# BIBLE TRANSLATION, THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

## A CRITICAL STUDY OF JOHN 2:1-4 FROM AN EWE PERSPECTIVE

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# DEDICATION

To our lovely wives, Mama Agnes Dueduah Misiame and Mama Gloria Boaheng.

Misiame also dedicates this work to his Father, Mr. Daniel Edo Misiame,

his Mother, Mrs. Esther Atsideku Misiame and

four beautiful daughters: Nissi, Charissa, Theodora and Evangelyn.

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# PREFACE

The intersection of Bible translation, theology, and culture is a rich and complex field of study. As the Word of God is translated into diverse languages and contexts, questions arise about how to faithfully convey the original meaning while also allowing the text to speak powerfully within a particular cultural framework. This book, *Bible Translation, Theology and Culture: A Critical Study of John 2:1-4 from an Ewe Perspective*, tackles these important issues through a focused examination of John 2:1-4, the account of Jesus turning water into wine at the wedding in Cana. The authors explore the historical, linguistic, and cultural background of the text, both in its original Jewish context and in the Ewe worldview, to offer fresh insights that will benefit biblical scholars, translators, and all who seek to apply Scripture faithfully in their cultural settings.

The book is organised into five chapters that guide the reader through the key issues. Chapter 1 lays the groundwork by introducing the book while Chapter 2 provides a theoretical review of Bible translation and interpretation, with a focus on the Ewe context. Chapter 3 presents an exegetical interpretation of John 2:1-4, exploring the text's background, structure, and implications. Chapter 4 is particularly illuminating, as it considers the role of women in Ewe culture and compares it to the Jewish context, drawing out the analytical implications for Ewe mother-tongue Bible readers. Finally, Chapter 5 summarises the key findings and offers a general conclusion to the book.

As the global church continues to grow and mature, we must engage in thoughtful, culturally sensitive biblical interpretation and translation. This book makes a valuable contribution to that ongoing conversation, demonstrating how a careful, contextual reading of Scripture can yield fresh insights and applications for the church today.

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# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ABS | - | African Biblical Studies |
| Deut | - | Deuteronomy |
| ESV | - | English Standard Version |
| EPCG | - | Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana |
| Ex | - | Exodus |
| Joh | - | John |
| Matt | - | Matthew |
| Mk | - | Mark |
| MTBH | - | Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics |
| NAB | - | National Accreditation Board |
| Num | - | Numbers |
| RL | - | Receptor Language |
| Rev | - | Revelation |
| SL | - | Source Language |
| TL | - | Target Language |
| L1 | - | First Language |

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# CHAPTER ONE
# GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## Why this book

The Bible declares that "All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and training in righteousness. (2 Tim.3:16, NRSV)." Although the Bible was inspired by God, we cannot look sight of individuals who translated it into different languages. Bible translation is the process of rendering a biblical text from the source language to any other language taking into consideration the religio-cultural and linguistic contexts of the people for whom the translation is done.[1] Structuralism and deconstruction are the two main philosophies that underpin Bible translation. Peter Kirk admits that among the proponents of structuralism philosophy are Friedrich Schleiermacher and Ernest-August Gutt. Structuralists believe that the Bible is inspired and inerrant and should not be altered.[2] This is in contrast to Jacques Derrida's deconstruction theory, which is backed by Eugene Nida and other scholars. Deconstructionists contend that to make the Bible relevant to the intended audience, meaning must be created through the reader as a result of the way language is used. According to Lewis Sperry Chafer, "Inspiration is the term used to describe the spiritual direction provided by the Holy Spirit to people who wrote the Old and New Testaments."[3] People

[1] Isaac Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators: Series in Language and Linguistics* (Wilmington: Delaware, 2022), 7.
[2] Peter Kirk, "Holy Communicative: Current Approaches to Bible Translation Worldwide," in *Translation and Religion: Holy Untraslatable*, ed. L. Long (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 2005), 92.
[3] Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Dallas, TX: Dallas Seminary Press,1947), 1: 61.

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from different ethnic groups in Ghana need to read and understand the Scriptures from the Greco-Roman world in their language and apply them to their lives.

Isaac Boaheng and Frederick Mawusi Amevenku assert that "Language is the hallmark and most enduring artifact of any society. It plays significant roles in social interaction and transmission of religious and socio-cultural values across diverse cultures and generations."[4] Bible translations present their challenges, and as a result, there are many ambiguities in many mother-tongue Scriptures. Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor quoting Lamin Sanneh revealed that, before any translation of the Bible into vernacular, the important concepts of Christianity should be adopted into local vocabulary, idioms, customs and conceptions.[5] From creation till now, God's message to humanity has gone through various translations to be able to reach its recipients.

According to Eugene A. Nida, Bible translation is a scientific, interdisciplinary process that converts a text from one language into another to communicate a biblical meaning.[6] Nida adds that translating the Bible is difficult. The process of getting a new text entails decoding the source text on multiple levels and encoding it to fit into the Receptor Language's (RL) linguistic, literary, and cultural traditions. This adds complexity to the process.

Basil Hatim and Jeremy Munday have defined translation as the process of transferring information from a source language (SL) to a translating language, considering the specific socio-cultural context of the receptor community. They contend that SL denotes

[4] Frederick Mawusi Amevenku and Isaac Boaheng, *Biblical Exegesis in African Context* (Wilmington: Vernon Press 2021), 79.
[5] Jonathan E.T Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "African Biblical Hermeneutics: A Methodology for Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics," *E-journal of Religious and Theological Studies* 1, no. 2 (2015): 9.
[6] Eugene A. Nida, "The Paradoxes of Translation,"*The Bible Translator* 42,(2), (1991): 6.

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the language from which a translation is made (the source text). However, RL designates the language into which a translation is done. Translation, according to Katharine Barnwell, is "re-telling the meaning of the original message in a way that is natural in the language into which the translation is being made as precisely as possible".[7]

Additionally, according to Van der Watt and Y. Kruger, to accurately read a text and translate it into a target language, the translator should try to ascertain the meaning of the source text.[8] They added that in addition to linguistic components, historical and sociocultural details on the setting in which the original text was produced should also be considered when interpreting a text. Furthermore, it is crucial to understand how words are constructed semantically to establish the source text. Lexicography and phonology are components of semantics, the formation of sentences, which includes syntax and some stylistic features like figurative language, metaphors, symbols, idioms, sarcasm, irony, etc. Paragraph structures encompass various elements such as the genre of texts, which involve micro, maso, and macro genres. The sociocultural and historical context of the text is taken into account, including the understanding of the world prior to and after the text. This context encompasses factors like society, geography, history, and other relevant aspects of the specific community for whom the source document was intended. This demonstrates that every meaningful Bible translation project must take into account the cultural component.[9]

[7] Katharine Barnwell, *Bible Translation: An Introductory Course in Translation Principles*, 3rd ed (Texas: SIL International, 1999), 8.
[8] Jan G. Van der Watt and Yolanda Kruger, "Some Considerations on Bible Translation as Complex Process," *Acta Theologica Supplementum* 2 (2002):16.
[9] Watt and Kruger, "Some Considerations on Bible Translation as Complex Process," 16-17.

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Referring to language and translation, John D. Hannah asserts that, Martin Luther offered his viewpoint on the German translation of the Old Testament. [10] He says, "I endeavored to make Moses a German that no one would suspect that he was a Jew."[11] The translation of the Hebrew and the Greek Bible into the various languages in the world has not ceased despite translation problems. In the same manner, it is important for Bible translators who translate the original biblical language into various mother tongues in Ghana to consider the religio-cultural sensitivities of the receptor communities into consideration. John Kwamena Ekem has been producing and urging others to develop context-sensitive studies that help the receptor communities for mother-tongue theologizing.[12]

Finding appropriate local African terminology through interpretation and reinterpretation is a major component of mother-tongue Bible translation. This kind of translation is more challenging than using words from the missionaries' tongue, but it is more fruitful in terms of producing a more accurate translation.[13] Every effort must be made to enhance the translations already made into other mother tongue languages so that people might hear God speak to them in those languages and apply the truth to their daily lives. This is because the same God who revealed himself to the writers of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures is the same God who works through the Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Bible Translators.[14] This appears to justify the more frequent release of new Mother-Tongue

[10] John D. Hannah, *The Reformation of the Church: The Early Modern Period 1500-1650* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2009), 8.
[11] Hannah, *The Reformation of the Church*, 8.
[12] John D. K. Ekem, "Interpreting the Lord's Prayer in the Context of Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Hermeneutics" in *Journal of African Christian Thought* 10, no. 2 (2007): 48.
[13] John D. K. Ekem, "Professional Chair Inaugural Address" in *Journal of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics* 1(2015a): 166, 158-74.
[14] Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "African Biblical Hermeneutics," 20.

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Bible editions. The first Ewe Bible translation project began in 1858 and completed in 1914; it was reviewed in 1931. After that, it needed to be revised in the year 2012 to incorporate the new findings into the new version. However, there seem to be some translational challenges which need to be resolved.

There are some controversies about how some Scriptures should be translated into non-biblical languages. These have developed as a result of translation issues that must be resolved. Kuwornu- Adjaottor has stressed that the formal equivalence or word-for-word translation approach which is an attempt to reproduce Greek and Hebrew as exactly as possible into English is an impossible task in mother-tongue Bible translations.[15] He adds that, because languages rarely correspond at the same level, translation is not a matter of locating word equivalents in a different language. This makes translation of the Bible into a receptor language (RL) very difficult. Bible translators sometimes face the challenge of translating some terms and figures into the RL because the RL may not have the exact expression for the source language (SL) of the text. Also, because thought patterns and syntax differ from language to language, faithful communication of the meaning of the writers of the Bible demands frequent modification in sentence structure and constant regard for the contextual meanings of words. Some expressions used in the Ewe mother-tongue Bible is inappropriate. This led the Bible Society of Ghana to release a new version of the Ewe Bible in 2012, thus incorporating the new findings into the new version. The idea was to produce a Bible that would be an accurate translation and have clarity and literary quality, and so prove suitable for teaching, preaching, and public

[15] Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Mother-Tongue Bible, Resources for African Biblical Studies."(Ph.D., Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology-Kumasi, 2012), 23.

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and private reading for the Ewe community. Even though this Bible has been revised, there are still problem texts such as John 2:1-4 where the translators maintained the word-for-word or formal equivalence for some words in verses three and four. Yohanes 2:3-4 "*Eye esi wein mede wo nu la, Yesu dada gblɔ nɛ bena: Wein mele wo si o.* 4. *Yesu gblɔ ne bena: Nyɔnu, nya kae le mia kple wo dome maha? Nye gafofo medo hade o."*

John 2:3-4 reads, *"*When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, 'They have no wine.' 4 And Jesus said to her, 'Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come".

