




An Analytical Study of the Translations of Genesis 1:26-27 in the Akuapem-Twi Bible



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ABSTRACT

In Ghana, the Western missionaries who introduced Christianity into the country reduced some Ghanaian languages into written form and then translated the Bible into these languages. After the missionaries left the country, the task of Bible translation was continued by Ghanaians to make the Bible accessible to various linguistic groups in the country. Out of the numerous problems that Bible translators encounter in their work is the non-availability of a word in the receptor languages to carry the exact meaning of a word in the source language. This and other challenges sometimes lead to obscurity in the translated text and the resulting theology. Of interest to the present paper, is the translation of Genesis 1:26-27 into Akuapem-Twi mother-tongue. As an exegetical study, the source texts were semantically and morpho-syntactically analysed and their renderings in the Akuapem-Twi Bible were compared. The philosophy behind the texts under study in the Akan/Twi Bibles could be largely, formal or literal equivalence (word-for-word). Though in some instances in all the Twi dialects and some other instances, in one or two dialects, the translators employed the dynamic equivalence (thought-for-thought) approach. In each of the instances, the approach adopted has either aided or distorted the interpretation of the target text. The rendering of the text (Gen.1:26-27) in the Akuapem-Twi Bible presents deviations from the source text and should consequently be revised and reread. For instance, after a careful study of ancient (source) texts such as the Masoretic Text, Septuagint and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and their comparison with the Akuapem-Twi Bible translation concerning Genesis 1:26-27, this paper argues that the Hebrew verb *āsāh* (v. 26), translated as *bɔɔ*, “created” could be rendered as *yɔɔ/yɛɛ*, “made” and the pronoun, *ōtō* (v. 27), presented as *wɔn*, “them” should be interpreted as *no*, “him,” in order to establish literary consistency with the source texts.

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INTRODUCTION

Christianity claims to be “Good News” in its mission in any language. Yet, this mission is impossible without communication.¹ Thus, translation has been a critically crucial enterprise in much of the history of Christianity.² Even the incarnation of Christ is thought of as an act of translation, where divinity became translated into humanity (Jn. 1:14).³ This original divine act of translation into humanity has occasioned a relentless series of new translations and has in so doing, rendered the authentic Christian mission to a mission by translation.⁴

Translating the sacred scriptures, which form the content of this divine translation is very significant. However, the inability to get the appropriate words to translate the content of the scriptures from the source language to the target language becomes a problem for the understanding of the scriptures.

This paper examines the translation of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures in foreign languages and communities, especially among the Akan of Ghana. It explores the definition of biblical translation, some approaches to translation, and the history of Bible translation activities in Akan languages. The study, having identified some challenges in the existing Akan Bible translations of Genesis. 1:26-27, that could impede the interpretation of the source texts in the new (Akan) environment, has critically studied both the source and the target texts, with the help of biblical study aids, methods, and approaches, and has proposed alternative readings to be adopted in the translations of the Akuapem-Twi Bible (AkTB).

Biblical Translation

Biblical translation is the proficiency and method of depicting a biblical text in a language which is different from the one in which it was originally written. Bible translation is the representation of the content of source documents (Biblical Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek texts) in such a way that the full effect and intent of the source text are made available to the reader.⁵ The Septuagint (LXX) is the product of the first biblical translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Greek language in the days of Ptolemy Philadelphus II in 250 BC in Alexandria, Egypt.⁶ This pioneering translation work was made possible on African soil and with Africans playing a key role.⁷

Attempting to present a biblical text in a foreign language in such a way that the sacred content in the source material is significantly retained in a receptive language, is the main task of Bible translation. Translations ought to be expressed using a kind of language register, which is easily comprehensible and can simultaneously retain the texts’ formality, structure, doctrinal accuracy,⁸ tense form, and theological message.

¹ Solomon Sule-Saa, “Owning the Christian Faith through Mother-Tongue Scriptures: A Case Study of the Dagomba and Konkomba of Northern Ghana,” *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (2010): 47.

² Andrew F. Walls, “A Watershed Period of Translation: The Bible in Sixteenth Century Europe and the Spread of the Christian Faith,” *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (2010): 3.

³ Andrew F. Walls, *The Missionary Movement in Christian History Studies in the Transmission of Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark/MaryKnoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 27.

