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THE שרים IN DANIEL 10:13, 20-21: PRINCES OR BATTLE COMMANDERS?

ABSTRACT

This article examines the choice of the English term “prince” as the accepted rendering for the Hebrew term שר, in Daniel 10:13, 20-21, in English versions of the Bible. These versions influence the translations and *ipso facto* the reception of the text in most parts of the world because of their scholarly support. Using a synchronic approach to the Hebrew Bible, the study semantically analyses the Hebrew term שר in comparison to the English term “prince”. After a close examination of the translation consensus of the term, it is proposed that the literary context requires that שר be understood not as “prince” – mainly a royal term in current usage – but as “commander” or “captain” – in a military sense – considering that the role of the שרים in Daniel 10 was a military battle.

1. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that the most widely used modern English versions of the Bible have considerable scholarly support. Bible translation worldwide, supported by Wycliffe organisations and the United Bible Societies (UBS), uses many English translation resources of the Bible. For these reasons, numerous Bible translation projects worldwide use the English versions as reference texts.¹ Thus, the translation consensus of English translation decisions is taken seriously.



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1 As in the case of the practice of bible translation in Nigeria, which is chosen as a context to illustrate the issues raised

A cursory look at the English translations of the Hebrew text shows consistency in their rendering for שר, in military and battle contexts, as “commander” or “captain” or by another similar term (see, for example, Gen. 21:22; Num. 31:14; Judg. 4:2). However, with reference to Daniel 10:13, 20-21, they seem to ignore this consistency for unclear reasons. In that text, they generally render the Hebrew term שר as “prince” and מלך as “king”, thereby implying that both terms, as used in Daniel 10:13, 20-21, are royal terms.

This article attempts to examine the accepted translation of the English versions of the Bible, with reference to the Daniel text under study. The article seeks answers to the following questions. Is the semantic range of the English term “prince” the same as the Hebrew term שר? Which semantic domain of שר is applicable to the understanding of שר in Daniel 10:13, 20-21? Is the rendering for שר, with reference to the Daniel 10 שרים, consistent with the renderings for the same term in other English translations? How does this choice of the English versions of the Bible specifically influence the translation of שר in local versions, with reference to Daniel 10? Is there a context to illustrate such an influence?

The study adopts a synchronic approach to the research questions. In comparing the semantic range of “prince” with that of שר, the study relies on the judgement of lexicographers, in the various dictionaries of modern English and ancient Hebrew, referred to, in this instance, as biblical Hebrew, in all biblical literature. To establish the semantic domain at issue in the specific texts under consideration, the study investigates the role of the שרים in the Daniel 10 narrative and considers its significance to the specific sense of the term שר within that context. Given that many English translations are used worldwide and in translation projects of the Bible, only selected versions are chosen to establish the consistency based on their wide use among religious adherents, recognition in biblical scholarship, and recognition in Bible translation practice.² Furthermore, since שר is used roughly 421 times

in this paper, apart from the original biblical languages, the language of wider communication (usually English or any other major indigenous language) is given priority over any other language. For this reason, European languages other than English are hardly considered in Nigeria. It is rare to find even a consultant on bible translation referring to such languages as German, Dutch, French, Portuguese, among others, as these are viewed as unfamiliar languages.

- 2 In this instance, I presuppose that specific versions, for which abbreviations are provided by the Society of Biblical Literature's *Handbook of style* (2014:122-123), are recognised as being supported among biblical scholars, and that those listed in the United Bible Societies' *Bible translator – Abbreviated guide to style* (2015) enjoy significant recognition in bible translation practice worldwide. Among the selected versions used in this research, the *Amplified Bible* is the only one that is in on only one of the two lists; it is of specific interest to this research because of its departure from the seeming consensus of the English Bible versions.

(Even-Shoshan 1997: 1205-1208) in the Hebrew Bible, and its usage in one context (Josh. 5:14-15) is similar to that in Daniel 10, only the Joshua 5 context is taken into account to establish the consistency and comparisons, in order to show how the English versions influence translations worldwide. Lastly, considering that Bible translation projects in several countries use English versions of the Bible as reference texts, and translation practices need not be exactly the same or totally different across countries, several examples from Nigeria illustrate the issues raised in this article. Due to the limited language abilities of Bible translators, Bible translation consultants, and preferences of the receptor language communities, in practice, most of the translation tools and reference versions used are, besides the original biblical languages, either in English or follow the same pattern as the English language resources. The practice of Bible translation in Nigeria supports local translations, by comparing them with well-known English versions, in addition to versions in the dominant indigenous languages.

