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Christian-Muslim Engagement in Translating Sūrah Yusuf: A Translatological Analysis of T.A.J. Ogunbiyi and Idris Animashaun's Work

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Abstract

An engagement with the Qur'an has been of great interest to both Muslims and non-Muslims over the years. Christian missionaries in Yorubaland have taken bold steps in rendering the Qur'an into Yoruba language to promote their evangelism mission before other groups in Africa. Amongst notable Christians in this regard was Reverend Thomas Adesina Jacob Ogunbiyi, who translated Surah Yusuf (Qur'an 12) into Yoruba in 1911 in collaboration with Alufa Idris Animashaun. However, to the best of our knowledge, this pioneering effort has not received adequate attention from scholars. It is therefore, the interest of this research to critically examine this work to know how accurate and coherent it is, in terms of the lexical items, figurative expressions and taking cognizance of the conditions and prerequisites for translating the Qur'an. The study adopts descriptive and analytical method of research. The study identifies difficulties in rendering some words and idiomatic expressions into the target language. Corrections are later suggested. The study concludes that any attempt at Quranic translation should take cognizance of the unique qualities of the Quran's classical Arabic language use.

Keywords: Animashaun, Christian-Muslim, Ogunbiyi, Translation and Yoruba.

Introduction

Yoruba language is spoken by the Yoruba's. It is a Niger-Congo language related to Igala, Edo, Ishan, and Igbo amongst others. It is one of the three major Nigerian languages along with Hausa and Igbo. Sennen (2019) emphasised in Salihu (2020) states that Yoruba is extensively spoken by a population of 40 million speakers who inhabit the South-Western part of Nigeria which cuts across Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, Oyo States, most parts of Kwara State and some other West African countries, such as Benin Republic, Ivory Coast, Togo, and Sierra Leone. In addition, remarkable numbers from non-African countries such as Cuba, Brazil, United Kingdom, United States of America and many others speak Yoruba as part of their cultural heritage. Bolanle (2012) states as noted in Saliu (2020) that Yoruba language comprises multitudinous dialectical varieties with differing degrees of mutual intelligibility. The most

prominent among them are Egba, Ekiti, Onko, Ibolo, Ondo, Iyagba, Ijebu, Owe, Ikale, Igbomina, Igala, Oyo to mention but a few. In spite of various dialects, there is standard Yoruba regarded as the official language used in formal settings: politics, schools, education, entertainment and media. The Standard Yorùbá is the form that every Yoruba can speak and understand. This also serves as a common heritage of the Yorùbá people. In this regard, Oyo dialect represents the standard for an average Yoruba user both in spoken and written communications.

Qur'ān has been of great source of research to many people from time immemorial. Particularly, Muslims have shown more concern about Qur'ān than any other groups. Wherever there is Islam, Qur'an also finds its way there, as a tool for proper understanding of the basics of the religion. Against this backdrop, Al-Ilorī (1965, 1990) asserts that Islam emerged in Yorubaland in the early sixteenth century, during the reign of Emperor Mansa Musa of Mali. This development undoubtedly provided Muslims with access to Qur'anic education. Consequently, the Quranic schools spread all over the places, in an informal system, later transformed into modern standard school with various levels: preparatory (al-Tamhidi), primary (al-'Idādi), secondary (al-Thanawiy) College, (al-Kuliyah) and university (al-Jam'iah). Today, those Quranic schools have produced many great scholars of international repute who within and outside the country occupied/occupy different positions in the society. Such positions include da'wah, education, administration, politics and a host of others.

After Islam has firmly rooted in Yorubaland over the centuries, Christianity was later introduced by the colonialists in the mid-nineteen centuries. The adherents of the two religions lived together with mutual respect, understanding, love and tolerance in many ways, such as, marriage, family, places of work, business and other social affairs. The level of mutual understanding and tolerance was very high to an extent that no family exists without having both Muslims and Christians living together without religious conflict or rancour. To an extent, some parents allowed their wards to participate in other religion activities. This unique attitude has been part of factors that encouraged Christian Missionaries to venture into Quranic translation. Gbadamosi (1978) argues that when the Christian missionary evangelistic movement began in Yorubaland, it was part of the belief of the movement that learning the Qur'an would be a great advantage to their evangelism mission. Thus, the interest was developed in learning Arabic and Islamic knowledge. A number of them studied Arabic under local reputable bilingual Muslim scholars in Lagos like Alufa Idris Animashaun while some had it outside the country. Those who acquired Arabic knowledge among the Christians were the pioneers of translation of the Qur'an to the Yoruba for the wider readership and better understanding of Islam from its source. Among them were Rev. M. S. Cole whose work was printed and distributed by the Christian Mission Society of Lagos in1924 and A. K. Akinlade who titled his work as "*Itumo al-Kuran Li Ede Yoruba* (The Meaning of the Qur'an in Yoruba Language) The work was printed by Caxton

Press West Africa Ltd. Ibadan in1965. Also, there was Thomas Adesina Jacob Ogunbiyi, who translated Surah Yūsuf (Q.12) in 1911(Gbadamosi: 1978).