⁴ Gillian Mary Bediako, “Bible Study on Translation in Christian History: Biblical Foundations in the Acts of the Apostles,” *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (2010): 11

⁵ Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Assessment of Three Problematic Texts in the Synoptic Gospels of the New Testament of the Dangme Bible,” (An unpublished Doctoral Thesis, Kumasi, Ghana: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, 2018), 69.

⁶ Tessa Rajak, *Translation and Survival: The Greek Bible of the Ancient Jewish Diaspora* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2009), 15.

⁷ John D.K. Ekem, “Early Translators and Interpreters of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures on the Gold Coast (Ghana): Two Case Studies,” *Journal of African Christian Thought*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (2010): 34.

⁸ Jude Fanwong Nkwawir, “Impact of Translating/Reading the Bible in the Vernacular in Africa,” (Master Thesis submitted to the MF Norwegian School of Theology, 2013), 10.

Some scholars assert that translation involves only transcoding words or sentences from the Source Language (SL) into a Target Language (TL) while preserving semantic and stylistic equivalence.⁹ In a differing view, Vermeer posits that “translation is not the transcoding of words or sentences from one language to another, but a complex form of action, whereby someone provides information on a text (SL) in a new situation and under changed functional, cultural and linguistic conditions, preserving formal aspects as closely as possible.”¹⁰ This is where translation imperfections usually occur in Bible versions. A translator’s ability to transpose a source material appropriately in the language, cultural and situational context of the target readers, without distorting the context and content of the source text has always been the most daunting task of biblical translation ventures.

Bible translation can be defined as the art and practice of rendering the Judeo-Christian scriptures into languages other than those in which it was formerly written, taking into consideration the culture and worldview of the new native environment.¹¹ This implies an act of revivifying the ancient Christian scriptures from the SL into a TL to make them become culturally and essentially applicable and appreciable to the indigenous readers.

Translation has been described as an act of not just translating texts but of translating people’s ways of life, cosmology and worldviews. The translation must incorporate fully, the cosmology of both the source text and the target text and their fundamental source values, philosophies and languages. It is expected of a competent translator to be an expert in both the source and target languages as well as grounded in their fundamental worldviews. A translator must be a skilled exegete of the source text and a lucid mother-tongue speaker of the receptor language. Mojola affirms that:

The languages and cultures embodied in the biblical texts are not an exclusive property of believers but of all members of the cultures that produced these texts or in which those texts were produced. These texts are only subsets of the larger culture which is by definition larger than the sum of all its parts. There is, in fact, no exclusive Christian or holy language or culture exclusive to them as such. The language of any translation is part of the language of the larger culture — of which the language of any text is only a limited manifestation.¹²

This implies that the world of the text to be translated cannot be isolated from that of the wider society within which the text was composed. The text at that stage of composition affects and takes on essential elements of the society. The competent translator would need to go behind the text to harness the historical, cultural, geographical, political, economic and religious background of that source text. The goal of every Bible translator, in the broadest sense, is to convey the meaning of the source text in the receptor language.¹³ However, while Bible translators agree that this is their principal objective, they disagree about how to achieve it. Basically, there are two competing theories of Bible translation: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence.

Formal equivalence or literal equivalence is a translation philosophy that encourages translators to endeavour to make their translations “more accurate” by presenting words, terms, figures and lexis in the readers’ language that can exactly and sufficiently express those from the source language. This philosophy fosters the need to maintain the status quo of the “Sacred Text”. Thus, it has been

⁹ Emmanuel Foster Asamoah and Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “A Critical Study of the Designation of Chapter as *Ti* by Asante-Twi Bible Readers,” *E-Journal of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (EHASS)*, Vol. 1, Issue 6, (2020): 221.

¹⁰ Hans J. Vermeer, *A Skopos Theory of Translation: Some Arguments for and Against*, (Heidelberg: Textcon Text Verlag, 1996), 50.

¹¹ Asamoah and Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “A Critical Study of the Designation of Chapter as *Ti*”, 221.

¹² Osotsi Aloo Mojola, “Bible Translation in the Context of the Text, Church and World Matrix –a Post Nida Perspective,” 154. [DOI: <https://doi.org/10.28977/jbtr.2003.2.12.141>].

