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Translatability of Laf'dhul-Jalaalah: A Comparative Analysis of Yoruba Translations of the Holy Quran

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Abstract

This study examines the linguistic, theological, and cultural difficulties involved in rendering Lafḍhul Jalālah ("Allah") into Yoruba language, with a comparative focus on four major Yoruba Qur'an translations: CT1, ST2, AT3, and MT4. Applying Farahzad's translation criticism model, supported by Critical Discourse Analysis, Functionalist approaches, and exegetical methods, the article analysis selected Qur'anic verses to investigate how the translators negotiate the semantic and doctrinal weight of the sacral term, Allah. The results shows that Yoruba equivalents such as Olohun, Olorun, and Olódùmarè are semantically and theologically insufficient owing to their origin in indigenous Yoruba metaphysical worldviews and their lack of the exclusive monotheistic specificity encoded in the Arabic term Allah. The comparative analysis reveals significant inconsistencies across translations, shaped largely by divergent intra religious ideologies and sectarian commitments. These variations not only compromise theological precision but also contribute to sociolinguistic fragmentation among Yoruba speaking Muslim communities. The study concludes that Lafḍhul Jalālah is fundamentally untranslatable into Yoruba and argues for the adoption of Transference-retaining the Arabic term as the most faithful strategy for preserving doctrinal integrity, ensuring exegetical accuracy, and maintaining global consistency in Qur'an translation.

Keywords: Translatability, Transference, Allah, Olohun, Olorun, Olodumare

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Introduction

Scripturally, the Holy Qur'an is considered the last divine message to all creatures (Haider et al., 2020), and its distinct characteristics are unparalleled to any other scripture (Iman, 2020). One of its unprecedented idiosyncratic features is its revelation in spotlessly ultraclean Arabic (Khoerudin, 2004). So, to attain its universality, translation represents an integral agentive element of its message conveyance (Al Farizi, 2023). Hence, mastering the Arabic language cum Islamic sciences becomes indispensable as a pivotal means of the inter-language rendition. This resulted from inseparability of the linguistic and communicative relationship between the duos (Akhirudin et al., 2023). Thus, an expertise in grammatical rules and other Islamic sciences with deep experience in translational theories and applications plays a significant role in Allah's message delivery to non-Arabic speakers (Alhirtani, 2019), in order to convey it with utmost consideration of intellectual honesty and cognitive originality, devoid of any sectarian influence, ideological mediation, or factional intimidation (Khoerudin, 2004). In consequence, every competent translator must acquire an extensive background in the Arabic language and Islamic sciences filled with intellectual dignity and trustworthiness to produce a faithful translation at the expense of their sectarian affiliation or ideological alliance.

Islam is considered the only universal pietistic credence with the final sacred compendium that began to stretch globally, and was disseminated to the largest ethnic group in West Africa, the Yoruba progeniture, around the 13th century[i]. After Hausa, the Yoruba are the second largest language group in Nigeria, numbering more than thirty million. Though the ancestry of the Yoruba is not accurately documented (Mustapha Zugh'lool)[ii], it is mythically viral that they sprang from Lamurudu, a fictitious king in Mecca, according to Samuel Johnson[iii], while other Yoruba historical accounts attributed their lineal origin to Ancient Egypt[iv]. The historians are incongruous with discordant opinions on the Yoruba provenance.

Equally, there are divergent historical accounts of the advent of Islam in Yoruba land. But, according to Al-Alooriy, its debarkation was between the 13th and 15th centuries through the traders from Mali during the reign of Mansa Musa (d. 1337)[v], while the first mosque was built in Oyo-Ile in 1550[vi]. Nevertheless, with the widespread of Islam in Yoruba land and the necessity for Quranic understanding, Yoruba translations inevitably began to surface willy-nilly. But deplorably, they emerged on different ideologies and divergent sectarianisms. Thus, identifying the reliably faithful one becomes a challenge for Muslims due to the dissimilarities in the concepts each translator desires to present to his readership in selling out his intended schism. This research, therefore, sheds light on some areas of the dissimilarities and disagreements.

So, Nigeria as a country with the largest Muslim population in Africa (McKinnon, 2021), the Yoruba Muslims, despite their ideological dismemberment into different sects like Ash'ariyah Sufism, Qadianism (Ahmadiyah), Salafism (Moderate and fanatic), et cetera (Balogun, 2019), are one of the most populous tribes in the country (Muhammad,

2024). But, due to this dissension, each sect sticks to its own (Yoruba) Quranic translation that conforms to their sectarian creeds and beliefs. As a result, the Yoruba Qur'an translations theologically differ via the difference in ideologies and doctrines. And, in consequence, the controversy enrooted to disunity among the Muslims to the level of labeling one another as Mumayyi'in (Negligent), Faasiq (unreliable), Mub'tadi'i (Innovator), and kaafir (Unbeliever) (Balogun, 2019), to the extent of ambushing one another with law enforcement on the counts of character assassination, bulling and defamation (Muhammad Al-awwal, 2008) and (Bn Maalik, 2008). This problem, nevertheless, has been negatively reflected in their socio-linguistic and behavioral relativity, which continues to disperse the Yoruba Muslims' indivisibility. So, proven by some previous studies that some of the Yoruba translators failed to maintain translation requirements that renders most of their works amplified with negative effects, adverse results, and unreliable outcomes (Badmus et al., 2023), and with the fact that none of the previous researchers addressed the major factors of the problem which are grossly influenced by intral-religious sectarianism, or studied the ideological implications behind the translators' approaches, I therefore consider it of immense significance to work on this essentially Impeccable topic by addressing the ideological influence of Yoruba translators on translatability of Laf'dhul-Jalaalah.

Research Methodology

The methodology of this study is based on descriptive analysis by adopting Farahzad's model of translation criticism approach (Farahzad, 2012) derived from Fairclough's approach to CDA (Fairclough, 1995). And with the fact that the Functionalist theories aim at studying the effects of text genre, context, various language functions, culture, style, and the communicative effect on the process of translation, CDA is concerned with both the language and the culture of ST and TT at the same time (Al-Harahsheh & Shahid, 2020). So, this research will adopt two out of the Farahzad's three-dimensional model (i.e., textual and paratextual) that define the relationship between prototext (source text) and metatext (target text).

