This fact is always captured in the works of the literary artistes who are working assiduously to embrace, preserve and revitalize Yorùbá culture through their fictional works.

### **Traditional Wedding Resilience**

Yorùbá traditional wedding is an event that is full of glamour right from the olden days until the present age. Yorùbá people consider marriage to be a sacred institution; with this they emphasise their religious beliefs when contracting a relationship, such as marriage. Apparently, religion and marriage are intertwined. There is no way we can tie conjugal knots without involving the spiritual. It is customary for both families to go and consult the Ifá oracle to inquire about the

fate of the would-be couple and the union. This is a cultural practice of the people. Traditionally, several steps are involved in Yorùbá traditional wedding starting from seeking the bride (*Ifojúsóde*); seeking the hands of the bride (*Ìtoro ọmọ*); getting response (*Ìjọhẹn*) and the rest, to the point where the knot is tied. All these make Yorùbá marriage a process rather than an event. It is pertinent to note that there are some aspects of marriage in the olden days that are no longer in practice, for example, carrying the bride's calabash (*igbá iyàwó gbígbé*) by the groom's family. The groom's family is obliged to take a white covered big, neat calabash, white cloth and two thousand cowries to the bride's family. The bride's family would keep the white cloth for the bride to cover her head on the day she is taken to her husband's house. Also, the "Làári" ritual for the bride, when it is five days to the wedding. Even, the common nuptial chant (*ẹkún iyàwó*) is rarely practiced in the contemporary era.

However, despite the transformation, Yorùbá traditional wedding continues to uphold some parts of the ancient customs and practices. Though not for several months as it used to take place in the ancient days but less than a week or even two days in recent time. In our contemporary society, traditional wedding remains a glamorous and lively celebration of culture, with the roles of the wedding spokespersons (*alága idúró* and *alága ijókòó*), the engagement items (*erù iyàwó*), with wearing of the iconic *aṣo òfi* (the traditional weaved cloth) by the couples and their families, with friends wearing uniformed Yorùbá attire (*aṣo ẹbí*). All these continue to be an integral part of Yorùbá traditional wedding, preserving Yorùbá cultural heritage. In *Iṣọlá's Ó Le Kú*, Àjàní decides to hold his wedding in a traditional way, using traditional attire with his fiancée's family wearing uniform Yorùbá attire. *Iṣọlá* presents it thus:

Wón pinnu láti máso iyàwó. Sányán kan tó pawó  
ni iyàwó àti ọkọ yóó lò. Àwon ọmọ iyàwó lẹkùnrin  
lóbìnrin nàá ti dá aso tiwon. o.i 114

They decide to buy uniform attire for the wedding  
A very beautiful *Sányán* for the couple. The bridal  
train has theirs too

The above excerpt reveals that Yorùbá attire during wedding is still in vogue, even, in the face of westernisation. Àjàní insists on using Yorùbá attire during his wedding. He also brings all the engagement items to the bride's family as the custom requires. Yorùbá has adapted to modern time by exposing the traditional wedding culture to other culture, by integrating western elements while preserving the spirit of the traditional wedding culture. Among the engagement items brought to the bride's family there are evident of western culture items, for instance, Bible or Quran representing the modern religion, drinks like Fanta and beer, also the wedding ring which is not part of the traditional items requested

from the groom's family in the olden days. Below is the list of the items Ajani brought to his bride's family:

Obi m̀er̀inl̀el̀og̀orin, or̀ogb̀o m̀er̀inl̀el̀og̀orin, oguń  
ataare, ìgò oyin m̀ej̀ì, oṭí bíà ìgò m̀ej̀ìl̀á, Sítáòtù ìgò  
m̀ej̀ìl̀á, Fántà m̀ej̀ìl̀á, oṭí wáinì ìgò kan.....  
Bíbèlì, ..... òr̀uka ìgbéyàwó, bàtà.....

o.i 114

Eighty-four pieces of kolanut, eighty-fourpieces of  
bitterkola, twenty, two bottles of honey, twelve bottles  
of Beer, twelve bottles of Stout, twelve bottles of Fanta,  
one bottle of Wain, ..... Bible.....  
wedding ring and shoe.....

The above excerpt apparently shows that, there is integration of westernization with the traditional culture of the Yorùbá, considering the items like, Beer, Fanta, Wine, wedding rings and Bible the book of the Christian faith representing the religion of the couple, presented alongside traditional items brought for the engagement. In the same vein, in Gbenro's *Lofurufu*, Oṃoḍéere and Adesíná's wedding takes place in United States of America. The wedding is conducted exactly the way it is done in Yorùbá traditional setting in Nigeria. The couple also put on the Yorùbá cultural attire. It is worth mentioning that, so many interracial marriages of Yorùbá ladies and European whites are conducted in traditional Yorùbá way, with the grooms and the grooms' families wearing the Yorùbá native wears of b̀ùbá, s̀òkòtò and agbádá for men, ìró, b̀ùbá and g̀èlè for women. It is very common to see such wedding in our contemporary time. This is to prove that Yorùbá traditional marriage is resilient globally.

### **Yorùbá Naming Ceremony Resilience**

In Yorùbá culture, naming ceremony is an important event. It is very significant in Yorùbá culture because Yorùbá places high premium on children. They believe children are special gifts from God, and so should be valued more as a special gift Ladélé, Oyebamiji, Aworinde, Oyerinde & Oladapo (2006). Therefore, when a child is born, they give the child a name that can symbolically secure the future and destiny of the child, name that has connection with the ancestors of the child and name that is connected to the divinities in the child's clan or lineage. During the child's naming, prayers are offered to God and the ancestors, using some symbolic items representing good wishes, safety and prosperity to offer the prayers. Yorùbá names are chosen carefully based on meaning, the occurrences that surround the birth, and the events or the happenings at the time of birth. During the slave trade, Yorùbá slaves, like other Africans were forced to change their names, and were given names, that have no cultural significance. Washington (2013) asserts that, Africans were renamed to suit the purpose of making life easier for the enslavers and to dehumanise the

slaves. Moreover, with the advent of the foreign religion, converts are changing their names to the names of the religion they professed, not totally, but in addition to the Yorùbá names they have. As part of resistance during a child naming ceremony, the traditional items that were used in the olden days to pray for the child are introduced into the foreign religions. This is evident in Olábímtán's *Àyànmó* when Àlàbí's wife gives birth after her husband's departure to Europe, despite the fact that they are Christians, traditional naming items such as, water, palm oil, Bitter kola, Cola nut, Catfish, are used to pray for the child

Ó ká aṣọ lẹṣẹ ọmọ tuntun, ó fi ẹṣẹ rẹ tẹlẹ, ó ní  
'Ilẹ ni à í tẹ kí á tó tẹ omi, bí o bá rin nílẹ kí o  
Má fẹṣẹ kọ o'. Lẹyìn èyí ó fowọ kan omi, ó tó  
ọ sí ọmọ lenu.... Bí o ti parí ti omi, ni ó fowọ  
ba epo tí ó fi sí ọmọ lenu... Lẹyìn èyí ni ó tún  
mú nínú eja àrọ ..... o fi kan ọmọ lenu. o.i 76-77

He removed the cloth from the child's leg, and  
Put his leg on the floor, he said 'We step on sand  
before we step on water, whenever you are walk-  
ing, you will not stumble' After that, he touches  
water, and put a drop in his mouth.... As soon as  
he finishes with water, he touches palm oil, he put  
it in the child's mouth... After this, he uses the  
catfish to touch the child's mouth.

As devoted Christians, using all these traditional Yorubá naming items to pray for the child depicts, cultural resilience and resistance to western civilization. Yorubá name is one important aspect of culture with which Yorubá people still keep their identity in the world till today.

### **Yorubá Language Resilience**

Despite decades of colonisation and westernisation that endangered Yorubá language, Yoruba language still strives to maintain its importance in the society and globally. Culture and language are interwoven; therefore, language is aiding the spread of Yorubá culture. Apparently, Yoruba language is tied to Yoruba culture and traditions, playing a crucial role in teaching ethics and values, also helping with the promotion of traditional religion practices. To add to its richness and to avoid going into extinction, the language has incorporated loanwords from other languages of the world, such as, English and Arabic language. In Nigeria, Yoruba is taught in schools, most especially Yoruba speaking part of Nigeria, and used as a medium of instruction, in order to prevent it from going into extinction. Some schools have a day out of the week to conduct the assembly in Yorubá to encourage passing the language to the coming generation. There are many prominent Yorubá authors that are writing novels, drama and poetry books to be

used by schools as recommended by the government, some of which are selected for analysis in this research. Obviously, Yoruba language is stubbornly resisting language erasure. In Isola's *O Le Ku*, Ajani insists that, the church service for his wedding should be conducted in Yorùbá language instead of English language that is commonly used in some churches

Àjàni fì dandan lé e pé, aṣo Yorùbá ni àwọn  
Omo iyàwó náà gbòdò wò. Ó tún fì dandan  
lé e pé Yorùbá ni kí wón ṣe isìn náà

o.i 144

Àjàní insists that the bridal train must wear traditional attire. He also insists that the wedding program must be conducted in Yorùbá

In recent times, Yorùbá language has spread his tentacles beyond Nigeria, even beyond Africa, for instance, Independent Newspaper of November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021, has reported that Yorùbá language is compulsory in Brazilian primary and secondary schools, also the state government of Alagoas, Brazil, passed a law recognising Yorùbá language as the cultural heritage of the state. In the same vein, United State of America, and some European nations are offering Yorùbá language in some of their universities and colleges.