¹³ Smith Kevin Gary, “Bible Translation and Relevance Theory: The Translation of Titus,” (Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor *Litterarum*, Stellenbosch, South Africa: University of Stellenbosch, 2000), 24.

accordingly described by scholars as “a word-for-word translation,” which emerges out of dogmatic presuppositions that translation does not need interpretation.¹⁴

The fundamental problem associated with the word-for-word approach is that it is interpretive, the very thing that it tries not to be.¹⁵ Kuwornu-Adjaottor asserts that word-for-word or literal translation is an awkward undertaking since words in themselves are meaningless unless people assign meaning to them.¹⁶ It is pragmatic to contend that there is no way one could understand the meaning conveyed by a word, phrase, or expression, apart from its frames of reference which encompasses the entire system of beliefs, practices, and experiences that make up the world in which such a word is used.¹⁷

Another translation philosophy, a relatively modern one, is Dynamic Equivalence or Functional Equivalence, which was propounded by Eugene Nida.¹⁸ Using the principle of “equivalent effect” from linguistics, Nida’s theory prefers translating thoughts to translating words, using uncomplicated language and style to make it understandable to the target readers.¹⁹ Bible translations using this approach are easily understood by the reader. This approach is more faithful to the goal of the Bible writers who sought to communicate in the common language of people. Translations using this approach are easier for unchurched people and new Christians to understand.²⁰

The functional equivalence theory of translation consists of reproducing in the receptor language, the closest natural equivalence of the source language, the message, in terms of meaning and style. It aims at communicating a message which is faithful to the original message, but clear and natural in the receptor’s language. This is achieved through analysis, reconstruction and transference of the source text to the target one.²¹

Translations that are intended for new converts to the Christian Faith which must display faithfulness and precision regarding the original texts may be required to make use of contemporary words, articulated in new ways, that where necessary, new vocabularies or expressions are neologised, that terms in the original text, be transliterated or adapted to the pronunciation of the mother-tongue, or that idiomatic expressions be used which express the central idea of the text.

However, the Dynamic Equivalence approach to Bible translation has been heavily criticized by some scholars to be knotty. They contend that the Dynamic Equivalence theory of translation does not endeavour to retain the structure and form of the working (source) text rather, it simply presents in a transpositional manner the very idea from the source text into a receptor’s text by providing a corresponding form of the source text. Implying that this approach is reader-oriented than source-oriented.

Noss for instance, argues that the Dynamic Equivalence approach does not draw on the theory of language, which is key to translation and thus falls short.²² Nababan bluntly states that the objective of this theory in attempting to achieve the same effect on target readers as it was in the source text readers, is unrealistic.²³ Carson affirms that the theory has been the main basis for the identification of translation imperfections by some scholars.²⁴ Mojola and Wendland postulate that Nida’s definition of

¹⁴ J. G. van der Watt, “What happens when one picks up The Greek text?” *Acta Theologica Supplementum 2* (2002):247.

¹⁵ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Assessment of Three Problematic Texts,” 80.

¹⁶ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Assessment of Three Problematic Texts,” 80.

¹⁷ T. Wilt & E. Wendland, *Scripture Frames and Framing* (Stellenbosch: African SunMedia, 2008), 249.

¹⁸ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Assessment of Three Problematic Texts,” 83.

¹⁹ Eugene. A. Nida & C. R. Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 1969/1982).

²⁰ Waard & Nida, *From One Language to Another*, 19.

²¹ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Assessment of Three Problematic Texts,” 85.

²² Philip A. Noss (ed.), *A history of Bible Translation*, (Scotland: Francis Dalrymple-Hamilton, 2007).

²³ M.R. Nababan, *Translation Theory*, (2008), cited in Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Assessment of Problematic Texts,” 86.

²⁴ D. A. Carson, “The Limits of Functional Equivalence in Bible Translation and other Limits too”, *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 56, Issues 1-4, (2005): 91.

translation is a statement or philosophy which views communication in terms of a conduit metaphor.²⁵ Porter contends that Nida does not take the theory far enough.²⁶ Others, however, believe that Nida has gone too far, and would love to retrace his steps to a more formal translational approach.²⁷ Those with this opinion, contend that the source language must be paramount, since in many instances, some of the tenets of Functional Equivalence such as communal lucidity and overemphasis toward the reader, create unnecessary digressions from the import of the sacred text.²⁸

Inasmuch as the dynamic equivalence theory has received criticisms, it has championed a significant idea that Bible translation ought not to be static but is expected to be dynamic and function-oriented in its approach, in order to communicate the message of the Bible in a simple but more meaningful way to the readers. Christians believe that the Bible is God's communication to humanity through time. Thus, humankind in all walks of life are enjoined to respond to the message of God. Dynamic principles of translation contribute immensely to bringing to pass the goal of the Bible.

