

**TRANSLATION AS CULTURAL BRIDGE: PRESERVING YORUBA
IDENTITY THROUGH ARABIC TRANSLATIONS OF D. O.
FÁGÚNWÀ'S WORKS.**

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of translation in preserving and transmitting *Yoruba* cultural values through a critical study of the Arabic translations of the literary works of *D. O. Fágúnwà*, one of the most influential *Yoruba* novelists whose writings are deeply rooted in *Yoruba* beliefs, proverbs, oral traditions, and cosmology. As African literary texts increasingly circulate beyond their indigenous linguistic contexts, the challenge of sustaining cultural identity in translation becomes more pressing, particularly when such texts are rendered into Arabic, a Semitic language with its own rich literary and rhetorical traditions. The study therefore investigates how the translation of *Fágúnwà*'s works into Arabic negotiates the balance between linguistic accuracy and cultural expression, and the extent to which the cultural essence of the *Yoruba* worldview is preserved without diluting indigenous meanings. Using a qualitative textual and comparative approach, the paper analyses selected Arabic translations produced by notable scholars such as A. S. Abdussalam, M. M. Jimba, and A. A. Adebisi, with particular attention to the rendering of cultural symbols, metaphors, proverbs, and narrative structures. The findings reveal that although certain cultural nuances undergo adaptation in the translation process, the translations largely succeed in retaining the core *Yoruba* cultural identity embedded in the original texts. The study concludes that translation functions not merely as a linguistic activity but as a cultural bridge that fosters intercultural dialogue and ensures the continuity of *Yoruba* heritage in global literary discourse. By highlighting the role of culturally sensitive translation, this paper contributes to African literary studies, translation studies, and intercultural communication, underscoring translation as a vital tool for safeguarding indigenous cultural heritage in a multilingual and multicultural world.

Keywords: D. O. Fágúnwà, Yoruba identity, Translation, Arabic literature, Cultural preservation.

Introduction

The translation of literature is widely recognized as a complex process that extends beyond linguistic substitution to encompass interpretation, negotiation, and cultural recreation (Bassnett and Lefevere, 1990). In an era of globalization, literary exchanges between non-Western cultures, often known as “South-South” exchanges, offer a valuable lens for examining these dynamics. Such translations challenge the historically Eurocentric focus of translation studies and highlight the complexities of bridging cultures without the intermediation of a colonial language (Santos, 2014). This paper looks into one such instance of cross-cultural mediation: the translation of the Yoruba literary works of *Daniel Olorunfèmi Fágúnwà* (1903-1963) into Arabic. However, the very cultural richness that makes Fágúnwà’s works foundational also renders it profoundly challenging to translate. The task requires bridging the wide conceptual and cultural distances between the Yoruba worldview with its unique cosmology, spiritual concepts, and oral traditions and the Arab cultural and literary sphere. The core problem this study addresses lies in how these deeply embedded, culture-specific elements were rendered for an Arabic-speaking audience without them being lost, distorted, or stripped of their original significance. How can the deep meanings of Yoruba proverbs, the roles of spiritual beings such as *irúnmalè* (deities or spirits), and the musical flow of an oral storytelling style be expressed in a Semitic language that has its own literary traditions and cultural values.

D.O. Fágúnwà and His Literary Works

Daniel Olurotimi Fagunwa was born in 1903, in a rural setting of Oke-igbo town, near Ondo, Yorubaland. He was also a teacher. A Yoruba chief whose series of fantastic novels made him one of Nigeria’s most distinguished literary figures.

In Yoruba traditional belief according to (Adebawale 2012:2), the deep forest is revered not just space but as a metaphysical symbol of power, transformation, and the unknown, because the place is characterized by all sorts various forms of evil practices and dark manipulations. Fágúnwà is well aware, through the medium of traditional folktales, as a village boy, that ‘igbo’ is the abode of trolls, spirits and fairies; the home of witches and wizards and all classes of demons known as ‘ebora’, all of whom Fágúnwà

has identified in his novels, and whom his major characters used to confront in duels and battles during their series of adventures.

