

D. O. Fagunwa and the Dynamics of Ethnographic Realia: Contemporary Translatory Cultural Communication Exemplified

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Abstract

*Realia, words and expressions for culture-specific elements, often perceived in material object or abstract concept terms, have been important subjects of scholarly attention in global term. Extant studies have largely concentrated on various contents of translation studies with sparse consideration for Culture-bound items (CBI) or Culture-Specific Terms (CST) indexing the flow of traditional experiences into the contemporary world of cultural perceptions. This study, therefore, explored D. O. Fagunwa’s Yoruba ethnographic realia in Ogboju Ode ninu Igbo Irunmole with a view to examining the stimulative force of the contemporary translatory cultural communication displayed in *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter’s Saga*. Nida’s Dynamic Equivalence theory was complemented with Venuti’s Foreignizing Approach in analysing the text-based data sourced from both the Source Language (SL) and the Target Language (TL). The data were subjected to textual analysis and thematic coding of Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA). Translation processes and strategies reflected the skilfulness of a master-cultural castrator, carving new but not far-fetched Yoruba traditional concepts into the flesh of an enslaving medium (English), to achieve a cultural onslaught of a universal reach. Culture-bound items include such words as Ifa, Oso, Esu, Olodumare, ghommids, kobolds, sand-elves, sixteen-eyed dewild, Agbako, Iranlowo, Helpmeet, Iwapele, and others to establish the onomastic relevance of linguistic signaling of cultural sensitivity in representing Yoruba beliefs and practices. Such expressions as Onibode orun, (Gatekeepers of heaven, ogbun ainisale, (Bottomless Bog), ekun oloju kan, (one-eyed leopard), Olojo oni, (Owner of this day), Alewilese, (the One Who makes good His words), Alakoso ohun rere gbogbo (the Sower of all good things), and others, exemplifying Soyinka’s shrewd and strategic translatory manoeuvrings of borrowing, literal translation, adaptation, modulation, and equivalence respectively. These were essentially reflective of the translator’s authentic representation of Yoruba culture, preserving the dynamics of the Yoruba ethnographic realia, and avoiding stereotypes and cultural appropriation. Translation of *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter’s Saga* is a mastery and a creative rendition that preserves the cultural essence and poetic beauty of the original Yoruba text. Soyinka’s skilful handling of Yoruba ethnographic realia, cultural sensitivity, and poetic language setting a high standard for cross-cultural literary exchange, demonstrating the importance of cultural sensitivity, authenticity, and poetic nuance in translating cultural heritage texts, and affirming D. O. Fagunwa’s Ògbójú Ode nínú Igbo Irunmole as a masterpiece of Yoruba literature and philosophy.*

Keywords: Dynamic Equivalence, Source Language, Cultural sensitivity, Ethnographic Realia

Introduction

Realia, in translation studies, refers to Culture-bound items (CBI) or Culture-Specific Terms (CST), concepts, or references that are deeply rooted in a particular language, culture, or society. It mostly usually manifests as cultural artefacts, historical events, social institutions, folklore, idioms, colloquialisms, slang, and proper nouns. Realia, referring to words and expressions for culture-specific material elements that may be perceived in a material object or abstract concept terms, originates in Medieval Latin, where it meant ‘the real things’. Vlahov and Florin (2004) trace the modern sense of the concept to the pioneering works of the Bulgarian translators who observe the inherent overtone of local colourations, making realia to pose a challenge for translation. Yet, as claimed by Palumbo (2009), the field of literary translation, from time immemorial remains a captivating domain where cultures converge, narratives unfold, and linguistic intricacies abound. Central to this dynamic exchange are elements that constitute realia, encapsulating the essence of a culture through its specific objects, customs, and practices. The translation of realia presents a unique challenge for translators as the elements are deeply embedded in their cultural context and may lack direct equivalents in the target language. Alla (2018) notes that realia are lexical items of the source language (SL) which denote unique objects and phenomena characteristic of its ancestral community with no direct lexical counterparts in the target language (TL). It follows, therefore, that when translating realia, the goal is to find equivalent terms or expressions in the target language that convey the same meaning, cultural context, and connotations as the original text. It is, therefore, necessary to examine the intersection of the dynamics of ethnographic realia and the challenges posed to scholarly translational efforts in contemporary Yoruba cultural communication, using D. O. Fagunwa’s *Ogboju-ode ninu Igbo Irunmole* as example.