### **Yorùbá Cuisine Resilience**

Yorùba traditional food has shown notable resilience in the global culinary scene, surviving in the global culinary landscape, despite centuries of colonisation and modernisation. Yorùbá cuisine is deeply entrenched in cultural and spiritual practices, as some of the Yorùbá foods are related to Yorùbá divinities, making it an integral part of identity and heritage. Furthermore, Yorùbá cuisine are functional diets, most of which is targeted at improving certain health conditions. For example, Yorùbá vegetable known as ewédú (Jute leaves) is rich in vitamins C, A, and K, with Gbègìrì (Beans Soup) which is rich in protein when taken with Amàlà (Yam flour meal). Yorùbá Jute leaves have been used in traditional medicine to treat various ailments such as indigestion, fever and rheumatism. The medicinal relevance of some Yorùbá diets, as well as cooking skills and richness makes it significantly famous globally. The resilience of Yorùbá cuisine is represented in Gbénró *Lófúrufú*, when Omoḍéere invites Oládélé to her room in order to explain some aspect of their course that seems difficult to her. Omoḍéere asks him what does he want to eat? Oládélé without mincing words asks for Amàlà and Ewédú, which Omoḍéere quickly prepares for him as evident in the excerpt below:

Ìgbà tí Omoḍéere bi Oládélé léèrè pé ṣé oúnjẹ  
alákòwé ni ó n fẹ ni tàbí ti ìbílẹ̀, orin ni Olád-  
élé mú bọ ẹnu tó n kọ pé...omo oko kíi sunkún

búrédi, kíá, Ọmọ́déere ti gbé omi àmàlà kaná  
Ó kọ ó bí òkè, ó fi ọ̀bẹ̀ ewédú sí i, Ọládélé sì  
Sọ òkè àmàlà nàà dilẹ o.i 5-6

When Ọmọ́déere ask Ọládélé if she should  
Prepare a local or foreign food, he responds  
with song that, ‘a local boy does not cry for  
bread’ .... Ọmọ́déere quickly prepares Amàlà  
and Ewédú for him, which he finishes without  
waisting time.

Even as a university student, Ọládélé does not joke with traditional food, Ọmọ́déere also has the mastery and the cooking skill, as a Yorùbá lady, she does not allow western life to rub on her, she has all it takes to prepare a native food. Both of them being youths, the author portrays them as custodians of culture. This is showing the resilience and continuity of Yorùbá food as one of Yorùbá cultural strength with which cultural erasure is being resisted.

### **Ethical resilience**

Ethics is the collection of values, philosophy, principles and standard that guide behaviour and decision making in human society. It helps to differentiate good from bad and also right from wrong, thereby fostering harmonious and healthy community relationship. According to Akanle and Adejare (2018) Yorùbá is a particular people with a particular way of life, going by this assertion, Yorùbá has a set of ethical values that guides their way of life. Yorùbá has a word that captures every virtue that is needed to make an upright individual, this is called virtue of Ọmọ́lúàbí, this is based on culture. Ọmọ́lúàbí in Yorùbá means good morals and virtuous conducts Ogunlólá (2013:139). One important virtue of Yorùbá worth mentioning is showing respect to elders or those in position of authority. The easiest means to notice a person that is respectful in Yorùbá society is by his or her mode of greetings. Greeting is a good gesture of respect visible in Yoruba land, a man would prostrate while a woman would kneel down. Anyone who does not know how to do this is termed to be disrespectful. Gbenro, showcase this in his novel, with the aim of projecting the importance and relevance of Yorùbá mode of greetings as a required virtue of Ọmọ́lúàbí. Ọmọ́déere in *Lófurufú* wins the heart of her mother in-law because of her mode of greeting. The very first time she sees her; her mother-in-law notices it. She has this to say about Ọmọ́déere

Ọmọ tí wọn bí nílẹ̀ ire ni tí ó sì gbẹ̀kòò, orúnkún ẹ̀şẹ̀  
Mẹ́jẹ̀jẹ̀ni ni ó fí n kí ẹ̀niyàn.

o.i 72

She is from a good home, and she is well brought up  
She kneels down on her two knees to greet people

Gbenro portray this in his novel, with the aim of projecting the importance and relevance of Yorùbá mode of greetings as a required virtue of Ọmọlúàbí, also as an identity that makes Yorùbá people stand out globally.

### Conclusion

Yorùbá novels offer a powerful lens through which social and cultural resistance are examined, also they illuminate the ways in which the Yorùbá people have consistently asserted their identity and resilience in the face of colonialism, oppression and cultural erasure. Yorùbá literary artistes, especially novelists through their fictional works have skillfully woven together themes of cultural preservation, language revitalisation, and political resistance, creating a literary landscape that reflects the community unwavering commitment to their heritage. By exploring the complexities of Yorùbá identity and experience, these novels do not only provide a window into the past but also serve as testament to the enduring power of cultural resistance, ensuring that the rich values and traditions of the Yorùbá people continue to thrive for generations to come. Ultimately, the literary reflections of identity and resilience in Yorùbá novels stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration, reminding us that even in the darkest of times, the human spirit can persevere and flourish

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## **Surviving Possibilities of Indigenous Languages and the English Language in Intercultural and International Communication**

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### **Abstract**

*Existing studies on language preference in the social media context and especially among netizens have been rare; hence, this study explores preference for language use by selected literate Nigerians on social media platforms, with a focus on the surviving possibilities of indigenous languages and the role of English as a passport to international and intercultural communication. The study aims to determine whether indigenous languages can serve as a viable means of communication in global contexts, and to verify the extent to which English facilitates international and intercultural communication. A descriptive quantitative research design and purposive sampling technique were employed to gather data from 500 randomly selected netizens in the Yorùbá-speaking states of Southwest Nigeria, namely Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Ekiti. The research adopted Phillipson's (1992) Linguistic Imperialism Theory as referenced in Oluwadoro. (2020), Gumperz's (1985) Interactional Sociolinguistics (IS) and Kachru's (1982) Three Concentric Circles of English use as its theoretical framework. Phillipson believes that linguistic imperialism perpetuates inequality and marginalises local languages, while Gumperz avers that language use is shaped by social context and power dynamics. The findings of the study revealed that local languages can be used to interpret technical and scientific thoughts, which is a symbol of it occupying a unique space on social media platforms. Thus, netizens (over 50%) employ code-mixing and code-switching as innovative language tools, and local languages like Yorùbá have potential in online spaces, particularly in cultural and social contexts. The survey also revealed that the English Language is the favourite language of an overwhelming 491/500 netizens on selected social media platforms. While the reasons for this is attributed to its official status, convenience, global relevance, and educational benefits. The study also found that English is considered essential for international and inter-cultural communication, respondents (99.2%) agreed that it helps Nigerians to connect with the outside world while (1.8%) disagreed. Additionally, (94.6%) believed that social media platforms have amplified the dominance of English. Out of those surveyed, 464 (93.0%) concurred that netizens on social media platforms should be able to communicate in English while 35 (7.0%) disagreed. Overall, the study highlights the*

*importance of English in online communication in Nigeria, while also acknowledging the potential of indigenous languages.*

**Keywords:** Preference, social media, indigenous languages, language choice, lingua franca

### **Introduction**

Social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram and TikTok have created online communities where users may share as much personal information as they want with other members. However, global communication has become challenging due to the challenges posed by cultural, linguistic, and geographic diversity. This is because important information from one part of the world may be simultaneously and clearly shared with people in other part of the world via, texts, images and video clips; thanks to the internet, sometimes referred to as globe wide web. Communication challenges arise when interacting with members of different countries, cultures and languages for business, personal tourism, or educational reasons. Such interactions are often problematic due to language barriers especially for those living in remote areas who have even less contact with speakers of other languages, thereby ensuring only basic communication would be the most difficult. In such cases, the intermediate or link language- English is always used. Consequently, English was the most widely used language for Internet content as of January 2023, accounting for around 59% of all domains. With 5.3% of online material, Russia came second, followed by Spanish-language content with 4.3% (Petrosyan, 2023).

However, despite the widespread adoption of social media in Nigeria, a multilingual country with over 500 languages (Blench, 2012), there is a dearth of research on language use and preferences on these platforms. While social media has become an integral part of daily life, with many literate Nigerians using these platforms to connect with others, share information and express themselves (Ajani, 2007), the factors influencing language preference on social media remain understudied. The use of English as a lingua franca and the emergence of indigenous languages on social media raise important questions about their surviving possibilities and potential as a passport to international and intercultural communication (Igboanusi, 2002), which have not been adequately addressed in existing research. Therefore, this gap in literature highlights the need for further investigation into language preference and the surviving possibilities of indigenous languages, such as Yorùbá (spoken in South-Western, Nigeria) and the English language in intercultural and international communication on the social media platforms in Nigeria.