Fágúnwà is celebrated as the father of the modern Yoruba novel. His emergence during the British colonial era in Nigeria marked a crucial moment for indigenous language literature. At a time when English was the dominant language of education, administration, and prestige, Fágúnwà's conscious decision to write his fantastical and metaphorical narratives in Yoruba was a profound act of cultural self-assertion (Isola, 1998; Irele, 2009). His first and most famous novel, *Ògbójú Odẹ nínú Igbó Irúnmálè* (The Brave Hunter in the Forest of the Four Hundred Deities), published in 1938, did not only launch a literary form but also shaped an entire worldview. His narratives are intricate tapestries woven from Yoruba folklore, mythology, proverbial wisdom, and cosmological beliefs, making them invaluable archives of the culture's identity (Ogungbile, 2015).

Fágúnwà's literary career began with *Ògbójú Odẹ nínú Igbó Irúnmálè* "The Forest of a Thousand Daemons: The Hunter Saga" (1938), the first full-length novel published in the Yoruba language. He wrote and submitted it for a competition in 1937 when a British publishing house known as Thomas Nelson and Sons later known as Nelson Publishers announced a literary competition for writers in African languages. The manuscript won the competition which has given him the motivation and inspiration to write more Yoruba novels (Ogundele, 1994). He followed this with other major works, including *Igbó Olódùmarè* "The Forest of God" (1949), *Ìrèké Oníbùdó* "The Cane of the Wayfarer" (1949), *Ìrìnkèrìndò nínú Igbó Elégbéjé* "Expedition to the Mount of Thought" (1954), and *Àdììtú Olódùmarè* "The Mysteries of God" (1961). A number of short stories; and two travel books were also credited to him (Jimba, 2002:4).

Fágúnwà's works typically appeared as wandering adventure tales that draw heavily on Yoruba fairy tales containing many indigenous narrative traditions such as spirits, monsters, gods, magic, and witchcraft. His style is rich in imagery: he describes a sad man as one who "hangs his face like a banana leaf", and a liar as one who "has blood in his belly but spits white saliva". Every event points to a moral, and this moral tone is reinforced by his use of Christian concepts and of traditional and invented proverbs. Fágúnwà's imagery, humour, wordplay, and rhetoric reveal an extensive knowledge of classical Yoruba. He was also influenced by such Western works as John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress*, which were translated into Yoruba by

missionaries. Also, John Milton's *Paradise Lost* significantly shaped Fágúnwà's literary imagination (Jimba, 2002:9).

Fágúnwà and the Voice of a Culture

D. O. Fágúnwà stands as a monumental figure in modern African literature, particularly within the Yoruba cultural landscape. His novels are not just narratives but abundant sources of *Yoruba* metaphysical thought, spirituality, and moral philosophy. Composed in the Yoruba language, his works are populated by a spectrum of spiritual beings such as *irúnmálè*, the primordial deities and forces that shape the Yoruba understanding of existence. These narratives function as vital cultural texts that sustain, transmit, and reimagine Yoruba collective memory and identity (Ogungbile, 2015; Barber, 1997).

The deployment of musical patterns, idiophones, and proverbial language echoes the structure of traditional storytelling, particularly the forms found in *ìtàn* (myths and legends) and *àló apá mò* (interactive folk narratives). These stylistic elements give voice to a culture that privileges rhythm, orality, and communal performance as core components of the literary experience (Soyinka, 1990; Owomoyela, 2005). As Isidore Okpewho (1992) argues, such integration of oral elements is a defining characteristic of African literature's unique aesthetic.

Within Fágúnwà's novels, characters frequently employ proverbs to interpret their journeys and navigate encounters with supernatural forces. These proverbs reflect the Yoruba philosophy of destiny (ayanmò), moral responsibility, and the duality of good and evil. For instance, in *Ògbójú Òde nínú Igbó Irúnmálè*, hunters and spiritual travellers use proverbs to warn, instruct, or reflect on their trials. This didactic function aligns with the traditional role of storytelling as a vehicle for moral and communal education (Akínyémí, 2004).