2. THE SEMANTIC RANGE OF “PRINCE” AND שר

A survey of standard dictionaries of the English language shows that the most commonly recognised meaning of the term “prince” is its reference to royalty (Hornby 2019:1163; Mayor 2009:1377; Rundell 2005:1100; Mish 2003:n.p.; McKeown & Summers 2006:n.p.; *Cambridge English Dictionary*). Merriam-Webster (Mish 2003:n.p.) gives an analogical meaning of the term as “one likened to a prince *esp.* a man of high rank or of high standing in his class or profession”. The *Cambridge English Dictionary* associates the analogical meaning with professional excellence (Hornby 2019:1163; Mayor 2009:1377; Rundell 2005:1100).

On the other hand, the biblical Hebrew term שר has been identified as having several meanings besides the ones expressed by the English term “prince”. Niehr (2004:207) notes that שר generally means “an official or officer”, regardless of the nation in question – Moab (Num. 22:8, 13-15, 21, 35, 40; 23:6, 17); Midian (Judg. 7:25; 8:3); the Philistines (1 Sam. 18:30; 29:3-4, 9); Ammon (2 Sam. 10:3; 1 Chron. 19:3); Assyria (Isa. 10:8; 31:9); Egypt (Isa. 19:11, 13); Edom (Isa. 34:12); Babylon (Jer. 38:17-18, 22; 39:3; 50:35; 51:57), and Elam (Jer. 49:38). Niehr (2004:196) also observes that, when it occurs in close association to a king, the שר is usually the king’s subordinate (2 Kgs 11:14; 1 Chron. 24:6; Ezek. 17:12; Dan. 9:6, 8). In such instances, שר is used with reference to various categories of office holders, including “officials associated with court administration”, “members of the military”, and “representatives of the upper classes” (Niehr 2004:198). The *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* outlines 17 semantic domains for שר, of which one is particularly attested to in the Dead Sea Scrolls. The first meaning for the term

in the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* is the military sense (Clines 1993-2016). This lengthy list of meanings is worth citing in full:

Military officer, army commander, captain, general ... prince, national leader, ruler, official ... royal majordomo, chief of royal household, courtier, steward ... tribal chief, chieftain, leader of clan ... head of household ... ruler of a district, provincial governor ... city governor ... magistrate, arbiter ... religious leader, cultic overseer ... notable, distinguished individual ... warden of prison ... chief herdsman ... taskmaster ... music-master ... leader of itinerants ... angelic prince ... Divine Prince; chief of the gods ... in the DSS, a. Prince of Light, Prince of Lights. (Clines 2011:182. See also Koehler *et al.* 1999:1350-1352; Brown *et al.* 1907:8269).

This survey of dictionaries shows that the biblical Hebrew term has a much wider semantic range than the English term “prince” in modern usage, even with its analogical application beyond royalty. The various domains show that the meaning of a שר in a particular context is determined more by the role the שר plays than by the kind of being the שר is. Hence, angels, human beings and deities could be chiefs, princes, and captains, depending on their roles in a given context. Therefore, to establish the correct rendering for שר in the passage under consideration would require a clear definition of what role the שרים play in that narrative. Since the שרים and מלכי פרס both occur in Daniel 10:13, and שרים are normally subordinate to their kings, it is important to distinguish their roles.

3. THE ROLE OF THE שרים IN THE DANIEL 10 NARRATIVE

There are at least three opinions on the question: What did the princes and kings do? One opinion is that the celestial beings were possibly scapegoats for the misfortunes of Israel who had Yahweh as their patron and keeper. According to this perspective, the inclusion of intermediaries between Yahweh and the world was meant to point out that, if Israel faced any misfortunes, Yahweh was not to blame. A second opinion is that the princes were playing the role of national patrons in a protective cosmic battle for their nations. Some scholars take this further, stating that Michael was to Israel in Daniel what Yahweh was to it in Deuteronomy (Collins 1993:374). A third opinion is that Michael was playing a protective role for Israel, by engaging the human rulers of Persia, identified in the text as the prince and kings of Persia. Thus, according to this view, the princes of Persia and Greece as well as Michael and Gabriel were playing the role of influencers.