### **Relating Intercultural and International Communication**

Intercultural communication refers to a discipline that studies communication across different cultures and social groups, or the effects of culture on communication. It involves the wide range of communication process and problems that naturally appear within an organization or social context made up of individuals from different social, ethnic, religious and educational backgrounds. In effect, intercultural communication seeks to understand how people from different countries and culture act, communicate, and perceive the world around them.

Undoubtedly, intercultural communication also focuses on the recognition and respect of those with cultural differences. Its goal is for a mutual adaptation between two or distinct cultures rather than complete assimilation. Similarly, it is the idea of knowing how to communicate in different parts of the world and thereby promotes the development of cultural sensitivity and allows language use for emphatic understanding across different cultures. This, intercultural communication competence is essential for navigating diverse cultural contexts. (Oyewole, 2018)

International communication, on the other hand, refers to communication across national borders, often involving governments, organizations, and individuals. (Thussu, 2019) However, it is also a complex and multifaceted sub-field within the major field of communication and media studies. It consists of the issue of culture and cultural commodification, (the turning of cultural products into commodities), the diffusion of information and news broadcasting by empires around the world, and the challenges faced by the developing world in the light of the processes. Mohammad, (2005)

The interdependency between different nations of the world and the competition between the international and multinational companies and organizations compel international communication. When individuals, cultural groups, country or state feel the need to be seen, heard and recognised within and outside their territory, international communication becomes crucial to achieve this. Before, the existing traditional media such as Television, Radio, Newspaper and films promote and facilitate international communication. In today's digital age, the flow of contents across social media platforms has grown exponentially, boosting international communication, more and more of which is being conducted through new technologies.

Moreover, the intersection of intercultural and international communication is critical in today's globalized world (Bhabha, 2018). Nigerian famous writer and nobel laurel, Whole Soyinka (2019) highlights the need for cultural sensitivity and awareness in international communication. Thus, effective intercultural

communication can facilitate international understanding, cooperation and development (Akindele, 2017)

Furthermore, intercultural communication can be challenging due to language barriers, cultural differences and stereotypes (Gudykunst & Tiny-Toomey, 2018). The benefits of it, involves a deep understanding of cultural nuances, language and context. Hofstede (2017) developed frameworks for understanding cultural differences and their impact on communication.

In international communication, technology played a significant role in bridging geographical and cultural gaps. (Castells, 2018). Relatively, Ayoade (2020), notes that social media transformed the way people communicate across culture and borders. Apart from the challenges posed by intercultural and international communication, they both offer opportunities for cultural exchange, collaboration and mutual understanding. To achieve these goals, there is a need for critical thinking and cultural sensitivity among different nations of the world.

Lastly, intercultural and international communication are complex and dynamic fields that involve a deep understanding of cultural differences, language and context. Effective intercultural communication has a significant impact in today's globalized world.

### **Research Problem**

The media landscape encompasses traditional outlets like magazines, cinemas, radio, newspapers, television, as well as social media platforms. Traditional media have garnered significant academic attention due to its early adoption (Anwar & Ali, 2021). Nigerian scholars such as Clark (2013), Akujobi (2019), Oluwadoro (2020), Abubakar (2020), Amin (2020) and Patel S.R. (2021) have contributed to this area of study.

However, with the surge of social media, researchers like Opeibi (2016), Igboanusi (2017), Awonusi and Adebileje (2019) have shifted focus to language use on social media platforms. What is central to all of them? They all acknowledged the superiority of English over indigenous languages in communication media. Despite this, there is a need for further investigation into the intersection of indigenous languages and English in online communication particularly in the Nigerian context.

This study, therefore, aims to explore preference for language use by netizens and the surviving possibilities of indigenous languages alongside English for international and intercultural communication, addressing a research gap in the existing literature. By examining the dynamics of language use in online spaces, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion on language, cultural identity, contexts and linguistic diversity in the digital age.

### **Aim and Objectives**

This study aims to investigate the role of language in facilitating international and intercultural communication in Nigeria, with a focus on the surviving possibilities of indigenous languages and the use of English as a lingua franca. The specific objectives of this study are:

- i. Determine the surviving possibilities of indigenous languages as a passport to international and intercultural communication in Nigeria.
- ii. Verify if the English language is a viable passport to international and intercultural communication.

### **Indigenous Languages in Nigeria**

Indigenous languages are deeply rooted in one's immediate environment and mother tongue. People tend to feel more comfortable and at ease when interacting in their native languages. According to Nwadike, indigenous languages play a vital role in preserving community literature, history, geography, and civics through various forms of expression, such as stories, songs, dances, myths, and legends. These languages also guide youth towards achieving their personal and societal expectations. Indigenous languages are inherently linked to the environment in which they are spoken, serving as a treasure of self-identity and a vital indicator of history and self-identification (Solanke, 2006). With over 500 indigenous languages, Nigeria's linguistic landscape is rich and diverse. According to Olaoye (2009) cited in Olaoye (2013), indigenous languages perform essential functions in child development, including instrumental function, interactional function and regulatory function.

Nigeria's indigenous languages can be broadly classified into two categories: Niger-Congo and Afro-Asiatic (which includes Tchado-Semitic) and Nilo-Saharan (which includes Sudanic) (Blench, 2012; Ethnologue, n.d.). The Hausa language, spoken predominantly in Northern Nigeria, has over 63 million speakers and is also spoken in other African countries, including Niger, Ghana, Chad, and Sudan (Blench, 2012). The Kano dialect is widely accepted as the standard for Hausa (Buba, 1997).

The Yorùbá language, spoken mainly in South-West Nigeria, has approximately 42 million speakers and is also spoken in neighbouring countries like Benin Republic and Togo, as well as in countries like Brazil, Cuba, and the United States (Akinjogbin, 1998). The Oyo dialect is widely used as the standard for Yorùba.

The Igbo language, spoken in South-East Nigeria, has around 35 million speakers, including speakers from other tribes (Emenanjo, 2015). The Owerri dialect is often used as the standard for Igbo. Although Igbo is not widely spoken as a second language by other minority groups in the region, it is still an important language in Nigerian linguistic diversity. According to Blench (2012), Hausa and

Yorùbá can be considered regional lingua franca due to their widespread use among minority groups in their respective regions.

Meanwhile, in Nigeria, Hausa, Igbo, and Yorùbá are considered majority languages, holding significant status in their respective regions. Although not officially recognized as second languages in the Nigerian Constitution, they play crucial roles in governance and education. For instance, these languages are used in state houses of assembly and official events. In education, they serve as mediums of instruction in primary schools, particularly in the first three years.

However, this stratification has raised concerns about inter-ethnic tensions and marginalization of minority languages. According to Ogunmodimu (2015), prioritizing majority languages may inhibit the growth and development of minority languages. The dominance of these majority languages can lead to a form of hegemony, where minority languages are overshadowed.

The Federal Character Principle, enshrined in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution (Section 14, subsections 3 and 4), aims to promote national unity and fairness by ensuring representation from diverse ethnic groups in governance. The Federal Character Commission (FCC) was established to implement and enforce this principle. By promoting equitable distribution of public posts and socio-economic infrastructure, the FCC seeks to mitigate marginalization and foster inclusivity.

While the Federal Character Principle has been a step towards addressing these issues, its effectiveness remains a subject of debate. Some argue that it has helped promote diversity, while others claim that it has become a means of recruiting unqualified individuals into the public service, potentially undermining its intended purpose.

### **Language Choice in Multilingual Communities**

According to sociolinguists, language choice refers to the deliberate decision-making process that speakers undergo to select the most suitable language or language variety to use in a particular context (Hymes, 1974; Gumperz, 1982). As noted by Appel and Muysken (2005), in multilingual communities, speakers may choose a language based on various factors, including the interlocutor, setting, topic, and function or goal of the conversation. The identified factors that influence language choice, including topic, social context, domain, personal identity, and attitude (Fishman, 1972; Giles & Powesland, 1975). For instance, individuals may choose to speak in their first language when discussing sensitive topics or interacting with family members, while opting for a more formal language in professional or formal settings. Multilingual speakers often exhibit code-switching, a phenomenon where speakers switch between languages within a single conversation (Myers-Scotton, 1993). This can be influenced by various

factors, including the speaker's linguistic proficiency, social identity, and the context of the conversation.