Arguably, the dynamic equivalence theory is still widely used today since most translations presume a level of equivalency with the source text.²⁹ The dynamic equivalence approach is not alien to the Akan/Twi Bibles. Akan translators have widely made use of the principles of dynamic equivalence in a sweep of texts in the Twi Bibles to communicate the message in the source text to the Akan readers. This feature of the Akan/Twi Bibles makes a strong justification for continuous translation, and interpretation, retranslation and reinterpretation.

Bible Translation Activities in Akan Languages

Although, from official records, Ghanaians (Gold Coasters) encountered Christianity through the Portuguese explorers in the 1470s, the area of biblical translation and interpretation for the indigenous people, remained grey until the advent of the Dutch in the seventeenth century.³⁰ One Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein, an African slave, during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade, who had an opportunity to study Biblical Languages whilst in Holland, is accredited to be the first who translated into Mfantse (Fante-Twi),³¹ the "Lord's Prayer", the "Ten Commandments" and the "Apostles' Creed" in 1744.³² The first full Akan/Twi Bible version, "Akuapem-Twi", was published in 1871,³³ courtesy of a Basel missionary, Johann Christaller, in collaboration with indigenous people such as David Asante, Clement Anderson Akrofi and C. A. Denteh.³⁴

As it were, that translation had orthographic hitches since it was based on a common dialect, Akuapem, and was meant to be used by the Asante, Akuapem and Fante readers whose pronunciation of certain words is different. Ekem concedes that the difficulties led to the newly-revised full Bible in Akuapem-Twi and Asante-Twi bearing the titles, *Anyamesem anaa Kyerew Kronkron Akan kasa mu* and *Anyamesem anaa Twere Kronkron Akan kasa mu* (The Divine Word or Holy Scriptures in the

²⁵ Osotsi. Aloo. Mojola & R. E. Wendland, "Scripture Translation in Translation Studies", in T. Wilt, ed., *Bible Translation: Frames of Reference*, (Manchester: St. Jerome, 2003), 7.

²⁶ S. E. Porter, "Translations of the Bible (since the KJV)", in S. E. Porter, ed., *Dictionary of Biblical Criticism and Interpretation*, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 365.

²⁷ L. Ryken, *The Word of God in English: Criteria for Excellence in Bible Translation: Communicating God's Word to the World*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2002).

²⁸ Kuwornu Adjaottor, "Assessment of Problematic Texts," 87.

²⁹ J.C. Loba-Mkole, "History and Theory of Scripture Translations," *Acta Patristica et Byzantina*, 19 (2008):176.

³⁰ Ekem, "Early Translators and Interpreters of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures on the Gold Coast (Ghana): 34.

³¹ The full Fante-Twi Bible was published in 1948. Others such as the Ga Bible was produced in 1866 while that of the Ewe, was published in 1913.

³² Ekem, "Early Translators and Interpreters of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures on the Gold Coast", 34.

³³ Jan P. Sterk, "Bible Translation in Africa: Keeping up with the Times," in *Bible Translation in African Languages*, Gosnell L.O.R York and Peter M. Renju (ed.), (Nairobi: Kenya: Acton Publishers, 2004), 177.

³⁴ John D. K. Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast: The Historical, Linguistic, and Theological Settings of the Ga, Twi, Mfantse, and Ewe Bibles*, (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura; Manchester, UK: St. Jerome Publishing, 2011), 49-78.

Akan language), published in 1964.³⁵ The current versions, Akuapem-Twi and Asante-Twi (2012 edition) were similarly occasioned by the identification of some translational challenges. An ongoing Akan Bible Translation Project is the Bono-Twi Bible Project which commenced in 2017 and is estimated to be completed after ten years of its commencement. Currently, the entire New Testament has been sent to Korea for publication while the translators continue with the Old Testament.³⁶

It is instructive to state that employing an appropriate translation approach, brings ancient sacred Scriptures back to life in a contemporary Bible believing society. The relationship between ancient Bible believers and contemporary Bible believers is nothing more than theological. Majority of African Bible readers' interest in the Bible is driven by this theological quest. Translating the Bible into African indigenous languages such as Akan/Twi in order to help Akan Christians realize this theological expectation in the Bible has been undoubtedly helpful.