His fiction is deeply rooted in Yoruba cosmology, where the visible and invisible worlds coexist in a dynamic continuum. The forests (igbó) in his novels are not mere geographical settings but spiritual landscapes inhabited by *irúnmálè*, witches (*ajé*), spirits, and shape-shifting creatures. This cosmological framework is central to *Yoruba* identity, emphasizing the profound interrelation of humans, deities, and nature (Idowu, 1962; Abimbola, 1976).

Through these mythic landscapes, Fágúnwà constructs narratives in which characters undergo moral trials that illuminate the *Yoruba* understanding of fate, divine will, and human agency. His protagonists, often hunters or

travellers, must demonstrate courage, wisdom, humility, and spiritual insight to overcome their challenges.

To engage with *Fágúnwà*'s novels is therefore to listen to a collective Yoruba voice that speaks in proverbs, sings in chants, negotiates with spirits, and preserves ancestral wisdom. The novels function as cultural archives, preserving oral traditions in literary form while extending their reach to new audiences.

Translation as Cultural Negotiation

Translating *Fágúnwà*'s works into other languages, such as English or Arabic, presents formidable challenges. As scholars like Bandia (2008) and Bassnett (2014) have noted, such translation is not merely a linguistic exercise but a transference of an entire cultural universe. Yoruba proverbs and idiophones are often resist direct and literal translation, as their meanings are deeply embedded in cultural context, oral performance, and shared community memory. This dilemma highlights the tension between fidelity and accessibility in postcolonial translation (Tymoczko, 1999).

The act of translation therefore, becomes a complex negotiation between two distinct cultural and literary systems. The translator must navigate the rich oral and literary traditions of both Yoruba and the target language (Arabic). This process creates a space where meanings are not simply carried over but are transformed, adapted, and reimagined (Venuti, 1995). The Arabic translators in this regard faced with the critical choice of domesticating the text by making it more accessible to the target audience or foreignizing it by preserving its Yoruba cultural accuracy, with each approach carrying significant implications for cultural representation (Katan, 2009:74).

Decades after their publication, *Fágúnwà*'s novels remain foundational texts for understanding African cultural identity, literary modernity, and the politics of postcolonial translation. They continue to inspire writers, translators, and scholars who recognize in his narratives a powerful model of how a culture can articulate its own voice through literature.

Border implications

The case of *Fágúnwà*'s Arabic translations is part of a larger story: the growing South–South literary exchange that bypasses traditional Eurocentric routes. It underscores the need for translators who are not only bilingual but bicultural who can interpret, not just translate. It also points to the value of foreignizing strategies and paratextual tools such as glossaries, footnotes, and

translator's notes that can help maintain cultural details without alienating readers.

Venuti's (2008) domestication/foreignization framework is especially relevant here. Most Arabic translations lean toward domestication, prioritizing fluency and accessibility. But a more foreignizing approach could allow Arab readers to encounter Yoruba culture on its own terms, preserving difference rather than erasing it. Yoruba proverbs (*òwe*) are deeply intertwined with concrete social experiences and cosmological perspectives. They often invoke specific elements of the Yoruba landscape such as forests, rivers, and farms and its spiritual inhabitants, making them contextually rich and challenging to translate directly Barber (1997).

Arabic Translations of Fágúnwà's Literary Works

All five of D. O. Fágúnwà's novels have been translated into Arabic by scholars. These works represent a significant effort to introduce Yoruba's rich literary heritage to the Arab world. By rendering literary works like *Ireke Onibudo*, *Ògbójú Ọdẹ nínú Igbó Irúnmále* and *Igbó Olódùmarè* among others into Arabic, translators with these efforts have built a cultural bridge, allowing Arab readers to experience the intricate tapestry of Yoruba mythology, folklore, and worldview.

These translations serve as crucial conduits for preserving and disseminating Yoruba cultural identity. Through them, the unique concepts of Yoruba cosmology, the spiritual significance of the forest, and the complex interplay between humans and supernatural beings are conveyed to a new audience.