However, to the best of our knowledge, all the translated works by these people have been studied by various scholars, such as Abubakar, (1986), Ogunbiyi (1989, 2001), Solihu et al (2015), Badmus et al (2023), and a host of others. The only work that has not received proper attention is the translation of Surah Yusuf carried out by the Rev. Thomas Ogunbiyi and Alufa Idris Animashaun. Therefore, this study considers it a gap that needs to be attended to. The paper focuses on examination of the work to know how accurate and coherent the translation is in the terms of the lexical items, figurative expression and other structures, and taking cognizance of the conditions and prerequisites for translating the Qur'an.

I. A Historical Overview of the Qur'an Translation

Since Qur'an is a divine scripture sent by Allah to all mankind in a pure classical Arabic language, it should be rendered into various languages of the world to meet its global status and the demand of more than 70% of world Muslim population that does not speak Arabic. Though, at the earlier stage, the Muslims held the position that translation of Qur'an was an enormous task due to the difficulties in the nature of the Arabic language and inimitability of the Qur'an. According to Zwemer (1915) in Febiyan (2014), the holy Quran has a sense of untranslatability, and to imitate its rhyme and rhythm is impossible. So, no matter how skillful a translator, he cannot translate Qur'an perfectly. Later, the need for the translation arose and the position of the rigidity of the assumption was gradually shifted. The translation of Qur'an became an integral part of Muslims' responsibility across the globe. Today there are various translations from different people including Muslims and non-Muslims, Arabs and non-Arabs and Arab Muslims and non- Arab Muslims. According to the World Bibliography of Translations of the Meanings of the Holy Qurʾān, published by the "the Istanbul-based Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA), there are about 2,672 translated works, which emanated from the original works or edited copies. The completed translations were 551 while 883 were partial translations. These works were selected from different 65 languages of the world between 1515 and 1980. (www.ircica.org).

Acording to Zadeh (2012), the first attempt at translation of the Qur'an started in seventh century by a companion of the Prophet, called Salman al-Fārisī (568-657), who was the first Persian that converted to Islam. He translated the first chapter (Sūrat al-Fātiha) into the language of his people, the Middle Persian, to be used in their canonical prayer. (http;//wikipedia.org). Another account relates that in 628CE, the Prophet sent messengers to kings around the world to embrace Islam and teach them about the Qur'an in their own languages. Similarly, Musa bn Sayyar translated some passages into Persian language in the third century of the Hirah. Perhaps, the first fully attested complete translations

of the Qur'an into Classical Persian was carried out between the 10th and 12th centuries. The Samanid emperor, Mansur I (961–976), ordered a group of scholars from Khorasan to translate the Tafsir al-Tabari, originally in Arabic, into Persian. Recently, there more translations from different scholars. Reima Al-Jarf (2014), quoting the King Fahd Complex for the Printing of the Holy Quran, asserts that the Holy Qur'an has been translated into the following languages:

- 39 Asian Languages: Uabek, Bahsa Indonesia, Urdu, Azeri, Malayalam, Brahism, Uyghur, Iranon, Awariah, Burmese, Bengali, Belushi, Pashto, Tagalog, Turkish, Tamil, Sindhi, Russian, Duria, Telugu, Farsi, Hebrew, Tajik, Chinese, Kurdish, Kyrgyz, Qazaq, Vietnamese, Korean, Kannada, Koshur, Kurdish (Kurmanji), Mandar, Bahasa Melayu, Lezgi Chal, Japanese, Hindi, Nepali.
- 15 European Languages: Spanish, Ukrainian, Albanian, German, English, Italian, Portuguese, Bosnian, Swedish, French, Hungarian, Romany, Greek, Dutch, Macedonian,
- 19 African languages: Oromo, Nko, Tamazight in Latin script, Tamazight in Arabic script, Diola, Mandinka, Dagbani, Yorùbá, Hausa, Malagasy, Fulfulde, Afar, Fulfulde in Latin script, Fulfulde in Arabic script, Lingala, Zulu, Kiswahili, Nyanja, Soomaali, Basaa.

II. Emergence of Yoruba Translation of the Qur'an

In the early nineteenth century, the first translation of the Qur'an into Yoruba was produced by Christian missionaries in Africa, preceding similar efforts by other groups. Presently, there are several Yoruba translations of the Qur'an in circulation, available in both partial and complete forms. The translation of the Qur'an into Yoruba has been a significant asset in facilitating interfaith dialogue between Muslims and Christians. Abdul-Azeez (2023) notes that the interest in seeking truth was enhanced through translation, as the Yoruba translation of the Qur'an became a tool for dialogue between ordinary Christians and Muslims in Yorubaland. The translated Qur'an is used alongside the translated Bible by Muslim evangelists when engaging in faith debates and discussions with their Christian counterparts. The details of the Christian-led Yoruba translations of the Qur'an are as follows:

a) The Christian-led Yoruba Translation of the Qur'an

The Yoruba translation of the Qur'an by Christians was not a mere witticism; rather, it was a strategic initiative designed to promote the mission of Christian evangelism. The interactions between Christian returnees and European Christians in Sierra Leone inspired local Christians to translate Islamic materials for religious propagation. Lacunza-Balda (1997: 97) observes that Protestant missionaries made the translation of the Qur'an an integral part of their missionary work, using

vernacular translations to encourage Muslims to compare the quality of the Bible with that of the Qur'an—hoping that these translations would reveal the flaws and inconsistencies in the Qur'an and demonstrate the superiority of the Christian scriptures.