The text stated above in John 2:1-4 has raised scholarly debates among Bible translators and theologians. Some scholars, like Gert Knepper, fiercely contend that the term *γύναι* should never be taken to mean "mother," given that the language so blatantly avoids addressing the issue. Knepper argues that Jesus' salutation of his mother as "woman" in Greek is actually as rude as it appears in the English translation, but not likely with overtones of arrogance.[16] Raymond Brown notes that there are no instances in the Bible where a son is seen calling his mother as "woman" in Hebrew or in Greek scriptures. His complex meaning retains the fact that it is not an indication of disrespect or a vulgar term nor a sign of an absence of respect.[17] The challenge of the text in John 2:1-4 is not with the translated language since the Jewish society is a patriarchal society and their culture allows that. However, in the Ewe traditional culture, motherhood is highly revered and cherished, one does not address his/her mother as such in public. This could be described as culturally indifferent to the RL. The respect that Ewe people have for the Bible may be related, in part at least, to the affinities that readers detect between the biblical and Ewe world-views. This

[16] Knepper, "Nida's *Γύναι*: Eugene Nida's Views on the Use of *Γύναι* in John 2:4", 167.
[17] Brown, "The Gospel According to John (i-xii)," 99.

provides the avenue for Biblical Students to challenge the status quo and make a drastic impact on the theological landscape which is able to affect future translations that will be culturally sensitive to the RL. There is a need for its translated equivalence to close the cultural gap. The book sought to find out the implications of the exegetical analysis of John 2:1-4 and its implications for the Ewe Mother-Tongue Bible readers and propose an alternative translation which will address the socio-cultural needs of the Ewe community in Ghana.

The justification for this work is that the research sought to fill the methodological gap by using the Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutical approach and qualitative research method to study John 2:1-4 in the Ewe mother-tongue Bible for the Ewe community. Additionally, the research sought to fill the translational gap of naturalness. Isaac Boaheng posited that a good translation must have at least four key features namely; naturalness, accuracy, clarity and acceptability.[18] He adds that, even though a translation is correct and clear, it may not seem natural. Naturalness suggests sincerity. In the text under review, the research sought to correct the seeming lack of naturalness and acceptability associated with the translated text in the Ewe mother-tongue Bible. Some scholars like Raymond Brown have argued that, Jesus used that statement to honour his mother in public and that it is a polite response[19]. In the authors 's opinion, this translated response in verse 4 "*Yesu gblɔ ne bena: Nyɔnu, nya kae le mia kple wo dome maha? Nye gafofo medo hade o."* seems to suggest a lack of naturalness and acceptability in the Ewe socio-cultural society.

[18] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 11.
[19] Brown, "The Gospel According to John (i-xii)," 99.

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## Research Approach Used

The authors employed a mixed methodology. The qualitative research methodology and the Mother-tongue Biblical methodology were used for the research. To find and understand the significance that people or groups attribute to a societal or interpersonal circumstance, qualitative research was applied.[20] This research process entails field investigations, interview techniques, data collection which commonly occurs in the setting of the subject, logical analysis of the data that advances from specific information to broad concepts, and the authors 's evaluation of the significance of the findings are all part of this research process. The format of the final report is flexible. The book also employed the Kuwornu-Adjaottor's nine-step Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutical methodology. This method contains both the exegetical part and the interview aspect. It is a step-by-step process that examines, adopts, and transforms scriptural words and phrases to contextualise the written word of God for native Bible-reading societies.

***The nine steps are as follows:***

Choose a biblical passage that you believe has been incorrectly translated into your native language, explain why this is problematic for your society, describe the approach you'll choose and its proponents, use Bible study tools, such as dictionaries, commentaries, encyclopedias, word study aids, etc. to conduct a study (an exegesis) of the text, learn what experts have stated about the text, their interpretations, and the logic behind those views, talk about how the idea is used in your language and culture; conduct interviews with native speakers of your mother tongue to gain a deeper understanding of the idea you are exploring. Use native terms

[20] John Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Approaches* (London: SAGE Publications, 2014), 4.

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and define them in English. Make a comparison of your work with other local languages you can understand, interpret the translations into your mother tongue. How do the Hebrew and Greek meanings of the text compare? What distinguishes them from one another? What could have caused the translational discrepancies? Finally, propose your own translation that can fit into your culture.[21]

**Data**

To gather data, the purposive sampling method was used to select twenty-five (25) participants who are indigenes of Anlo land and can fluently speak the Anlo- Ewe language. Also, five (5) Ministers of the Gospel who are natives of Anlo land and fluent speakers of the Ewe language were interviewed to give their interpretations and implications of the statement as used in John 2: 1-4.

**Organisation of the book**

The research work was organised into five (5) chapters as follows. The first chapter served as an overall introduction to the whole work. It covered the study's background, problem statement and justification, objectives and goals, research objectives and questions, methodology, significance of the study, limitations, and organisation of chapters. A theoretical review of Bible translation and interpretation, brief history and philosophies of Bible translation in Africa, Exegetical considerations of Bible translations, Relative Value of Language, Linguistic Exegesis, Contextual Exegesis, and the history of the translation of the Ewe Bible are all covered in chapter two.

The third chapter presents an exegetical interpretation of the text. It discussed the background of the Johannine gospel, the

[21] Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Mother-Tongue Bible, Resources for African Biblical Studies," 23.

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delimitation of the text to determine the pericope, the structure of the text, the implications of the exegetical interpretation, the homiletical situation of the text, the role of women in Ancient Jewish society, and linguistic analysis of the vocative *Γύναι* (Woman).

Chapter Four considered women, culture, Christianity among the Ewe, a brief history of the Anlo-Ewe people political traditions of the Indigenous Ewe, some religious beliefs of the Ewe, Ewe Anthropology and gender construction, Motherhood in the Ewe culture, women in Ewe culture versus women in Jewish culture, and the analytical implications of John 2:1- 4 for the Ewe mother-tongue Bible readers.

Chapter Five served as the concluding section of the book. It included a summary of the entire work, highlighting the major findings and addressing the emerging issues from the study. Furthermore, this chapter provided recommendations and drew conclusions based on the findings.

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# CHAPTER TWO
# BIBLE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter explores the foundational principles and background of Bible translation, with a focus on the historical context of translation efforts in Africa, particularly Ghana. It delves into exegetical considerations, examining how translators balance conveying the original meaning of biblical texts with the cultural and linguistic nuances of the target language, highlighting the relative value of language in this process. The chapter also introduces linguistic exegesis as a vital approach to translation work, using the history of Bible translation into the Ewe language as a case study to illustrate the broader challenges and developments in Bible translation within African contexts.

## Bible Translation

The transmission of the revelation from God to man centers mainly on three significant historical developments in human history. These are the inventions of writing before 3000 BC; the beginnings of translation before 200 BC; and the development of printing before AD 1600.[22] It is a widely accepted fact that no other book has been translated into as many languages or has undergone as many translations over a long period as the Bible. No other literary work is still the subject of such intense translation activity around the globe. The Septuagint (LXX), which is the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek in the centuries just before the Common Era, is the first major Bible translation.[23] Although the practice of orally

[22] Norman L. Geisler & William E. Nix, *From God to Us: How we got our Bible* (Chicago: Moody Publications, 1974), 187.
[23] Aloo Osotsi Mojola, "Bible Translation in Africa – a Brief Historical Overview," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 15,no. 2 (December 2012), 5: 1-15.

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translating the Bible dates back to times before the first Hebrew Scriptures were committed to writing, the complex and fascinating history of Bible translation began in earnest with this translation.

Translating etymologically means carrying across. Contextually, to translate could also mean to carry across a text or a message in a given medium[24]. In a more general term, translation could be categorized into three: translation as a process and a product or an academic field of study. Translation as a process could be defined as a means of transferring information from a SL to a receptive language taking into consideration the specific socio-cultural context of the people into consideration.[25] Furthermore, translational studies is an academic discipline responsible for the "challenges raised by the production and description of translation.[26] The theoretical and historical components of translation are also part of the academic field of study. Similarly, translation could also mean the transmission of meaning in a text in one language SL and the construction, in another language, of a corresponding text, which is known as the target text TL.[27] In the words of Katharine Barnwell, translation means reproducing the Judeo-Christian scriptures as faithfully as you can while maintaining their inherent meaning in the non-biblical language you are translating them into.[28] Another scholar, Roman Jacobson categorised translation into three categories. These are :

a. Intralingual or Rewording: That is, translating and explaining in the words of the same language.

[24] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 4.
[25] Basil Hatim and Jeremy Munday, *Translation: An Advanced Resource Book* (London: Routledge, 2004), 6.
[26] Sugeng Hariyanto, *Website Translation: with special reference to English – Indonesian language Pair* (Malang: CV Transkomunika Kencana, 2002), 19.
[27] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 215.
[28] Barnwell, *Bible Translation: An Introductory Course in Translation Principles*, 8.

b. Translation Proper or Interlingual translation: That is, translating from one language into another.
c. Transmutation or Intersemiotic translation: Translation from one linguistic medium to another or transmission from a non-verbal system to another. This can be seen in paintings, music or artwork.[29]

A summary of Jacobson's distinction could mean that translation can take place in the same language by rewording, summarising, paraphrasing or commenting in the same language. Intralingaul translation is usually overlooked in translation discussions. However, intralingual translation is the reinterpretation of the message from one linguistic medium to another linguistic medium or from verbal to nonverbal modes.

From the above discussions, the translation of a language from Greek into the Ewe language or the interpretation from Dangme to Asante Twi from Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek into another language must consider the culture of the receptor community. Put in another way, Bible translation is the act of transferring the message of the Bible from the original text to the intended audience in a particular geographical community. An essential distinction is made between an exact representation of the text and a version that preserves the literary excellence, theological grandeur, and most importantly, the spiritual message of the Bible is the main goal of the Bible translator.[30] It is incumbent on the translator to navigate between two socio-cultural environments, that is, the Biblical and the receptive cultures. Translation as a system of communication involves the sender, who sends the message in a

[29] Roman Jakobson, "*On Linguistic Aspects of Translation" In Language in literature*. Eds. Krystina Pomorska and Stephen Rudy (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1987), 429.
[30] Andreas J. Köstenberger and Leonard Scott Kellum, *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: B&H Publishing, 2009), 36.

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coded way, and the receiver, who decodes the message. The translator acts as a mediator in the communicative aspect of translation. It must be noted that the translator acts as an agent of transformation and change because there is no guarantee that the recipient would be able to interpret the sender's message accordingly.[31] In the words of Jacobus Marias, the translator has an active hand in the intercultural process because language is always embedded in the cultural and ideological structure of a given people.[32] Considering the process of translation, Snell-Horby posits that the text and its linguistic components are the starting point for the translator.

Based on the text's structure, the translator/reader constructs his or her scenarios according to their level of expertise and internalised knowledge of the subject matter.[33] By this act, the translator impacts and is influenced by the setting because a translation cannot travel to new surroundings without acclimatising to the new setting. This can be said that translation affects its new environs.[34] Translation can be said to be performing surgery on languages by removing and replacing a text in one language with another. Simply described, it is the substitution of text in one language with text equivalents in another language.[35] The main idea of translation is changing the meaning of a message from a SL to TL/RL. Three factors are involved in the form of the communicative

[31] Maria Tymoczko, *Enlarging Translation: Empowering Translators* (Manchester: St Jerome, 2007), 67.
[32] Jacobus Marais, "The Language Practitioner as Agent: The Implications of Recent Trends in Research for Language Practice in Africa," *JNGS* 6/3 (2008): 35.
[33] Mary Snell-Horby, *Translation Studies: An integrated approach* (Amsterdam-Philadelphia: John Benjamin Publishing Company, 1988), 81.
[34] Cynthia L. Miller-Naudé and Jacobus A. Naudé, "The Translator as an Agent of Change and Transformation: The Case of Translating Biblical Proverbs," *OTE* 23/2 (2010): 306.
[35] Hariyanto, *Website Translation*, 20.

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aspect of translation. These are: the message which consists of form, content and receiver.