In the context of African literature, the works of D. O. Fagunwa stand out as rich sources of realia, reflecting Yoruba traditions, folklore, and societal nuances. The present study interrogates how culture-bound vocabulary and lexical items in one of D. O. Fagunwa’s novels have been translated into English, with a specific focus on the strategies employed to convey Yoruba realia. By examining these translation strategies, the research aims to enrich our appreciation of the complexities involved in cross-cultural communication and contribute to the ongoing discourse within translation studies. This analysis underscores the importance of maintaining the cultural essence of the source texts in literary translation.

Statement of the problem

Previous studies on Fagunwa's novels have primarily focused on their literary and cultural significance in Yoruba literature. For instance, Bamgbose's (1974) comprehensive study highlights Fagunwa's profound influence on the development of the Yoruba novel while Ibrahim and Jegede's (2016) analysis of health in Fagunwa's novels underscores the author's engagement with traditional Yoruba culture. Lindfors (1979) examines the form, theme, and style in Fagunwa's narratives, providing insights into the unique characteristics of his works. Such scholarly efforts probably fuel Olumuyiwa and Aládésanmí's (2016) interest in studying interrogative sentences in Fagunwa's novels to further explore the linguistic aspects of his writing. Additionally, the Fagunwa Study Group has conducted various analyses on the contemporaneous nature and stylistic distinctiveness of his novels (Fagunwa Study Group, 2018). These notwithstanding, addressing the strategies involved in translating Fagunwa's culture-specific elements into English, however, remains a critical 'virgin soil'. Yet, the spread of the English language across the globe and its growing importance in different nations in the modern age. It is, therefore, necessary to contemplate a scholarly navigation into the dynamic process through which a meaning in the Yoruba language (Source) is 'linguistically' and 'semantically' transformed into the language (Target), and the responsibility of the translator in discovering 'how to reconstruct the meaning' of the source 'and how to convey it' in the target language (Al-Hamad and Al-Shunnag, 2011:151). *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga* (1982) is the specimen for our exploration of the translation of the Yoruba ethnographic realia.

This study, therefore, aims to investigate dynamics of the Yoruba ethnographic realia and the burden of translation strategies to the contemporary translators of selected novels of D. O. Fagunwa. In the process of achieving this aim, the specific objectives shall be to:

1. Identify the Yoruba ethnographic realia (CBI) in the translations of the selected novel of Fagunwa.
2. Categorise the Yoruba ethnographic realia (CBI) in the translations of the selected novel of Fagunwa

3. Examine the strategies used to translate the Yoruba ethnographic realia in the selected Fagunwa's translated text.
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of these strategies in the translation of the Yoruba ethnographic realia in the selected Fagunwa's translated text.

In pursuing the foregoing objectives, finding answers to the following questions is expedient:

1. What are the examples of the Yoruba ethnographic realia (CBI) in the selected novel of Fagunwa?
2. What are the classificatory modes for the Yoruba ethnographic realia (CBI) in the selected novel of Fagunwa?
3. How do translators deploy various techniques in their translations of the Yoruba ethnographic realia (CBI) in the selected novel of Fagunwa?
4. How effective are the strategies used by the translator in communicating the specificity of the items?

Significance of the Study

Considering the centrality of translated culture-based texts, and the understanding of linguistic and cultural navigation in the process, this study is significant to the extent of contributing valuable insights to the field of Translation Studies, particularly in the field of realia translation and its intersection with Yoruba literature. By exploring the strategies involved in translating the Yoruba ethnographic realia into English in the selected texts, this research seeks to fill a gap in existing scholarship and offer practical solutions to translators and scholars alike.

Micro-Significance of the Study

1. Translation Studies

This research will significantly contribute to the field of Translation Studies by offering a balanced understanding of realia translation strategies, particularly within the context of Yoruba literature. By analysing the translated versions of D.O. Fagunwa's novels, this study aims to uncover the complexities involved in rendering Yoruba realia into English. Through a meticulous examination of translation choices and strategies, translators, scholars, and students

of Translation Studies will gain valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities inherent in realia translation, enriching their understanding of cross-cultural communication and literary translation practices.