Other translational Theories and Approaches, such as Functional Equivalence (Formal and Dynamic Equivalence) Theory will be also adopted. This is due to the fact that the study compares various translators and because of its dynamic interplay across linguistic innovation, theological fidelity, and cultural adaptation. In addition, there will be application of Interdisciplinary Approach (Sutopo et al., 2020), because translation is multimodal beyond words (Boria et al., 2020), which should entail a thorough comprehension of the ST with all of its subtle cultural and theological implications through the means of intertextuality (Dimitroulia & Kourdis, 2019), and the Exegesis approach will be equally applied. For brevity and clarity, each Translation is given an alphanumeric acronym, such as CT1 (Committee of Yoruba Muslim Scholars' Translation), ST2 (Saudi published Translation), AT3 (Ahmadiyyah's Translation), MT4 (Abu Raheemah Mikaaheel's Translation). The selected verses used for this study are: Surah Al-Fatiha (The

Opening), Quran 1:1, Surah Al-Baqarah (The Cow), 2:255 (Ayat al-Kursi), Surah Al-Ikhlas (The Purity), Quran 112:1-4, Surah Al-An'am (The Cattle), Quran 6:101, and Surah Al-Baqarah, Quran 2:63, respectively.

Literature Review

Issue of Translatability

Translation is a means of linguistic and cultural transfer between two or many languages. the translator faces challenges in providing strategies to the differences in structure, meaning, and culture (Fitria, 2022), whence the ability to produce the equivalence of linguistic and cultural items turns difficult or unattainable (Simanjuntak, Barus, & Resmayasari, 2020). These cultural items may result from ideology, beliefs, and values (Mashhadi, 2021). The process of dealing with sorts of linguistic and cultural transferring challenges becomes disputable parts of translational cliché which is transubstantiated into two controversial concepts in translation theory: Translatability and Untranslatability (Abdelkarim & Alhaj, 2024), which can be both found in different levels of the textual communications[vii].

According to Abdelkarim & Alhaj (2024), translatability signifies an accurate meaning transfer between two languages, while Untranslatability, contrastingly, implies rendition difficulty that frequently emerges from the unavailability of equivalent homogeneity in the target linguistic and cultural boundaries. Little wonder, Catford (1965) sees the lack of correspondence in the target language with the linguistic features and items as available in the source language as untranslatable. As is evident, there are two major role players factorizing these two concepts: linguistic factors and cultural factors (Hussein & Ilhami, 2023). The translator, therefore, should be able to reproduce in the target text the same meaning and the message represented in the source language with their comprehensive understanding and mastery of the text in order to avoid the problem of translation loss[viii], which could undeniably emerge from such conceptual asymmetry in the target text (Safira et al., 2023). This is because translation, aside from the importance of text transferring from the source to the target, is considered an act of problem solving (Banafsheh and Abdollah 2015). Mashhadi (2021), of course, has earlier emphasized that the cultural differences in both texts are also important as the literary devices in the original work. Literary translation, according to Newmark (1988, p. 119), is "the most testing type of translation"[ix].

Besides, there are other extra-linguistic and cultural factors above the levels of meaning, expression, emotion, and ideology, such as aesthetic and prosodic which include intonation, stress, rhythm, rhyme, sense, singability or musicality, and loudness. They are considered challengingly complex for the requirement of a deep understanding of both the source and target languages (Fadli, Baharuddin, & Wardana, 2023). To further explain untranslatability issues, Amini et al. (2024) recognize how song lyrics are of significant challenges, because the translator must avoid adding new sense of information or thoughts

to the translation (Batubara et al., 2023). Although Nida (1964, p. 154), while arguing the process of translation against being a mechanical word-for-word substitution, but as an involvement of adaptation to both linguistic and cultural contexts, states that "no translator can avoid a certain degree of personal involvement," and concludes that "no translator can avoid a certain degree of personal involvement in his work"[x].

Translatability and Untranslatability Approach

Thereupon, in tackling the issue of translatability and untranslatability, the scholars differ on two different approaches: the Monadist approach and the Universalist Approach. The first is adopted by Nida, Jakobson, Bausch, Hauge, and Ivir. These scholars hold the opinion of translatability in the existence of linguistic universals exemplified in syntactic and semantic categories available in all languages. Nida and Taber (1969) disagree with the concept of untranslatability, as they claim that "anything that can be said in one language can be said in another unless the form is an essential element of the message". Dryden (cited in Frost, p. 72) also affirms that "poetry is translatable, but the one who should translate poetry must be a poet"[xi].

Hence, literary translation, poetry, for example, is translatable to scholars like Dryden and Eugene Nida as long as the translator is a poet who must render the stylistic features of the poem alongside its linguistic aspects. However, the issue of loss which could be arguably contested by the adherents of untranslatability concepts is explanatorily clarified by Benjamin (1968) that: "There is nothing "lost" in translation, but, on the contrary, there is something "gained" by birth of a text which will not be merely a replica of the original but will have the ability to achieve a sort of equivalence to the SL. Accordingly, the "task of the translator consists in finding that intended effect upon the language into which he is translating which produces in it the echo of the original"[xii].

And the Universalist Approach (or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis) adopted by other scholars. According to Pedro (1999), "each linguistic community interprets reality in its own particular way, and this jeopardizes translatability"[xiii]. This is referred to as the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis in reference to Edward Sapir and Benjamin Lee Whorf's work, when Sapir opines that, "the real world is to a large extent unconsciously built up on the language habits of the group. […] The worlds in which different societies live are distinct worlds, not merely the same world with different labels attached"[xiv]. That means different linguistic communities are different from one another in their world perception. Thence, there also appeared the third approach in the late 1960s when the Deconstructionists' approach was developed in France by Andrew Benjamin, Michel Foucault, Paul de Man, and Jacques Derrida, who challenged the prevailing concept of translation as a transfer of meaning. These founders maintain that the target text is not considered subsidiary to the original text but a dependent on translation since translation of a text involves rewriting of the original text[xv]. Nevertheless, the issue of translatability and untranslatability falls under the matter of degrees, where there is no text that is absolutely translatable or totally untranslatable (Banafsheh and Abdollah, 2015).