## Historical Overview of Bible Translation in Africa

Bible translation was basically the enterprise of foreign missionaries who were assisted by indigenous co-workers from Africa.[36] Eugene Nida described Bible translation as the deliberate, multidisciplinary process of translating a text from the SL into the RL to transmit a biblical message from one language to another.[37] He further added that Bible translation is a complicated task, which demands the skill of decoding and encoding the source text to conform to the socio-cultural needs of the receptor language.[38] It is important to remember that before beginning Bible translation on this continent, none of the European missionaries received training in African linguistics.[39] The journey of Bible translation on the continent has seen very significant and challenging stages to achieve some level of success.[40] Yorke and Renju distinguished three key eras in the development of Bible translation in Africa. They were the Biblical and Early Church Epoch, the Missionary Epoch, and the Modern Epoch.[41]

## Biblical and Early Church Era

Bible translation was part of the agenda for spreading the Gospel and Church planting on the African continent during the early days

[36] Ype Schaaf, *On that way Rejoicing: The History and Role of the Bible in Africa* (Kenya: Paternoster Press Publication, 1994), 154.
[37] Nida, "The Paradoxes of Translation," 5.
[38] Nida, "The Paradoxes of Translation," 5.
[39] Schaaf, *On that way Rejoicing*, 54.
[40] Gosnell L.O. Yorke and Peter M. Renju, eds., *Bible Translation & African Languages*. (Nairobi: Action Publishers, 2004), 17.
[41] Yorke and Renju, *Bible Translations & African Language*, 17.

of Missions.[42] It is believed that Bible translation in Africa commenced long ago before Christianity on African soil. Aloo Osotsi Mojola revealed that the Septuagint is believed to have been translated about two to three centuries before the birth of Christ in the city of Alexandria in Egypt.[43] According to Atta Akosa, the beginning of the Bible translation could date around 260 BC.[44] In the years that followed, Bible translation in Africa is thought to have been influenced by Philip's meeting with the Ethiopian Eunuch described in the Acts of the Apostles. This represents the second face after the Septuagint. Scholars alleged that he returned to announce the Christian faith to his people in Nubia, his hometown.[45] Yorke and Renju claim that Christians were able to create literature for worship by employing the Greek script to write their native Nubian language.[46] In other words, the Christians wrote their Nubian language using the Greek alphabet and they were able to develop literature for worship.[47] They intentionally translated some portions of the Greek text into their native language. This buttresses the point that before the coming of the missionaries to Africa to translate the Bible into African indigenous languages, some Africans, especially the Nubians, had already undertaken that initiative, showing their resourcefulness.

[42]Michel Kenmogne, "Engaging with the Current Context of Bible Translation in Africa: Anglophone and Francophone Initiative, "*Journal of African Christian Thought,* 15, no. 2 (2012), 33. 33-49

[43]Aloo Osotsi Mojola, "Bible Translation in Africa- a brief Historical Overview," 5

[44] Thomas Atta Akosa, "The Language Factor in African Christian Mission: Bible Translation and Biblical Interpretation in the African Church" in, *African Christian Mission thought* 15, no.2 (2012): 21. 20-35.

[45] Yorke and Renju, *Bible Translation and Africa, Language,* 10.

[46] Yorke and Renju, *Bible Translations & African Language,* 10.

[47] Yorke and Renju, *Bible Translations & African Language,* 11.

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## The Missionary Era

The 19th Century European Evangelical and Missionary Awakening represents the second movement of Bible translation and the growth of Christianity in Africa, according to Aloo Osotsi Mojola[48]. The period was characterised by the establishment of Bible Society movements and the commanding urge to evangelise the world. It was also the period of the development of vernacular Bibles in African languages.[49] It is established that the second upsurge of Bible translation was greatly controlled by missionaries from Europe, who were assisted by African indigenes. However, the third wave was mainly pioneered by African mother-tongue speakers.[50] Mojola indicated that most of the translation philosophies used during the period included functional equivalent, dynamic equivalence, lieral and meaning-based equivalence.[51] He further indicated that translators focused on languages that were mutually beneficial to many ethnic groups.[52] He added that translators concentrated on languages that various ethnic groups shared. Yorke and Renju opined that the gospel of Mark was the first mother-tongue Bible to be published in modern Africa, and it was the first published in the Bullom language in Sierra Leone. It is significant to highlight that the 19th century saw the beginning of Bible translation and publications in Africa. Significantly, Bible translation and publications in Africa gained root in the 19th century.[53] The first New Testament in Amharic was translated in 1829, but the Geez was printed way back in 1549.[54] The period also

[48] Aloo Osotsi Mojola, "Bible Translation in Africa- a brief Historical Overview, 5.
[49] Yorke and Renju, *Bible Translations & African Language*, 11.
[50] Gilbert Ansre and Paul Opoku-Mensah, "New Directions for Bible Translation in Africa." *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 15 no. 2 (2021), 1.1- 15.
[51] Mojola, "*Bible Translation in Africa*," 5.
[52] Mojola, "*Bible Translation in Africa*," 8.
[53] Yorke and Renju, *Bible Translations & African Language*, 12.
[54] Yorke and Renju, *Bible Translations & African Language*, 11

saw the establishment of management boards to superintend National Bible Societies in Africa.[55] The Tswana Catechism and the Gospel of Luke are said to have been translated in 1830.[56] It is important to note that, North Cameroon hosted the first Bible translation course in the year 1961.[57]

Samuel Ajayi Crowther represents another tradition of Bible translation in Africa. He is a native of Yoruba and was born in present-day Nigeria. On the day of his mother's baptism, according to historical accounts, he translated the baptismal ritual into Yoruba.[58] Before the Yoruba New Testament was made available in 1862, Crowther had started translating some of the books.[59]

**Modern Era**

One of the key individuals representing the modern era of Bible translation in Africa is Cardinal Charles Levigerie. He did not translate, but he set the rules for the Missionaries of Africa and Missionary Sisters of Africa, also known as White Fathers and White Sisters.[60] Lavigerie highlighted reverence for indigenous socio-cultural practices and admonished the white fathers and sisters to acquire the native language of the Africans and record their oral traditions. He taught them to write grammar and dictionaries in areas where their languages were not developed. Furthermore, he admonished them to translate the Gospels and write the catechism into the local languages of the people.[61] The first Bible to be translated and published into the Berber language was done in 1869 under the careful planning of Cardinal Lavigerie. In 1905, the

[55] Schaaf, *On that way Rejoicing in Africa*, 133.
[56] Yorke and Renju, *Bible Translations & African Language*, 13.
[57] Schaaf, *On that way Rejoicing in Africa*, 133.
[58] Yorke and Renju, *Bible Translations & African Language*, 14.
[59] Yorke and Renju, *Bible Translations & African Language*, 14.
[60] Yorke and Renju, *Bible Translations & African Language*, 16.
[61] Yorke and Renju, *Bible Translations & African Language*, 77.

Gospel and Acts were published for the first time in Uganda and the Zanzibar dialect of Swahili.[62] Having traced the historical account of Bible translation to the twentieth century in Africa, the focus will be shifted to Bible translation in Ghana.

## A Brief History of Bible Translation in Ghana

The 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC) in Ghana revealed that the population of Christians in Ghana was twenty-one million, nine hundred and thirty-two thousand, seven hundred and eight (21, 932,708) representing seventy-one-point three percent (71.3%).[63] This means that this large number of people is guided in one way or another by Bible. This is particularly true during church services, family devotions, Bible studies, prayer gatherings and for academic purposes.[64] The affinity for the Bible has led many Christians to request scriptures in their mother tongue to understand God's word in their language. Bible translation in Ghana started centuries back. Jacobus Capitein was appointed chaplain of Elmina Castle following his ordination as the first African Protestant Minister in the Netherlands Reformed Church.[65] He then translated the Twelve Articles of Faith into Fante, which is a language used on the Gold Coast. This was one of Ghana's first translations.[66] Although the Basel missionaries should be commended for their groundbreaking achievement in translation, the works of native translators like David Asante, C.A. Akrofi and H. J. Keteku are now much more

[62] Yorke and Renju, *Bible Translations & African Language*, 17.
[63] Ghana Statistical Service, 2021 Population and Housing Census, Religious Analytical Report, GSS, Accra, Ghana, 25.
[64] Mary N. Getui, *Interpreting the New Testament in Africa*, (Nairobi: Action Publishers, 2005), 31.
[65] Schaaf, *On their way Rejoicing in Africa*, 37.
[66] John David Kwamena Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana): The historical, linguistiand theological settings of Ga, Twi, Mfantse, and Ewe Bibles.* (Rome & Manchester: American Bible Societies, 2011), 15.

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important and pertinent. The various mother-tongue Bibles in Ghana have been metamorphosized from other Bible translation works. According to Senavoc, the Basel Mission produced an Akuapem-Twi writing system. The mission dispatched Christaller to the Gold Coast in 1853, where he dedicated himself entirely to the study of Twi.[67] In 1866, Presbyterian Johannes Zimmermann translated the Bible into Ga, and in 1871, J.G. Christaller did the same in Twi.[68] Aside from his Akuapem Twi Bible, Christaller carried out research and released numerous hymns, Bible stories, and prayers in Twi. His early works included a Twi and Fante grammar that was finished in 1875, plus 3600 Twi idioms and proverbs completed in 1879, as well as the renowned Twi Dictionary he published in 1881.[69] Africans were required by Basel Committee policy to hear the Gospel, read the Bible, and participate in worship and education in their local mother tongue. After demonstrating the translation process for the Twi Bible, a brief historical overview of translation ideologies will be attempted.

**Philosophies of Translation**

Translation theories are the methodologies, approaches or strategies used in rendering a text from one language into another. Since the emergence of translation activities, various philosophies and theories of translation have emerged. Different scholars have argued for different theories of translation including literalist, relevance, interpretive, functionalist, descriptive, text-linguistic, comparative, professional, literary-rhetorical and intercultural approaches. For

[67] Juliana Senavoe, "The effect of Non-Translation of the Scriptures, among the Guan of Southern Ghana- Some Preliminary Findings," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 5, no.1 (June 2002): 48.

[68]Benhardt Yemo Quarshie, "Doing Biblical Studies in the African Context-The Challenge of Mother- Tongue Scripture -*Journal of African Christian Thought* 5, no.1 (2002): 4, 1-10.

[69] Senavoe, "The effect of Non-Translation of the Scriptures, 48.

the purpose of this book, literalist, relevance, functionalist, and text-linguistic approaches were considered.

**Structuralism**

The philosophy which believes that the accuracy or faithfulness to the original biblical text should be preserved at all costs. This is known as foreignisation, formal correspondence or direct translation.[70] It maintains that the Bible should be read as a sacred document that should not be altered and that readers of the Bible should become used to the culture and language and understand it for what it is. Ernst Gutt reaffirmed that structuralists demand that readers of translated works become familiar with the source text's context of history and culture.[71] There is a genuine concern for preserving the exact meaning of the Sacred Text.