(Abdulsalam, 1994:3) asserts that this work, like others of its kind, clearly reflects the cultural elements of the Yoruba people. It provides insights into their ways of thinking, social interactions, and linguistic features as revealed through the events of the story and its use of rhetorical imagery such as similes, metaphors, and metonymies along with other stylistic techniques. The influence of these features is evident in the translation style, particularly in the figurative expressions that have been deliberately retained.

The translated works help ensure that the profound wisdom and imaginative depth of Fágúnwà's storytelling transcend linguistic and cultural barriers, fostering a greater appreciation and understanding of Yoruba heritage far beyond its original context. While the full impact depends on their reception and distribution, these translations are a vital first step in embedding Yoruba culture in the global literary landscape.

The translated works are:

1. *Irèké Onibùdó* (1949) Translated as "قصب المُخيّم" (Qaṣabul-Mukhayyam). By Professor A.S. Abdulsalam, 1994.
2. *Ògbójú Ode nínú Igbó Irúnmalè* (1938) Translated as "الصَّيَادُ الْجَرِيُّ فِي الْغَابَةِ الْعَفَارِيَّتِ" (Al-Šayyād al-Jarī' fī Ghābatil-`Afārīt). By Professor M.M. Jimba, 2002.
3. *Àdiìtú Olódùmarè* (1961) Translated as "أَدِيُّوْ أُولُوْدُمَارِيْ" (Adiìtú Olódùmarè). By Dr. I.R.F. Hammed, 2015.
4. *Irìnkèrindò nínú Igbó Elégbèje* (1954) Translated as "الْمُغَامِرَةُ فِي غَابَةِ إِلِيْغْبَيْجَنِيْ" (Al-Mughamaratu fī Ghābati Elégbèje). By Toyyib Adebisi, 2016.
5. *Igbó Olódùmarè* (1949) Translated as "الْعَابَةُ إِلَهِيَّةٌ" (Al-Ghābatul-Ilāhiyyah). By Dr. A.A. Adebisi, 2022. (Adebisi, 2022:10).

Challenges and Strategies in Cross-Cultural Literary Translation between African and Arab Cultures

The translation between African and Arab literary traditions involves navigating significant linguistic, religious, and cultural divides. There is a scarcity of direct, culture-to-culture translation, with many works being translated via an intermediary European language. Direct translation, when it occurs, faces the challenge of finding conceptual equivalents for religious ideas, social structures, and ecological references that may not exist in the target culture (Faiq, 2007:9).

Translators in these works often employ strategies such as using a generic term (generalization), providing an explanation within the text (explication or gloss), or substituting a source-culture element with a familiar target-culture element (cultural substitution). The choice of strategy profoundly impacts the representation of the source culture.

Translating D.O. Fágúnwà's Yoruba novels into Arabic presents a complex web of challenges, spanning linguistic, cultural, and literary domains.

Key challenges in this specific context include:

Cultural Untranslatability:

Core Yoruba concepts, such as deities (*òrìṣà*), the anthill spirit (*ebora okiti ogran*), spirits (*irúnmalè*), and abstract notions like *àṣe*, lack direct equivalents in Arabic culture and the Islamic worldview, making accurate conveyance difficult, this is one of the challenges encountered by M.M. Jimba while trying to find equivalents words to words like: *irúnmalè* (deities), *الآلهة*, *Orun Alakeji* (the other world), *Oke Orun* (the sky), *السماء*, *Orun Apaadi* (The Hell) *جهنم*. He carefully considered the author's intended meaning in translating the words and expressions, ensuring that each instance reflected its contextual sense throughout the text (Jimba, 2002:22-26).

Rich Oral Traditions:

Fágúnwà's prose is profoundly rooted in the Yoruba oral storytelling tradition, which relies heavily on the aesthetic use of proverbs, idioms, songs, and incantations. These linguistic elements embody the musical flow, wisdom, and cultural worldview of the Yoruba people, giving his narratives a distinct musical flow and moral depth. However, such features often pose serious challenges to translators, as their poetic resonance and cultural nuances are difficult to preserve in another language. In the process of translating *Fágúnwà*'s works into Arabic, translators have adopted different strategies to balance faithfulness to the source text with clarity for the target audience.