2. Translators and Editors

The findings of this research will offer practical implications for translators and editors involved in the translation of Yoruba literature. By critically analysing the translated versions of Fagunwa's novels, this study can provide insights and recommendations to improve future translations of Yoruba realia. Translators and editors will benefit from the identification of effective translation strategies and approaches, ensuring greater cultural accuracy and accessibility in their translations. Ultimately, this will contribute to producing high-quality translations that faithfully capture the cultural nuances and richness of Yoruba literature.

3. Readers of Yoruba Literature

This study holds significance for readers of Yoruba literature by enhancing their comprehension and appreciation of D.O. Fagunwa's work. By illuminating the complexities of cultural elements embedded within the text, readers will gain deeper insights into the cultural context and significance of Fagunwa's novels. Through a clearer understanding of realia translation strategies, readers will be able to engage more meaningfully with the text, thereby enriching their reading experience and fostering a deeper appreciation for Yoruba literature and culture.

4. Scholars of Yoruba Literature

For scholars of Yoruba literature, this research offers valuable insights that can inform further analysis of Fagunwa's novels and their translations. By examining the translation of realia in Fagunwa's work, scholars will gain a deeper understanding of his literary techniques, cultural references, and thematic concerns. This research can contribute to ongoing discussions within the field of Yoruba literary studies, enriching scholarly discourse and advancing our understanding of Fagunwa's contributions to African literature.

Macro-Significance of the Study

1. Cultural Exchange and Understanding

At a broader societal level, this research has the potential to promote cultural exchange and understanding between Yoruba and English-speaking communities. By bridging the gap between Yoruba and English cultures through an in-depth analysis of realia translation, this study can foster greater cross-cultural appreciation and empathy. Through a deeper understanding of the cultural nuances embedded within Fagunwa's novels, readers from diverse cultural backgrounds can develop a more nuanced appreciation for Yoruba literature and culture, thereby promoting mutual understanding and respect.

2. Preserving Yoruba Culture and Heritage

This research contributes to the preservation and dissemination of Yoruba cultural knowledge by highlighting the significance of realia in Fagunwa's work. By examining the translation of realia in Fagunwa's novels, this study underscores the importance of preserving and celebrating Yoruba culture and heritage. Through the dissemination of accurate and culturally sensitive translations, this research ensures that Yoruba cultural knowledge is preserved and accessible to future generations, thereby contributing to the safeguarding of Yoruba cultural identity and heritage.

3. Development of Translation Theories

By analysing realia translation approaches within the framework of Yoruba literature, this research may contribute to the development and refinement of translation theories, particularly within the context of postcolonial studies and interlingual communication. The findings of this study can inform theoretical discussions surrounding the challenges of translating cultural elements and navigating linguistic and cultural differences. By shedding light on effective translation strategies and approaches, this research can advance our understanding of translation theory and practice, thereby enriching the field of Translation Studies.

4. Enriching Literary Scholarship

Lastly, this research enriches the landscape of literary scholarship by focusing on realia as a critical element in understanding and appreciating African literature. By highlighting the

significance of realia in Fagunwa's novels, this study expands the scope of literary scholarship to include a deeper examination of cultural elements and their translation. Through an interdisciplinary approach that bridges Translation Studies and Yoruba literary studies, this research contributes to a more holistic understanding of African literature, thereby enriching the scholarly discourse and promoting greater appreciation for the diversity and richness of African literary traditions.

In conclusion, the significance of this study is in its overarching aim of advancing the field of Translation Studies by unravelling the complexities of translating Yoruba realia. Beyond academic discourse, this research holds the potential to elevate Yoruba literature onto the global stage, fostering greater appreciation and understanding of this rich literary tradition. Moreover, by facilitating cross-cultural exchange and communication, this study contributes to bridging cultural divides and promoting mutual understanding. Its practical implications extend to translators and scholars, offering actionable insights that can enhance the quality and fidelity of translations while enriching scholarly discourse. Through its multifaceted approach, this research endeavours to catalyse meaningful dialogue and engagement, ultimately fostering a deeper appreciation for the nuances of linguistic and cultural diversity.