Cultural and Linguistic Untranslatability

The distinction between linguistic untranslatability and cultural untranslatability is explanatorily highlighted by Catfort: "instances of untranslatability can arise from two sources: one is linguistic and the other is culture." The first emanates from the differences in the source language and the target language, which could be in phonology, character structure, and figure of speech, such as puns, alliteration, and malapropism, while the latter is responsible for the absence in the target language of relevant situational features. Subsequently, he states that cultural untranslatability occurs when "A situational feature, functionally relevant for the source language text, is completely absent from the culture of the target language as a part. For example, the names of some institutions, clothes, foods, and abstract concepts, among others, are instances of culturally untranslatable items. But nevertheless, he believes that cultural untranslatability is less absolute than linguistic untranslatability[xvi]. But to Bassnett (2002), as long as language is an integral part of a cultural system, "cultural untranslatability must be de facto implied in any process of translation" (p. 41)"[xvii].

Linguistic untranslatability, on the other hand, is also further elucidated by Wolfram Wilss (2001, p. 86), who says: "The translatability of a literary text can thus be measured in terms of the degree to which it can be re-contextualized in TL, taking into account all linguistic and extra-linguistic factors. The translatability of a poetic text is thus guaranteed by the existence of universal categories in syntax, semantics, and the (natural) logic of experience. Linguistic untranslatability occurs when the linguistic form has a function beyond conveying factual relationships and is therefore a constituent part of the functional equivalence to be achieved. This, for example, is true of play on words, which can usually be adequately translated semantically but not stylistically".

The issue of translatability and untranslatability becomes an important concept of study in different areas of translation. Some areas, for instance, focused more on certain types of figurative language (Adawiyah & Firdausi, 2023; Mashhadi, 2021; Situmorang & Sihite, 2024). Metaphor, hyperbole, personification, assonance, simile, metonymy, alliteration, and symbolism are different types of figurative language mentioned by Kennedy (1979), and to remedy the untranslatability of these linguistic items in the target language, various techniques, such as adaptation, amplification, borrowing, calque, compensation, description, discursive creation, established equivalent, generalization, linguistic amplification, linguistic compression, literal translation, modulation, particularization, reduction, substitution, transposition, and variation are proposed in 2002 by Molina & Albir (Firdausyiah, Hermawan, & Muniroh, 2021). Lawrence Venuti (2022) acknowledges that the difficulty in translation arises from looking for equivalent meanings for terms that are culturally specific, which may not exist in the target language [xviii]. It is unsurprising that Jakobson (1959, p. 219), in his article about the possibility and impossibility of translation, confirms that poetry "by definition is untranslatable. Only creative transposition is possible".

Translatability of Islamic sacred texts

Language is a universal property globally used for conventional goals and purposes. The issue of translatability and untranslatability is no less discussed or dissimilar in the Arab world compared to its visibility in the West, most especially in terms of sacral texts. But, the notion of untranslatability is much more challenging, especially to the translators of the Holy Qurʾān[xix], because the issue of whether the Qurʾān is translatable or untranslatable has been the subject of argument since the time of revelation (Khalaf & Yusoff, 2012; Al-Abdullatif, 2018; Hidaya & Solihin, 2019).

According to Nassimi (2008), Alhaj & Alwadai (2022), and Alhaj (2022), the Islamic translation scholars conclude that the Holy Qurʾān in its form and content is incomparable, and it cannot be translated into the English language with absolute faithfulness to the original. Little wonder, the notion of crude approximation to refer to a pragmatic translation of the Qur'anic surface meanings is strictly used by the translators of the Quran, that it is just a translation of the meanings of the Quran, not a substitution. Thus, the adoption of the transference Strategy by the wide use of transliteration resulted from the incontestability of the untranslatable cultural gap[xx]. On this, Alcaraz and Brian (2002) see that the translation of the Quran is impossible in another language, but only its message. The text of the Quran is so inimitable in its meanings, structures, rhetoric, and rhyme that it seems "any translation of the Quran immediately ceases to be the literal word of Allah, and hence cannot be equated with the Quran in its original Arabic form. In fact, each of the translations is actually an interpretation which has been translated" ('The Nobel Quran, 2009, para.5)[xxi].

In 2010, Danial and Sara hypothesized three reasons why the Islamic scholars agreed on the impossibility of translating the Quran literally: first, the words of different languages do not express the exact meanings, even if they perhaps express some specific concepts. Second, the targeted narrow meaning of the Quran to specific concepts would be lost in the other language, and third, the Quranic presentation would therefore be confused in the target text. They find their support for the untranslatability of the Quran in the Surah Yusuf (Josef), where Allah says: "We have sent down as an Arabic Quran" (verse 2), believing that the exact translation of the Quran is unrealizable. Also, where He says: "If men and jinn banded together to produce the like of this Quran, they would never produce its like, not though they backed one another" (Surah Al-Isra',The Night Journey, verse 88). And according to Hitti (1970), "The style of the Koran is God' style. It is different, incomparable and inimitable. This is basically what constitutes to the "miraculous character' (ijaz) of the Koran. Of all miracles, it is the greatest".

However, based on the aforementioned definition of translatability, and that the Muslim translation scholars also agree to the possibility of transferring the message or meaning of Quran, and, according to Hatim and Munday, (2004, p. 15) who defined translatability as "a relative notion that has to do with the extent to which, despite obvious differences in linguistic structure (grammar, vocabulary, etc.), meaning can still be adequately expressed

across languages", Wilss (1982, p.42) agrees that a text can be re-contextualized into another target language, "the translatability of a text is thus guaranteed by the existence of universal categories in syntax, semantics, and the (natural) logic of experience".