Suffice it to state that the evolution of the African Independent Churches (AICs), coincided with the emergence of Bible translations in the mother-tongues of the people.³⁷ The first mission churches were often thoroughly entwined to the worldviews and values of the missionaries and moreover depended on foreign translations (Bible versions), usually in the mother-tongues of the missionaries. The mother-tongue Bible was essentially, the instrument of liberation for the indigenous Christians of Africa. The Bible, translated into an indigenous language, provided a platform for the people to encounter the Bible in their own languages. They could appreciate God's self-communication to them in their own mother-tongue. That is to say, with translation, the second "Pentecost" was experienced on African soil. The African believers who have come to the Christian faith anew and were equipped with biblical knowledge could now engage the missionaries, to challenge their biblical expositions, to question the authority of the missionaries on the basis of the more reliable authority and doctrines of the Bible. The Bible in mother-tongue, therefore endowed and released the indigenous Christians of Africa to establish a personal direct relationship with the God of the Bible devoid of the intermediation of any missionary. The translated Bible thus becomes one of the most vital tools for the growth of the church in Africa and a symbol for Christian identity in a foreign milieu. As a result, believers of the Bible everywhere acknowledge the Bible as God's Word and his self-revelation to them rendered in their mother-tongue for them to appreciate and respond to God.³⁸

Factors of Translation Imperfections

Several factors account for translation imperfections in receptor languages. One is the engagement of non-mother-tongue translators whose amateurism and incompetence in the target language affect the translation negatively. This is attested to by Mojola, that "a quick look at many Bible translation journals, shows this to be the case."³⁹ The use of some other translations as source texts for third language target text, also contributes to the problem of translation imperfections. This is affirmed by Asamoah concerning some Akan/Twi Bibles that there seem to be translation and interpretation challenges facing mother-tongue readers of the Asante-Twi Bible (AsTB).⁴⁰ There is also the problem of the unavailability of words, expressions and figures in the target language that can perfectly express what is in the source language. Rhodes affirms that there is no one-to-one parallel of words between

³⁵ Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast*, 75.

³⁶ Isaac Boaheng, who is a member of the translation team of the "Bono-Twi Project" disclosed to us on June 19, 2022.

³⁷ See for example, David Barrett's writings, notably his "The Spread of the Bible and the Growth of the Church in Africa" in *UBS Bulletin*, No.128/129, 3rd and 4th Quarters (1982/1984):5-18 or William Smalley's "Translation as Mission — Bible Translation in the Modern Missionary Movement" (1991: Chapter 10 on "Translation and Indigenous Theology"). Philip C. Stine (ed), "Bible Translation and the Spread of the Church — The last 200 Years" (1990), contains some stimulating presentations on this subject.

³⁸ Mojola, "Bible Translation in the Context of the Text, Church and World Matrix," 146.

³⁹ Mojola, "Bible Translation in the Context of the Text, Church and World Matrix," 156.

⁴⁰ Emmanuel Foster Asamoah, "A Study of the Translation of *proseuche* (Acts 6:4) in the Greek New Testament and Asante-Twi Bible," *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies*, Vol. 9, Issue 2, 1-18, (2022):1.

languages, and because no two languages ever express themselves in exactly the same way, no translation will ever be absolutely perfect.⁴¹ The Akan Bibles, like other translations, have some translation challenges because of the factors alluded to so far. The current study attempts to provide a better text (Gen. 1:26-27) in the target language (Twi/Akan), especially, the AkTB.