Arguing for the first opinion, Anderson (1984:126) considers the possibility that the narrative about the angels and the princes of Persia and Greece was meant to explain the woes of Israel when it was expected to be under the protection of an all-powerful deity. In this study, Anderson's suggestion is plausible. This view assumes that the narrator of Daniel thought that Yahweh ruled the world through intermediaries. From that perspective, the woes of Israel could be explained as resulting from the oppressive works of the gods of the nations whom the Daniel 10 שרִים represent. A particular case in point is where Daniel 11:39 considers the success of the oppressive king, presumably Antiochus Epiphanes, by referring to the support he obtained from an alien god. With the wide scholarly acceptance of the dating of the visions of Daniel to the difficult times of Israel under Antiochus Epiphanes, Anderson's suggestion fits the narrative. Such is the perspective reflected in Psalms 82, dated by many commentators (with a few exceptions) to post-exilic times, and generally recognised as a liturgical psalm (Dahood 2008:268; Gerstenberger 2001:114-115; Hossfeld & Zenger 2005:332; Tate 1990:333). Being a liturgical psalm, it must have been in circulation and, for that reason, it could have been known to the narrator of the Book of Daniel. The Jews felt unjustly treated by Antiochus who discriminated against them because of their faith and ancestral traditions (1 Macc. 2:19-20). This is consistent with the accusation against the gods in Psalm 82:2-3 that they were responsible for the oppressive situation in the world of the psalmist. Again, the cry at the end of Psalm 82:8, calling on Yahweh to judge the earth, would be the kind of cry the Jews of the Daniel narrative would raise, especially in a liturgical setting. Thus, the conflict situation involving the שרִים represented a conflict of interest among the patron deities of the nations. In summary, the scholars who argue for this first opinion hold that the Daniel 10 narrative explains the oppressive situation in which the Jews found themselves, in terms of interference with the execution of the will of Yahweh by his messengers. Such "malevolent" celestial beings, known as the princes of Persia and Greece, impede the operations of Yahweh's "benevolent" messengers.

The second opinion presupposes that the beings in the battle were playing roles ascribed to the gods of the nations in the ancient Near East and early Judaism (Deut. 4:19; 32:8 [4QDeut^d and LXX]; Josh. 24:15; Judg. 5:19-20; 2 Kgs 18:35; Isa. 24:21; 36:20; Ps. 82; 1 En. 9:1; 20:5; 71:9; Sir 17:17; Jub. 15:31-32; Babylonian and Canaanite mythology) (see Hartman & Di Lella 2008:283; Speiser 1969:60-72; Ginsberg 1969:129-142; Péter-Contesse & Ellington 1993:270). However, as noted earlier, the usage of שר in the Hebrew Bible shows that, where there is a king, a שר is subservient to the king as the king's appointee, and that official role could be a military or a civil one. In Daniel 10:13, kings and princes are mentioned in close association in that the battle is recorded not only as one against the prince of the kingdom of Persia,

but also as one against the kings of Persia.³ The majority opinion of scholars is that the שרים were in a battle of the gods and were patron deities, to whom Yahweh was believed to have given charge of the nations. The problem with this understanding is that it does not account for the role of the מלכי פרס in the Daniel 10:13 text. If the שר מלכות פרס (prince of the kingdom of Persia) was the national patron deity of Persia, what would be the role of those מלכי פרס (kings of Persia)? The שרים of Persia and Greece need not be gods to engage in such battles; they could be serving the gods by fighting in defence of the interest of those gods – Michael for Yahweh, and the princes of Persia and Greece for their national gods. Such a situation would suggest that it may not be safe to suppose, as Collins does, that Michael replaced Yahweh as the patron deity of Israel (Collins 1974:32-3; 1975:601; 1993:374); he only defended Yahweh's interest in his role as helper to Yahweh's messenger.

In support of the third opinion, Calvin distinguished the role of Yahweh's messengers from those of the princes of Persia and Greece, whom he thought were human rulers (Myers 1998). In his view, they were not playing analogous roles. Calvin holds that Michael was playing a protective role for Israel, by influencing the rulers of Persia to act in ways that were favourable to Israel. According to this view, the battle was a legal or verbal battle in the Persian court and not a military type of battle. Citing 1 Chronicles 21:1 as an example where Satan, a celestial being, influenced David to go against Yahweh's will by taking a census, Stevens (2000:419) supports this third position, arguing that Michael, Gabriel, and the prince of Persia could have operated through human mediation in the Persian court. On this basis, Stevens (2000:419) disagrees with Bruce (1984:86) who held that a human being could not have withstood an angel in the manner described in Daniel 10. In support of his argument against Bruce's position, Stevens cites Daniel 8:25, where Antiochus Epiphanes, the little horn, opposed not simply an angel, but the God of Israel. However, contrary to Stevens' argument, it is evident in the Hebrew Bible that ancient Israel did not believe that human beings could withstand angels for long. To illustrate this ancient perspective, two texts, in which angels engage human beings in conflict situations, are particularly helpful – the angel's wrestling match against Jacob (Gen. 32:23-33) and the angel at war against the Assyrian army (2 Kgs 19:34-35; 2 Chron. 32:20-21). Although the text