In summary, the linguistic and cultural untranslatability of the Quran is locatable through divergent factors, such as figurative elements like Metaphor, hyperbole, personification, assonance, simile, metonymy, alliteration, repetition, assonance, and symbolism, or due to inevitable semantic, syntactic, stylistic and connotation voids, like omissions, additions or from cultural conflicts owing to semantic complexity of ideological expressions, restricted legal terms with heavy loads of details indirect language of symbolism, rhetorical devices like pun or with heavy loads of details indirect language of symbolism, rhetorical devices like pun or wordplay, eloquence of its artistically rich style, sequence and poetic rhythm and musicality, despite the fact that, as Arberry (1998) in the introduction of his book, the Koran interpreted, states, the Quran "is neither poetry nor prose but a unique fusion of both". This research, therefore, studies the challenges faced by the translators of the Holy Quran into the Yoruba language and how their divergent intra-religious ideological affiliations influenced their strategic solutions applied to the untranslatable linguistic and cultural voids.

History of Quran Translation into Yoruba

At the primordial stage of Islam in Yoruba land, Muslims were pedagogically conservative. A'jami[xxii] was first indispensably developed by the Yoruba clergy as the only available medium of intellectual documentation using the Arabic orthographic system to transcribe the Yoruba language. Thereafter, Yoruba orthographic structure emerged in the 18th century with the invention of Yoruba orthography credited to, among other contrivers, Samuel Ajayi Crowder (1806-1891) after his resettlement in Sierra Loane in 1822 when he was freed from slavery captivity. He became a clergyman of the Church of England in 1843 after his graduation in England and at Fourah Bay College, Sierra Loane, between 1831 and 1841[xxiii]. In essence, the protraction in inventing Yoruba orthography typifies one of the paramount factors of delay for the Quran translation into the Yoruba Language.

Ajemi instrumentality has since gained prominence in documenting various spheres of intellectualism. This writing gives the Yoruba Muslims the groundbreaking credit of recording literacy before the invention of the Yoruba manuscript. Hence, the exigency for supplementary chirographical silhouette became inconsequential, which made any bid for Translation of no cogitation. Subsequently, a Christian Reverend, M. S. Cole, in 1924, pioneered the earliest Yoruba Quran translation. This Translation was first printed and distributed by the Christian Missionary Society of Lagos as part of their evangelism to the Yoruba Muslims[xxiv].

Thenceforward, it became an inevitably arduous and onerous challenge for the Yoruba Muslims to translate their Quran themselves. And, different translational penmanship

began to surface consecutively. The chronology of Major Yoruba Quran Translations is as follows:

Year	Translator/Committee	Title/Abbreviation	Notes
1906	Rev. M.S. Cole	Al-Kurani ni Ede Yoruba	First translation, Christian-led
1965	E.K. Akinlade (EKA)	Itumo Al-Kurani Lede Yoruba	First major Muslim translation
1972	WML Committee (WML)	Al-Kurani Ti A Tumo Si Ede Yoruba	Most influential, committee-based
1976	Ahmadiyya Mission (AHM)	Al-Kurani Mimo Ni Ede Yoruba	Ahmadiyya community
1996	Y.A. Quadri (YAQ)	Al-Kurani Alaponle	Linguistic innovation, reformed orthodox.
1997	King Fahd Complex for Printing the Holy Quran	Al-Qur'an Alaponle Pelu Itumo Re Ni Ede Yoruba	Multilingual, digital, with commentary
2020	Abu Rahimah Mikaeel	Al-kur'an Alapon-onle Ati Itumo Re Ni Ede Yoruba. (Alalaye Soki)	Multilingual, digital, with commentary
2025	Dr. Dauda Awwal	Global English–Yoruba Qur'an 4-in-1	Multilingual, digital, with commentary

Connotation of Laf'dhul-Jalaalah

Arguably, the early scholars differ linguistically regarding the etymological, philological, and semantic concepts of the term "Allah." The majority of early grammarians considered it a علم (proper noun), while some treated it as مشتق (a derivative word), despite their disagreement on its derivability. Morphologically, some grammarians concluded that the word الله is from the root verb أَلَهَ, which means عبد (to worship), while others, in contrast, postulated that it originated from وَلِهَ, which signifies تحير (to get overwhelmed). That is, when a slave (over) thinks about the essence and propriety of Allah, he becomes overwhelmed. This submission was the opinion of Abul Barakaat Al-Anbaariy (577 H.) when he hypothesized that: فسمي – سبحانه - (إلها) لتحير العقول في كنه ذاته وصفاته, "the Almighty is called (ILaa-han) because His essential attributes make the minds overwhelmed"[xxv].

However, it is equally considered a derivation of لاه لوها. That is, احتجب أو استتر (to hide). There are other scholars as well who contemplated being rooted from لاه ليهاً, meaning ارتفع (to rise), or from تألّه تأليها. That is, من فقر الخلق وحاجتهم إليه from the neediness of the creatures to the Creator[xxvi]. Nonetheless, based on the majority opinion of the scholars, the word Allah (الله) is essentially a non-derivative proper name exclusively attributed to the quintessential majesty of the Most High. It is a name that sums up all the attributes of the Creator, which must be uniquely used for the only worthy of worship, Allah. المألوه أي المعبود محبة وتعظيما. In addition, in a statement attributed to Abdullah Bn Abbas is stated that the meaning of Allah (الله) is:

ذو الاولوهية والعبودية على خلقه أجمعين، وهو الذي يأله كل شيئ ويعبده كل خلق. That is, Allah (is the One who) owns the theistic superiority and servitude over all His creations; the only One that must be deified and worshipped by all[xxvii]. More so, some scholars conceivably claimed that laf'dhul-Jalaalah was philologically borrowed from the

Hebrew and Syriac languages, and its root word is لاها, which means ذو القدرة, the Omnipotent. In summary, Laf'dhul-jalaalah (word of Majesty) is a nomenclatural epithet sacredly ascribed to the majestic name of the Highest, Allah. And due to its exceptional qualities, the term "Allah" is the only name entitled to such a noteworthy appellation – لفظ الجلالة - as the first and paramount name among the 99 beautiful attributes of the Most Merciful (لفظ الجلالة أول اسماء الله الحسنى), and as the root of all other names of Allah, according to Prof. Shereefah Ziyaadah Dasooqiy[xxviii].