Rendering of Genesis. 1:26 in the Akuapem-Twi Bible

Masoretic Text (Hebrew Text)

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם
 בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כִּדְמוּתֵנוּ

The Text in Akuapem-Twi Bible

*Na Onyankopɔn kae se, “Momma yɛmmɔ onipa
 sɛ yɛn sɛsɔ,*

The AsTB and the Mfantse-Twi Bibles’ translation of the text (1:26) are preferable as against that of the Akuapem-Twi Bible (AkTB). One could observe that the translators of the 2012 edition of the Asante-Twi Bible (AsTB) were to some extent, faithful to the source text. The problem identified with the text has to do with how the Hebrew verb, *עָשָׂה* ‘*āsāh*, “to make” or “he made”, has been rendered in the Akuapem-Twi Bible (AkTB). The deviation in the AkTB is found in the mistranslation of the Hebrew verb, ‘*āsāh*, as *bo*, “to create” or *boɔ*, “he created” in the clause, *yɛmmɔ onipa* (a plural form), “let us ‘create’ humankind,” instead of *yennyɔ/yennyɛ onipa*, “let us ‘make’ humankind,” as properly translated in the AsTB and the Mfantse-Twi Bible (MfTB).

Indeed, there is a significant difference between the English verbs “to make” and “to create,” just as there is between the Twi verbs *bo* “create” and *yɛ/yɔ* “make,” implying that they cannot be used interchangeably. To “create,” denotes to generate or initiate something out of nothing whereas to “make” tilts towards manufacturing or fabricating a product out of some existing materials. The creation narrative indicates that humankind was made or formed out of the dust of the ground (Gen. 3:9) whiles the universe and the rest of the things in it were created *ex-nihilo* (out of nothing) This is affirmed by the Septuagint (LXX) which renders the word, ‘*āsāh*, in Greek, as *ποιέω poieo*, “to make”, instead of “create.” Likewise, the Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (TPsJ), one of the ancient Israelite texts, which relates, “...Let us ‘make’ human in our image, in our likeness...”⁴²

It is suspected that translators of this text in the AkTB, used the dynamic equivalent theory that would suggest that since God, in Akan cosmology, is known as *Obɔadeɛ*, “the Creator,” the suitable verb to use in describing the origin of humankind as ascribed to God is, *bo* “create.” However, the use of that verb has been found to be a deviation from the source text which denotes, “to make,” implying that the translators of the text in AkTB did not rely on any of the important ancient texts, be it the MT, LXX nor TPsJ. Thus, one would agree with the renderings of the verb, ‘*āsāh*, in AsTB and the Fante-Twi Bible and suggests that the AkTB translation should be revised from *bo* “create” to *yɔ/yɛ* “make.”

The Critical Apparatus in the “*Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*,” suggests that in ancient texts such as the Samaritan Pentateuch, the Septuagint (LXX) and the Vulgate, the word, *כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ* *kidmūtēnū*, “likeness” is rather prefixed by *ו* to suggest the existence of an inseparable conjunction, *və*, to be translated as “and” or “but.” However, the conjunction is ignored in the TPsJ and the MT. This could explain the reason why in the AkTB, that conjunction does not feature. The AkTB

⁴¹ R. Rhodes, *The Complete Guide to Bible Translation: How They Were Developed* (Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 2009), 26.

⁴² Tov Rose, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862-1865), 8. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is a western targum (translation) of the Torah (Pentateuch) from the land of Israel (as opposed to the eastern Babylonian *Targum Onkelos*). The Targum is more than a translation. It includes much *Aggadic* material, collected from various sources as late as the *Midrash Rabbah* as well as earlier material from the *Talmud*. So it is a combination of a commentary and a translation. In the portions where it is pure translation, it agrees with the *Targum Onkelos*.

translators, like the Septuagint scholars, ignored the conjunction because it appeared that *kidmūtēnū*, “in our image” succeeding the word, **בְּצֶלֶם** *bəṣelem*, “in the likeness (image),” meant the same and referred to the same thing.⁴³ As a result, the AkTB translators simply render the two phrases as one, *se yen seso* “in our likeness/image,” instead of *se yen seso ne yen suban so* “in our likeness and in our image” as related in the other Twi Bibles.

Translation of Genesis 1:27 in the Akuapem-Twi Bible

The Masoretic Text (Hebrew Text):

וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת-הָאָדָם בְּצֶלֶם
 בְּצֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים בָּרָא אֹתוֹ
 זָכָר וּנְקֵבָה בָּרָא אֹתָם:

Presentation of the Text in some Twi Dialects:

Asante-Twi Bible

Na Onyankopɔn bɔɔ onipa wɔ ne suban so.
Aane, Nyankopɔn suban so na ɔbɔɔ no, ɔbarima ne ɔbaa na ɔbɔɔ wɔn.