The first notable attempt at translating the Qur'an into Yoruba is credited to Reverend Michael Samuel Cole. His translation was primarily written for Yoruba Christians and for those among traditional religion adherents who were considering conversion. This work was the first translation of the Qur'an into the Yoruba language and the first in an African language. Reverend M. S. Cole began the translation based on suggestions and encouragement from members of the Holy Trinity Church in Lagos. The task began in 1902 and was completed in 1906. It was printed by Samuel E. Richards in Nottingham, England, and published in the same year by the Native Literature Publishing Society under the title "Al-Kurani ti a Yi pada se Ede Yoruba" ('The Qur'an Translated into Yoruba').

According to Solihu (2015), the cover page features the title along with a crescent symbol facing downward, surrounded by seven stars. This edition contains 452 pages, including 19 pages of preliminaries/preface, with 2 pages unnumbered. In 1924, it was republished by the Church Missionary Society in Lagos with amendments, including the title "Al-Kurani ni Ede Yoruba" ('The Qur'an in the Yoruba Language').

In 1965, Reverend E.K. Akinlade published the second translation, titled "Itumo al-Kuran Li Ede Yoruba" (Meaning of the Qur'ān in Yoruba Language). This work was printed by Caxton Press West Africa Ltd in Ibadan. However, according to Solihu (2015), some scholars—such as Ogunbiyi, Jimoh, and Opeloye—do not consider any work other than that of E.K. Akinlade as the first Yoruba translation of the Qur'an, due to the unavailability of the earlier work in circulation.

However, these two works have received scholarly assessments from Ogunbiyi (1988, 2001), Abikan (2002), Abdul-Azeez (2015), and Salihu (2015). Their studies reveal that the two translations served as a motivation for subsequent translations led by Yoruba Muslim scholars (Salihu, 2015); that the translators' lack of knowledge of Arabic led them to rely on English translations (Ogunbiyi, 2001); and that the translations contributed to enmity between Muslims and Christians, as they were perceived to distort the message of Islam and promote Christian concepts (Abdul-Azeez, 2023). Additionally, the studies highlight an ignorance of the Qur'an's subject matter, the absence of the Arabic text, a lack of proofreading or review by experts (Abdul-Azeez, 2023), limited understanding of the Yoruba language beyond its everyday use, and the unavailability of these translations in circulation

b) The Muslim-led Yoruba Translation of the Qur'an

Until the second half of the twentieth century, the written Yoruba translation of the Qur'an did not appeal to Muslims as much as its oral form.

According to Abdul-Azeez (2023) and Solihu (2015), the delay was attributed to several factors: the use of the Arabic-based Yoruba script (Àjèmí)—the only means of literacy before colonial times—was considered unfit to convey the divine message of the Qur'an; dispersing the Qur'an from its source language, Arabic, was regarded as inappropriate; and there was a fear of using the same Yoruba alphabet, invented by Samuel Ajayi Crowder for the translation of the Bible into Yoruba, as it was seen as an evangelistic approach. After the Christians proceeded with their Yoruba translation of the Qur'an, significant criticism arose regarding its authenticity. Consequently, in the second half of the twentieth century, Muslims boldly introduced several versions of the translated Qur'an to replace the earlier works in circulation.

Complete Translation

The first Yoruba translation of the Qur'an led by Muslims is credited to Alhaji Usama Kuta, titled "Odidi Kurani ni Ede Yoruba" (A Complete Qur'ān in Yoruba Language). The work was printed in Iwo town, Osun State, although the date of publication is unknown. It was considered an improvement over previous translations and was rated higher because it was the first translation produced by Muslims, who possess a deep understanding of the Qur'an's subject matter. However, it was criticized for certain deficiencies, such as the absence of the Arabic text and inaccuracies in translating some words and expressions.

The second translation was a collective effort by the Muslim Council of Nigeria, led by His Eminence Ahmadu Bello, with support from the World Muslim League (WML) and King Khalid bin Abdul-Azeez of Saudi Arabia. This translation underwent various stages of review as follows:

The first stage began in 1962 when a committee was formed—comprising Imam Jamiu, Muhammad-Awwal Augusto, Ahmad Tijani Akani, Hasani Yusau Dindey, among others—under the supervision of Sir Ahmadu Bello and Ustaz Kamilu Sharif. In 1972, a committee of four Nigerian undergraduate students of Arabic and Islamic Studies was constituted to proofread the work; the team included Abdul Latīf Aḥmad Adekilekun from Al-Azhar University and Abdul Wahāb Sanusi, Khidr Mustaphā, and 'Isā Ade Bello from the Islamic University of Medina. In 1973, the work underwent final editing, correction, and assessment by a committee of erudite Yoruba Muslim scholars, including Shaykh Kamaludīn al-Adabi, Shaykh Burhanudin Sanusi Alaka, Shaykh Adam Abdullah al-Ilory, Alhaji Abdul Rahman Salahudin al-Adabi, Alhaji Muhammad Raji Sulaiman El-Imam, and Alhaji Musa Ali Ajetunmobi al-Adabi. The work, titled "Al-Quran Ti A Tumo si Ede Yoruba" (The Translated Qur'an), was published by Dāar al-Arabia in Beirut with financial assistance from King Faysal bin Abdul-'Azīz of Saudi Arabia. It was issued in two volumes: Volume One, covering chapters 1 to 17 with 379 pages, and Volume Two, covering chapters 18 to 114 with 380 pages. The work has been reprinted more than three times and

was distributed free to pilgrims during King Faysal bin ‘Abdul-Azīz’s reign.

In 2004, when a reproduction of the work was needed for Saudi Arabia, it underwent another review by two eminent Nigerian students from the Islamic University in Medina—the late Ibrahim Abdul-Baqi and Abdur-Razaq Abdul Majid Alaro—and the title was amended to “Al-Qur’ān Alaponle Pelu Itumo Re ni Ede Yoruba” (The Translation of the Noble Qur’an into Yoruba). Then, on January 18, 2015, another committee was commissioned by Muhammad Habeebllah Adam Abdullah, led by Prof. R.D. Abubakr, to review the work, and in December 2022, the work was published under Alhaji Ebiti’s name (Ibeji Foundation) and Professor Abubakre’s publishing house, Daaru ’l-‘Ilm, in Iwo:

Another translation emanated from the Ahmadiyyah Muslim Mission, led by Basheer al-Dīn Mahmūd, Khalīfah of Ghulam Ahmad. The work started with only one Juz’ (section). In 1967, a ten-man committee, under the leadership of Alhaji B.B. Balogun, was constituted to complete the remaining part, titled “Al-Kurani Mímọ̀ Ní Èdè Yorùbá àti Lárúbáwá” (The Holy Qur’an in Yoruba and Arabic Languages).

Another notable translation in this category was produced by Professor Yasir Anjola Quadir, a retired Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Ilorin. In 1985, the work initially appeared as a partial translation with the title Al-Kur’aanu Alaponle Hisbu Meji (The Noble Qur’an of Two Volumes). Due to public demand, he completed the translation, titled “Al-Kur’an Alaponle Ìtúmọ̀ sí Èdè Yorùbá” (The Noble Qur’an Translated into the Yoruba Language), which was published in 1997 and reprinted in 2024 with minor amendments.

In 2003, an Indian scholar, Basheer Ahmad Muhyidīn, also translated the Qur’an, titling it “Al-Kur’an Ọ̀rọ̀ Àbẹ̀mí Tọ́tọ́ Ododo Ọ̀rọ̀ Ayérayé” (Qur’an: The Ever-Living and Truth) (Ali-Agan, 2017).

Partial Translations

Abdul-‘Azīz Lahol translated *Al-Qur’ān Totobi Ẹ̀sù Mẹ́ta Pẹ̀lú Ìtúmọ̀* (The Noble Qur’an of Three Volumes), but the work is no longer in circulation. According to Abikan (2011), the translation contained numerous errors due to the translator’s incompetence and the absence of the Arabic text, although he included a transliteration. It appears that Lahol’s primary objective was to assist readers who lacked the ability to read the Qur’an in Arabic. Another translation, *Al-Kur’ani Alaponle Ẹ̀sù Kan Ti Àtú sí Èdè Yorùbá* (The Glorious Qur'an - One Hizb Translated into Yoruba) by Solihu Bamidele, was published by al-Balagh Publication, Lagos, Nigeria, and includes both the Arabic text and its transliteration. Similarly, *Al-Kur’ani Òlógò Jùlọ Ẹ̀sù Mẹ̀rin* (The Glorious Qur'an – Four Hizbs), translated by Ishaq Ahmad, was published by Abbas Printing Co., Lagos, in 2004. Additionally, Ade Bello translated part of the Qur’an under the title

Ẹ̀sù Márùn àti Ìtúmọ̀ (Five Volumes of the Qur'an with Meaning)

III. Reverend Thomas Adesina Jacob Ogunbiyi

Reverend Thomas Adesina Jacobson Ogunbiyi, an indigene of Isale Eko in Lagos, South-West Nigeria, was the founder and first Olori Apena of the Reformed Ogboni Fraternity. He was honored with the title of Commander of the British Empire (CBE) and also served as an Honorable Member of the Legislative Council. Additionally, he held a Licentiate in Theology. Ogunbiyi was the Archdeacon of Lagos from 1921 to 1929 but was later expelled from the church for engaging in questionable practices, such as praying at his father's tomb, in preparation for a pilgrimage to the Holy Land and Turkish Palestine. He adopted the name Alimi—likely in deference to Sheikh Alimi of Ilorin—and came to be known as Alhaji Muḥammadu Alimi Thomas Ogunbiyi.