In conclusion, the term "Allah" is an Arabic philological word used for the only Creator and Sustainer of the world. Thus, it is imperative that "Allah" is not a mere patronymic, but the actual eponym of the Most High in Arabic. Moreover, among its core features is its exclusive specificity for Him alone. Ibn Ya'eesh says[xxix], خاص به وحده لا يشاركه فيه غيره، ولا يدعى به أحد سواه. Hence, the term "Allah" is exclusively attributed to Him alone; nobody shares it with Him, and none should be referred to it besides Him. Although there are other names that are Islamically proscribed to be used for other than Him, such as Ar-Rahmaan and Al-Khaaliq, while others like As-Samee'u, Al-Baseer, Al-Kareem, et cetera, are conversely allowed[xxx]. The word Allah appeared approximately 2,699 times in the Quran and occurred 33 times in the opening chapters. It is considered the word of (majesty or) essence (اسم الذات/ اسم الجلالة) and a summation of all attributes of the Almighty. It is the preeminent name of the highest rank for glorification and supplication, and consequently rated as the leader of all names, which is singled out as a word of sincerity by means of which testification is pronounced. Thereupon, it becomes an ideogram of faith.

"اسم ذات وهو مستجمع لجميع الصفات وانه أشهر أسماء الرب وأعلاها محلا في الذكر والدعاء ولذلك جعل امام سائر الاسماء وخصت به كلمة الاخلاص ووقعت به الشهادة فصار شعار الايمان[xxxi]".

Translatability of Laf'dul Jalaalah

From the aforementioned, it is deduced that the term "Allah" is not just a mere translation; it is the actual name of the Almighty in Arabic. So, the equivalence that will wholly capture all the sacral connotations of the concept in another language would be strenuous. Though a translation could be influenced by different theological schools of thought, a particular sectarian background of a translator may significantly impact the interpretation of specific terms in a way that conforms to their specific belief and understanding[xxxii]. The difference between the Sunni, Shiite, and Quadiyaani is a practical example. Cultural bias can also significantly affect how a translator renders a particular concept. (Noureldin M. A. 2018). The word Jihad, for instance, may have different interpretations, such as a holy war, virtuous deed, or Jihad itself, depending on the concept the translator intends to emphasize (Mesbahul Hoque et al., 2023). In that regard, the scholars differ on the translatability of Laf'dul-Jalaah. Some scholars consider it untranslatable, while it is permitted by others.

Shaykh Naadhim Muhammad Sultaan Al-Misbaam agrees to the untranslatability of Laf'dhul-Jalaah, but, according to him, it can be rendered with the strategy of transference, when he says: "The names of the Almighty and His attributes are absolute توقيفية; they are

words that indicate the meanings intended by the Almighty, and it is of no use for the Translation to intentionally or unintentionally depart from this principle by describing Al-lah with whatever suits it or with what He did not authorize. This act happens a lot among translators, who often need help conveying the initially intended meaning, so they import the close meanings, which is not permitted with the names of the Almighty"[xxxiii].

"إن أسماء الله تعالى وصفاته توقيفية، فهي ألفاظ تدل على معاني أرادها الله تعالى، ولا يومن أن تخرج الترجمة عن هذا الضابط بقصد أو بغير قصد، فيوصف الله بغير ما يريد وبما لم يأذن به. وهذا يحدث كثيرا لدى المترجمين فإنهم يعجزون غالبا عن نقل المعنى المقصود في الأصل فيعمدون إلى استيراد معان مقاربة للمعنى المقصود. وهذا لا يجوز في حق أسماء الله تعالى"

According to the fatwa of Shaykh Ihsaan Utaybi, it says :

"إن لفظ الجلالة "الله" من أسماء الأعلام، وأسماء الأعلام لا تترجم، بل تنطق كما هي".

That is, the word of majesty "Allah" is among proper names, and proper names are not translated, but rather pronounced as they are[xxxiv]. Also, in 2019, the Advisor to the King of Saudi Arabia and Governor of Mecca Region, Prince Khalid Al-Faisal, issued an urgent directive to the government agencies regarding translating the word "Allah" into English. He directed the replacement of the word "GOD" in the Translation of English with the word "Allah," according to the Saudi Arabian "Okaz" newspaper. The Emirate of Mecca Province announced that this directive is based on what the Grand Mufti of the Kingdom indicated is not permissible, as the Translation may carry forbidden connotations[xxxv]. To that end, scores of translators of the Quran into English shared the opinion and strategically adopted the principle of النقل Transference. Among these translators are as following:

S/N	Translator/Committee	Notes
1	Abdullah Yusuf Ali	He consistently uses "Allah" instead of God.
2	Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall	He maintains the use of "Allah" as the name for God
3	Muhammad Muhsin Khan: The Translation by Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan	They retain "Allah" as the name for God
4	Shakir: The Translation by Muhammad Sarwar	He uses "Allah" as well

Nevertheless, there are other translators who consider the translatability of "Allah" and choose to use the English word "God" instead of the Arabic name "Allah". Among these translators who maintain the status quo are:

S/N	Translator/Committee	Title	Notes
1	Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan	Noble Quran	They often use "Allah" but occasionally use "God" as well
2	Dr. Bill Warner	The Quran: A Simple English Translation	God" is used instead of "Allah
3	Dr. Rashad Khalifa	The Quran: The Final Testament	He consistently uses "God" in place of "Allah

Laf'dhul - Jalaalah in Yoruba Socio-cultural Postulation

Socio-linguistically, the semantic range of Yoruba sacral names for God is: Olohun, Olorun, Olodumare (The Supreme Being), Oluwa (Lord), Elede (Creator), Asheda (Creator)[xxxvi], Obanla (Greatest King), Oba awon Oba (King of kings), but the most predominantly weightier and prominently used terms for the real name of God are the first three, while the remaining are considered His attributes[xxxvii]. Though, Olodumare is less used compared to the other two names, as evident in all the translations of the Quran, where it is never mentioned, perhaps because of its controversial questionability among the scholars[xxxviii].