Effective language choice requires consideration of several strategies, including knowing one's audience, being aware of the context, using clear and concise language, being mindful of tone and nuance, and being respectful and empathetic (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). By adopting these strategies, individuals can communicate more effectively and avoid misunderstandings. Language choice is a complex and dynamic process that is influenced by a variety of factors in multilingual communities (Hoffmann, 1991). As noted by Clyne (2003), individuals consciously select their language according to the situation, their identity, and their relationship with others. Additionally, language choice is a complex phenomenon that reflects identity, history, and social dynamics. In multilingual communities, the language a person chooses to speak can indicate their social status, cultural heritage, or context (Gumperz, 1982; Myers-Scotton, 2006). For instance, in countries like India or South Africa, people may switch between local languages and English, often associating English with education, professionalism, or modernity (Bourdieu, 1991). Historical and political influences shape language choice, with colonial history leaving lasting imprints on language use in regions like Africa and Southeast Asia (Pennycook, 1998). In Nigeria, English was adopted as the official language after independence in 1960, coexisting with local languages like Hausa, Yorùbá, and Igbo (Bamgbose, 1992). While English is used for official matters, indigenous languages are used for traditional festivals, cultural identity, and ideologies (Oyetade, 2001). In multilingual societies, language choice can be a form of resistance, a way to reclaim identity, or assert cultural independence (Scott, 1990). Sociolinguists explore these choices to understand how language functions as a tool for navigating social hierarchies and expressing individual or group identity (Gumperz, 1982). By examining these patterns, we gain insight into the power dynamics and cultural values that corroborate multilingual societies.

### **Lingua Franca in Intercultural and International Communication**

The terms "lingua franca" has become increasingly important in today's globalized world. According to Seidler (2011), a lingua franca is a language used for communication among people with different native languages. It can also be defined as a language which is used habitually by people whose mother tongues are different in order to facilitate communication between them. Thus, Akindele and Adegbite (1999:52) defines lingua franca as a language of wider communication which is used in cross-ethnic interaction.

However, lingua franca is used principally to facilitate communication among people from different linguistic backgrounds. English, being neutral, qualifies as a language of inter-ethnic communication in Nigeria. It is therefore 'regarded' as

Nigeria's lingua franca (Ogu, 1992:9). Balogun and Akindele (2021:18) explain this further that English in Nigeria is not an exclusive preserve of any ethnic group, society or culture; it is the language for almost everybody as such as its spread and promotion in Nigeria society. Bamgbose (2019), notes that English plays a significant role in global interactions.

A lingua franca is a great boon in today's interconnected world. Graddol (2018) observes that lingua franca facilitate international communication, trade, and diplomacy. It also provides access to global opportunities, and economic growth (Kachru, 2019). The language may not just be a language of inter-ethnic communication but may also be mass-oriented. That is, it is used by all the sectors of the linguistic community in which it operates. ( SeeAkindele and Adegbite 1999: 51-52). Furthermore, it enables people from different cultures to interact, share ideas, and learn from each other. (Pennycook, 2017).

Besides, the use of a lingua franca also pose serious challenges. The dominance of a single lingua franca can lead to language shift and language loss. ( Skutnabb-Kangas, 2015). However, Igboanusi (2017) notes that the use of English as a lingua franca in Nigeria can threaten local languages and cultural identity. Consequently, non-native speakers may face difficulties in expressing themselves effectively (Widdowson, 2018)

To mitigate the challenges of a lingua franca, it is essential to promote linguistic diversity and multilingualism. This can be actualized by encouraging the use of local languages and promoting language education that prioritizes communicative competence and intercultural awareness. (Akindele, 2017). Similarly, language support services such as interpretation and translation, can facilitate communication among people from different Linguistic backgrounds.

Conclusively, the use of a lingua franca is both beneficial and challenging. By examining the role of English as a lingua franca, promoting linguistic diversity and multilingualism, we can harness its potential while preserving indigenous languages and cultural identities.

### **Research Design and Methodology**

This study adopted a quantitative research approach to systematically collect and analyze numerical data. Specifically, it employed a descriptive research design, which aims to present an accurate account of the demographic information, behaviors, and attitudes of a specific population without any experimental manipulation. To ensure the relevance and appropriateness of the data collected, a purposive sampling technique was used to target individuals most likely to provide meaningful insights. A total of 500 internet users (netizens) were randomly selected from the Yorùbá-speaking states in the Southwest region of Nigeria—namely Lagos, Oyo, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Ekiti. Data were collected

using a structured questionnaire disseminated via WhatsApp on Android devices. Participants were fully briefed on the voluntary nature of their involvement and were given the choice to either participate or decline without facing any negative consequences. Furthermore, the study clearly assured participants that all responses would be treated with confidentiality and used strictly for academic research purposes, in line with ethical research standards. The demographic data of respondents—including variables such as age, gender, educational background, and geographic location—were analyzed using frequency counts to provide a summary profile of the sample population. The questionnaire itself comprised 36 items, which were systematically categorized and labeled according to the core objectives of the research to ensure clarity and analytical consistency. Upon completion of data collection, the responses were processed and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25.0. This statistical tool facilitated the extraction of meaningful patterns and insights from the data set, contributing to a deeper understanding of the research problem. The study specifically focused on three social media platforms—YouTube, Instagram, and TikTok—based on their widespread usage and relevance in contemporary digital culture. These platforms were selected due to their status as some of the most visited websites globally in the 21st century. They are particularly noted for their global accessibility, the ability to upload multiple videos or images in a single post, and their dominant use for infotainment purposes—blending both information and entertainment. These characteristics made them especially suitable for the objectives of this study.

**Data Analysis**

The data collected through the questionnaire administered are presented in tables and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 25.0).

The tables below show the analysis of the questionnaire administered.

**Table 1:** Surviving possibility of the varied indigenous language due to the partial/total negligence by Nigerians while on social media platforms

Items	Groupings	Frequency	Percentage
Do you by any means code-switch/code-mix while on social media platforms?	No	172	34.4
	Yes	328	65.6
Do you need your native language to express certain ideas on social media platforms?	No	20	4.0
	Yes	480	96.0
Social media platforms connect the whole world at a single node through the hegemonic use of English	No	33	6.6
	Yes	467	93.4

Local languages value in the global market can be compared to the English language.	Agree	161	32.2
	Disagree	31	6.2
	Neutral	23	4.6
	Strongly Agree	241	48.2
	Strongly Disagree	44	8.8
Local languages may be suitable to interpret technical and scientific thoughts.	Agree	226	45.2
	Disagree	88	17.6
	Neutral	32	6.4
	Strongly Agree	113	22.6
	Strongly Disagree	41	8.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>500</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 1 presents the surviving possibility of the varied indigenous languages due to the partial/total negligence by Nigerians while on social media platforms. The results showed that about two-third (65.6%) of the study participants code-switch/code-mix while on social media platforms. On whether the dominant usage of the English language aids netizens in reaching a bigger audience, most of the respondents (96%) agreed while 4% respondents disagreed. The majority of the study participants (n=467, 93.4%) agreed that social media platforms connect the whole world at a single node through the hegemonic use of English while the remaining 33 (6.6%) respondents disagreed. Nearly half of the sample (48.2%) highly agreed, 161 (32.2%) agreed, 31 (6.2%) disagreed, 44 (8.8%) strongly disagreed, and 23 (4.6%) were indifferent when asked whether English is the most often used language for international and intercultural communication. Regarding suitability of local languages to interpret technical and scientific thoughts, 113 (22.6%) of the study participants strongly agreed, 226 (45.2%) respondents agreed, 88 (17.6%) disagreed, 41 (8.2%) strongly disagreed while 32 (6.4%) were indifferent.

**Table 2:** English language as a passport to international and intercultural communication

S/N	STATEMENTS	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Strongly Agree	Strongly Disagree
	English language bridges the gap among netizens of	175 (35.0%)	37 (7.4%)	9 (1.8%)	234 (46.8%)	45 (9.0%)

	diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds.					
	The English language is the most appropriate language for academic purposes in Nigeria.	152 (30.4%)	37 (7.4%)	14 (2.8%)	247 (49.4%)	50 (10.0%)
	The use of the English language in business sectors determines the standard of international communication.	244 (48.8%)	56 (11.2%)	10 (2.0%)	173 (34.6%)	17 (3.4%)
	The English language is the primary language in international commerce due to its significant economic importance.	237 (47.4%)	44 (8.8%)	34 (6.8%)	162 (32.4%)	23 (4.6%)
	Given the globalised nature of the workplace, English is an undisputed language of business.	219 (43.8%)	57 (11.4%)	31 (6.2%)	173 (34.6%)	20 (4.0%)

**F = 500**

**% = 100%**

Table 2 presents the English language as a passport to international and intercultural communication. The result showed that 234 (46.8%) of respondents strongly agreed that the English language bridges the gap among netizens of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, 175 (35%) agreed, 37 (7.4%) disagreed, 45 (9%) strongly disagreed while 9 (1.8%) were indifferent. 247 (49.4%) strongly agreed, 152 (30.4%) agreed, 37 (7.4%) disagreed, 50 (10%) strongly disagreed, and 14 (2.8%) were neutral when asked if English is the best language for academic purposes in Nigeria. In addition, 173 (34.6%) respondents strongly agreed that the English language is an uncontested language of business in the context of a globalised workplace, 219 (43.8%) agreed, 57 (11.4%)

disagreed, 20 (4%) strongly disagreed, and 31 (6.2%) were neutral. Approximately one-third (34.6%) of the study participants strongly agreed that the use of the English language in business sectors determines the standard of international communication, 244 (48.8%) agreed, 56 (11.2%) disagreed, 17 (3.4%) strongly disagreed, and 10 (2%) were indifferent. Similarly, 162 (32.4%) strongly agreed, 237 (47.4%) agreed on whether the English language is the first language in international trade due to its great economic value, 44 (8.8%) disagreed, 23 (4.6%) strongly disagreed, and 34 (6.8%) were indifferent.