Rev. T.A.J. Ogunbiyi was a controversial figure, though he was also a scholar, linguist, founder, innovator, reformer, and revolutionary. While some praised him, others criticized him. He was fluent in Arabic, English, Hebrew, and Yoruba. His inquisitive nature led him to Egypt and Jerusalem, where he gained further knowledge about the socio-cultural and religious aspects of human existence.

Like many other Christians of his time, Ogunbiyi dedicated himself to learning Arabic as a tool for evangelism. Gbadamosi (1971) states that Christians, particularly local clergy, recognized the need for Arabic proficiency for several reasons: to engage in discussions with Muslims, read the Qur'an, communicate with educated Muslims, earn their respect, refute Muslim disputants, and produce Arabic-Yoruba translations of Christian religious texts for Muslim audiences. Consequently, some local clergy were selected to study at Fourah Bay College in Freetown, Sierra Leone, the first Western-style university in West Africa, founded in 1827 by the Church Missionary Society (CMS) to train Africans as schoolmasters, catechists, and clergymen. In 1876, CMS successfully affiliated the college with Durham University, leading to an expanded curriculum that included Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Arabic, History, Natural Sciences, French, and German. Some clergy also pursued Arabic studies under local scholars proficient in both Arabic and English. A notable example was Imam Idris O.A. Animashaun, who organized Arabic classes twice or thrice a week. Among his pupils were Reverends M.S. Cole, James Johnson, M.T. Euler-Ajayi, and T.A.J. Ogunbiyi, pioneers of the Arabic-Yoruba translation of the Qur'an.

Reverend Ogunbiyi produced Asaro Kukuru ("Tracts for Muhammadans") and Awon Oro Olorun ("The Words of God"), which included the Ten Commandments in both Yoruba and Arabic, as well as Awon Imale ("The Muslims") and Itan Momodu ("The Story of Muḥammad"). He also translated Surah Yusuf into Yoruba. In 1910, he introduced the Harvest Festival celebration into the Anglican Church at Holy Trinity Church, Ebute-Ero, Lagos. He founded the Lagos Keswick Convention in 1913, a revival movement that brought together Methodists, Baptists, and the Salvation Army for

interdenominational preaching. This movement eventually evolved into the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) in 1943.

Additionally, Ogunbiyi played a crucial role in reforming the Ogboni Fraternity on December 18, 1914, at Obun-Eko, Lagos. He was a member of the Ogboni Aborigine in Abeokuta and the Osugbo cult in Ijebuland. He also founded the first Lagos Company of the Boys' Brigade in Nigeria.

IV. Alufa Idriss Ode Akintola Animashaun

Idris Ode Akinola Animashaun was one of the first generations of educated Muslim elites and leaders in old Lagos. He was an adopted son of Sunmonu Asunmo Animashaun. He was the nephew of one of Sunmonu's business associates and an orphan who followed his itinerant trader uncle from one place to another. Sunmonu Animashaun gave him the Islamic name *Idris Akinola Animashaun*. Idris Animashaun received a traditional Islamic education under various *Ulama* in Lagos. However, unlike many others of his time, he was given the rare opportunity to acquire Western education—an unusual privilege in an era when such schooling was closely associated with converting Muslim pupils to Christianity.

Family traditions reveal that Idris Animashaun was one of the brightest minds of his generation and had a voracious appetite for reading anything in print. He was a preeminent Muslim educationist who, along with a few others, laid the foundation for the growth of Western education among Muslims in the Lagos Colony. He became the first Headmaster of the first Government Muslim School, established in Lagos in June 1896. He maintained a warm relationship with European clergy and the local Christian intelligentsia. Additionally, he served as an Arabic instructor to a group of Christian scholars, which included Reverends Oyebode, James Johnson, M.S. Cole, and T.A.J. Ogunbiyi, among others.

V. Analysis and Discussion

Surah Yusuf (Qur'an 12) contains the full story of Prophet Yusuf. It was revealed to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in Makkah to console him when he faced numerous challenges from the people of Makkah. Allah wanted him to understand that the hardships he encountered from his people had also been faced by previous prophets in the course of calling people to Islam. The analysis and discussion of the translation of the Surah are as follows

I. Structural Analysis

The translation of Sūrah Yusuf by T.A.J. Ogunbiyi is among the earliest Yoruba translations of the Qur'an by a Christian missionary in the early twentieth century. The work is unique in structure, as it is presented in a three-in-one (interlinear) format, containing the Arabic text, a transliteration, and a Yoruba translation. The Arabic text follows the Maghribi script, which was commonly used in Africa at the time. However, the transliteration does not conform to any standard format, whether British or German. Similarly, the Yoruba script used in the translation does not align with modern standard Yoruba orthography. The translation follows a style similar to Rodwell's, beginning with: "Surat Yusuf,

alaihi salamu, makyatu, wahiya miatu wahida asarata ayatan, Bisimi llahi rahamoni rrahimi" (Sūrah Yusuf, a Makkah Sūrah, 111 verses, In the name of Allah, the Most Beneficent, the Most Merciful). Additionally, the disjointed letters (fawātihu as-suwar) are rendered as A L R instead of Alif Lām Rā', a practice also found in the work of S.M. Cole, who borrowed it from Rodwell. The Arabic text, transliteration, and translation are not numbered, but three marks (…) were placed at the end of each verse in the Arabic text for separation.