In the literature

In recent years, there has been a growing interest in studies that analyse geographical and ethnographical realia in literary texts, particularly focusing on the translation of these elements. These studies offer valuable insights into the complexities of realia translation and its implications for cross-cultural communication and literary interpretation. Two notable studies in this area are *Realia vs irrealia in non-fiction vs fiction texts: A case study of translation* (Razumna and Movchan, 2023) and *Reading and Interpreting Ethnography* (Dourish, 2014). Razumna and

Razumna and Movchan (2023) conducted a comprehensive case study examining the translation of realia and irrealia in non-fiction and fiction texts. Their study investigates the nuances of translating geographical and ethnographical elements present in the non-fiction book by L. Johnson *What Foreigners Need to Know about America from A to Z* and the apocalyptic novel *Seveneves* by N. Stephenson and their translations into Ukrainian, exploring how translators navigate the cultural and linguistic challenges posed by these elements. By comparing translation

strategies employed in non-fiction and fiction contexts, Razumna and Movchan shed light on the dynamic relationship between realia and irrealia and their representation in translated texts. Their research offers valuable insights into the strategies used by translators to convey geographical and ethnographical realia accurately while maintaining the integrity of the original texts.

In *Reading and Interpreting Ethnography*, Dourish (2014) provides a detailed examination of ethnographical texts and the challenges inherent in interpreting and translating ethnographic realia. Drawing on insights from ethnography, anthropology, and translation studies, Dourish explores the complexities of understanding and translating cultural nuances embedded within ethnographic texts. His study highlights the importance of cultural mediation in the translation process and emphasizes the need for translators to possess a deep understanding of the cultural contexts in which ethnographic research is conducted. Dourish's research contributes to our understanding of the unique challenges posed by ethnographical realia and offers valuable guidance for translators working with ethnographic texts.

These empirical studies offer diverse perspectives on the translation of geographical and ethnographical realia, providing valuable insights into the challenges and strategies employed by translators. By examining the translation of realia in both non-fiction and fiction contexts, Razumna and Movchan's study highlights the importance of context in shaping translation choices and strategies. Similarly, Dourish's exploration of ethnographical texts underscores the complexities of translating cultural nuances and the need for translators to possess specialized knowledge and expertise in the field of ethnography.

Theoretical Framework

Translation theories are copious, ranging from Eugene Nida's 'Dynamic Equivalence', Lawrence Venuti's 'Foreignizing Approach', Holz Mantori's 'Theory of Translatorial Action' to Reiss' 'Text Type Theory'. Exploring the key principles of these theories to ethnographic Realia has useful implications for contemporary translations studies in Yoruba literary and linguistic criticisms. The limited scope of the present study, however, precludes our amassing theoretical postulations. Therefore, the analysis shall solely rest on 'Dynamic Equivalence' and 'Foreignizing Approach'. This results from the fact that, in the context of Yoruba literature, both approaches offer valuable insights into the translation of realia.

Dynamic Equivalence

This theory allows for the adaptation of Yoruba realia to resonate with English-speaking audiences, prioritizing clarity and communicative effectiveness. It nevertheless, runs the risk of domesticating the source text and diluting its cultural specificity. Domestication is the strategy that brings about close conformity to the culture of the target language (TL) and may bring about loss of information from the source text (ST).

Foreignizing Approach

This theory preserves the cultural integrity of the Yoruba ethnographic realia, challenging readers to confront cultural differences and fostering a deeper appreciation for Yoruba culture. It though retains information from the ST and ‘involves deliberately breaking the conventions of the TL to preserve its meaning’, it, however, may alienate readers and impede comprehension.

Therefore, translators as well as analysts must carefully balance fidelity to the source text with the need to make it accessible to the target audience, taking into account the unique cultural and linguistic features of Yoruba literature.

Within this landscape, the focus on ‘Yoruba realia’ emerges as a particularly intriguing study area. With its rich traditions, folklore, and rituals, the Yoruba culture presents a wealth of realia that permeates its literary works. Translating Yoruba realia into English poses unique challenges due to the cultural nuances and intricacies embedded within these elements. Scholars such as Soyinka (1975) and Chinweizu and Madubuike (1983) have shed light on the significance of Yoruba culture in literature, highlighting the need for sensitivity and cultural competence in its translation.

This study seeks to illustrate the application of these theories to the translation of the Yoruba ethnographic Realia, exemplifying from D.O. Fagunwa’s novel *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmale (The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter’s Saga)*. It is in the belief that such theories are capable of foregrounding the novel’s rich cultural elements, including names of mythical creatures, traditional practices, and supernatural phenomena.