Some translators employ the principle of *dynamic equivalence*, which seeks to reproduce the intended meaning rather than the literal wording, thereby making the translation more natural and accessible to Arabic readers. For example, the Yoruba expression "*Oro mi dowo re o Olorun oba*" a heartfelt plea entrusting one's affairs to God was rendered as "وأفوض أمري إلى الله" (I entrust my affairs to You, O God). Similarly, the proverbial expression "*kaka ki o san lara iya aje, nfi omo re bi obirin, eiye nyi lu eiye*", expressing disappointment when a situation worsens instead of improving, was translated as "غير أن الطين يزداد بله" (adding insult to injury) (Hammed, 2015: 25-26).

In a different vein, Professor Jimba (2002:26) favored a more literal translation approach, aiming to preserve the original eloquence, imagery, and philosophical undertones of Yoruba proverbs as he translated: "*eni da eeru ni eeru to*" into Arabic as: "فمن نثر الرماد عاد عليه" meaning (for whoever scatters ashes will have them blown back upon him) (Jimba, 2002:77). He believed that a literal rendition in some cases allows Arabic readers to experience the linguistic richness and metaphysical depth of Yoruba thought. To enhance

understanding, he provided footnotes with Arabic equivalents and brief explanations, facilitating a comparative study between Arabic and Yoruba proverbial expressions. This approach not only preserves cultural authenticity but also fosters intercultural dialogue, enriching both linguistic and literary traditions.

However, footnotes and glossaries explain at the same time some cultural terms such as *alupayida* البَلْيَةُ, *Arogidigba* الْحَوْتُ الْمَقَدُّسُ, *Ewure-iberu* المَاعِزُ, among others. (Abdulsalam, R. A. 1994:3).

Cultural and Religious Differences:

Translating the D. O. Fágúnwà's works into Arabic presents unique difficulties arising from cultural and religious differences. His narratives are deeply rooted in Yoruba cosmology and mythology, where spirits, deities, and supernatural forces play essential roles in shaping the moral and spiritual universe of the stories. Rendering such elements into Arabic, a language embedded in the worldview of Abrahamic monotheism, poses both linguistic and theological challenges. For instance, in *Ògbójú Odẹ nínú Igbó Irúnmalè*, the term “Irúnmalè” refers to the *four hundred divinities* in Yoruba belief, a concept that has no direct equivalent in Arabic. Translating it as “al-jinn” (الجِنْ) or “ash-shayāṭīn” (الشَّيَاطِينَ), as some translators have attempted, alters the original meaning and may mislead Arabic readers. Consequently, the translator must either employ explanatory footnotes or adopt paraphrasing strategies, both of which can interrupt the narrative flow and diminish the aesthetic impact of the text. As Abdulsalam (1994:27) observes that translating African oral and mythological literature into Arabic “demands not only linguistic competence but also deep intercultural sensitivity”.

Proper Nouns and Places

Character and place names in Fágúnwà's Novels often carry deep symbolic meanings in Yoruba. These shades of meaning are almost lost when transliterated into Arabic script, for instance, the protagonist's name, Àdiìtú Olódùmarè, literally means “*the mystery or secret of the Supreme Being (Olódùmarè)*” a name that expresses the main idea of the novel's central philosophical exploration of divine wisdom and human limitation. When written directly into Arabic as (أَدِيْتُوْ أَلْوَدُوْمَارِيْ) (Adītu Olódùmarè), the theological depth of the name risks being not easily understood if not deeply explained through footnotes or glossaries to analyse the philosophical and artistic quality of the real texts, since the Arabic reader may not recognize *Olódùmarè* as the Yoruba conception of God, comparable yet distinct from

the Islamic understanding of Allah. Similarly, names such as *Akara-ogun* (the *Brave Warrior*) and *Irúnmalè* (the *Four Hundred Deities*) carry components of moral and cosmological meaning that cannot be conveyed through mere phonetic rendering. As Abdulsalam (1994) argues, effective translation from African languages into Arabic “requires cultural mediation that retains both linguistic integrity and symbolic resonance” (Abdulsalam, 1994:33). Hence, translating *Àdìítú Olódùmarè* into Arabic demands not only linguistic competence but also a deep understanding of Yoruba culture, ensuring that each name’s cultural weight is communicated to the Arabic audience.