The translation has several structural and linguistic inconsistencies. Punctuation marks are not properly used in the Yoruba translation, sometimes causing confusion in meaning. Ogunbiyi also incorporates biblical concepts into his translation, such as using Orun-rere for (الآخـــرة) instead of the more appropriate Ọjọ́ ìkẹyìn (Last Day). Similarly, he translates (أعصـر خمـرا) as eso ajara (grape juice), referencing Jeremiah 31:29: "Ní ọjọ́ wọ́n, wọn kì yóò wí pé àwọn baba ti jẹ èso ajara aipọn, èhin sì ti kàn àwọn ọmọ." However, the correct translation should be "Mo n fun oti" (I am making wine). Additionally, some Arabic loanwords are present in the Yoruba vocabulary, such as (تيأسـوا) being translated as tanman. The word tay'asu means "to lose hope" (so ireti nu), making the proper translation of the verse: "Ẹyin ọmọ mi, ẹ wa nipa Yusuf àti ọmọ ìyá rẹ̀. Ẹ má ṣe sọ ireti nu nipa ìkẹ Ọlọhun." These inconsistencies highlight the challenges in early Yoruba translations of Islamic texts

II. Lexical Items Analysis

This section considers the misinterpretation of some vocabularies;

(1) لَقَدْ كَانَ فِي يُوسُفَ وَإِخْوَتِهِ آيَاتٌ لِلسَّائِلِينَ

Apere lododo fun yesufu at awon omo baba re fun awon olubere

The word *Ayat* in the Arabic language connotes several meanings, such as mark, sign, wonder, and miracle. However, in this context, the appropriate meaning is *wonder* or *surprise*, due to the fact that the life story of Prophet Yusuf is full of wonders for those who seek knowledge. The word *Qad* is an emphatic term that reinforces the meaning of the passage, but it was omitted in the translation. Therefore, the correct translation of this verse is: *Dájú-dájú, àwọn àríṣẹ́mọ̀ ń bẹ fún Yùsúfù àti àwọn ọmọ ìyá rẹ̀ fún àwọn olùbèrè.*

(2) أَرْسِلْهُ مَعَنَا غَدًا يَرْتَعْ وَيَلْعَبْ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

Ran pelu wa lola, ko ma daran, ko si ma sure, awa je oluso re

The word *arsilhu* comes from *arasala*, which means to send out, send away, dispatch, forward, release, or transmit. However, in this passage, Yusuf's brothers requested their father to allow or release him to go with them the following day. Therefore, the translation *ran pẹ̀lú wa* is not appropriate. The word *yarta'* means to feel free, enjoy, or take pleasure, while *yal'ab* means to play. These two words were not properly translated. The suggested correct translation should be: *Yọ̀nda rẹ̀ pẹ̀lú wa lọ́la, kí ó lè dárayá, kí ó sì lè ṣeré, àwa yóò sì jẹ́ olùṣọ́ fún un.*

(3) قَالُوا يَا أَبَانَا إِنَّا ذَهَبْنَا نَسْتَبِقُ وَتَرَكْنَا يُوسُفَ عِنْدَ مَتَاعِنَا

Nwon ni Baba wa awa lo andode kakiri afi Yesufu sile sibi inka wa

The word (*nastabiku*) was incorrectly translated as (*dọ̀de)* (to hunt). However, (*nastabiku)* is derived from the verb (*sabaqa*), which means to compete with others. A more accurate translation of this word should be to compete (*ṣe àlápàntẹ̀tẹ̀*). This meaning is evident in verse twelve of Sūrah Yusuf, where Yusuf's brothers request permission from their father to allow Yusuf to go with them to enjoy himself and play. Therefore, the entire passage should read as: *Wọ́n ní, 'Bàbá wa, àwa ló sáré ìje; à fi Yúsúfù sílẹ̀ níbi ìńkà wa*.

(4) قَالَتْ مَا جَزَاءُ مَنْ أَرَادَ بِأَهْلِكَ سُوءًا

Obirin wipe kini esan fun eni ti o gbero la ti pa o pelu aburu

The word ('ahaluka) is mistakenly understood by the translator as (halaka) to ruin or destruction, disintegration and death. Whereas the word '(ahaluka) is a noun, which means relative or people). So, the correct translation should be (*Obìnrin náà wí pé; kí ni ẹ̀san fún ẹni tí ó gbèrò aburú pẹ̀lú ará ilé rẹ̀*.)