**Brief History of Structuralism**

Structuralism began in part with the Geneva School of Linguistics and the work of Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913). It started with his course in General Linguistics which was first published in 1916 based on his lecture notes collected by his students. These notes now serve as the beginning (the Magna Carta) of modern structural linguistics. He underscored the significance of synchronism over diachronic analysis in linguistic study which had become the turning point for this study. This philosophy presents different types of approaches and patterns, than a system, a theory, or a well-formulated thesis. It must be noted that different methods propounded by different proponents sometimes struggle to agree with one another about the entire context. Furthermore, structuralism is a discipline that can be useful in other areas like

[70] Kirk, "Holy Communicative," 92.
[71] Kirk, "Holy Communicative," 92.

mathematics, anthropology, psychology, and physics.[72] In the 1960s, literary structuralism became a major school.[73] This theory is defined in translation as a literal translation. It seeks to translate as far as possible, the precise import of the source text in the translated language. It is called word-for-word translation and can be described as rigid.[74]

**Ideologies of Structuralism**

Structuralism is not antagonistic to the original methods of analysing holy scriptures, however, it comes in part as a response to be added. Its proponents like Claude Levi Strauss and Bill Stencil argue that the traditional method was hypothetical when trying to identify what lies behind the text,[75] or in recovering the historical process of how the text came into being.[76] Another ideology is characterised by the complete dependence on the author over the source text for its meaning whose real meaning, however, cannot be stated.[77] Given this challenge, synchronic analysis is chosen over diachronic analysis in structuralism because synchronic analysis dominates.[78] Furthermore, in this theory, the meaning of the text does not depend on the author and the world behind the text. Rather,

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[72]James Barr, "*Revelation Through History in the Old Testament and in Modern Theology*," *Int* 17 (1963): 210.

[73] Howard Felperin, *Beyond Deconstruction* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985), 74, cited in Tremper Longman III, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation,* vol. 3 (Michigan: Zondervan, 1987), 29.

[74] Geisler and Nix, *From God to Us*, 188.

[75] Peter W. Macky, "The Coming Revolution: The New Literary Approach to New Testament Interpretation," in *A Guide to Contemporary Hermeneutics: Major Trends in Biblical Interpretation,* ed. Donald K. McKim (Michigan: Eerdmans, 1989), 268.

[76] Macky, "The Coming Revolution: The New Literary Approach to New Testament Interpretation," 267.

[77] William W. Klein, Craig L. Blomberg and Robert L. Hubbard, Jr., *Introduction of Biblical Interpretation* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1993), 429.

[78] Bernard C. Lategun, "Directions in Contemporary Exegesis: Between Historicism and Structuralism," *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* (1978), 236.

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it claims the sovereignty of the text over the idiosyncrasies of the author and his world.[79] Another characteristic is that, since texts are not alone but have deep structures, meaning does not reside in the author but in the texts and their structures.[80] Significantly, the deep structure of a text denotes the fundamental meaning, purpose, and relationship with other characters and objects, in a narrative, and most particularly, the types of obstructions and their determinations that change as the text discloses,[81] issues related to the plot, motifs, characterisation, theme; or in poetry: rhyme, parallelism, meter and others are referred to as surface structure.[82]

Concerning the above discussions, Biblical meaning does not descend from the heavens, but it can be said to be the outcome of the fundamental and unseen structures called deep and preconscious structure, called the socio-economical, psychological and cultural, which is non-historical and may not be identified by the author.[83] The surface structure is therefore deemed insignificant in discovering the meaning of the text.[84] Apart from the above, structuralists believe that the meaning of a word can be derived from word systems because a single word is meaningless unless it is in relation to other words in contrast to one another.[85]

One key component of structuralism is the value of language in spoken or written form. Structuralism believes that language is not just formed, nonetheless, it is the product of one's thoughtfulness. Additionally, structuralists accept that a word or

[79] Lategun, "Directions in Contemporary Exegesis," 236.
[80] Wilburn T. Stancil, "Structuralism and New Testament Studies," *Southwestern Journal of Theology* 22, no. 2 (1980): 43, 40-50.
[81] Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical,* 428.
[82] Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical,* 428.
[83] Stanley E. Porter and Jason C. Robinson, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory* (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2011), 196.
[84] Klein, Blomberg and Hubbard, *Introduction to Biblical,* 428
[85] Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics: An Introduction to Interpretive Theory,* 196.

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sign consists of a concept (signified) together with a sound or image (signifier).[86] It is believed that there could be variations in the connections between the signified and the signifier because the motive of the structuralist is to identify the underlying structure or outcome of the text in question.

**Challenges**

The mission of hermeneutics is consequently a total failure in structuralism if one's knowledge of the meaning of the text refers to the authorial intent and the reader's engagement with the text. Structuralists believe that the inner structure of a text, which the author may not be aware of, contains meaning.[87] The arrangement or structure of the linguistic indicators in the text or the author's aesthetic labor is all that remains of a text's meaning when it is read outside of its historical context.[88] As a result, synchronism,, which helps to provide a variety of meanings for the text, paradoxically turns to become a weakness to structuralism. It can result in complete denial of the value of history, as of well as the intended meaning whereby the text to be vulnerable to misinterpretation.[89] Due to its high level of complexity, its almost esoteric terminology, and its extremely limited ability to aid in the understanding of the text, which for many structuralists is not even a concern. Longman claims that structuralism has prevented and most likely will continue to prevent the vast majority of biblical scholars from actively participating in Bible translation.[90] Because different professionals employ it differently depending on their needs, there is no standard

[86] Porter and Robinson, *Hermeneutics:An Introduction to Interpretive Theory,* 196.
[87] Stancil, "Structuralism and New Testament Studies," 48.
[88] Stancil, "Structuralism and New Testament Studies," 48-49.
[89] Stancil, "Structuralism and New Testament Studies," 48-49.
[90] Vern S. Poythress, "Structuralism and Biblical Studies, *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society*", 21 no.3(1978): 233, 221-237

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technique or substance for applying structuralism in biblical studies. They also seem to dispute with one another, not just concerning the contents (theories) but also about the basic concept.[91]

**Linguistic Approach (Formal Equivalence/ Word for Word)**

The most well-known example of linguistic methods of translation is the formal equivalence (also known as literal equivalence) theory of translation. The Latin word *littera*, meaning letter, is where the word literal first appeared.[92] A literal translation concentrates on the very letters (that is, the words generated by the letters themselves) and seeks to precisely replicate and reproduce the words of the source text in the target text. The word serves as the fundamental translational unit in this method. As a result, a literal translation converts text from one language to another, that is, from the SL to the target language.[93] It means one word at a time, with or without preserving the meaning of the original whole. It is essential to achieve correlations that are phrase for phrase, poetry for poetry, sentence for sentence, or concept for concept. This form of translation, known as gloss translation, aims to give the reader the context of the best understanding of the original language.[94]

The formal equivalence method of translation, as described by Robert P. Martin, is as follows: The translator is fascinated with the connection of paragraph to paragraph, sentence to sentence, clause to clause, phrase to phrase, and word to word when viewed from this philosophical standpoint.[95] The formal equivalence

[91] Tremper Longman, *Literary Approaches to Biblical Interpretation*, vol. 3. (Michigan: Zondervan, 1987), 59.
[92] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 12.
[93] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 12.
[94] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 13.
[95] Robert P. Martin, *Accuracy of Translation and the New International Version*, (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1989), 8.

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maintains how the original text expresses its concepts. According to the grammar of the target language, translation philosophy or methodology tries to say what it says. The formal equivalence translator tries not to change the idioms that the original writer used; instead, he aims to render them more or less literally, even though clear recipient language expression does not always permit him to do so.[96] The English Standard Version (ESV) Committee's citation that follows is relevant at this point: The ESV aims to convey each Biblical author's distinctive voice and exact words as closely as possible.[97]

It is an essentially literal translation.[98] This places a focus on word-for-word correspondence while also accounting for variations between current literary English and the SL's grammar, syntax, and idiom. As a result, it aims to be transparent to the original text, allowing the reader to perceive the original's structure and content as clearly as possible.[99] By contrasting the text in the recipient culture with the text in the source culture, one can ascertain the precision and accuracy of a translation based on this theory. Using this strategy, words in the source and target languages are meant to be equivalent.[100] Here, the linguistic connection between these two words is important rather than their cultural connotations in their chosen language. According to formal equivalence theory, taking the Bible literally is the best approach to assist the reader in comprehending the world of the Bible.

This philosophy is particularly based on the theological supposition of the inspiration of Scriptures. It is predicated on the

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[96] Robert P. Martin, *Accuracy of Translation and the New International Version*, 8.
[97] *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version* (Peabody, ME: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), ix.
[98] Robert P. Martin, *Accuracy of Translation and the New International Version*, 8.
[99] *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*, ix.
[100] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 13

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idea that translation entails transferring the grammatical structures and vocabulary of the original text.[101] Therefore, it places a strong emphasis on maintaining the original language's grammatical and lexical features. Interpretation plays a role in every translation in some way. The formal equivalency approach minimises this to a minimal minimum because, according to this philosophy, exegetes, commentators, and expositors, not translators, are responsible for interpretation.[102] As a result, the translator must focus on what the text actually says, rather than what it actually means. For theology students who want to understand the Biblical languages but cannot read Hebrew or Greek, literal translations are particularly helpful.

Nevertheless, the literal method of translation has come under fire for being insensitive to the linguistic and socio-cultural settings of the receptor culture.[103] The grammatical and stylistic patterns of the RL are prone to distortion, which compromises the message. Because those words are rarely used in isolation, this method frequently results in muddled translations because it does not take context into account.[104]

Therefore, a literal translation of a word may sometimes cause hermeneutical and exegetical issues to its readers. Examples of translations based on formal equivalence include the King James II (KJ II, 1971), the New King James Version (NKJV, 1982), the New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1971), and its important modification, the New American Standard Bible, Updated Edition (NASU, 1995).[105]

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[101] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 91.
[102] Ernst R. Wendland, "Theology and Ministry in Africa through Bible translation: 'How firm a foundation?'"*The Bible Translator* 57(4), 206-216, 208.
[103] Wendland, "Theology and Ministry in Africa through Bible translation, 208.
[104] Wendland, "Theology and Ministry in Africa through Bible translation, 208.
[105] Wendland, "Theology and Ministry in Africa through Bible translation, 209.

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**Deconstruction Philosophy in Bible Translation**

Deconstruction is a type of philosophy used to interpret a text to modify it rather than destroy it. This theory holds that truth is determined by one's perspective and that meaning is relative to society and circumstance.[106] Lois Tyson offers the following explanation of deconstruction as it relates to literature. Literature is as unstable, dynamic and ambiguous as the language of which it is composed. This means it is not a stable element residing in the text for us to uncover or passively consume.[107]

Meaning cannot be discovered or passively ingested since it does not exist as a stable element in the text. To be discovered or passively ingested, meaning must be an aspect that is stable and present in the text.[108] As the reader reads, they construct meaning for themselves. Put in another way, meaning is created through the reader as a result of the way language is used. Also, the meaning that is formed lacks a stable component capable of bringing an end to a matter; in other words, no interpretation is definitive. Literary writings, like all texts, are made up of many overlapping, contradictory meanings that are in constant motion with one another and with ourselves.[109] Another viewpoint contends that the Bible's translation ought to be as interesting and pertinent as possible to make it relevant to the intended audience. This is known as domestication, dynamic equivalence, or indirect translation, in contrast to the prior hypothesis.

Dynamic equivalence-based translations are more effective in connecting their readers immediately and intimately and giving them the impression that they speak directly to them, as claimed by

[106] Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide* (New York/London: Routledge, 2006), 258.
[107] Tyson, *Critical Theory Today,* 258.
[108] Eugene A. Nida, Principles of Correspondence,136.
[109] Tyson, *Critical Theory Today,* 259.

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Ciampa.[110] Nida, a linguist and the creator of the Dynamic Equivalence Theory stated that his purpose was to effectively communicate the Good News about Jesus Christ across all kinds of cultural and linguistic obstacles, and they appeared to do this more successfully. Although the first method is more genuine to the original text, readers may be misled because of a lack of contextual and cultural knowledge.[111] Although some scholars worry that the latter technique runs a serious risk of being unreliable or even deceptive, it may be more pertinent and simpler to understand. In practice, translations typically steer clear of these two extremes and instead find a creative middle ground. The truth is conditioned by one's perspective, according to this theory, and meaning is relative to society and circumstance.