**Table 3:** Responses on reasons for the hegemonic use of English on social media platforms

Items	Groupings	Frequency	Percentage
What is your favourite language on social media platforms?	English	491	98.2
	Yoruba	9	1.8
If your choice is English, enunciate the reasons in the boxes below.	A matter of personal interest	55	11.2
	English is associated with class symbol /prestige	60	12.2
	English is the official language in Nigeria	376	76.6
The hegemonic use of English has eased Nigerians of global communication problem on social media platforms.	No	20	4.0
	Yes	480	96.0
Many netizens in Nigeria use the English language for linguistic relativity to the outside world	No	4	.8
	Yes	496	99.2
Do social media platforms enhance the Hegemonic use of English?	No	27	5.4
	Yes	473	94.6
<b>Total</b>		<b>500</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 3 presents the reasons for the hegemonic use of English on social media platforms. Only 9 (1.8%) respondents named Yorùbá as their preferred language on social media, while almost three-quarters of the respondents (n=491; 98.2%) named English as their preferred language. Out of 491 respondents who reported the English Language as their favourite language on social media platforms, some gave the following reasons: a matter of personal interest (11.2%), English is

associated with class symbol /prestige (12.2%), English is the official language in Nigeria (76.6%). More than three-quarters of the total sample (96%) agreed that the hegemonic use of English has eased Nigerians global communication problem on social media platforms while 20 (4%) disagreed. On whether many netizens in Nigeria use the English language for linguistic relativity to the outside world, nearly all the respondents (99.2%) agreed while less than 1% respondents disagreed. Similarly, 473 (94.6%) respondents agreed that social media platforms enhance the hegemonic use of English while 27 (5.4%) disagreed.

### **Findings and Discussion**

The study's findings indicate that netizens actively utilize code-mixing and code-switching as intentional and strategic linguistic tools in their online interactions, rather than relying solely on English. This linguistic behaviour not only enhances creative expression but also promotes effective communication. Consequently, the research underscores the central role of English in connecting users globally through social media, thereby facilitating a unique and borderless network of communication.

Nonetheless, more than half of the participants acknowledged the value of indigenous languages, such as Yorùbá (spoken in South-Western Nigeria), in interpreting complex technical and scientific ideas. This observation demonstrates the adaptability and significance of local languages in modern communication contexts.

These findings are further validated by statistical results, which reveal that approximately 65.6% of respondents engage in code-mixing and code-switching on social media platforms. Similarly, an overwhelming majority of respondents (96%) believe that the use of English enables them to connect with a wider audience, while only 4% disagreed.

In addition, when participants were asked about the suitability of local languages for conveying technical and scientific information, 22.6% strongly agreed, 45.2% agreed, while smaller percentages expressed disagreement or neutrality. These responses highlight the multifaceted dynamics of language use in digital communication.

The study argues that local languages continue to hold significance on media platforms, as users frequently switch between their native tongue and foreign languages. This is particularly evident in the widespread practice of code-mixing and code-switching, where multiple languages are seamlessly combined. Notably, over half of the participants expressed the belief that languages like Yoruba are capable of conveying sophisticated scientific and technical concepts. This finding suggests that local languages not only remain relevant but are also thriving in

digital spaces, especially in regions where Yorùbá is predominantly spoken. Here, netizens tend to embrace their linguistic roots as a core aspect of their identity and online interaction.

Moreover, these conclusions align with earlier research by Fafunwa (1990) and Akinwumi (1991), both of whom demonstrated Yorùbá's potential in the instruction of scientific and technological subjects.

Regarding the second research objective, survey results revealed diverse perspectives on the function of English as a medium for cross-cultural and international communication. While 46.8% of respondents strongly agreed that English bridges linguistic and cultural gaps among netizens, 35.0% agreed, and smaller proportions disagreed or remained neutral.

As a result of these findings, it becomes evident that English has established itself as the lingua franca of the digital era, facilitating communication across different cultures and languages. This widespread adoption is reinforced by Crystal (2011), who asserts that English dominates social media, forums, and websites, enabling global interactions. Consequently, this study argues that English has become the default language for international communication, commerce, and cultural exchange. Its global significance is supported by its economic value and extensive adoption.

Jenkins (2007) similarly emphasizes that English has emerged as the primary global language, facilitating interaction across linguistic and cultural boundaries. This phenomenon is largely attributed to its prevalent use across key domains such as business, science, education, and entertainment. Supporting this, Graddol (2006) identifies English as the language of globalization, enabling participation in the global economy. The adoption of English by numerous multinational corporations as their official language further confirms its dominance.

The study's results also validate the notion that English proficiency is a highly sought-after skill in the job market. Crystal (2003) maintains that fluency in English is often a prerequisite for accessing international markets and securing employment opportunities.

Furthermore, the study suggests that the importance of English in global communication is likely to increase. Ferguson (2007) points out that the ongoing globalization of commerce, education, and communication will continue to strengthen English's role as the world's most widely used language.

Overall, the study confirms that English is a crucial tool for global communication. This supports the views of many language experts who consider English as the global language of the modern age. Given the increasing

interconnectedness of the world, the ability to communicate in English will likely become even more essential.

According to Table 3, the survey of 500 netizens shows a strong preference for English on social media, with 491 respondents (98.2%) choosing English, while only 9 (1.8%) preferred Yoruba. These results support earlier findings by Kachru (2017) and Crystal (2011), who both noted that English has become the most popular language online.

However, considering the linguistic context of South-Western Nigeria, where Yorùbá is widely spoken and holds cultural and political significance, the small number of respondents who preferred Yoruba is not unexpected (Oyetade, 2007). In relation to the second question in table, which examined reasons for the preference of English on social media, the findings revealed that 55 respondents cited personal interest, 60 associated English with social status and prestige, while a significant majority of 376 indicated that they use English primarily due to its official status in Nigeria.

This aligns with Section 51 of the Nigerian Constitution (1977), which declares English as the official language, reinforcing its function in promoting national unity and development — a view also supported by Awobuluyi (1991). Therefore, the official status of English continues to shape language preferences on digital platforms.

Additionally, the argument that English is the most preferred language on social media is further reinforced by the survey results, where 98.2% of respondents chose English over Yorùbá. The key reasons cited include personal interest (11.2%), its connection to class and prestige (12.2%), and its status as Nigeria's official language (76.6%).

Furthermore, 96% of respondents agreed that the widespread use of English has simplified communication among Nigerians on social media, with only 4% disagreeing. Almost all respondents (99.2%) believed that English facilitates communication with international audiences, while 94.6% agreed that social media has amplified the dominance of English. Only a small minority (5.4%) disagreed.

In light of this, it is essential to promote the Yorùbá language in sectors such as education, media, and governance to ensure its survival and growth. Preservation efforts must include documentation, the development of educational materials, and language promotion programmes. Ultimately, these findings offer valuable insights into the factors driving English language dominance and the marginalization of Yorùbá in digital spaces. They also highlight the urgent need

for cultural reorientation and proactive strategies to preserve and promote indigenous languages (Akindele, Afolabi, &Olasunkanmi, 2025).

In conclusion, this research shows that while English remains a dominant force in international and intercultural communication, netizens continue to integrate code-mixing and code-switching as tools for online engagement. Importantly, local languages like Yorùbá retain their relevance, reflecting users' cultural identity and linguistic diversity in the digital age.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The main finding of this research is that English facilitates international and intercultural communication, bridging linguistic and cultural divides. Meanwhile, indigenous languages maintain a significant presence on social media, with netizens valuing and utilizing their mother tongue alongside foreign languages, evident in the prevalence of code-mixing and code-switching. The findings reveal that local languages such as Yorùbá are capable of conveying complex technical and scientific ideas. Using a sociolinguistic method, future research areas might examine other facets of English language hegemony, including language attitudes, identity, multilingualism, and cultural environment. This study's objectives can be further investigated, and new areas of inquiry can be explored, including language policy and planning. Expanding the study population to include diverse geographical areas, age groups, occupations and language preferences can provide more comprehensive insights. Alternative research methodologies, such as post-colonial theory, discourse analysis, language attitude studies, language policy analysis and conversation analysis, can also be applied to this topic. Similarly, future studies can delve deeper into language preferences and practices on social media through in-depth interviews and focused research contexts. Crucially, the English language is a passport to international and intercultural communication, under scoring its importance in online communication. This conclusion aligns with Odebunmi (2020), who also emphasised the significance of English in social media communication.