(5) وَاسْتَبَقَا الْبَابَ وَقَدَّتْ قَمِيصَهُ مِنْ دُبُرٍ

Awon mejeji jijakadi lo sibi ilekun, obinrin na si fa ewu re ya leyin,

The word (*Istabaqā*) was translated as (*Ijàkádì*), meaning wrestle or fight. However, istabaqā linguistically means to try to get ahead of others, to try to defeat or beat, or to compete. In this context, when the unexpected situation occurred between Yusuf and his master's wife, he attempted to escape through the door, but she did not allow him. As a result, both of them rushed toward the door simultaneously, each trying to get ahead of the other. The appropriate translation for this action should be: *Àwọn méjèèjì dìjọ sáré lọ síbi ìlẹ̀kùn*.

(6) وَقَالَ لِلَّذِي ظَنَّ أَنَّهُ نَاجٍ مِنْهُمَا اذْكُرْنِي عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ

O s iwi fun eni ti o daju pe yo la ninu won pe ranti mi lodo Oluwa re

The word (ẓanna) was mistakenly interpreted as *daju* (certainly). Whereas the word means think, assume, suppose. So, the appropriate translation is Ó *sí wí fún ẹni tí ó lérò pé yóò là nínú wọn.*

III. Sentence Structure

The section examines some misinterpretation of certain sentences:

(1) وَأَلْفَيَا سَيِّدَهَا لَدَى الْبَابِ

awon majeji ba ogboni won lenu ona

The word *(sayyidaha)* refers to the husband of the woman, who is the master of Yusuf. However, the word *(Ogboni)* was incorrectly used, as it typically refers to a father or an elderly person. The individual mentioned in the verse is neither the father of Yusuf nor the woman's father. Additionally, the translator used *(wọn)* as a dual pronoun for both Yusuf and the woman. However, the pronoun *(ha)* in the verse refers only to the wife. If the verse were referring to both of them, the correct pronoun would have been *(huma)*. The suggested translation should be: *Àwọn méjèèjì bá ọkọ rẹ̀ lẹ́nu ọ̀nà.*

مَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ إِلَّا أَسْمَاءً سَمَّيْتُمُوهَا أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ (2)

Own ti eyin si ko je inkan afi awon oruko ti enpe won eyin ati awon baba yin,

The translation of this verse contains several issues, including direct translation errors and omissions of certain words, which make the meaning of the passage unclear. For example, the phrase *min dunihi* was not translated, leading to an incomplete rendering of the verse. A more accurate translation should be: *"Ohun tí ẹ jọ́sìn fún lẹ́yìn Rẹ̀ (Ọlọ́run) kò jẹ́ nǹkankan ju àwọn orúkọ tí ẹ̀yin àti àwọn bàbá yín ń sọ wọ́n lọ́."*

وَإِلَّا تَصْرِفْ عَنِّي كَيْدَهُنَّ أَصْبُ إِلَيْهِنَّ وَأَكُنْ مِنَ الْجَاهِلِينَ (3)

Ki o si ete won lo fun mi ki ma lo ba won ki nsi di alaimo kan

The translation was not perfectly constructed, as it requires the inclusion of additional words and proper punctuation marks for clarity. The suggested corrected translation is:

Ti Ìwọ, Ọlọ́run, kò bá sẹ́rí ète wọn fún mi, èmi yóò darí lọ sọ́dọ̀ wọn, èmi yóò sì wà nínú àwọn aláìmọ̀kan.

وَقَالَ نِسْوَةٌ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ امْرَأَةُ الْعَزِيزِ تُرَاوِدُ فَتَاهَا عَنْ نَفْسِهِ(4)

Awon obinrin kan wi nilu pe obinrin ijoye fe omo odo re

The key issue in this verse is the translation of the word *turāwidu*, which means to attempt, to seduce, or to have an intention. However, it was incorrectly translated as married. The passage does not discuss marriage between Yusuf and his master's wife but rather an attempt at casual sexual relations (*al-Fashā'*). The correct translation of this passage should be: *Àwọn obìnrin kan nínú ìlú sọ pé obìnrin ọlọ́lá jùlọ fi ìfẹ́ fa ojú ọmọ ọ̀dọ̀ ọkọ rẹ̀ mọ́ra.*

قَالُوا تَاللَّهِ تَفْتَأُ تَذْكُرُ يُوسُفَ حَتَّى تَكُونَ حَرَضًا أَوْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْهَالِكِينَ(5)

Won bura Olorun pe iwo ko ni ye ranti Yesufu titi o fidi ogbologbo tabi titi iwo yo fiku.

The passage contains several mistranslations. The word *qālū* (they said – *wón wí pé*) was entirely omitted. Additionally, *haradan* was not properly translated; it means to instigate, provoke, goad, or abet. The appropriate Yoruba translation for *al-Haradan* is *aláàárẹ̀* (someone afflicted by illness). Similarly, *al-Hālikīn* comes from *halaka* (to be ruined, perish – *ṣègbé* or *parun*). The correct translation of the verse should be: *Wọ́n wí pé; a fi Ọlọ́run búra, ó sì tún rántí Yúsúfù títí ìwọ yóò fi di aláàárẹ̀ tàbí kí ọ wà nínú àwọn tí ó ṣègbé*.