In Bible translation, there are four different kinds of equivalence: linguistic which is the similarity between words of the SL and the translating language; paradigmatic which presents the similarity between grammatical components; stylistic which describes the similarity in the meaning or impact of the expressed text or message; and textual or syntagmatic which describes the similarity in the structure and form of the texts.[112] However, despite the different kinds of approaches, it is sometimes impossible to attain equivalence due to linguistic distinctions and historical backgrounds of the source and receptor worlds. Notwithstanding this barrier, the translator is nevertheless expected to convey the message in the RL as closely as possible, first in terms of equivalency in meaning and subsequently in terms of literary

[110] Emilius Roy Ciampa, "Ideological challenges for Bible translators," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology, 28,* no. 32. (2011): 132, 140-150.
[111] Eugene A. Nida, "Principles of Correspondence." In: Venuti, L., Ed., *The Translation Studies Reader* (London; Routledge, 1964),136.
[112] Eugene A. Nida, Principles of Correspondence,137.

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form.[113] Although this barrier exists, the translator is nevertheless obliged to express the meaning in the RL as accurately as possible, first in terms of meaning equivalence and then in terms of literary form. As long as the text's meaning does not change, it is allowed to modify the literary form when translating.

**Linguistics Approach to Deconstruction Theory (Dynamic/Functional Equivalence)**

According to Eugen Nida, before the middle of the 20th century, most translations were literal. In the middle of the twentieth century, Nida led an effort to develop the dynamic equivalence theory of Bible translation. Nida claims that communication in general includes translation.[114] Based on the coding model of communication, he proposed two key assumptions: first, that any message may be conveyed to any addressee in any language if the most effective means of expression are found; and second, that everyone has a core universal experience that makes such communication possible. Nida suggested that a translation is said to have this feature, following the dynamic equivalence theory, when the message of the source text has been translated into the target language to the point where the target's response is almost identical to that of the original receptors.[115] By focusing on thought-for-thought translation, which aims to make the receiver the center of the communication, Nida attempted to shift the focus away from word-for-word translation or strict adherence to the source text's word choice, grammar, or syntax. According to Nida, the purpose of translation is to preserve all of the dynamic or meaning qualities of

[113] Eugene A. Nida, Principles of Correspondence,138.
[114] Eugene Albert Nida and Charles Russell Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 200.
[115] Eugene Albert Nida and Charles Russell Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 200.

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the original text. The translator is not required to maintain the original text format. The closest natural counterpart to the message in the SL is called dynamic equivalence.[116]

This definition includes three crucial words. The first phrase, equivalent, refers to the message carried by the source text or language. The second term, natural, refers to the RL. The third term, closest, mixes the two orientations depending on the closest approximation.[117] In other words, a translation must seek to elicit from the target audience the same response that the original material elicited from the original audience. Additionally, it must be natural in that it matches the RL and culture as a whole, the context of the specific message, and the RL's intended audience.[118] It must also be closest in that it connects the two cultures based on the highest degree of approximation.

Furthermore, Nida added a three-step process of analysis, transfer, and restructuring to be used in the highest degree of dynamic equivalence of translation.[119] To understand the meaning of the words and word combinations for the original audience, the translator must analyse or interpret the original text in terms of grammatical relations. Then, by bridging the language and cultural divide between the Biblical world and the modern one, he or she conveys that meaning to the modern reader. To make the message sound natural and appropriate in the RL, the translator finally re-translate.[120]

The question is: How does one transfer the message from the SL to the RL while keeping the dynamic equivalence of the original?

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[116] Eugene A. Nida, "Principles of Correspondence." In: Venuti, L., Ed., *The Translation Studies Reader*, (London; Routledge, 1964),136.
[117] Nida, "Principles of Correspondence," 136.
[118] Nida, "Principles of Correspondence," 136.
[119] Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 200.
[120] Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 33.

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Languages have deep kernels and surface structures, according to Nida, and surface structure differences between languages are more noticeable than deep structure differences.[121] To translate effectively, it is, therefore, preferable to break down the source material into its basic sentences, translate those into the RL, and then reformulate those sentences into the RL's native form.[122] The translators will strive to accurately represent to their readers what God intended the inspired Word to represent to those who read or heard it as it was originally given- no more, no less.[123]

The Revised English Bible (REB, 1989), the Good News Bible (GNB, 1976), the Jerusalem Bible (JB, 1966), and its extensive revision, the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB, 1985), are instances of dynamic equivalency translations.[124] Therefore, the translators will not be bound to the 1961 edition. It has been argued that the dynamic equivalence theory leads readers to misinterpret the form, tone, and grammar of the original text. It is related to theories of meaning-based translation, transculturation or cultural equivalence, complete equivalence, ideal equivalence, closest natural equivalence, and functional equivalence.[125] The aforementioned provides ample evidence that using a single translation hypothesis for the entire Bible is insufficient. This reinforces the notion that translation cannot occur without some degree of interpretation because it is not to easy as just look for words in the target language to replace phrases in the source language.

[121] Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 39.
[122] Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 33.
[123] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 101.
[124] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 102.
[125] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 102.

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**Functional Approach ( Skopos Theory)**

One of the empirically based descriptive studies of translations in their target culture was the Skopos theory, whose later developments and applications are now well-known under the name of "functionalism." The Skopos Theory is built on the proposition that any translation is a goal-oriented task, and thus any translating action needs to have a skopos (purpose) which is "the most important fact in translation."[126] The functionally oriented method was developed in response to "equivalence-based linguistic approaches," which saw translation as a "code-switching operation" and focused on the originating language."[127] This new perspective on Translation Studies was informed by insights from action theory, communication theory and cultural theory, among others. This approach shifts attention from words and meaning to the intended function of translation in its societal context of production. What matters to the translator is the function of the translation in the target culture, rather than how it functions in its home culture.[128]

The theory contends that equivalence-based linguistic approaches to translation cannot yield the desired results because of differences between the original and the receptor cultures. Therefore, there is a need to move away from those approaches to a functionally and socio-culturally oriented framework that focuses on the receptor community. The target-side purpose has priority in the translator's decisions. To translate means to produce a target text in a target setting for a target purpose and target addresses in target circumstances. One of the main advantages of the approach is that it

[126] Mary Snell-Hornby, *The Turns of Translation Studies: New Paradigms or Shifting Viewpoints?* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2006), 54.
[127] Christine Nord, "Functional Translation units" Translation- Acqisition-Use: *AFinLA yearbook* (2007): 43.
[128] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 122.

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moves translation theory beyond lower linguistic levels toward a consideration of the communicative purpose of translation.[129]

In Scriptural language translation, an intended text may have a missionary goal, a catechetical objective, or a liturgical meaning depending on the skopos, which refers to the intended use of a certain text in a specific cultural context. The translation's objective, which differs depending on the requirements of the target culture, guides the process. Here, the target culture's goals, norms, practices, and requirements-which vary from society to society-inform the goal of a translation.[130] In other words, the decision over whether to translate dynamically, literally or anywhere along the free/faithful spectrum depends on the needs of the receptor community. Since the factors that determine the style of target text depend on the context of the receptor community, skopos theory does not have a specified form and style at the outset of a translation activity as other theories (like dynamic equivalence) have. Every text has a skopos, which may be explicitly stated or implied. [131]The skopos theory depends on the needs of the audience, and this makes any translation type-be it foreignising or domesticating, idiomatic or literal, gender-neutral or otherwise-potentially viable. It is a purpose-driven translation that says: give the customers what they want. Because every creation of a text may at least retroactively be given a goal (skopos), the skopos theory can be "useful" to an already finished translation. Assigning skopos to a text retrospectively requires one to assume the purpose and the needs/expectations of the target audience.[132]

[129] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 122.
[130] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 122.
[131] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 122.
[132] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 122.

The following list in chronological order summarises the main functional rules of the skopos theory[133]: a translating text's skopos, or purpose, must be considered; (b) a translating text provides information in a target language and culture about specific information in a source language and culture; (c) a translating text does not reversibly provide information; (d) A translated text has to be internalized, and (e) have consistency with the original language. To do this, the translator must be able to differentiate between the intention of the sender and the receiver's function. While it is believed that the sender's intention will be congruent with the message's purpose, this is not always the practice case, mostly because of the significant cultural disparity between the source text and the audience for the translation. The translator must be aware of the goals of the target material to do this. The goal of translation is to meet the purpose stated in the translation brief rather than functional equivalence with the source text.[134]

**Exegetical/Hermeneutical Considerations in Bible Translation**

Kelvin G. Smith has indicated that, without interpretation, translating the Bible will be next to impossible.[135] One will undoubtedly produce inaccurate translations full of errors, ambiguity, and obscurity without analyzing the text to comprehend what it means. A successful translation "needs careful exegesis of the source work, taking into consideration its discourse elements, rhetorical tactics, and social Norms."[136] In Bible translation, the relationships between biblical texts are extremely important. The

[133] Benjamin Stephen Green, *A Skopos-Based Analysis of Breytenbach's Titus Andronicus* (MPhil Thesis: University of Stellenbosch, 2012), 109

[134] Green, *A Skopos-Based Analysis of Breytenbach's Titus*, 109.

[135] Kevin G. Smith, "Bible Translation and Relevance Theory the Translation of Titus" (Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: University of Stellenbosch, 2000), 228.

[136] Smith, "Bible Translation and Relevance Theory the Translation of Titus" (Unpublished Doctorate Dissertation: University of Stellenbosch, 2000), 228.

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translator can better understand the numerous elements and dimensions of culture, religion, and language by knowing how one text links to another and keeping the three together.

According to Smith, hermeneutics is the term used to describe the art and science of interpreting the Bible, and it comes from the verb *hermeneuo,* which means to interpret or explain.[137] Exegesis refers to the process of establishing a text's meaning for its original audience, while hermeneutics deals with the task of interpreting the meaning of scripture and highlighting implications for contemporary audiences.[138] In contrast to exegesis, which deals with the actual process of interpreting texts, hermeneutics refers to interpretive principles.[139] While translating, meaning is transferred from one language to another, and not merely words that are swapped out.

So, without interpretation, the translator is unable to interpret the text in the light of its context before figuring out precisely what it means in the original context and then what it means in their own context as well.[140] Unfortunately, most people think that translation can be done without interpretation. This is untrue because in actuality, every translation is the result of interpretation.[141] Exegesis is a prerequisite for interpretation, which is implied by translation.

Translation, according to Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart, is in itself a sort of interpretation.[142] There are two crucial terms in interpretation: The literal interpretation confirms that the meanings

[137] Smith, "Bible Translation and Relevance Theory the Translation of Titus," 228.
[138] Randolph W. Tate, *Handbook for Biblical Interpretation: An Essential Guide to Methods, Terms, and concepts* (Michigan: Baker Academics, 2012), 194.
[139] Walter C. Kaiser and Moises Silva, *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 285.
[140] Smith, "Bible Translation and Relevance Theory the Translation of Titus, 228.
[141] Smith, "Bible Translation and Relevance Theory the Translation of Titus, 228.
[142] Gordon D. Fee and Douglas K. Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*: *A Guide to Understanding the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1982), 17.