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## **Challenges and Methodologies in Translating Islamic Texts from Arabic into Other Languages**

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### **Abstract**

*The translation of Islamic texts from Arabic into other languages is a critical and multifaceted endeavour, essential for fostering understanding among diverse global audiences. This study explores the challenges and methodologies involved in translating the Quran, Hadith, and Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh). It highlights the linguistic intricacies of Arabic, including its morphology, syntax, and rhetorical devices, and examines cultural and theological complexities such as the preservation of sacredness and the risk of misrepresentation. Poor translations can lead to doctrinal inconsistencies, interfaith misunderstandings, and the erosion of theological integrity. Methodologies discussed include literal and interpretative translations, dynamic equivalence approaches, collaborative interdisciplinary strategies, and the integration of modern technological tools. Each approach offers unique strengths and limitations, with literal translations ensuring fidelity to the original text, while interpretative and dynamic equivalence approaches enhance accessibility and relevance. Collaborative efforts between linguists, theologians, and cultural experts, as well as the judicious use of AI tools, are identified as critical for addressing the complexities of this task. The implications of translation extend beyond linguistic challenges to include the promotion of interfaith dialogue, the application of Islamic principles in contemporary contexts, and the enrichment of global discourse on Islam. Ultimately, the study underscores the need for nuanced and interdisciplinary approaches to ensure translations maintain both linguistic precision and theological fidelity, fostering deeper understanding and unity across cultures and faiths.*

### **Introduction**

The translation of Islamic texts from Arabic into other languages represents a critical and multifaceted endeavour. Islamic texts, particularly the Quran and Hadith, form the cornerstone of Muslim faith and practice, influencing spiritual, legal, and ethical frameworks. These texts are deeply embedded in the Arabic language, which itself is characterized by unique linguistic, stylistic, and rhetorical features. As Islam continues to spread globally, translating these sacred

texts has become an essential task for fostering understanding among non-Arabic-speaking populations. However, the process of translation is fraught with challenges that go beyond mere linguistic barriers, encompassing cultural, theological, and technical complexities.

The Arabic language holds a privileged status in Islam, often referred to as the "language of revelation." This designation stems from the belief that the Quran was revealed in Arabic as the divine and eternal word of God, with its linguistic structure considered a miracle in itself. The eloquence, complexity, and rhetorical style of Arabic are seen as unparalleled, forming an intrinsic part of the Quran's inimitability (*i'jaz*). Furthermore, Arabic serves not only as a medium for divine communication but also as a unifying factor for the global Muslim community, providing a standardized language for worship and religious discourse.<sup>1</sup> These attributes of Arabic present unique implications for translation, as translators must grapple with preserving the Quran's linguistic beauty and theological depth while making it accessible to non-Arabic-speaking audiences. The challenge lies in balancing the linguistic precision required to maintain the sanctity of the text with the cultural adaptability needed to convey its meanings effectively across diverse contexts. Its role is not merely communicative but also intrinsic to the faith's sacred texts. The Quran, believed to be the literal word of God, exemplifies the depth and eloquence of Arabic, making it central to Muslim identity and religious practice.<sup>2</sup> Beyond its linguistic significance, the Quran's message serves as a source of guidance for all aspects of life, from spirituality to governance. Similarly, the Hadith—records of the sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad—convey practical applications of Islamic principles, enriching the interpretative framework of the Quran.

Despite this centrality, Arabic is not the native language of the majority of Muslims worldwide. As Islam spread to regions as diverse as Southeast Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Europe, the necessity for translating Islamic texts grew exponentially. These translations aim to bridge linguistic divides and enable non-Arabic-speaking Muslims to access the foundational teachings of their faith. For example, in Southeast Asia, translations of the Quran into languages such as Bahasa Indonesia and Malay have been instrumental in shaping Islamic education and religious practice among local communities. Similarly, in Sub-Saharan Africa, translations into Swahili and Hausa have enabled millions to engage with Islamic teachings in their native tongues, fostering a deeper connection to the faith. In Europe, translations into English, French, and German have not only catered to Muslim diaspora communities but have also facilitated interfaith dialogue and a broader understanding of Islam among non-Muslims. Moreover, they provide non-Muslims with an opportunity to understand Islamic principles, promoting intercultural dialogue and reducing misunderstandings about the religion.

However, translation is not a neutral act; it is inherently influenced by the translator's cultural, theological, and personal biases.<sup>3</sup> This dynamic is particularly significant in the context of sacred texts, where inaccuracies or misinterpretations can have profound implications. For example, translating the Quran requires not only linguistic precision but also a deep understanding of its theological and rhetorical dimensions. Missteps in this process risk distorting the intended meanings and undermining the sanctity of the text.<sup>4</sup> These challenges underscore the complexity of translating Islamic texts, necessitating a careful and methodical approach.

The purpose of translating Islamic texts is multifaceted, encompassing religious, educational, and intercultural objectives. For instance, religiously, translations of the Quran and Hadith allow non-Arabic-speaking Muslims to engage with foundational teachings, fostering spiritual growth and practice. Educationally, examples such as the widespread use of translated Islamic texts in Southeast Asian madrasahs demonstrate how translations contribute to structured religious education.<sup>5</sup> Interculturally, translations have played a key role in bridging gaps between Muslims and non-Muslims, as seen in European contexts where translated Islamic works are used in academic and interfaith dialogue settings to challenge stereotypes and promote mutual respect. These examples illustrate how translations serve multiple purposes, enriching individual faith while contributing to broader societal understanding. At its core, translation serves to make the teachings of Islam accessible to a global audience. For non-Arabic-speaking Muslims, translations provide a means to engage with their faith, fostering spiritual growth and understanding. For non-Muslims, translations offer insights into Islamic beliefs and practices, challenging stereotypes and facilitating mutual respect.<sup>6</sup>

The scope of this endeavor extends beyond the Quran and Hadith to include jurisprudential works (Fiqh), theological treatises, and historical narratives. Each category of text presents its unique challenges. For instance, translating Fiqh involves interpreting complex legal arguments that are deeply rooted in specific historical and cultural contexts.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, theological texts often contain nuanced philosophical discussions that require a sophisticated grasp of both the source and target languages. These variations in scope demand a range of methodologies and expertise to ensure accurate and meaningful translations.

Furthermore, the implications of translation extend into contemporary issues such as interfaith dialogue and the application of Islamic principles in modern contexts. By making Islamic texts accessible, translations can contribute to resolving ethical dilemmas, fostering social cohesion, and addressing misconceptions about Islam. However, the success of these efforts depends on the quality and integrity

of the translation process, highlighting the need for rigorous scholarly engagement.<sup>8</sup>

### **Thesis Statement**

The translation of Islamic texts from Arabic into other languages is a complex and essential endeavor that requires balancing linguistic fidelity, cultural sensitivity, and theological accuracy. By examining the unique challenges posed by the Arabic language and the cultural and doctrinal specificity of Islamic texts, this study explores the methodologies employed to address these issues. Ultimately, it underscores the critical role of translation in fostering understanding and dialogue among diverse cultures and faiths.

This thesis is grounded in the recognition that translation is both a technical and an interpretative act. Unlike secular texts, Islamic texts carry a spiritual and theological weight that demands a meticulous approach. Literal translations, while preserving the formal structure of the text, often fail to convey its deeper meanings. For example, the translation of the Arabic term *taqwa* into English as "fear" often misrepresents its broader spiritual connotations, which include consciousness of God, piety, and moral mindfulness. Such translations strip away the rich semantic layers embedded in the original Arabic, leading to potential misunderstandings of the text's intent and depth.<sup>9</sup> Interpretative translations, on the other hand, risk introducing subjective biases but may provide greater accessibility for contemporary audiences. This tension highlights the need for a balanced methodology that prioritizes both fidelity and accessibility.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to addressing linguistic and theological challenges, this study emphasizes the importance of cultural sensitivity. Terms such as *taqwa* (piety) and *sharia* (Islamic law) often defy direct equivalence in other languages, reflecting the profound interconnectedness of language and culture. Translators must navigate these complexities with care, employing strategies such as explanatory notes and collaborative consultation with scholars. By doing so, they can ensure that the translated text retains its original essence while resonating with the target audience.<sup>11</sup>

The thesis also highlights the evolving nature of translation methodologies. In recent years, collaborative and interdisciplinary approaches have gained prominence, involving linguists, theologians, and cultural experts in the translation process. This model recognizes the multifaceted nature of Islamic texts and the diverse skills required to translate them effectively. Additionally, advancements in technology, such as artificial intelligence and machine translation, offer new tools for addressing linguistic challenges, though their limitations underscore the continued need for human expertise.<sup>12</sup>

By situating these discussions within the broader context of globalization and intercultural dialogue, this thesis underscores the relevance of translating Islamic texts in today's interconnected world. Accurate and accessible translations not

only enable Muslims to engage with their faith but also foster mutual understanding among different cultures and religions. As such, this study advocates for a nuanced and interdisciplinary approach to translation, recognizing its potential to bridge divides and enrich global discourse on Islam.

### **Literature Review**

Translating Islamic texts from Arabic into other languages presents intricate challenges rooted in linguistic, cultural, theological, and technical dimensions. These texts, encompassing the Quran, Hadith, and classical Islamic jurisprudence, are revered for their spiritual significance and linguistic depth. The task of translation demands not only technical skill but also an appreciation of the texts' multifaceted meanings. This discussion explores the key challenges translators face in these domains, supported by scholarly insights and literature.