The duo Olohun and Olorun are compound nouns and a contraction of the words: Olo (Owner/Lord) + oHun (karma) = the Owner/Lord of Karma (i.e., fair Judge of men), and Olo (Owner/Lord) + oRun (Heaven) = Owner / Lord of Heaven, and they are synonymously used interchangeably. The connotative implications of these terms stem from their semantic and morphological formation. In Yoruba cosmology, Olorun is culturally referred to as the Supreme being who confines Himself in the sky or heaven, the father of other pantheons of deities known as Orishas (the mini-gods), such as Agemo, Obatala, Olokun, et cetera, who report back to Him.

Linguistically, as evident above, the term "Olorun" symbolizes confinement of God in the sky or heaven because it is mythically believed that at one time, Olodumare and the sky were nearer to Earth, so near that anyone could reach up and touch the sky. However, He was annoyed one day when someone wiped his hands on the sky after taking his food. As a result, Olodumare and the sky separated themselves from the Earth and became known as Olorun (Lord of Heaven). Since then, Olorun has controlled the world from a distance, excluding the sea, which is independently governed by Olokun, according to Yoruba cosmology[xxxix]. Yoruba believed that Olohun and Obatala shared control of the Earth because when He decided to create the Earth, He assigned the task to Obatala [xl]. So, when Obatala created human forms, Olorun breathed life into them. According to them, Olorun has no physical representation, such as hands, face, or a consecrated place, like Allah is described as resting on His 'Ar'sh (Throne). Olohun, according to them, does not descend from heaven. Instead, He sends his most skilled Orisha, Agemo (a chameleon), on His behalf. No wonder, perhaps it was one of the reasons why He was ably represented by Agemo when He was challenged for a contest by the sea goddess, Olokun, according to Yoruba mythology[xli].

Exegetically, the terms Olohun and Olorun semantically assimilate some of the attributes of Allah; as explained earlier, they somewhat signify an incalculably small number of Allah's attributes, such as المنتقم (The Avenger) and العلي (The Most High), respectively. Not surprisingly, "Allah" cannot be used for someone else either literally or figuratively, حقيقيا آو مجازيا, the way that "Olohun" or "Olorun" is figuratively used in Yoruba sociolinguistics for god-fatherism. For instance, "Lagbaja ni olohun mi kekere" (So-and-so is my demigod), for favoritism. Perhaps it is one of the reasons why the

Yorubas worship Orishas (mini-gods), such as Esu, Ogun, Oya, Osun, Egungun, Ifa, Sango, et cetera, instead of directing their devotion to Olorun or Olohun or Olodumare Himself. In a nutshell, it is revelatory that the terms Olohun or Olorun cannot fully capture the attributes of the Islamic concept of Allah as described in the Quran because Allah is majestically beyond humanly descriptive comprehension. And, in consequence, due to this untranslatability, the Transference strategy unavoidably becomes inevitable.

Analysis of Yoruba Translations of Holy Quran: Sample 1

Quran 1:2	C T1	ST2	AT3	MT4
ٱلْعَٰلَمِينَ رَبِّ لِلَّهِ ٱلْحَمْدُ	Gbogbo ope ti **Olohun** ni, Olutoju gbogbo eda	Gbogbo ope ti **Olohun** ni, Olutoju gbogbo eda	Gbogbo iyin, ti **Allah** ni, Oluwa gbogbo agbaye	Gbogbo eyin n je ti **Allahu**, Oluwa gbogbo eda
الله	**Olohun**	**Olohun**	**Allah**	**Allahu**

Sample 2

Quran 2:63	C T1	ST2	AT3	MT4
وَإِذْ أَخَذْنَا مِيثَٰقَكُمْ وَرَفَعْنَا فَوْقَكُمُ ٱلطُّورَ خُذُوا۟ مَآ ءَاتَيْنَٰكُم بِقُوَّةٍ وَٱذْكُرُوا۟ مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ	….(ti A si wipe): E gba ohun ti A fun nyin mu sinsimn ki e si ma ranti ohun ti mbe ninu re, ki enyin ba le beru (**Olohun**)	… (ti A si wipe): E gba ohun ti A fun nyin mu sinsimn ki e si ma ranti ohun ti mbe ninu re, ki enyin ba le beru (**Olohun**)	…(Wi pe) ‘e gba ohun ti A fi fun yin mu sinsin, ki e si maa ranti ohun ti n be ninu re, ki e baa le maa paya **Olorun.**	…(A si so pe): “E gba ohun ti A fun mu daradara ki e si ranti ohun to wa ninu re, nitori ki e le beru (**Allahu**)
الله	**Olohun**	**Olohun**	**OloRun**	**Allahu**

Sample 3

Quran 2:225	C T1	ST2	AT3	MT4
فِي بِاللَّغْوِ ٱللَّهُ يُؤَاخِذُكُمُ لَا .. يُؤَاخِذُكُمْ وَلَٰكِنْ أَيْمَٰنِكُمْ	**Olohun** ko ni mu nyin fun ibura yin ti ko ti inu wa…	**Olohun** ko ni mu nyin fun ibura yin ti ko ti inu wa…	Allah ko ni gba yin mu lori ibura yin to je ti asan…	**Allahu** ko ni fi ibura yin ti ko ti inu yin wa biyin…
الله	**Olohun**	**Olohun**	**Allah**	**Allahu**