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to be understood are based on the text. The system's foundation is established by this premise. All of the additional premises flow from and are established per what literal affirms.[143] These textually-based interpretations are articulated within the bounds of regular language usage, according to grammatical meaning. Language is polysemic, meaning that each word, phrase, or even sentence can have more than one meaning.

**Comparative Value of Language**

Lamin Sanneh has emphasised the fact that language has a role in translation. To function, every translation needs a linguistic medium. But it goes beyond that because the language itself is a dynamic manifestation of culture.[144] This suggests that, for lexical assets to be useful, especially when attempting to capture the dynamic nature of reality, they must be enhanced by the force of use, customary, and traditions. Language is more than merely a people's soul as if it were a member of some exclusive gnostic order. Language is the tool that allows for the appreciation of the visible texture of existence in all of its subtle, nuanced variation and possibility.[145] Language is also the clothing that gives shape, decorum, and vitality to conscious life. A perfect connection between languages is impossible, as no two languages are alike. No translation can be a hundred percent accurate.[146] Creating an accurate word-for-word translation of a document written in one language into another is completely impossible. The translator must attempt to accurately understand the original's meaning before

[143] Fee and Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, 17.
[144] Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989), 200.
[145] Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 127.
[146] Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader*, 127.

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trying to convey it in the target language (TL). This is achievable if the Bible translator respects the qualities of the RL and leverages the possibilities of the language to the maximum possible extent. [147]

These gaps or omissions in communication are caused by the negotiation of meaning when the speaker chooses one language construction from a wide range of options without knowing for sure that the addressee would understand. Since they are always present, hiding behind the speaker's actual selections, and if proper attention is paid, they can reveal a lot about the values that underlie those selections, the most interesting field of investigation is those words and utterances that are not chosen by the speaker. An individual word or statement does not exist in a vacuum; it exists with other potential options that the author or speaker rejected or chose not to use.[148]

One crucial result is that some linguistic orientation is required from the speaker because of the difficulty and potential instability of communication in a world of divergent opinions and different interpretations. This is a component of language's interpersonal function and includes the development of a value orientation, which is essential to how the text projects reality.[149] To produce a text that has meaning in a communicative context, the writer or speaker makes choices from the possibilities accessible at several functional levels throughout the text such as discourse, genre, register, semantics, lexicogrammar. The text serves as the instantiation in technical terms of a language's system. To buttress these points, Kuwornu-Adjaottor has indicated that finding words that are equal in two languages is not the only consideration in translation. It requires interpretation because it must transfer

[147] Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 4.
[148] Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 4.
[149] Jeremy Munday, *Evaluation in Translation* :*Critical points to Translator decision-Making* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 14.

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information from one domain of thought and language to another is a difficult task.[150]

**Linguistic Considerations**

Boaheng has opined that the study of language is called linguistics. Hence, linguistic exegesis deals with the language component of the translation.[151] First, there is linguistic identification, which entails identifying all morphemes such as those for nouns and verbs and the connection between the words known as syntax in the SL. The grammatical structures in which a word occurs are frequently a source of information about its precise intended meaning, that is, syntactic marking[152]. He further indicated that at other times, a word's precise intended meaning might be deduced from how it interacts with other phrases in the sentence. Semotactic marking refers to this conditioning by the definitions of the terms used nearby. It is essential to complete this phase since one cannot translate a document without understanding the words and how they relate to one another. The meaning of each word in the SL is discussed in semantic exegesis, which is the second component of linguistic identification.[153] To identify what the text means in the target language, the translator must first understand what it means in the original language. Only those who can understand the meaning of the words behind them can translate.

[150] Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Evaluation of Translation and Interpretation of the Dangme Bible," *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology (MOTBIT)* 2, no. 5 (2020): 114, 109-115.
[151] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 121.
[152] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 121.
[153] Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 122.

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## Contextual Considerations

According to Sanneh, the translator's project can be seen as a devotion to the people's setting rather than the text as a stand-alone normative system, which is very significant.[154] The use of localised idioms similarly point to a dramatic departure from the literalness of the text and a desire to communicate with the audience on their level. The concept underlying contextual exegesis is that it is necessary to determine the meaning of a word based on the context in which it appears.[155] In the words of Emmanuel Tov, the determination of equivalents solely based on linguistic-semantic identification is described asas a linguistic exegesis.[156] Contextual exegesis shares similarities with linguistic exegesis in that it involves language, but it frequently relies more on the context's overall meaning to determine equivalents. A word may have several fundamental meanings, but most of the time, the context makes it clear which of the fundamental meanings of a word is meant.

In this regard, three contexts might be investigated. The first is the historical context, which discusses the broad historical background of the work in terms of its author, date of writing, audience or recipients, occasion, and purpose, as well as the socio-economic, political, and religious circumstances of the book. Historical context consists of elements that the translator may research, including the author's life at the time the book was written, his or her circumstances, and the relationship between the author and the intended audience.[157]

[154] Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, 192.
[155] Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture*, 192.
[156] Emmanuel Tov, Textual Critcism of the Hebrew Bible (Minneapolis:Fortress Press, 2001), 127.
[157] Tov, Textual Critcism of the Hebrew Bible, 127.

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## Cultural Basis for Bible Interpretation

The increased focus on translation has contributed to sociocultural communication among different cultures. Attention must be drawn to the connection between culture and translation since translation is one way that culture enters into human communication. Translation creates a bridge between cultures.[158] Peter Tolop has indicated that translation is the primary means through which culture works and that new texts can be incorporated into an existing culture to bring about change. The process of translation is not just linguistic; it can also have a significant political and social impact on the accessibility and comprehension of various cultures. Politics and culture are given special consideration and are seen as significant cues for translation; therefore, it is possible to view the translation process as a means of propagandising cultural and political debates.[159] The two are thought to be involved in translation, along with language. Language serves as the system of symbolisation for its explicit pieces in culture, which is an organic whole that is larger than the sum of its material, social, and religious components.[160] Religious culture, in particular, relies on analytical reception to validate its ongoing transmission and accumulation. Yet, in cultural translation, the emphasis is not on language but rather on how translation and culture interact as well as how culture affects translation. To put it briefly, the cultural turn contends that the operational unit of translation is not the word or the text but rather the culture.[161]

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[158] Peeter Tolop and Bruno Osimo "Historical Identity of Translation: From Describability To Translatability of Time" *Trames Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences* 8 no. 4 (2010)**:** 383-393, 385.
[159] Tolop and Bruno Osimo "Historical Identity of Translation, 383.
[160] Eugene A. Nida, *Customs and Cultures : Anthropology for Christian Missions* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), 39.
[161] Susan Bassnett and André Lefevere, *Translation, History and Culture*. (London: Printer Publishers, 1990), 34.

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Cultural Studies interpret the term Cultural Turn, to mean the study of translation within the framework of culture, politics, and ideology. George Mulrain observed that a survey of the history of biblical hermeneutics shows that no interpretation has ever been established without taking into account or relying on the particular cultural code which includes the way of thinking, or the social context of the interpreter.[162] Mulrain implies that no interpreter is entirely removed from his or her circumstances, past, and culture. Biblical interpretation is therefore in some ways biased because an African scholar who was born and reared in an African cultural environment will not disregard their culture, way of thinking, and life experiences when they interpret and translate the Bible. Yorke has rightfully referred to African biblical interpretation as Afrocentric hermeneutics, because Western biblical academics understand the Bible from a Eurocentric perspective.[163] As a result, an African scholar will approach the Bible differently from a Western scholar in ways that are unique to his or her African culture and experience. African Biblical Hermeneutics, according to David T. Adamo, "is an area of study that emphasises a particular approach to reading and understanding the Bible from the perspective of Africa and uses the African social milieu as a focus of interpretation".[164] This is done to challenge the conceptual supremacy and dominance that Western and European biblical scholars have long enjoyed, as well as to comprehend God and the Bible from the perspective of African experience and culture.[165] Through a methodical approach that re-examines ancient biblical

[162] George Mulrain, "*Hermeneutics within a Caribbean Context," Vernacular Hermeneutics* 8 no. 6 (1999): 118, 117-21.
[163] Yorke, *Bible Translation & African Languages*, 35.
[164] David T. Adamo, "*African Cultural Hermeneutics*," in: R S Sugirtharajah, ed.,Vernacular Hermeneutics (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 2.
[165] Adamo, "*African Cultural Hermeneutics*, 2.

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tradition, African Biblical Hermeneutics seeks to confront the effects of the cultural ideological conditioning to which Africa and Africans have been subjected.[166]

## Mother-tongue Translations

Mother tongue describes the first language a person learns to speak. For example, depending on the tribe to which a person belongs, their mother tongue, if they were born and nurtured in Ghana, would either be Akan, Ewe, Ga, Fante, Kasena, Nzema, etc. Man's deepest thoughts and feelings are communicated through his/her mother tongue.

Kuwornu Adjaottor argues that a mother tongue and a vernacular, which is the language used by an area or community, are two different things. He added that a person's mother tongue is their own native and indigenous language. It verifies and reinforces who they are, where they came from, and their sense of identity.[167] According to Ekem, who uses B.Y. Quarshie's definition as a starting point, a person's mother tongue is the first language they can speak naturally or the language they are raised in, and it stands in opposition to any later languages they may learn. According to his explanation, a mother tongue may develop into a vernacular language of a group of people, in an area, or a country as its use spreads.[168] Under Ekem's definition, the emphasis is placed on a person's native language without ignoring their L1. Ekem prefers a person's mother tongue to be the native tongue while recognising

[166] Adamo, Reading and Interpreting the Bible, 2.
[167] Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Mother-Tongue Biblical hermeneutics: A current trend in Biblical Studies in Ghana," *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies* (JETERAPS) 3(4), (2012): 576, 575-579.
[168] John D. K. Ekem, "Jacobus Capitein's Translation of 'The Lord's Prayer' into Mfantse: An Example of Creative Mother Tongue Hermeneutics," *Ghana Bulletin of Theology* 2 (2007): 67, 66-79.

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that L1 is also a mother tongue. When all of these factors are considered, one may say that a person's mother tongue is the language that a person initially learns to speak fluently due to his or her upbringing. It must be stressed that parents or other caregivers have a significant impact on a child's mother language.

According to Kuwornu-Adjaottor, viable instruments for the scientific investigation of the phonetic, phonological, morpho-syntactic, and semantic components of a mother tongue in the Bible are employed. [169] A study of the Dangme mother tongue Bible by Kuwornu-Adjaottor demonstrates that there are sociocultural and translation issues in the translation, which the authors feel is equally true in the Ewe mother tongue Bible. The translation is an endeavor that calls for fluency in a mother tongue, a solid grasp of the holy scriptures, a working knowledge of biblical languages, and an understanding of African culture.[170] In other words, making the Scriptures relevant to African challenges and perspectives is very important. This project is expected to result in the translation of the Bible into local dialects, the creation of study Bibles into local languages, and the creation of commentaries in indigenous languages. It should be remembered that translating the Bible into one's native language constitutes an act of interpretation in and of itself. When the Bible has been translated into native languages, indigenous people can draw links between the Scriptures and their cultural settings.[171]

## History of the Translation of the Ewe Mother-Tongue Bible

[169] Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Evaluation of Translation and Interpretation of the Dangme Bible,"115.
[170] Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Evaluation of Translation and Interpretation of the Dangme Bible,"115.
[171] Atta-Akosah, "*The Language Factor in African Christian Mission*," 22.