#### **1. Linguistic Challenges**

Arabic, as the language of the Quran and primary Islamic texts, poses significant linguistic challenges for translators. Its unique features, including complex morphology, syntax, rhetorical devices, and semantic richness, often defy direct translation. Arabic's morphological and syntactical structures differ markedly from most target languages. For instance, Arabic verbs convey nuanced meanings through triliteral roots and derived patterns, while its syntax often employs ellipsis and rhetorical questions for emphasis. Translators struggle to retain these nuances in languages where equivalent structures may not exist.

Abdel Haleem notes that the Quran's syntax often intertwines multiple layers of meaning, making it challenging to convey all aspects in translation. The rhetorical style, including devices like *tajnis* (paronomasia) and *iltifāt* (grammatical shifts), enriches the text but complicates translation efforts. These elements risk being diluted or lost in target languages, especially when linguistic equivalents are unavailable.<sup>13</sup> Arabic is characterized by polysemy, where a single word holds multiple meanings based on context. Terms like *taqwa* and *fitna* encompass spiritual, social, and theological connotations that vary according to their usage. Ghazala argues that translating such terms requires not only linguistic precision but also a deep understanding of Islamic theology and context.<sup>14</sup> For instance, the term *taqwa* is often translated as "piety" or "god-consciousness," yet these words fail to capture its full spiritual and ethical dimensions. Untranslatable terms often require explanatory notes, which can disrupt the flow of the translated text.<sup>15</sup>

The Quran's stylistic devices, such as rhyme, rhythm, and metaphor, are integral to its impact. However, preserving these features in translation often leads to a trade-off between form and content. Ghazala underscores the difficulty of retaining the Quran's unique stylistic harmony, where rhetorical and aesthetic

elements reinforce its message. Literal translations may preserve surface meanings but fail to evoke the emotive and spiritual resonance of the original text.  
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## 2. Cultural Challenges

Islamic texts are deeply embedded within the cultural and historical milieu of 7th-century Arabia. Translators face significant challenges in bridging the cultural gap between the source language and the diverse target audiences worldwide. Certain concepts central to Islamic thought, such as *sharia* (Islamic law) or *jihad* (striving), carry connotations shaped by their cultural and religious contexts. Translating these terms without adequate explanation can lead to misinterpretation. Baker observes that some translators opt for domestication—adapting terms to fit the cultural framework of the target audience—while others use foreignization, retaining the original term and adding footnotes. Each approach has its limitations, as domestication risks distorting the original meaning, while foreignization may alienate readers unfamiliar with Islamic concepts.<sup>17</sup>

Languages reflect the worldviews of their speakers, making it difficult to convey ideas that lack direct equivalents in the target language. For instance, Arabic words like *barakah* (divine blessing) and *halal* (permissible) are rooted in Islamic theology and culture, and their translations often fail to capture their full depth. Hassan notes that the lack of cultural equivalence can result in translations that are either overly simplistic or burdened with extensive commentary, reducing their accessibility to readers.<sup>18</sup> In contemporary contexts, certain Islamic terms have been politicized or misrepresented, further complicating their translation. For example, *jihad* is often mistranslated as “holy war” despite its broader meanings, which include personal struggle for self-improvement. Baker argues that accurate translations must address such misconceptions without compromising the integrity of the original text.<sup>19</sup>

## 3. Theological Challenges

Translating Islamic texts involves significant theological challenges, particularly when dealing with the Quran and Hadith, which are considered sacred by Muslims. Ensuring theological fidelity while making the texts accessible to non-Arabic-speaking audiences requires careful deliberation. The Quran is regarded as the literal word of God, making its translation a sensitive undertaking. The theological implications of translation, as any deviation from the original meaning could be perceived as altering divine revelation. Translators must balance literalism, which preserves the text’s exact wording, with interpretive approaches that clarify its meaning.<sup>20</sup>

Kidwai critiques various Quran translations for their doctrinal inconsistencies, noting that differences in translators' theological perspectives can lead to significant variations. For instance, terms like *rahma* (mercy) and *azab* (punishment) carry profound theological implications that can be interpreted differently based on the translator's framework.<sup>21</sup> Literal translations often fail to convey the Quran's contextual meanings, while interpretive translations risk introducing subjective biases. Badawi and Abdel Haleem advocate for a middle ground, where translators provide interpretive notes to explain theological concepts without altering the text's core message. However, this approach requires a high degree of scholarly expertise, as well as sensitivity to the theological diversity within Islam.<sup>22</sup>

The translation of Hadith (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad) poses additional challenges due to their contextual nature. Siddiqui notes that Hadith are often tied to specific historical and cultural circumstances, making it difficult to convey their relevance in contemporary settings. Similarly, translating Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh) requires an understanding of both legal principles and cultural nuances, as these texts often reflect the societal norms of their time.<sup>23</sup>

#### **4. Technical and Practical Challenges**

In addition to linguistic, cultural, and theological challenges, translators face technical and practical obstacles that hinder the production of accurate and accessible translations. One of the most significant technical challenges is the absence of standardized terminologies for Islamic concepts. Al-Said highlights the inconsistency in translating terms like *ummah* (community) and *salat* (prayer), which can lead to confusion among readers. Developing a universal lexicon for Islamic terminology would help address this issue, but such efforts require consensus among scholars from diverse linguistic and theological backgrounds.<sup>24</sup> The qualifications of translators vary widely, with some lacking the linguistic or theological expertise needed to handle sacred texts. The ethical responsibility of translators to ensure accuracy and respect for the source material. However, many translations are undertaken by individuals or organizations without sufficient scholarly oversight, resulting in errors and inconsistencies. Translators must navigate ethical dilemmas, such as deciding whether to prioritize readability or fidelity. Translations of sacred texts require a high degree of impartiality, yet personal or institutional biases often influence the final product. For instance, translations commissioned by religious or political organizations may reflect specific agendas, affecting their credibility.<sup>25</sup>

The advent of AI and software-assisted translation tools has introduced new possibilities for translating Islamic texts. However, these tools have been criticized for their inability to account for the cultural and theological nuances inherent in sacred texts. Machine translations often produce literal renderings that

fail to convey the intended meanings, underscoring the need for human expertise.

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## **Method in Translating Islamic Texts**

Translating Islamic texts from Arabic into other languages is a highly intricate task, requiring a blend of linguistic precision, cultural sensitivity, and theological awareness. To address the challenges inherent in such translations, scholars and practitioners have developed various methodologies.

### **1. Literal Translation**

Literal translation focuses on rendering the original text as closely as possible to its word-for-word meaning. This method seeks to preserve the structure, vocabulary, and syntax of the source language, often at the expense of readability in the target language. Literal translation is often employed in translating the Quran and other sacred Islamic texts to ensure fidelity to the original wording. Proponents argue that this approach safeguards the sanctity and divine authority of the text. The significance of literal translation in preserving the Quran's sacredness, even though it may reduce its accessibility to general readers.<sup>27</sup>

While literal translation ensures linguistic accuracy, it often fails to capture the nuanced meanings and rhetorical beauty of the source text. Abdel Haleem critiques this approach for oversimplifying the Quran's complexities. Translating the Arabic term *rahma* as "mercy" neglects its broader connotations of compassion and divine grace. Furthermore, the rigid adherence to the source language structure can result in awkward or incomprehensible renderings in the target language. Literal translation has its place in academic and theological contexts where exact wording is paramount. However, he argue that this methodology is less effective for conveying the Quran's deeper meanings and stylistic nuances to lay audiences.<sup>28</sup>

### **2. Interpretative Translation**

Interpretative translation prioritizes the conveyance of meaning and context over linguistic form. This method recognizes that some elements of the source text are untranslatable and instead focuses on communicating the intended message to the target audience. Interpretative translation is particularly useful for texts that are culturally or theologically complex. It allows translators to adapt content in ways that resonate with the target audience's cultural and linguistic norms. Mustafa advocates for this approach to bridge cultural gaps and provide readers with a clearer understanding of Islamic concepts. This approach facilitates a more accessible and relatable translation, making Islamic texts understandable to non-Arabic-speaking audiences.<sup>29</sup> However, it also introduces the risk of subjective interpretation, where translators' biases may influence the text's presentation. Khalidi warns that interpretative methods must be guided by scholarly expertise to avoid misrepresentation of the original message.<sup>30</sup> Interpretative translation has gained traction in modern contexts where cultural and linguistic diversity necessitates a more flexible approach. Its potential to address the limitations of

literal translation, particularly in conveying the Quran's theological and ethical teachings.

### **3. Dynamic Equivalence Approach**

The dynamic equivalence approach, rooted in the principles of Nida and Taber, focuses on achieving functional equivalence between the source and target texts. This method emphasizes the intended effect of the text on the target audience rather than its linguistic form.<sup>31</sup> Dynamic equivalence strives to make Islamic texts accessible and relevant to modern readers by adapting cultural references and idiomatic expressions. For example, translating *salat* (prayer) as "prayer ritual" provides non-Muslim readers with a clearer understanding of its significance in Islamic worship. This approach ensures that the text's message is effectively communicated, fostering cross-cultural understanding. However, it risks oversimplifying or distorting theological nuances. Hassan argues that while dynamic equivalence enhances readability, it may compromise the text's theological fidelity.<sup>32</sup>

Nida and Taber's principles have been influential in shaping this approach, but its application to Islamic texts remains contentious. Meanwhile, there is a need for careful balance to ensure that the text remains both accessible and faithful to its original meaning.