Absence of a “Canon” of African-Arabic Translation:

The lack of institutionalized norms within African-Arabic translation discourse constitutes another major challenge in translating D. O. *Fagunwa*’s literary works into Arabic. Unlike translation between European languages, which benefits from long-standing theoretical frameworks and extensive bilingual corpora, Yoruba–Arabic translation remains largely uncharted territory. A comprehensive body of reference works, glossaries, or standardized strategies for addressing the complex interplay of Yoruba mythology, cosmology, and idiomatic expression within an Arabic linguistic and cultural framework still largely absent. As a result, translators are compelled to innovate ad hoc solutions when faced with culturally specific concepts such as *Olódùmarè* (the Supreme Being), *Irunmale* (the four hundred deities), or *Àdìítú* (the divine mystery), which lack direct Arabic equivalents. Abdulsalam (1994:35) observes that the scarcity of African–Arabic translation scholarship often forces translators to rely on their “personal cultural intuition rather than on institutionalized linguistic standards”. Similarly, Bandia (2008:102) emphasizes that postcolonial translation from African languages demands “creative mediation across epistemological systems”. Thus, in translating *Àdìítú Olódùmarè* into Arabic, the translator must not only navigate linguistic boundaries but also construct a new interpretive framework, effectively contributing to the emergence of a nascent African–Arabic translation canon.

Opportunities in Conveying Fágúnwà’s Works to the Arab World

The translation of D.O. *Fágúnwà*’s seminal works into Arabic presents a transformative opportunity to forge deeper intellectual and cultural connections between the African and Arab worlds. This endeavour is not merely a linguistic exercise but a strategic initiative with far-reaching implications for literature, academia, and intercultural relations. The key opportunities are:

Intercultural Exchange

Translating D.O. Fágúnwà's works into Arabic provides a significant opportunity to enhance cross cultural dialogue and understanding between African and Arab civilizations this will facilitate cultural bridge-building and give Arab readers opportunities to engage with the spiritual and intellectual depth of African thought through his novels that deeply embedded in Yoruba cosmology and ethical philosophy, thereby introduce Arab readers to the spiritual and philosophical dimensions of African thought. Such translations can dismantle long-held stereotypes and foster intellectual curiosity about Africa's rich oral and literary heritage (Bandia, 2008; Abdulsalam, 1994). Generally, translation plays a vital role in safeguarding the indigenous knowledge system, which are often transmitted orally or documented in native languages (Adebisi and Olajumoke, 2025:38).

Expansion of Comparative Literary Scholarship

The introduction of Fágúnwà's narratives into the Arabic literary sphere opens new and exciting avenues in comparative literary research. Scholars can draw parallels between the moral, and mystical dimensions of Fágúnwà's fiction and classical Arabic narrative traditions such as *Kalīlah wa Dimnah* and *Alf Laylah wa Laylah* (The Thousand and One Nights). This comparative lens enables a deeper exploration of shared literary motifs such as the moral journey, divine guidance, and the triumph of virtue within two distinct yet spiritually resonant traditions (Egunjobi, 2008; Al-Faruqi, 1986).

Development of a New Field in African–Arabic Translation Theory

The process of translating Yoruba literary works into Arabic provides a fertile ground to develop theoretical frameworks for African–Arabic translation. In the absence of a well-established canon, each translation of Fágúnwà's work becomes a case study, and testing strategies for conveying oral aesthetics, idioms, and worldview across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Such efforts contribute to building a new scholarly discipline within translation studies that bridges African and Arab intellectual traditions (Bandia, 2008; Newmark, 1988).