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A sizable linguistic community known as the Ewe-speaking people is found in West Africa. They are thought to have left Oyo in southwesten Nigeria about the year 1700 CE and settled in their current locations after traveling through Ketu in Benin and Notsie in Togo.[172] Ekem revealed that, despite not being the same, the Ewe are related to the Adja and the Fon. As a result of their close relationship, some scholars also call them Ewe, Adja, Adja-Ewe, or Gbe.[173] He added that the Kwa subgroup of Niger-Congo languages is spoken by the three populations of Ewe, Adja, and Fon. They also have similar cultural practices. They have all migrated from Nigeria to the east at some point in the past. As a result, the Ewe are related to the Yoruba of contemporary Nigeria and Benin. With various variations, the Ewe-speaking people refer to their language, which is spoken in Ghana, Togo, and Benin, as Euegbe (Ewe language). Gilbert Ansre asserts that the modern Ewe people are mostly found in Ghana, Togo, and Benin, with a lesser presence in southeast Nigeria.[174] They moved from Oyo in Nigeria to Ketu in south-eastern Benin due to the cruel leadership of an evil ruler, King Agorkoli at Ketu.[175]

**The Spade Work of the Ewe Bible Translation**

The Ewe language Bible translation project was distinguished by the involvement of many translators who were assisted by even more native coworkers. The teams were faced with the dilemma of whether to use the interior or coastal dialects right away. The records show that in February 1858 it was decided that Bremen missionary

[172]Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast*, 79.
[173]Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast*, 79.
[174] Gilbert Ansre, *Evangelical Presbytertan Church. 150 Years of Evangelization and Development 1847-1997*, 52.
[175] Dennis Laumann, *The History of Togo and Benin from pre-colonial to post-colonial times*, in B. N. Lawrence (ed.). *The Ewe of Togo and Benin.* (Accra: Woeli, 2005), 25.

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Bernard J. Schlegel and his group should concentrate their efforts on the coastal languages.[176] In the same year, 1858, hymns and narratives about many facets of Jesus' life and career were also translated into the Ewe language together with passages from the Bible, specifically Hebrews, 1-3 John, and Revelation. Schlegel completed these translations with help from John Wright and other native partners. Wright, who the same author claims was not an Ewe but came from the area of Ga in west of the Volta, was one of the most notable of these African coworkers who worked with Schlegel. It is possible that Schlegel misunderstood and, as a result, incorrectly constructed some Ewe language sounds since he replicated them exactly as his assistant had heard and said them.[177] Published in 1861 under the title *Nya nyuie h 'akpäle ene le wegbe me*, the Gospels were translated by Schlegel and his native collaborators (Four Books of Good News in the Ewe language). Before being issued in 1898 as *Nubabla yeye la we agbale le Eweegbe me* (The book of the New Testament in the Ewe language), the Ewe New Testament underwent numerous revisions. Bremen missionaries Jacob Spieth and G. Däuble oversaw the planning of this significant exercise. Spieth was a gifted linguist who translated the Bible into the Ewe language for the Bremen mission in Togo. Even less extraordinary was Rudolph L. Mallet, a freed slave who spent twenty years assisting Spieth with his linguistic research.[178]

In 1861, Schlegel had only written the first four Gospels. Between 1867 and 1889, John Binder, Weyhe, and Merz were responsible for most of the original translation. With the help of Andreas Aku, Quist, Kudese, Adzaklo, and Joseph Tosu, Spieth and Däuble edited the volumes between 1898 and 1913. The British and

[176] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast,* 79.

[177] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast,* 79.

[178] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast,, 73.*

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Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) then oversaw the printing in Germany. Nevertheless, the start of the war prevented them from being sent.[179]

Up until the Brits allowed shipment via Holland to Africa in 1915, all of the printed Bibles were kept in the Society's storehouse in Germany.[180] The British Government authorised the shipment of 200 copies to Togoland around the end of 1915 out of the 10,000 that had been printed, according to the BFBS Editorial Subcommittee minutes from April 16, 1916.[181] For further distribution to disadvantaged communities, these Bibles were to be given to Prascs Ernst Bürgi, who was then headquartered in Lomé. An event of tremendous joy occurred during this dark time, according to Ansre, when the first copies of the new Bible came to Keta. The first edition of the whole Ewe Bible appeared in Keta in 26th January 1916. Two Hundred (200) of the ten thousand (10,000) copies that were made were shipped to Keta, where there was a significant Bible Day celebration on February 6. Subsequently, similar events took place in the other districts. The missionary K. Freyburger, who was based in Quittah (Keta) at the time, sent a report on the celebration on February 7, 1916.[182]

In a moving obituary recounting the achievements of Spieth, who played such an important role in the Bible translation, while also alluding to Adzaklo's role, M. Sclunk, Missions Inspector of the North German Mission, wrote from Hamburg in 1914:

> The missionary became first and foremost a Bible translator. Missionaries of the North German Mission had earlier on translated the most important Bible histories and whole books of the Bible into the Ewe language. Special mention must be made

[179] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast,* 79.
[180] Ansre, *Evangelical Presbytertan Church*, 52.
[181] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast,* 79.
[182] Ansre, *Evangelical Presbytertan Church, 53.*

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> of Schlegel who, as someone gifted in languages, had indeed distinguished himself in this translation work. The first edition of the New Testament appeared in 1877 and when a second edition became necessary in 1898, Spieth also played a significant role in the revision exercise. As someone who had stayed long enough among the Ewe people and been particularly able to win their full confidence, Spieth had also emerged as one of the best scholars of the Ewe language, who understood the people very well and spoke the language that they could naturally understand.[183]

That made him without a doubt qualified to conduct a rigorous analysis of the Ewe scripture that had already been released to provide the foundation for a consistent translation after his furlough in his native country was over. He soon recognized that a new translation was what was required, and he set out to complete it with incredible diligence, thoroughness, and perseverance. He hired a native Togolese teacher called Ludwig Adzaklo, his linguist who was fluent in the language, and they worked together to translate the scriptures word for word and sentence for sentence. Spieth decided to make his home in his beloved Tübingen, where he knew he would find the peace, academic inspiration, and emotional and spiritual jolt he needed for his work. He carefully studied the text to determine the meaning of each verse of Scripture.[184]

While the arrival of the first copies of the Ewe Bible was being celebrated in Eweland, the war had a significant effect on the colonisers and the national borders of the area. Soon after the outbreak of World War I in August 1914, neighboring French army units in Dahomey and British units in the Gold Coast gained control of Togo and divided the territory. The Ewe were then under

[183] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast, 80.*
[184] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast,* 80.

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three different administrations: the Gold Coast, British Togoland, and French Togoland.[185] The Versailles Treaty of 1919 put a further strip of Togoland under British mandate.

When the British and French armies drove the colonialists out of Togo, they allowed the German missionaries to continue working until 1916.[186] Then the British deported the Bremen Missionaries, along with the German Missionaries of the Basel Mission. Because the Bremen Mission had trained Church leaders in Westermann, Germany, in "The Ewe School," the translation work was carried on by indigenous leadership, who were growing stronger. In addition to Andreas Aku, who as has been mentioned, was made the head of the Presbyterian Church in Eweland, other strong leaders emerged, such as Robert Baeta and Robert Kwami. The Breman Missionaries were allowed to return in 1925.[187]

Ekem has indicated that the next recorded revision of the Ewe New Testament was spearheaded by Westermann and published together in 1929 using a revised orthography.[188] The revised New Testament, together with Psalms, was published in 1930 under the title, *Nubabla yeye la We Psalmowo fe agbale* (The New Testament Book and Psalms). The Psalms were based on a revised text of the 1913 full Bible. The full Ewe Bible, which had undergone some revisions with slight orthographical alterations, was published in 1931 as *Biblia alo nonlo Kokoe la le la le Euegbe me* (The Bible or Holy Scripture in the Ewe language). This review was prepared under the leadership of Däuble and Westermann. The circumstances surrounding this whole process of coming out with

[185] Worldmark Encyclopedia of the Nations, I Ith ed., Vol. 2 Africa (Detroit: Thompson Learning, Inc.), 561.
[186] Lamin Sanneh, *West Afrian Christianity, BFBS Archival Records* (Ewe File BFBS Archival Records ). 4
[187] Sanneh, *West Afrian Christianity,BFBS Archival Records*, 117.
[188] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast,* 80.

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a revised New Testament and Psalms together with a revised full Bible are summarised in a letter from the North German Missionary Society dated October 10, 1928. Westermann also informed the people that the Bible Society is prepared to reprint the Ewe Bible and Pocket Testament for use in the Eweland. [189]The Bremen missionaries and their African co-workers had succeeded, with assistance from BFBS, in making this priceless legacy of the Ewe Bible/Testament available to their target audience. In 1953, Mark's Gospel was reissued in larger print for new literates as *Nyanyuie la, abe alesi Marko Oloe ene* (The Good News/Gospel as written by Mark).[190]

**Towards A New Ewe Bible Beyond 1970**

Since the early 1970's, a new translation of the Ewe Bible was initiated by the Bible Society of Ghana. According to the Bible Society of Ghana records, the need for a new Ewe Bible translation became quite acute in the process of an attempt to publish a Bible concordance in Ewe.[191] The first meeting was held in 1973, during which a decision was taken to work on a new translation starting with the Gospels. New translations of the Gospel of Mark, *Nyanyuie La Abe Alesi Markonloe Ewe* meaning, the Good News/ Gospel as written by Mark, and the Gospel of Luke, *Nyanyui La abe Alesi Luka nloe Ewe,* (The Good News/ Gospel as written by Luke), were prepared for publication in 1974, but evidently were not published at that time. There was a need to sensitise the receptor communities on the importance of using these portions of Scripture before the publication of a new Ewe Bible. Matthew's Gospel was prepared by an interconfessional team made up of Rev Abutiate, Rev. Baeta, and Rev Father Amewowor, all Ghanaians as well as Rev. Fr. Kodar

[189] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast,* 80
[190] Sanneh, *West Afrian Christianity,BFBS Archival Records* (Ewe File).
[191] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast,* 81.