Methodology

Attempt at studying ethnographic realia naturally imposes a transparent and systematic approach to data collection and analysis. This is crucial in establishing the credibility of the research outcomes, and in providing a solid foundation for drawing meaningful conclusions. Following this pathway, this study adopts qualitative content analysis to enhance the quality and integrity of the research process, thereby strengthening the contributions to the field of translation studies and literary scholarship. To this end, a descriptive research design is deployed to explore the strategies of translating Yoruba realia into English from the STs, aligning with the research questions and objectives of the study. Again, our choice of this method is based on the conviction that it can facilitate:

- (i) textual analysis and thematic coding,
- (ii) uncovering of the underlying meanings and cultural nuances embedded within Yoruba realia,
- (iii) elucidation of the strategies employed by the translators of the Target Texts (TTs).

The decision to prioritize re-reading the texts and identifying culture-bound items was justified by its ability to capture the intricacies of realia translation at a granular level. Engaging directly with the STs, fosters gaining first-hand insight into the cultural specificity of the texts, laying the groundwork for a detailed analysis of the translated realia in the TTs. This further ensured that no culturally significant elements were overlooked and that the subsequent analysis was grounded in a comprehensive understanding of the STs. This enables the documentation and interpretation of a diverse range of culture-bound items.

Analysis and discussion

Real-world elements in the selected textual narrative include historical events, cultural practices, or linguistic features, and these are to be featured in analysing how Fagunwa employs realia in his work could offer valuable insights into the text's meaning, context, and cultural significance.

Fagunwa, indeed, incorporates realia, such as Yoruba mythology, cultural practices, and language, to create a rich and immersive narrative. D.O. Fagunwa, a Yoruba writer and translator, is one whose work *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga*, originally

titled *Ògbójú Qdẹ nínú Igbo Irunmole* in Yoruba, remains a masterpiece of Yoruba literature. The work is remarkable for its rich use of realia, drawing heavily from Yoruba mythology, culture, and language to create a unique narrative that blends folklore, adventure, and philosophy. These are the properties that Soyinka grapples with his English translation of the text, showing great effort at translating the Yoruba ethnographic realia. It is an effort at preserving and sharing aspects of Yoruba heritage with a wider audience.

First level of analysis

Barring such issues as loss of cultural specificity by which some nuances of Yoruba culture might have been lost in translation, as the text was adapted for a broader audience, and the challenge of interpretation versus literal translation of which Soyinka's translation was criticized by some scholars for prioritizing interpretation over literal translation, which might have altered the original meaning, the translation of "The Forest of a Thousand Daemons" is widely regarded as a successful effort in conveying the richness of Yoruba culture and realia as listed below:

some textual or lexical examples of skilful preservation of the cultural nuances and complexities of the original Yoruba text include

1. Proverbial statements such as

"Ọrọpò èku égbé nṣẹ"

Meaning:

"A thousand pieces of elephant tusk cannot be gathered in one place"

by this, Soyinka seeks to convey the idea that great things are difficult to achieve.

2. Idiomatic expressions such as:

"Ìgbà jé ẹsọ"

Meaning:

"The time has come to wear the masquerade's costume"

Which is translated to mean "the time has come to take action".

3. Metaphorical manoeuvrings such as:

"*Ọṣo ńṣe igbà léṣé*"

Meaning:

"The sun is shining brightly on the farm"

By this, Soyinka maintains the symbolism of prosperity and abundance.

4. Lexical items of cultural references such as:

"*Ọṣo*" (the god of fertility) and "*Èṣù*" (the god of fate),

By these, Soyinka preserves references to Yoruba deities like maintaining their cultural significance.