### **4. Collaborative and Interdisciplinary Approaches**

Collaboration between linguists, theologians, and cultural experts has emerged as a critical methodology for translating Islamic texts. This approach leverages diverse expertise to address the multifaceted challenges of translation. Collaborative translation projects involve teams of specialists who work together to ensure linguistic accuracy, theological fidelity, and cultural relevance. Ahmad stresses the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration in achieving balanced translations that cater to diverse audiences.<sup>33</sup>

This methodology minimizes errors and biases by incorporating multiple perspectives. It also fosters a more comprehensive understanding of the source text's linguistic, cultural, and theological dimensions. For example, collaborative efforts have been instrumental in producing widely respected translations of the Quran. Abdel Haleem underscores the effectiveness of collaborative approaches, noting their potential to produce translations that are both accurate and culturally sensitive. However, such projects require significant resources and coordination, which can pose practical challenges.<sup>34</sup>

### **5. Modern Technological Tools**

The advent of artificial intelligence (AI) and software-assisted translation tools has transformed the field of translation, including the translation of Islamic texts. Technological tools, such as machine translation software and AI algorithms, can

assist in processing large volumes of text quickly and efficiently. They are particularly useful for preliminary translations and for creating standardized glossaries of Islamic terminology. Al-Yousef notes that these tools have the potential to enhance accuracy and consistency in translations. Despite their advantages, technological tools have significant limitations when applied to Islamic texts. They often fail to account for the cultural and theological nuances that are critical to accurate translation. Machine translations may produce literal renderings that are devoid of context and meaning, leading to misinterpretations.<sup>35</sup> He critiques these tools for their inability to replicate the depth and sophistication of human expertise. While modern tools have expanded the possibilities for translation, he further emphasize the need for human oversight to ensure that the nuances of Islamic texts are preserved. Integrating technology with expert review processes can mitigate some of these limitations.

### **Translating Islamic Texts**

Translating Islamic texts is a challenging endeavour that requires balancing linguistic precision, theological fidelity, and cultural sensitivity. The Quran, regarded as the literal word of God by Muslims, poses unparalleled challenges for translators. Its divine origin, intricate linguistic style, and profound theological content demand a meticulous approach. One of the most widely read English translations of the Quran is by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, first published in 1934.<sup>36</sup> His work is notable for its extensive footnotes and poetic style, aiming to capture the Quran's rhythm and eloquence. Yusuf Ali adopted a blend of literal and interpretative methodologies, striving to maintain the text's sanctity while making it accessible to English-speaking audiences. Yusuf Ali's translation has been praised for its literary elegance and theological insights. His explanatory notes provide valuable context for readers unfamiliar with Islamic culture and theology. This approach made his work a popular choice among both Muslims and non-Muslims seeking to understand the Quran. Despite its popularity, Yusuf Ali's translation has faced criticism for incorporating his personal theological interpretations, which some argue deviate from the original meanings. Abdel Haleem notes that his use of archaic English, such as "thou" and "thine," may alienate modern readers. Additionally, his footnotes, while informative, can overwhelm readers seeking a straightforward understanding of the text.<sup>37</sup>

More recent translations, prioritize clarity and modern language. Abdel Haleem adopts a dynamic equivalence approach, emphasizing readability and contextual understanding. His translation has been praised for bridging linguistic and cultural gaps, making the Quran accessible to contemporary audiences without compromising its core message. Translating the Quran requires a balance between literal fidelity and interpretative clarity. Successful translations often involve interdisciplinary collaboration and a deep understanding of the Quran's linguistic, cultural, and theological dimensions.<sup>38</sup>

### **Translation of Hadith**

Hadith, the recorded sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, form a critical component of Islamic tradition. Their translation is challenging due to their historical and cultural specificity, as well as their theological significance. Sahih al-Bukhari, one of the most authentic Hadith collections, has been translated into multiple languages. A notable English translation by Muhammad Muhsin Khan and Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali exemplifies the challenges and complexities of this genre. Khan and Hilali employed a literal translation approach, accompanied by extensive commentary to explain cultural and theological nuances. Their work also includes transliterations of key Arabic terms, such as *sunnah* and *sharia*, to preserve their original meanings. This translation has been lauded for its meticulous attention to detail and the inclusion of explanatory notes, which help readers contextualize the Hadith within Islamic tradition. The translators' efforts to provide direct access to the original Arabic terms enhance the text's authenticity.<sup>39</sup>

Critics argue that the translation's literal approach sometimes results in awkward phrasing and a lack of fluency in English. Additionally, the heavy reliance on commentary can detract from the readability of the text. Hassan points out that the translators' Salafi orientation influenced their interpretations, potentially limiting the work's appeal to a broader Muslim audience. Other translations, such as those by Aisha Bewley and Abdul Hamid Siddiqui, adopt a more interpretative approach, striving for greater readability and accessibility.<sup>40</sup> These works demonstrate the diversity of methodologies in translating Hadith and highlight the importance of catering to different audiences. The translation of Hadith requires a careful balance between literal accuracy and contextual interpretation. Translators must navigate cultural and theological complexities to ensure that the Prophet's teachings are conveyed accurately and comprehensibly.

### **Translation of Islamic Jurisprudence (Fiqh)**

Fiqh, the body of Islamic law, is deeply rooted in the Quran, Hadith, and the scholarly interpretations of jurists. Translating Fiqh texts involves unique challenges due to their technical terminology, legal intricacies, and cultural context. One of the most prominent translations of Fiqh literature is *The Reliance of the Traveller*, a classic manual of Shafi'i jurisprudence translated by Nuh Ha Mim Keller. This work provides a comprehensive overview of Islamic legal rulings and has become a key reference for English-speaking Muslims.

Keller's translation combines literal and interpretative approaches, striving to preserve the original text's legal precision while making it accessible to contemporary readers. His use of footnotes and appendices provides additional context and clarifications for complex legal concepts. Keller's translation has been praised for its scholarly rigor and accessibility. His efforts to bridge

classical Islamic law with modern legal frameworks have made the text relevant to both traditional scholars and lay readers.<sup>41</sup> The inclusion of Arabic terms alongside their translations ensures fidelity to the source text.

Critics argue that Keller's translation reflects a traditionalist perspective that may not resonate with Muslims from other jurisprudential schools. Additionally, the complexity of Fiqh terminology poses challenges for readers without a background in Islamic law.<sup>42</sup> Translation's reliance on classical legal frameworks may limit its applicability in modern contexts. Translations of Fiqh works, such as *Al-Muwatta* by Malik ibn Anas, have also highlighted the challenges of rendering Islamic legal texts into other languages. Translators must grapple with the diversity of legal opinions within Islam and the need to adapt these rulings to contemporary contexts. Translating Fiqh requires a deep understanding of Islamic legal principles, as well as the ability to convey technical terms and concepts in an accessible manner. Collaborative efforts between legal scholars and linguists can enhance the quality and relevance of such translations.

### **Implications in Translating Islamic Texts**

Poorly translated Islamic texts can distort the original message, leading to widespread misunderstandings about Islamic beliefs and practices. For instance, theological terms like *sharia* and *jihad* are often mistranslated or stripped of their nuanced meanings, contributing to negative stereotypes about Islam. Such inaccuracies undermine the integrity of Islamic teachings and perpetuate misconceptions, especially in non-Muslim societies. Translation errors can create barriers to productive interfaith and intercultural discussions. Misinterpretations of foundational concepts in the Quran or Hadith may result in unnecessary conflicts or alienation. Mistranslations can exacerbate tensions between communities by fostering erroneous assumptions about Islamic doctrine.

Inaccurate translations of Fiqh texts can lead to flawed legal interpretations and misapplication of Islamic laws. Translators who fail to account for contextual differences between source and target languages risk introducing legal ambiguities or inconsistencies. This is particularly concerning in multicultural settings where Islamic jurisprudence informs personal or communal decision-making. Sacred texts like the Quran demand linguistic precision and theological fidelity. Poor translations compromise these qualities, resulting in a loss of trust among readers.

### **Conclusion**

The translation of Islamic texts plays a critical role in fostering understanding, unity, and dialogue across cultures and faiths. However, the complexity of these texts demands nuanced methodologies that balance linguistic, cultural, and theological considerations. From linguistic intricacies and cultural sensitivities to

theological fidelity, translators face numerous challenges when rendering Islamic texts into other languages. Poor translations can lead to misrepresentation, interfaith conflicts, and the erosion of theological integrity. To address these issues, recommendations include specialized training, the development of standardized glossaries, interdisciplinary collaboration, and the judicious use of technology.

Accurate and accessible translations of Islamic texts are essential for preserving the sanctity of Islam's teachings and promoting mutual understanding among diverse communities. Translators must approach their work with humility, diligence, and respect for the sacredness of the texts they interpret. To further enhance the quality of Islamic text translations, scholars, institutions, and technology developers must collaborate to create innovative tools and methodologies. By bridging linguistic and cultural divides, such efforts can contribute to a more harmonious and informed global discourse on Islam.

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