Akuapem-Twi Bible

Enti Onyankopɔn bɔɔ onipa se ne seso;
Onyankopɔn seso so na ɔbɔɔ wɔn; ɔbarima ne ɔbea na ɔbɔɔ wɔn.

Mfantse-Twi Bible

Na Nyankopɔn bɔɔ nyimpa wɔ nankasa no su do,
Nyew, Nyankopɔn no su do na ɔbɔɔ nyimpa; ɔbɔɔ hɔn ɔbanyin nye ɔbaa.

בָּרָא *bārā*, in the Masoretic Text and its Rendering in the Akuapem-Twi Bible (Gen.1:27)

This verse (Gen. 1:27), in the creation narrative, assumes a poetic style, reflecting all the poetic elements of parallelism, repetition, rhythm etc. Robert Alter in affirming this view describes the text as a triadic line.⁴⁴ However, the Hebrew verb used in the working text (Masoretic Text), appears problematic. In v. 26, the narrator’s use of ‘*āsāh*, “to make” was very appropriate since it agrees with the object, human, who was to be made out of the ground. The narrator’s decision to opt for a different verb, **בָּרָא** *bārā*, that designates, “to create,” in the three appearances in that verse (v. 27), is unfortunate and problematic for Twi translators who want to be faithful to the source text. Hence, translators of the text (1:27) in AkTB resorted to the Twi verb, *bɔɔ*, “created.” The use of *bɔɔ* “created” for Hebrew, **בָּרָא** *bārā*, is not limited to the AkTB but it is likewise used in the two other Twi mother-tongue Bibles (AsTB and MfTB).

Interestingly, the LXX and the TPsJ translate **בָּרָא** *bārā*, differently in Genesis 1:27. The LXX, for instance, translates it as *ποιέω poieo*, “he made”⁴⁵ in the text, *καὶ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν ἄνθρωπον* “and God made the human,”⁴⁶ while the TPsJ renders it “he created.”⁴⁷ This can be accounted for when one considers the ancient Jewish tradition of reserving the verb, *bārā*, “to create” to describe Yahweh’s

⁴³ Elliger and Rudolph, *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 2.

⁴⁴ J.P. Fokkelman, “Genesis,” in *Literary Guide to the Bible*, Robert Alter and Frank Kermode eds. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1987), 36.

⁴⁵ Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, trans. by J. V. Hiebert, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 7.

⁴⁶ Bible Works 9.

⁴⁷ Rose, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, 8.

creative ability, as what is playing out forcefully in the Targum and the Masoretic texts, which originated from Israel.

There is therefore the need for an emendation of the verb, **בָּרָא** *bārā*, in the MT as it appears in Genesis 1: 27, to establish a consistent idea as found in 1: 26 of the MT and the LXX, to theologize a possible view that in the creation narratives, humans were made from the ground (Gen. 2:7) but not created out of nothing. This study suggests that the verb, *bārā*, in Genesis. 1:27, translated as *בָּרָא* “created,” in the AkTB, should be amended to *יָצָא* “made.”

Translation of the Hebrew Pronoun, **אִתּוֹ** ‘*ōtō*, (1:27) in the Akuapem-Twi Bible

The Hebrew punctuation mark, *athnah* (which functions as a comma/semi colon), which breaks a sentence into two parts, has been identified under the Hebrew pronoun, **אִתּוֹ** ‘*ōtō*, “him.” This punctuation is relevant, in that it indicates that the succeeding phrase provides a detailed explanation of what has been said earlier. Clearly the renderings in all the Twi Bibles follow what is found in the MT. Nevertheless, one observes that the Akuapem-Twi Bible presents a translation imperfection, regarding the Hebrew pronoun, ‘*ōtō*, “him,” in the second apposition clause, as *wɔn* “them,” instead of *no/ɔno*, “him.” Morphologically, ‘*ōtō*, is a pronoun, the third masculine singular, denoting, “him.” Its plural form, **אִתָּם** ‘*ōtām*, which appears in the second clause of the same text, denotes, “them,” Twi – *wɔn*. One may agree that there is a translation challenge, which could be described as a clear mistake, or an oversight but one could also see the role of the dynamic equivalence approach, which resulted in the imperfection in the text. Translators might have assumed that since the second clause, *ɔbarima ne ɔbea na ɔbɔɔ wɔn*, “male and female He created them,” is an explanation of the first clause, *Onyankopɔn seso so na ɔbɔɔ wɔn (no)*, “God made them (him) in His image,” it was better for them to ignore the literary form of ‘*ōtō*, “him,” in the source text, so that the seeming contradiction between ‘*ōtō*, “him,” and **אִתָּם** ‘*ōtām*, “them,” in the two clauses would be resolved. Nevertheless, this is not the case in the AkTB. That idea has rather created a conundrum for readers of the text in the AkTB.