1.2.1 Realia Denoting Folklore and Mythology

Table 1

S/N	ST 1	TT 1	Translation Strategy
1.	Eleda pg 2	Maker pg 8 / Creator pg 20	Equivalence
2.	Otalugba sigidi pg 2	two hundred and sixty incubi pg 9	Adaptation
3.	osanyin pg 2	birds of divination pg 9	Adaptation
4.	anjonnu pg 2	spirits pg 9	Adaptation
5.	isalu orun pg 3	vault of heavens pg 11	Modulation
6.	Olorun Alāye pg 4	Immortal God pg 11	Modulation
7.	Ero-isalu-orun pg 4	stranger from the dome of heaven pg 12	Modulation
8.	iwin pg 6	ghommids pg 14	Adaptation
9.	Edumare pg 7	The King of Heaven pg 17	Adaptation
10.	ebora inu awusa pg 8	a walnut troll pg 17	Adaptation

11.	Omi loju Egberere pg 9	Tears in the eye of a gnome pg 19	Adaptation
12.	Olorun Oba pg 10	God the King pg 20	Equivalence
13.	ewele pg 12	the sixteen-eyed dewild pg 22	Modulation
14.	Agbako pg 12	Agbako pg 22	Borrowing
15.	oro pg 16	spirits pg 29	Adaptation
16.	eseku pg 16	kobolds pg 29	Equivalence
17.	oku pg 16	the dead pg 29	Equivalence
18.	Olorun pg 16	Lord pg 29	Equivalence
19.	Oba Orun pg 18	the King of Heaven pg 31	Equivalence
20.	ese iya pg 23	maternal foot (left foot) pg 37	Adaptation
21.	Olodumare pg 25	Ruler of skies pg 41	Adaptation
22.	Olojo oni pg 25	Owner of this day pg 41	Literal Translation
23.	Olorun pg 25	God Almighty pg 42	Equivalence
24.	awon anjonnu pg 31	guardian spirits pg 49	Adaptation
25.	ekun oloju kan pg 31	one-eyed leopard pg 48	Literal Translation
26.	Aroni pg 42	Aroni, the one-legged ghommid pg 62	Borrowing
27.	Iku pg 42	Death pg 62	Adaptation
28.	ina orun apadi pg 43	hell pg 63	Equivalence
29.	ogbun ainisale pg 44	Bottomless Bog pg 65	Adaptation
30.	iwin-ile pg 62	sand-elves pg 89	Adaptation
31.	Onibode orun pg 68	Gatekeepers of heaven pg 96	Literal Translation
32.	Ogongo Olorun pg 75	ostrich of God pg106	Literal Translation

33.	ayorunbo pg 77	wanderer type of children pg 108	Modulation
34.	Alewilese pg 95	the One Who makes good His words pg 131	Literal Translation
35.	Eni Mimo pg 95	Clean Spirit pg 131	Adaptation
36.	Eni Iyanu pg 95	the Wonderous One pg 131	Literal Translation
37.	Alaye pg 95	the Owner of Life pg 131	Literal Translation
38.	Olubukun pg 95	The Blessed One pg 131	Literal Translation
39.	Oga Ogo pg 95	The Prince of Glory pg 131	Equivalence
40.	Onibuore pg 95	Dispenser of goodness pg 131	Literal Translation
41.	Alatunse pg 95	the Mender of ills pg 131	Literal Translation
42.	Alakoso ohun rere gbogbo pg 95	the Sower of all good things pg 131	Literal Translation
43.	Alabo pg 95	Proctector pg 131	Literal Translation
44.	Olupamo pg 95	Defender pg 131	Literal Translation
45.	Enikansoso ti O wa ti O si mbe titi lai pg 95	the One who alone is and the Omnipotent One pg 131	Literal Translation

Second level of analysis

One interesting point of analysis is Soyinka's skilful retention of linguistic play like alliteration and assonance that characterize the ethnographic realia described above as examples of as Yoruba oral traditions in the original text.

With the spellings used based on the Yoruba orthography system, the foregoing analysis has demonstrated how Soyinka skilfully preserved the cultural nuances and complexities of the original Yoruba text, ensuring that the translation remained faithful to the spirit of Fagunwa's novel.

Thematic contextualization of heritage and identity

Another level of analysis reveals Soyinka's mastery of contextualization of realia and their significance in the story. In the first instance, *Egungun* festival is explained as a phenomenon of high significance. With its relevance to the story's themes of heritage and identity, *Egungun* festival is presented as a Yoruba tradition of honouring ancestors

Excerpt 1:

"The Egungun festival was in full swing, with masked figures dancing and prancing to the beat of drums..."

Context:

The protagonist, Akara-ogun, is struggling to find his place in society, and the Egungun festival serves as a reminder of his cultural roots.