3 6QpapDan and Theodotion texts have שר מלכות פרס and τοῦ βασιλείας Περσῶν (kingdom of Persia); the LXX text has τοῦ βασιλείωσ Περσῶν (king of Persia) against the MT text which has שר מלכי פרס (kings of Persia). 6QpapDan and Theodotion's, on the one hand, and LXX readings, on the other, can be explained as different attempts to harmonise the reading שר מלכות פרס Daniel 10:13a with the reading about the kings in Daniel 10:13b. The MT, on the other hand, is generally held to have an older history; and its reading best explains the others, considering that it has a more difficult reading that could have prompted the attempts at harmony. Therefore, the MT is taken to be the more original reading.

is not quite clear about who exactly the being was, the Genesis narrative of Jacob's wrestling with an angel (or God) shows that Jacob suffered an injury (Gen. 32:26). In the case of the angel of God released against the Assyrian army, a single angel defeated a large and powerful Assyrian army in one night, by killing as many as 180,000 soldiers (2 Kgs 19:35). Even if someone doubts the historicity of the narrative about the defeat of the Assyrians, it does not vitiate the argument that it shows what ancient Israel thought about how powerful an angel could be. The narrator of Daniel was likely familiar with such thinking and may not have digressed from it. Similarly, Stevens' assertion that the princes could have worked through human mediation is not well supported. His example of Satan in Chronicles is unclear, in that the text does not tell clearly what kind of celestial being Satan was. Among the various categories of celestial beings (especially among מלאכים, רוח, and שרים) in the Hebrew Bible, the one usually reported as operating through human mediation is the רוח (Num. 24:2-3; Judg. 14:6; 1 Sam. 18:10; 19:9; 1 Kgs 22:19-22). Stevens has not established that Satan was a שר nor has he shown that a שר played that role elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible. Detaining an angel on a divine assignment for 21 days would require more than verbal persuasion. Certainly, force of a specific kind would be needed to hold such an angel. Without ruling out the possibility of a legal aspect to the battle, this study does not consider it plausible to think that merely a battle without force kept Gabriel in one place for that long.

There is evidence of an early understanding in the Old Greek of the שרים of Persia and Greece as being military. The early Jewish translator of the Old Greek understood the שרים of Persia and Greece as playing military roles in that narrative; hence, his choice of *στρατηγός* for its rendering. For unclear reasons, this translator limits his use of *στρατηγός* to the princes of Persia and Greece. With reference to Michael, the same translator chooses two different terms: *ἄρχων* for Daniel 10:13 and *ἄγγελος* for Daniel 10:21 and 12:1. Whether the translator was distinguishing between the function or the nature – human/divine – of the שרים of Persia and Greece, on the one hand, and Michael and Gabriel, on the other, is not immediately clear. Meadowcroft (1995:252-254; 2004:102) interprets this distinction in the choice of vocabulary to mean that the Old Greek translator intended to show that the שרים of Persia and Greece were human beings, whereas Michael was not. This argument is weak when weighed against the fact that a similar term *ἀρχιστρατηγός* is used with reference to clearly celestial figures (Josh. 5:14; 3 Bar. 11:14; 2 En. 33:10). This article considers the use of *στρατηγός* for those beings to imply that they had a military function.

Theodotion's Daniel offers a different interpretation for שר. It uses the term *ἄρχων* for all the שרים in all the relevant Daniel texts. Evidence from