Sample 4

Quran 112:1-4	C T1	ST2	AT3	MT4
ٱلصَّمَدُ ٱللَّهُ أَحَدٌ، ٱللَّهُ قُلْ هُوَ …	Sope: on ni **Olohun** Okan-soso. **Olohun** ni Oba ti a ma nronu kan…	Sope: on ni **Olohun** Okan-soso. **Olohun** ni Oba ti a ma nronu kan…	So pe, Allah okansoso. Allah, Eni ti O da duro, ti gbogbo (eda) maa n ronu kan...	So pe: Oun ni Allahu, Okan soso. Allahu ni Asiwaju ti eda ni bukata si…
الله	**Olohun**	**Olohun**	**Allah**	**Allahu**

Sample 5

Quran 24:35	C T1	ST2	AT3	MT4
وَٱلْأَرْضِ ٱلسَّمَٰوَٰتِ نُورُ ٱللَّهُ . نُورِهِۦ مَثَلُ	**Olohun** ni imole samma ati ile. Apejuwe imole Re…	**Olohun** ni imole samma ati ile. Apejuwe imole re…	Alaah ni imole awon orun ati aye. Afijo imole Re…	Allahu ni Olutan-imole sinu awon sanmo ati ile. Apejuwe imole Re…
الله	**Olohun**	**Olohun**	**Allah**	**Allahu**

Translation Tabular Analysis

From the above examples, it is evident that there are four entries used as equivalent for Allah - الله by all translators: OloHun, OloRun, Allah, and Allahu respectively. But, for avoidance of repetitive redundancy, the first and second examples will be used for tabular analysis.

Table of Example 1

SL	Translators	TL	EQ			CoC			Translator' Intervention			
			F	D	T	Add	Alt	Del	Alien.	Int.	Mon	Man
الحمد لله	CT1	Gbogbo ope ti **Olohun**		X					X	X		X
	ST2	Gbogbo ope ti **Olohun**		X					X	X		X
	AT3	Gbogbo iyin, ti **Allah** ni,			X						X	
	MT4	Gbogbo eyin n je ti **Allahu**,			X	X					X	

Result and Findings

From the above translations, it is perceptible that both CT1 and ST2 applied dynamic equivalence by using the term Olohun (Lord of Karma, i.e., fair Judge of men) for the Arabic name "Allah", which, as earlier mentioned, does not wholly accommodate the inclusive meaning of worthy of worship المعبود inferred in the Arabic connotative sense of its derivative verb, ألله (to worship). Rather, it only approximates one of the attributes of Allah, المنتقم (the Owner/Lord of Karma, or the Fair Judge of men). In that regard, there are elements of **alienation** and **integration**. The translators totally moved away from the Islamic cultural norm that negates addressing Allah, the Almighty, with other names except what He has called Himself or what the Prophet Muhammad attributed to Him, regardless of how beautiful the name sounds. However, the translators are ideologically influenced by **integrating** into their target culture, which leads to the **management** of the element by steering the situation towards the achievement of its translatability. Conversely, the AT3 and MT4, on the other hand, ideologically agree to the untranslatability of Laf'dhul Jalaala. They are of the view, as earlier explained, that Allah's names are unique and absolute أسماء الله توقيفية. So, it is unethical to them to address Him without what He calls Himself or what the Prophet says about Him. In consequence, they both apply the transference strategy according to J.C. Catford (1965). Hence, they exhibit **monitoring** of the situation (Farghal, 1993:257) without interfering with the message of the source language text and by rendering it neutrally (Shunnaq, 1994:104). Though MT4 affixed "u", making it sound closer to the Arabic.

Table 2

SL	Translators	TL	EQ			CoC			Translator' Intervention			
			F	D	T	Add	Alt	Del	Alien.	Int.	Mon	Man
لَعَلَّكُمْ .. تَتَّقُونَ	CT1	…. ki enyin ba le beru (**Olohun**)		X					X	X		X
	ST2	… ki enyin ba le beru (**Olohun**)		X					X	X		X
	AT3	…ki e baa le maa paya **Olorun.**		X			X		X	X		X
	MT4	… ki e le beru (**Allahu**)			X	X					X	

In the first two translations, the translators are consistent. But AT3, in addition to his **dynamic** equivalence, applied the **alteration** method by moving from Olohun to Olorun, which totally changed its meaning.

A False-Friends Perspective

Nevertheless, the term "Olohun" can be probabilistically categorized under false friend classification, semantic to be précised[xlii], based on the fact that it is recurrently used among the Yoruba Muslims and despite the fact that Olorun is considered to be the standard and commonest usage in a typical Yoruba sociolinguistic environment. False friends, according to Grzegorz Szpila (2006), are defined as "lexemes in which at least two different languages with identical or similar graphic/spoken forms whose semantics overlap either partially or not at all". This probability equally arises from the scores of borrowed words from Arabic to Yoruba for connate purpose, as evident in the following illustration[xliii]:

Arabic	Transliteration	Yoruba	English
زكاة	**Zakaah**	**Saka**	Annual **mandatory charity**
البركة	**Albarokah**	**Alubarika**	Blassing
الدعاء	**Ad-du'a**	**Adua**	Prayer
البصل	**Albasol**	**Alubosa**	Onion
العافية	**Alaafiyah**	**Alaafia**	Health
الله	**Allahu**	**Olohun**	God Lord of Karma (In Yoruba)

In summary, the term Olohun, aside from its cultural materiality, similarly shares proximity to be identified as a false friend. Nonetheless, from the above translations, it is established that the terms Olohun, Olorun, Allah, and Allahu are equivalently used for the Arabic name الله in Yoruba translations of the Holy Quran. The duo of CT1 and ST2 consistently used the term Olohun, while AT3 used both "Allah" and OloRun interchangeably and inconsistently. But only MT4 is solely consistent with "Allahu."