Thematic contextualization of divination process and spirituality

Soyinka contextualizes the Ifá divination process, a Yoruba spiritual practice, to reveal the characters' destinies and the story's themes of fate and free will.

Excerpt 2:

"The Ifá priest revealed that Akara-ogun's destiny was tied to the forest, and that he must embark on a journey to fulfill his purpose..."

Context:

Akara-ogun's journey into the forest is a metaphor for self-discovery and fulfilling one's destiny.

Thematic contextualization of ethno-religious deities

Soyinka contextualizes the roles of Yoruba deities like Olódùmárè (the supreme god) and Èṣù (the god of fate) to illustrate their influence on the characters' lives and the story's themes.

Excerpt 3:

"Akara-ogun sought the guidance of Olódùmárè to navigate the challenges of the forest, and Èṣù's wisdom to understand the mysteries of fate..."

Context:

The characters' interactions with deities reflect their struggles with fate, free will, and spiritual growth.)

The foregoing demonstrations of how Soyinka contextualized realia to reveal their significance in the story, doubtless, are potential sources of enriching the reader's understanding of Yoruba culture and its role in shaping the narrative.

Third level of analysis

There are levels at which Soyinka demonstrates some dexterous show of cultural sensitivity in representing Yoruba culture and beliefs, showing respect, humility, and a commitment to authenticity.

Respectful cultural representation:

Soyinka respectfully represents Yoruba beliefs and practices, avoiding stereotypes and cultural appropriation. His deep-seated cultural affiliation or attachment to his root is illustrated in the depicting the *Ifá* priest as a wise and compassionate figure, rather than a stereotypical "witch doctor". Similarly, the level of veneration *Egungun* festival and *Ifá* divination is seen in his refusal to regard them as "exotic" ritual

Authentic language appropriation: Soyinka uses authentic Yoruba language and terminology, rather than simplifying or distorting them for a non-Yoruba audience. He, for instance, uses the term "Olódùmarè" instead of "God" to refer to the supreme deity, maintaining the cultural specificity of the Yoruba belief system, exemplifying Afrocentrism.

All these culminate into Soyinka approaching the story with cultural humility, recognizing the limits of his own cultural perspective and avoiding cultural appropriation. This he does by acknowledging the complexity and richness of Yoruba culture, avoiding simplistic or stereotypical representations.

Fourth level of analysis

Ethnographic Realia and the embodied poetic and lyrical quality

Examples of contemporary cultural communication abound in Soyinka's translational project entitled *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga*. Instances of Soyinka's deployment of poetic and lyrical quality, capturing the essence of Yoruba traditions include:

Rhetorical decorations by which the forest is vividly described, evoking the sensory details of Yoruba oral traditions. Let us consider the following excerpt for example:

"The forest was a tapestry of emerald, green, with threads of silver and gold woven by the ancient gods themselves."

In this translation, using rich imagery, Soyinka is able to display mastery and abundance of 'rhetorical decorations' in his writing, presenting and suggesting images of sensible objects in his discourse. These types of symbolic imagery can also be exemplified in the following expression

"The river flowed like a vein, pulsing with the
lifeblood of the forest."

Akin to rich imagery is the deployment of **Implied comparison** by which symbolic forms of language are used to convey the mystical and symbolic aspects of Yoruba beliefs as can be seen in the following example:

¹"The trees stood like sentinels, guarding the secrets of the forest, their leaves whispering ancient wisdom to the wind."

²"The trees were giants, their branches like outstretched arms embracing the sky."

The foregoing translation thus reveals the dynamics of ethnographic realia with which Soyinka invokes the implicit similarity between various aspects of the Yoruba flora. To achieve this, such tropes as metaphors, simile, personification and thingification for the descriptions and denotations of 'fulness of life and abundance of African or Yoruba forests.

Other sundry manifestations of translatory cultural communication

In like manner, the Yoruba ethnographic realia of Fagunwa's penmanship in *Ogboju Ode ninu Igbo Irunmole* (Source Text 1) are translated with a rare combination of Soyinka's mastery of the English language and sophistication of the Yoruba language.