Enrichment of Arabic Literary Heritage

The translation of *Fágúnwà*'s imaginative and moralistic narratives into Arabic represents a significant step toward broadening and enriching the corpus of modern Arabic literature. His combine allegory, folklore, and moral instruction in a manner that parallels the narrative techniques of the Qur'ān and classical Arabic fables. Through symbolic representation and spiritual reflection, *Fágúnwà* addresses universal human concerns such as faith, morality, temptation, and the quest for wisdom, motifs that resonate deeply within the Arabic literary and religious imagination.

By introducing *Fágúnwà*'s and some other indigenous narratives to Arabic-speaking world, translators open new spaces for intercultural literary dialogue and comparative literary works. This integration highlights shared ethical and philosophical values across civilizations and demonstrates how literature can serve as a bridge between African and Arab cultural heritages. Moreover, such works challenge Arabic writers and critics to engage with non-Arab worldviews expressed through rich metaphor and mythic imagination. Ultimately, this process not only diversifies and revitalizes Arabic literature but also affirms the universality of moral enlightenment through storytelling and artistic creativity (Awonuga, 2012; *Fágúnwà*, 1950).

Strengthening Afro-Arab Intellectual Relations

The Arabic study and translation of *Fágúnwà*'s works can strengthen Afro-Arab academic collaboration, thereby promoting mutual exchange among scholars, translators, and cultural institutions. It creates avenues for joint research, translation workshops, and conferences aimed at understanding Africa through its indigenous literary voices. Such collaborations reinforce the historic cultural and religious ties between Africa and the Arab world, contributing to a more inclusive global literary discourse (Mazrui, 2005; Abdulsalam, 1994).

Conclusion

This study concludes that the translation of D. O. *Fágúnwà*'s Yoruba literary works into Arabic transcends the boundaries of language, it represents a dynamic process of cultural negotiation, preservation, and intellectual exchange. The analysis of the Arabic translations by Abdulsalam (1994), Jimba (2002), Hammed (2015), and Adebisi (2022) reveals that translation functions as both a *linguistic act* and a *cultural bridge* between Africa and the Arab world. Due to the facts that *Fágúnwà*'s novels are deeply embedded in Yoruba values, oral tradition, and moral philosophy, challenge translators to

render metaphysical concepts, spiritual beings, and proverbs that have no direct Arabic equivalents. Yet, these challenges have fostered creativity and innovation in translation practice.

In another development, the translation of African indigenous-language literature into Arabic remains largely without a guiding canon. Unlike translations between European and Arabic languages, which benefit from centuries of established conventions, African–Arabic translation lacks standardized frameworks or precedents. This absence of a canon compels translators of Yoruba works, such as D.O. Fágúnwà’s *Ògbójú Òdè nínú Igbó Irúnmalè*, to adopt innovative strategies for rendering cultural and cosmological elements. Consequently, each translation attempt becomes both a linguistic act and a pioneering scholarly experiment, contributing incrementally to the emerging discipline of African–Arabic literary mediation (Abdulsalam, 1994; Bandia, 2008)

The findings reveal that Arabic translators employ a combination of *dynamic equivalence*, *literal translation*, and *paratextual aids* such as footnotes and glossaries to maintain the philosophical and artistic beauty of the original texts. Through domestication, translators bridge the linguistic and cultural gap for Arabic readers; through foreignization, they retain the symbolic and spiritual essence that defines Yoruba cultural consciousness. These dual approaches underscore translation’s dual responsibility: to communicate meaning while safeguarding cultural identity.

Moreover, the study finds that translating Fágúnwà’s works into Arabic offers significant opportunities for intercultural dialogue, comparative literary research, and the emergence of a new field in *African–Arabic translation theory*. It fosters South–South literary exchange, enriches Arabic literary discourse with African metaphors and mythopoetic imagination, and reinforces the intellectual and cultural ties between Africa and the Arab world.

In conclusion, the Arabic translations of Fágúnwà’s novels affirm that translation is not just a transfer of words but a profound act of cultural preservation and transformation. It allows Yoruba cultural values, philosophies, and artistic expressions to enter a broader global discourse, ensuring their continued relevance in a multicultural world.

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