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that *Lafḍhul-Jalālah* ("Allah") is fundamentally untranslatable into Yoruba, as indigenous equivalents such as *Olorun*, *Olohun*, and *Olódùmarè* are shaped by cosmological and theological frameworks that diverge from the Qur'anic conception of a singular, transcendent deity. The comparative analysis of CT1, ST2, AT3, and MT4 reveals that sectarian ideologies significantly influence translation choices, resulting in inconsistent renderings and doctrinal ambiguity. These findings underscore the necessity of **Transference**—retaining the Arabic term—as the most faithful strategy for preserving theological precision and ensuring exegetical integrity in Yoruba Qur'an translation. For Translation Studies, the research highlights the limits of equivalence in sacred discourse and affirms the value of interdisciplinary approaches. For Islamic Studies, it reinforces the centrality of divine nomenclature to Qur'anic meaning. Future research should extend this inquiry to other African languages, digital translation practices, and reception studies to further illuminate how cultural cosmologies shape the translation and understanding of Islamic sacred terminology.

Abbreviations of Analysis Table

Abbr.	**Add.**	**Alien.**	**Alt.**	**D.**	**Del.**	**EQ**	**F.**
	Addition	Alienation	Alteration	dynamic	Deletion	equivalence	Formal
Abbr.	**Int.**	**Man.**	**Mon.**	**SL**		**T.**	**TL**
	Integration	Management	Monitoring	Source Language		Transference	Target Language

NOTES

[i]- Adam Abdullah Al-alooriy, Mu'jaz Tareekh Nigeria, (Beirut, 1965) 147.

[ii]- Mustapha zughlool, Rowai'ul Ma'luumaat An Aqtoor Afriqiyah Wa Ba'di maa Nabaqhat Feeha Minal Mamlakaat, (Isolo: Daru Da'wah Wal-irshad, 149. And Mustaph Zooghlool, Az'haru Ruba fi Akhbaari Bilaadi Yoruba, (Isolo: Daru Da'wah Wal-irshad, 1987) 33.

[iii]- Samuel Johnson, The History of the Yorubas, (London, 1921) 3-5.

[iv]- Mustapha zughlool, Rowai'ul Ma'luumaat An Aqtoor Afriqiyah Wa Ba'di maa Nabaqhat Feeha Minal Mamlakaat, (Isolo: Daru Da'wah), 149.

[v]- Al-alooriy, Mu'jax Tareekh Nigeria, p.147.

[vi]- Al- Alooriy, Naseemus Sobba, p.54.

[vii]- According to Rode Arta, Yuliani Saragih, Ashadi, Sulis Triyono, The Study of The Song Lyric "How Far I'll Go" and its translated version, "Seb'rapa Jauh Ku Melangkah" Translatability can be found in the translation of personification and hyperbole, while untranslatability in the translation of lyrics featuring alliteration, symbolism, and

assonance. See: challenges of translating figurative language in 'how far i'll go': translatability vs. untranslatability.

[viii]- In *Toward a science of translation*, Nida uses this term, *loss in translation,* when the translator encounters terms or concepts in the source language that are not available in the target language.

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[xv]- *Ibid.*

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[xxiii]- Samuel A. Crowther, A Vocabulary of the Yoruba Language. (London: Seeleys, 1852).

[xxiv]- Badmus N. O., D and Amidu A. J, Dynamicism in Yoruba Translation of the Quran, *International Journal of Integrative Sciences*, Vol.1, No 8, 2023.

[xxv]- البيان في غريب إعراب القران: 13.

[xxvi]- البحر المحيط، 14/1.

[xxvii]- رسالة في أسس العقيدة لمحمد بن عودة السعودي، ص 17.

[xxviii]- The Characteristics of Laf'dhul Jalaalah (Allah) - an analytical study, department of linguistics, faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, for Females, Alexandria.

[xxix]- شرح المفصل لابن يعيش، 3/1.

[xxx]- تفسير أيات من القران الكريم لمحمد بن عبد الوهاب بن سليمان النجدي، ص 12.

[xxxi]- شرح المراح في التصريف للعيني، 13.

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[xxxiii]- ترجمة لفظ الجلالة (God)؛ الموقع الرسمي لفضيلة الشيخ ناظم المسباح (nazermalmesbah.com).

[xxxiv]- الموقع الرسمي للشيخ إحسان العتيبي: هل يجوز ترجمة لفظ االجلالة "الله" بكلمة God وحكم التقاط أوراق فيها اسم الله.

[xxxv]- ترجمة لفظ الجلالة (God)؛ الموقع الرسمي لفضيلة الشيخ ناظم المسباح (nazermalmesbah.com).

[xxxvi]- Ajayi S.A. The Concept Of God In Ancient Israel And Yoruba Ontology: A Comparative Analysis, p.8. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/391667145

[xxxvii]- Though, Layi (2016) agrees that "Olorun seems to be an adjective for Eledumare. such that you hear the Yoruba people when making reference to Olodumare saying Olorun Olodumare". See, Layi, Oladipupo Sunday, and Oladipupo Sunday Layi. (2016). "Is Olodumare, God in Yoruba Belief, God?: Ā Response to Benson O. Igboin". *Kanz Philosophia : A Journal for Islamic Philosophy and Mysticism,* 6(1): 17-31. doi:10.20871/KPJIPM.V6I1.169. p. 12.

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[xli]- *Ibid.*

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Ethical approval

This study is based exclusively on the critical examination and comparative analysis of published Qur'anic translations, scholarly literature, and religious texts. It does not involve human participants, personal data, animal experimentation, or any form of empirical intervention requiring ethical oversight. Accordingly, formal ethical approval was not applicable to this research.

Authors' Contributions

Abdulhakeem Salaudeen Saffar Marindoti is the sole author of this article and assumes full responsibility for its intellectual content. The author undertook the conceptualization and design of the study, literature review, methodological development, selection and examination of the Qur'anic texts and their Yoruba translations, comparative linguistic and theological analysis, interpretation of findings, and preparation and revision of the manuscript. The author has reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Data Availability Statement

The data supporting the findings of this study consist of published Yoruba translations of the Holy Qur'an, selected Qur'anic verses, and relevant scholarly and exegetical sources. The primary materials examined include four Yoruba Qur'an translations identified as CT1, ST2, AT3, and MT4. The textual examples, comparative observations, and analytical findings are presented within the article. No original empirical datasets were generated or collected as part of this research.

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