In other word, the translation of *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga* is a creative rendition of Fagunwa's original text, infused with the poetic and lyrical qualities that are characteristic of Yoruba oral traditions. Therefore, other range of literary devices skilfully employed to convey the rich cultural heritage and mythological themes that are central to the story are cursorily presented below:

Rhythmic cadence: Soyinka's translation captures the rhythmic cadence of Yoruba oral traditions, echoing the beat of drums and the rhythm of storytelling.

Example:

"The drums beat out a rhythm, a heartbeat that echoed through the forest, summoning the spirits of the land."

Poetic repetition: He uses repetition, a hallmark of Yoruba oral traditions, to emphasize important themes and motifs.

Example:

"The forest, the forest, ancient and wise, holding secrets and stories that only the trees could tell."

Alliteration and assonance: Soyinka employs alliteration and assonance to create a musical quality, reminiscent of Yoruba praise poetry.

Example:

"The leaves rustled and whispered, a soft susurrations that soothed the soul."

Other such alliterative phrases include:

"The leaves whispered secrets, their soft susurrations a soothing serenade."

These instances demonstrate Soyinka's skill in capturing the poetic and lyrical quality of the original text, conveying the essence of Yoruba traditions and oral storytelling.

Vivid personification:

"The forest was a living entity, its breath a gentle breeze that caressed the skin."

Repetitive refrains:

"The forest, the forest, a realm of wonder, a realm of awe."

It is crystalised through this analysis these peculiar uses of imagination not only create a sense of enchantment and wonder but also underscore the cultural significance of the forest and its inhabitants in Yoruba mythology. By capturing the poetic and lyrical essence of the original text, Soyinka's translation ensures that the cultural heritage and mythological themes of the story remain vibrant and alive for readers.

Summary of findings

Our findings highlight Wole Soyinka's skilful translation of *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga* (Target Text 1) in preserving the cultural nuances and complexities of the original Yoruba text, *Ogboju Ode Ninu Igbo Irunmole* (Source Text 1). We identified and discussed examples of:

- (i) Cultural sensitivity in representing Yoruba beliefs and practices, using contemporary cultural communication of the Yoruba ethnographic realia.
- (ii) Contextualization of the Yoruba ethnographic realia to reveal their significance in the D. O. Fagunwa's original story.
- (iii) Creative deployment of Poetic and lyrical language that captures the essence of Yoruba oral traditions, using the Yoruba ethnographic realia.
- (iv) Successful handling of the Yoruba ethnographic realia, including proverbs, idioms, and metaphors to project cultural heritage and mythological themes of the story.
- (v) Authentic representation of Yoruba culture, preserving the dynamics of the Yoruba ethnographic realia, and avoiding stereotypes and cultural appropriation.

In the overall analysis, Soyinka's translation demonstrates a deep respect for the source culture and a commitment to conveying its richness and complexity to a broader audience.

Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, our analysis of Wole Soyinka's translation of *The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: A Hunter's Saga* reveals a mastery and a creative rendition that preserves the cultural essence and poetic beauty of the original Yoruba text. Soyinka's skilful handling of Yoruba ethnographic realia, cultural sensitivity, and poetic language ensures that the translation remains faithful to the spirit of the original novel, making it an excellent representation of Yoruba culture and literature. This translation sets a high standard for cross-cultural literary exchange, demonstrating the importance of cultural sensitivity, authenticity, and poetic nuance in translating cultural heritage texts. Soyinka's literary efforts and matchless show of linguistic dexterity not only confirms D.O. Fagunwa himself as a unique Yoruba writer and translator; but also affirms *Ògbójú Qdẹ nínú Igbo Irunmole* as a masterpiece of Yoruba literature and philosophy.

Based on our analysis, we recommend:

- (i) Using Soyinka's translation as a model for translating cultural heritage texts, prioritizing cultural sensitivity and authenticity.
- (ii) Incorporating more Yoruba language and cultural elements in translations to preserve the cultural essence of the text.
- (iii) Encouraging collaboration between translators, cultural experts, and literary scholars to ensure accurate representation of cultural heritage.
- (iv) Developing translation workshops and training programs focused on cultural sensitivity and poetic nuance.
- (v) Promoting cross-cultural literary exchange programs to foster global understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural heritages.

By implementing these recommendations, ensuring that translations of cultural heritage texts maintain the richness and complexity of the original work, and promoting cultural understanding and appreciation worldwide is a 21st century global possibility.

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