A critical study of the text (1:27) in its original source indicates that the narrator introduced no contradiction in his presentation. The topical sentence, **וַיַּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם בְּצַלְמוֹ** *vayyibrā ēlōhim ‘et- hā’ādām bəšalmō*, “and God created the human in his image,” settles the dust, where he includes a definite article, **הָ** *hā*, “the,” to show the definiteness of the object (human), who is being described. This implies that the narrator refers to a specific human, a view that easily synchronises with the pronoun, ‘*ōtō*, “him,” in the immediate statement that follows it, but adds that this human was made in two sexes – male and female, hence the plural form, ‘*ōtām*, “them” in the last sentence. All of this is to contend that the attempt to translate ‘*ōtō*, as *wɔn*, “them,” instead of *no/ɔno*, “him,” in order to reconcile it with ‘*ōtām*, “them,” *wɔn*, in the last clause, is unnecessary and inconsequential.

Alternative Translation of Genesis 1:26-27 in the Akuapem-Twi Bible

From the foregoing textual analysis of the renderings of the text (Gen. 1:26-27) in the Akuapem-Twi Bible, this paper postulates below, an alternative translation for Akan readers:

Na Onyankopɔn kae se, “Momma yennyɔ onipa se yen seso, na onni po mu mpataa, wim nnomaa, anantwi ne mmoa a wɔye keka ne biribiara a ewea n’afuru so wɔ asase so no so.”²⁶ Enti Onyankopɔn yɔɔ onipa se ne seso; Onyankopɔn seso so na ɔyɔɔ no; ɔbarima ne ɔbea na ɔyɔɔ wɔn.²⁷ And God said, “Let us make human in our likeness, to govern the fish of the sea, the birds of the skies, and over all the livestock and over the whole of the earth and over all the creeping animals that crawl on the earth.”²⁶ And God made the human in his image; in the image of God, they were made; male and female, he made them.²⁷

CONCLUSION

Biblical scholars and Bible translators agree that the use of Formal Equivalence approach in Bible translation can sometimes result in meaninglessness and indecipherable sentences in target texts.

Hence, the need for Dynamic Equivalence in some circumstances. However, Dynamic Equivalence approach must be employed with circumspection because it can cause a translator to present a different or another text altogether.

This paper has drawn attention to inaccuracies in the rendition of selected Hebrew terminologies into the Akuapem-Twi mother-tongue version of the Hebrew Scripture (Gen. 1:26-27). The paper has shown clearly that the translators' use of the Dynamic Equivalence approach in translating the Hebrew terms, אָסָח 'āsāh, (Gen. 1:26) and אֹתוֹ 'ōtō, (Gen. 1:27) was unwarranted. As a result, this work has suggested the use of Formal or Literal Equivalence approach in rendering these Hebrew terms in the AkTB. The alternative translations provided in the study are meant to provide the Akan Christian community with an accurate, faithful and natural translation that will enhance mother-tongue theologizing. The paper recommends that the use of the Twi verb, bɔɔ, "created" to translate the Hebrew verb, אָסָח 'āsāh, "make," (Gen. 1:26), should be revised to yɔ/yɛ, "make," similarly, its use as a past tense, bɔɔ, בָּרָא bārā, "created," in Genesis 1:27 with regards to the coming into existence of humankind, needs to be reread in all the Akan mother-tongue Bibles to establish a coherent theology of the origin of human existence. Furthermore, in the same text (Gen. 1:27), this study contends that the Hebrew pronoun, אֹתוֹ 'ōtō, which has been completely mistranslated in the AkTB as wɔn, "them," must be corrected to no, "him," to properly represent the source text in the target text. This work will therefore prompt a holistic analysis of other Ghanaian mother-tongue translations and probably lead to a revision of existing versions.

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