(6)

قَالَ رَبِّ السِّجْنُ أَحَبُّ إِلَيَّ مِمَّا يَدْعُونَنِي إِلَيْهِ

O ni iwo Oluwa mi mo fe ewon ju oun ti o pe mi si lo

The main misinterpretation in this passage is the word *yadʿunani*, which was translated as a second-person plural verb, whereas it is actually third-person plural. Yusuf referred to his master as *Rabb* and expressed his preference for prison over succumbing to the desires of his master's wife. The corrected translation should be: *Ó ní, 'Ìwọ Ọ̀gá mi, mo fẹ́ràn ẹ̀wọ̀n ju ohun tí wọ́n ń pè mí sí lọ*.

IV. Semantic Analysis

This part analyzes some semantic meaning.

يَخْلُ لَكُمْ وَجْهُ أَبِيكُمْ(1)

Oju baba yin yio pada si odo yin

The sentence conveys a semantic meaning, but the translator rendered it literally, leading to a loss of the intended message. The word *yakhlu* was incorrectly translated as "return" (*pada*), whereas it actually means "empty," "vacant," or "to be free." In this context, it implies that Yusuf's father's mind would be free from love or concern for him. The corrected translation should be: *Kí bàbá yín lè ráyè yín*. (So that your father can have time for you.

وَشَرَوْهُ بِثَمَنٍ بَخْسٍ دَرَاهِمَ مَعْدُودَةٍ وَكَانُوا فِيهِ مِنَ الزَّاهِدِينَ (2)

Won ta li owo fadaka die ti adu na dura, awon omo iya kuro lodo re

The word "al-Ẓāhidīna" comes from "Ẓahada", which literally means to abstain, renounce, abandon, forsake, or withdraw. However, in this context, it semantically means "they were satisfied with that little amount." The corrected translation should be: *Wọ́n tà á ní owó fàdákà díẹ̀, tí wọn yọ́nú sí*.

وَكَذَلِكَ مَكَّنَّا لِيُوسُفَ فِي الْأَرْضِ

Be gege li a yan ibugbe fun Yesuf ni ile na, Yio ma sokale ninu re bi o ba ti fe

In this verse, the word "makanna" means to become strong, influential, gain influence, firm, consolidate, and establish. The phrase "fil-ardi" literally means "in the land" but semantically implies "everywhere." *The correct translation should be Gẹ́gẹ́ bẹ́ẹ̀ ni Yésúfù di àgbà láàyè.*

إِنَّهُ رَبِّي أَحْسَنَ مَثْوَايَ (4)

Olorun, asiwaju mi fun mi ni ibujoko rere,

The word, *Rabbu*, in means lord, master, owner, proprietor, head of the family. However, in this context the word, *Rabb*, stands for master, who provided accommodation and sustenance for Yusuf and. The word *asiwaju* is not adequate. Then, the translator translates *Inahu* as Allah. So, he starts the translation of the verse with *Olorun* but the word, *Inahu*, is a pronoun with emphatic referring to the master. The phrase, *ahasan mathwaya*, translated to *ibujoko rere* is not a perfect translation but it should be *Dájúdájú Ọ̀gá mi ṣe dáadáa sí mi*.

يَا أَسَفَى عَلَى يُوسُفَ وَابْيَضَّتْ عَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْحُزْنِ (5)

O wi pe wo ibanuje mi fun Yesufu, oju re mejeji funfun fun ibanuje,

The major word is *wabyadhat*, which literally means to be white. However, in this context, it means, Prophet Yaqub, Yusuf's father became blind due to his weeping for several years for not sighting Yusuf. The word, *abyadhad*, was used to describe his blindness because the two eye balls cannot longer see anything except white. So, the suggested translation should be *Ó wí pé; ẹ wo ìbànújẹ́ mi l'órí Yésúfú, ojú rẹ̀ méjèèjì kò ríran mọ́ fún ìbànújẹ́*.

مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ (6)

Olorun ko ranse pelu re nidi oro na.

The literal translation was given to this passage. Perhaps, the meaning under it is "there is no

revelation/ proof of it". So, the proper translation should be *Kò sí àkọsílẹ̀ kan fún un láti ọ̀dọ̀ Ọlọ́run*.

Conclusion

In this paper, attempts have been made to examine Christian-Muslim engagement through the translation of Sūrah Yusuf by Rev. A.J. Ogunbiyi and Alufa Idris Animashaun in 1911. This translation is one of the earliest Yoruba translations of the Qur'an and has not received adequate academic attention. The study has taken into account the emergence of Qur'anic translation within Islam and later focuses on the Yoruba translations of the Qur'an produced by both Christians and Muslims. The paper also has examined the translation work of Rev. Ogunbiyi and Animashaun from various perspectives. It has highlighted some incoherencies and inadequate translations of certain lexical items, sentences, and semantic meanings, while also revealing the authors' limited knowledge of both Arabic and Yoruba. The study concludes with recommendations that Qur'anic translations should be undertaken by individuals who master the cultures and styles of both the source and target languages, and it encourages other Arabic scholars to conduct research on other early translations of the Quran by Christians.

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