usage shows that ἄρχων has a narrower semantic range in comparison to שר. Muraoka (2009:96) notes only two semantic domains for ἄρχων in the Septuagint – a ruler, and someone charged with important functions. Muraoka (2009:639) also notes that στρατηγός could refer to a military commander (LXX Jer. 28:23; Ezek. 23:6) or a regional governor (2 Macc. 10:11). The first of these two options is more applicable to Daniel 10:13, considering that, in both instances of LXX Jeremiah and Ezekiel, στρατηγός is a Greek rendering for שר while in the case of 2 Maccabees it is not. This suggests that the English term “prince” has a closer semantic range to ἄρχων than it does to στρατηγός. Theodotion’s practice of using “stereotyped translation, associating one and only one Greek word with any one Hebrew word” smacks of poor context sensitivity, especially with reference to such a Hebrew word with a broad semantic range as שר (Joosten 2015:221).⁴ Thus, there is more reason to trust the Old Greek rendering of this term in Daniel 10 than Theodotion’s. At least, the Old Greek shows sensitivity to the military semantic domain of שר by its choice of a military term for it. Although the Old Greek is known for its wide textual variation with the Masoretic Text (Metzger 1993:39), Daniel 10 is not one of the Old Greek portions where such variation is attested. Therefore, a comparison of the semantic domains of ἄρχων, στρατηγός, and שר, in addition to contextual considerations in determining correct word choices for a translation, support the word choice of the Old Greek over against Theodotion’s choice, which seems to be the main influence behind the word choice of the English versions. Perhaps Metzger’s (1993:39) words might be taken as an explanation for such influence by Theodotion:

The [LXX] translation of the Book of Daniel was so deficient that it was wholly rejected by the Christian church, and a translation made ... by Theodotion was used from the fourth century onward in its place.

4. CONSISTENCE OF THE ENGLISH VERSIONS CONCERNING שר

Different versions of the Bible take different translation decisions on the same words in different contexts. The same is true of the renderings for שר in the English versions. There seems to be a general agreement that שר would be understood as a commander in a military context. However, determining such a context does not always appear to be easy (Harris *et al.* 1999:885). For example, of its 421 occurrences in the Hebrew Bible, the *New International Version* translates שר as “commander” 110 times and “prince” 51 times (in

⁴ Smith (2015:31) rightly warned “a word without their worlds, without their internal literary contexts and external cultural realities, is not a word, as any user would have understood it.”

both singular and plural). The *Authorized Version* renders שר as “captain” (a synonymous military term for “commander”) 130 times and “prince” 208 times in its translation (Kohlenberger & Swanson 1998:8569; Strong 1996:8269).

Despite the variations in translation decisions on the term in several other contexts, there seems to be consensus on the rendering of שר in Daniel 10:13, 20-21 as “prince”, despite the wide recognition of the battle context where the term is used. The Hebrew Bible records only two instances where celestial beings in a battle context are referred to as שרים (Josh. 5:14-15; Dan. 10:13). There does not seem to be much disagreement among scholars and translations about the understanding of the שר in the Joshua text as a captain and the Daniel 10:13, 20-21 שרים as princes. Hartman and Di Lella (2008:282), as well as Collins note connections between these two texts (Anderson 1997:137). Collins (1975:601) argues that the designation of Michael as a שר “must be seen as a development of the prince of the host of Yahweh who appears to Joshua in Jos. V 13”. Although throughout the Hebrew Bible, where the bearer of the title of שר is in battle or in a military setting, שר is understood as a reference to a captain or commander, scholarly reference works offer divergent views on Joshua 5:14 and Daniel 10:13, 20-21. For example, the *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT)* (Koehler *et al.* 1999:1352) offers a nuanced understanding that the two texts refer to guardian angels. For Daniel 10:13, 20, 21; 12:1, it presents שר as referring to the guardian angel of the Jews, whereas in Joshua 5:14, it refers to “the chieftain of the army of Yahweh”. On the other hand, the *Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* records two different meanings for שר in the Joshua and Daniel texts (Clines 2011:182, 184, 189). The שר in Joshua 5:14 is a “heavenly captain” belonging to the category “military officer, army commander, captain, general”, whereas in Daniel it is to be understood as referring to an “angelic prince”. Similarly, the *New Revised Standard Version*, the *New International Version*, the *English Standard Version*, the *New Living Translation*, the *New American Bible*, and the *New King James Version* have “commander” for Joshua 5:14 and “prince” for Daniel 10:13, 20-21. The *New Jerusalem Bible*, the *New American Standard Bible* and the *New Jewish Publication Society of America Tanakh* have “captain” for Joshua 5:14 and “prince” for Daniel 10:13, 20-21. The *Today’s English Version/Good News Translation* comes close to the LXX by choosing to add “angel” for its rendering of שר in Daniel 10. In Daniel 10:20-21, it renders שר as “guardian angel”, which is a departure from its choice of “angel prince” for the same term in 10:13. It is not clear whether this decision presupposes that the “princes” of the nations were equally understood to be the “guardians” of those nations. The *Amplified Bible* departs from the accepted English renderings for שר in the Daniel and Joshua texts. It renders שר as “prince” in both cases. Though consistent, this choice does not seem to take into account the battle context in both texts.

5. CONTEXTUALISATION OF שר IN NIGERIAN TRANSLATIONS

The foregoing shows that the prevailing perspective portrayed by the English term “prince” suggests that the English versions present שר in Daniel 10:13 as a royal term. The placement of שר within the royalty semantic domain in scholarly works and Bible versions has influenced local translations worldwide. A few examples from Nigeria illustrate this fact.⁵ One of the latest Hausa translations has “*sarkin yakin rundunar Yahweh*” (literally “the war chief of Yahweh’s army”) for Joshua 5:14 and “*shugaban kasar Fashiya*” (literally “leader of the land of Persia” – it is the standard Hausa expression for a head of government) for the prince of Persia in Daniel 10:13, and “*shugaban kasar Hellas*” (literally “president of Greece”) for the prince of Greece in Daniel 10:21. The same version has “*mala'ika Mikayel, daya daga cikin manyan shugabanni*” (literally “angel Michael, one of the high ranking leaders”) as translation for “Michael, one of the chief princes” in Daniel 10:13 (*Littafi Mai Tsarki* 2014). The Tiv Bible has “*kur ikumutya i TER*” (literally “commander of the Lord’s army”) for Joshua 5:14, “*ortaregh u tator u Pershia*” (literally “clan head of the kingdom of Persia”). Michael was only one of the “*mbaterev*” (clan heads) (*Icighan Bibilo* 2007). The Igbo Bible has the same term “*Onye-isi*” (“head person” – a standard expression for a human leader) for all the beings in Joshua 5:14 and Daniel 10:13, except the kings who are rendered as “*Eze*” (literally “king”) (*Bible Nso* 2006).

These examples show that the Nigerian translations attempt to contextualise the rendering for שר as a military term in Joshua 5:14 and as a royal term in Daniel 10:13. However, there seems to be no justification for differentiating the semantic domains of שר in these texts apart from relying on the consensus of English translations. The comparison of the semantic range of the two terms so far in this study has shown that “prince” is not a good equivalent for שר in Daniel 10:13, where the Hebrew term has a military connotation if the battle context is taken seriously.

5 Hausa is the business language of northern Nigeria, and Igbo is the business language of south eastern Nigeria. Tiv is spoken in central Nigeria. Of these three, Tiv has the least number of speakers; it has over one million speakers and Bible users. Igbo and Hausa each have over ten million speakers and Bible users. Though my choice of these three is done at random, I took into account the regions in Nigeria where the Bible versions in this study are used and the population size. There are other languages with large populations such as Yoruba, Ibibio, Efik, Egbira, Igala, and Fulfulde, all of which have bibles. Although they are omitted in this study, the translation tools used for their translations are the same as those for the ones chosen for this study; hence the high likelihood of showing the same translation pattern as the ones chosen for this study.

6. CONCLUSION

A comparison of the semantic range of the two terms שר and “prince” has shown that שר has a much wider semantic range than “prince”. “Prince” is thus not a good equivalent for שר in a number of contexts, including battle and military contexts. Such is the case in Daniel 10.

English versions of the Bible are consistent with their renderings for שר in military and battle contexts as “captain” or “commander”. However, the test to which this study subjects the English versions shows that, when tested against their renderings for שר in Daniel 10:13 and Joshua 5:14, those versions have digressed from consistency. They render the same term in two similar contexts differently for unclear reasons. It is likely that they followed the lead of Theodotion Daniel's choice of ἄρχων over against the LXX choice of στρατηγός as the rendering for שר.

Contextualisation attempts of the selected Nigerian translations for the study have shown that those translations follow the placement of שר in Joshua 5:14 in the military semantic domain and שר in Daniel 10:13, 20-21 in the royal semantic domain. This tendency is explained by the availability of Bible translation resources used in the translation of local Bible versions, the limited language abilities of local Bible translators and translation consultants, the preferences of the communities, and the practice that emphasises weighing local translations against familiar Bible versions. The latter are usually English translations or translations in the dominant language in the environment of the receptor language communities, which is often also heavily influenced by English translations.⁶

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6 Mother tongue translations for minority languages in Nigeria often follow the lead of the existing majority of language versions of the Bible. The Hausa versions influence most of the translations in the north; the Yoruba version exercises the same influence in the south west, while the Igbo Bible exercises a similar influence in the south east and the south-south. These majority languages, Hausa and Igbo, are significantly influenced by the translation decisions of the English versions.

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