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from Togo. Following an unsuccessful attempt to publish Matthew, work resumed in 1979. By 1981 and 1982, attempts were made to publish Mark, Ephesians, and Galatians, but these attempts were unsuccessful because Ghana was undergoing an economic crisis that affected the operations of the National Bible Society.[192]

In those years, the following persons joined the Ewe translation team: Mr. B. K Akpeleasi (First Century Gospel Church, Ghana), and Rev. Fr. E. E. Amegadzi (Roman Catholic Church, Ghana). Other translators who contributed to the Ewe project were Rev. J. K. Akoto (Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana), Mr. F. S. Konu (Église Protestante, Togo), and Rev. W. K. Amegah (Église Protestante, Togo). Ephesians was eventually published as a portion in 1984.[193] Translations were done by the following key Ewe translators: C. G. Baéta, A. K. Abutiate, and Nyaku. They were coordinated by Rev. Prof. Gilbert Ansre, an outstanding Ghanaian linguist who served for many years as a United Bible Society (UBS) Translation Consultant based in Lomé, Togo.[194] Ephesians, with a preface, introduction, section headings, and footnote references, translated by Abutiate and Akpeleasi was published in 1984 as *Paulofe agbale si woilo do de Efesotowo* (Paul's Letter which he wrote to the Ephesians). By 1990, the new translation of the New Testament had been completed and published as *Nubabla yeye la.* A new translation of the Old Testament into Ewe was subsequently embarked upon, and it is gratifying to note that the book of Ruth has since 1995, been made available as *Rut fe agbale* (Ruth's book).[195] Having worked systematically from Genesis through to Malachi? Speith could finally write on June 23, 1909:

[192] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast,* 81.
[193] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast,*81.
[194] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast,* 80.
[195] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast, 95.*

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This morning, at 20 minutes to 10, we translated the last verse of Malachi. This means that the completed translation of the Old Testament lies before us. The Lord has through all these years of labour and anxiety, been gracious to us. To him alone thanks.[196]

In a farewell speech to mark the completion of his revision and translation work in Germany, Adzaklo made the following profound remarks which also reflect the translation philosophy he and his partner adopted:

> There are certainly different opinions regarding how Bible translations should be carried out. Some would wish for a word-for-word translation whilst others would be more inclined towards a free translation. The question now arises: How was the Ewe Bible actually translated? I can answer the question as follows: If one were to take portions of our translation and translate them literally into German, that would not make any sense to the Germans. This is a decisive factor. We have translated according to the thought pattern of the Ewes which is different from that of the Germans and that of the Hebrews.[197]

In following this philosophy of translation, Adzaklo and Spieth practised a method similar to the methodology later codified by Eugene A. Nida, which he named dynamic equivalence or functional equivalence.[198] Their thorough knowledge of the Ewe and Hebrew worldview and thought patterns through a mastery of the intricacies of the Ewe and Hebrew languages, aided them a great deal in coming up with carefully out idiomatic translations. In the

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[196] Martin Schlunk, *"Andreas Jakob Spieth: Missionar, Bibelübersetzer, Erforscher der Religion und Sitten der Ewevölker in Togo"* In Separatabdruck aus dem (Württembergischen Nekrolog fir das Jahr 1914), 35.

[197] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast*, 82.

[198] The term "dynamic equivalence" was introduced by Eugene A. Nida, *Toward a Science of Translating* (Leiden: Brill, 1964). Using this method, translators are less concerned with a line for line formal equivalence in translating, but rather try to create a dynamic relationship, "between receptor and message (whichl should be substan-

above document, Adzaklo demonstrates his mastery of the use of Ewe idiomatic expressions in Bible translation.[199]

However, it can be said that not all portions of the Bible were translated using this philosophy, especially John 2:1-4, where the translator maintained the same statement with the same idea in the Ewe mother tongue Bible. The explicit distancing manner used in greeting one's mother must have appalled John's Gospel's initial audience, according to Knepper. [200] Raymond Brown's more nuanced interpretation, in contrast, maintains that it is neither a warning nor an impolite term nor a sign of lack of affection, though he does point out that there is no precedent for this, a son addressing his mother as "woman" in Hebrew nor, to the best of our knowledge, in Greek.[201]

In summary, an Ewe pulpit Bible, based on the 1931 revision, has been printed. The idea of a pulpit Bible emerged from the Millennium Project initiated by the United Bible Societies (UBS) which took effect from the year 2000.[202] One goal of this project was to produce special large-print editions for Church pulpits, and for users who required large print for easier reading. The Bible Society of Ghana responded positively by ordering the production of pulpit Bibles in various local languages. The Ewe pulpit Bible is the second pulpit Bible produced by the Bible Society of Ghana, the first being the Asante-Twi pulpit Bible. This has been done in partnership with the Bible Society of Togo. The fully translated Bible has been on the Market since 2011.

[199] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast,* 82
[200] Gert M. Knepper, "Nida's Γύναι: Eugene Nida's Views on the Use of Γύναι in John 2:4", *The Bible Translator* 42, 2 (2015): 167, 150-170.
[201] Brown, "The Gospel According to John (i-xii)," 99.
[202] Ekem, *Early scriptures of the Gold Coast, 96.*

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## Conclusion

This chapter has revealed that the Gold Coast, which later emerged as the young Black African nation of Ghana, benefited immensely from African and European translators of the Judeo-Christan Scriptures. These translators worked together as teams mainly under European leadership, braving numerous obstacles to translate the Bible into some major languages and dialects of the Gold Coast, namely, Ga, Akuapem-Twi, Asante-Twi, Mfantse (Fante) and Ewe. It is important to note that no translation is free from interpretation. An exegetical analysis is indispensable in the translation process. This means that the translator must have some basic exegetical training. However, since not all translators have this skill, the situation can be helped by referring to exegetical comments provided by scholarly commentaries. The translator must avoid being too close to the original text so that he or she appears too far from the RL and produces translations that cannot easily be understood. Such a situation creates a gap between what the translator exegete understands and what is or is not understood by his intended readers.[203] Although the authors agree that translator work necessarily requires interpretation, care must be taken not to introduce doctrinal biases in translation. Simply put, this indicates that it is not an easy undertaking to translate a biblical text from its original form into another language. Bible translation requires interpretation; it is not a word-for-word reconstruction. Translators may create their own terminology or consult native speakers to produce difficult-to-translate words and phrases. Bible translation is thus a continuing endeavor, not a one-time event. The following chapter will focus on the main text of the book.

[203] Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Mother-Tongue Biblical hermeneutics, 579.

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# CHAPTER THREE
# AN EXEGESIS OF JOHN 2:1-4

This chapter examines the background of the Gospel according to St. John, purpose, date, place, audience, genre and an exegetical interpretation of the text under examination. Implications were drawn from the exegetical interpretations of the text, as well as the homiletical situation for Ewe Mother-Tongue Bible Readers involved in the study.

## Background to the Johannine Literature

### *Authorship*

The writer of the fourth Gospel is unanimously accredited to John according to the tradition of the Church.The Gospel can be said to be unquestionably the work of a disciple of Jesus, a Jew and an eye-witness.[204] The writings ascribed to St. John are what is termed as the Johannine literature which comprises the Gospel according to St. John, his three epistles; 1 John, 2 John and 3 John and the Apocalypse or Revelation. The author of the fourth Gospel, like the authors of the synoptic Gospels, is unknown. However, Westcott put forth a concentric sequence of justifications for linking Apostle John, the son of Zebedee, to the fourth Gospel.[205] He contends that the internal evidence of the Gospel points to a Palestinian Jew who was an eyewitness and the disciple that Jesus cherished as the author.[206] According to Kuwornu-Adjaottor, there is a contention that the Gospel of John was actually authored by John the Elder or

[204] Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament Vol. II*,( Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, 2009), 5.
[205] Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Gospel according to St. John, 2 Vols.* (London: Murray, 1908; repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Publishers, 1980), 43.
[206] Frederick Fyvie Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistle of John* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001), 3.

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Presbyter, rather than John the Apostle. He asserts that John the Apostle provided the apostolic testimony that formed the basis of the Gospel, but it was the Elder who actually wrote or dictated it. The author of the fourth Gospel is also known as the beloved disciple. He makes a clear distinction between the witness, which he attributes to the apostle, and the authorship, which he attributes to the lesser-known figure of the Elder.[207]

In character, he was a strange mixture of temper and ambition. He was intolerant and yet courageous. He was one of the leaders of the twelve, one of the inner circles of Jesus, Peter, James and John (Mk 3:17, 5:37, 14:33). Kuwornu Adjaottor quotting Eusebius, revealed that he was exiled to Patmos during Domitian's rule. He rose to the rank of bishop in Asia Minor and was in the area of Ephesus to see one of his churches.[208] At the last supper, John, who was known as the disciple had a favored position beside Jesus (13:23). He had the opportunity to see the resurrected Lord before his ascension, in the upper room (20:19-29) and in Galilee (21:2).

**Purpose of the Book**

The key to the purpose of the fourth gospel is found in 20:31-32, "These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name." Scholars disagree over whether the phrase refers to non-Christians developing saving faith or Christian believers increasing their faith. While some academics, including Leon Morris and D. A. Carson maintain the viewpoint that John's primary audience consisted of Jews[209], there are scholars such as Raymond E. Brown who argue

[207] Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor, *New Testament Theology for College Students and Pastors*, (Accra; Noyam Publishers, 2020), 55.
[208] Kuwornu-Adjaottor, *New Testament Theology for College Students and Pastors*, 19.
[209] D. A. Carson, The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel: John 20:31 Reconsidered; *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 106, No. 4, 1987), 640: 639-651.

that his primary intention was to address believers.[210] Being an Evangelist and preacher, it is likely that the writer of the Gospel of John had two main purposes for writing. Firstly, they intended to spread the message of evangelism and reach those who were not yet believers. Secondly, they aimed to strengthen the faith of Jewish Christians who were experiencing persecution, providing them with reassurance and support.[211]Vincent posits that, regarding the purpose behind its composition, there are three theories. The first is also referred to as the additional theory. John created the fourth Gospel as an addition to the other three to fill in any gaps in the synoptic account. It is additional in the sense that the author frequently believes that his readers are already familiar with some facts before adding others based on his own unique knowledge. According to the second theory, the Gospel was written in a polemical or contentious manner to counter the errors of the Nicolaitanes and the Cerinthus. Similarly, irenic or conciliatory theory is the third school of thought. It asserts that the Gospel was meant to bring disparate theological points of view into harmony and to restore the principles that heresy had corrupted. Even though the fourth Gospel is the most comprehensive response to the many varieties of gnosticism, it is the book that Gnostics most frequently cite.[212]

**Date**

There is some debate as to when the fourth gospel was written. The Gospel of John has traditionally been dated late. Eusebius, for instance, said that John wrote "last of all." The gospel is dated

[210] Raymond E. Brown. The Gospel of St. John and the Johannine Epistles. New Testament Reading Guide 13 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1960), 46.
[211] George Arthur Buttrick (ed.), *The Interpreter's Bible Vol. 8* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 437.
[212] Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament Vol. II*, 6.

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between A.D. 80 and A.D. 95. Another author, John A.T. Robinson, argues that the gospel's ultimate composition date was about the year AD 65.[213] After reviewing the arguments, the claim that the gospel was penned in Ephesus between 80 and 95 AD is convincing.[214] John served the Ephesus Church, which Paul had established (Acts 19:1–20), for a considerable amount of time, according to Eusebius.[215] Ephesus is an Island near Patmos, where John spent some time in exile (see Rev. 1:9–11). Due to persecution, Christians sought refuge in Asia Minor around 68-70 AD. However, they soon faced even harsher persecution during the reign of Emperor Domitian (81-96 AD), which is considered one of the most severe persecutions in the history of the Church (2 John 1-8; 3 John 9-10; Rev. 1:9; 2:9-13; 13:7-10).[216] The result was the destruction of Israel's national aspirations and the growing polarisation of the Jewish and Christian populations. When Jews had to come to terms with their Jewish faith without the Temple, there was a very deep sense of disorientation that was widespread. The first generation of Christians was also vanishing and being replaced by a new generation at the time. A new generation of church leaders who were not eyewitnesses relied on the instructions and doctrine of the Gospel of John. According to Eusebius, John wrote his gospel when he was in Ephesus.[217] During the first century, that city was one of the largest centers of Christian activity in the Gentile world.

[213] John A. T. Robinson, *Redating Matthew, Mark and Luke*. *A Fresh Assault on the Synoptic Problem* (Stoughton: London, 1991), 243.
[214] Kuwornu-Adjaottor, *New Testament Theology for College Students and Pastors*, 56.
[215] Eusebius of Caserea, *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus*, (New York : Stanford & Swords, 1850), 3:24:1
[216] Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History of Eusebius Pamphilus*, 24.

[217] Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of John* 19.

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## Place of Origin and Audience

While scholars like Guthrie and Tenney are not entirely positive about where this Gospel was really written, tradition, which heavily relies on the works of Irenaeus and Eusebius suggests that it was written from Ephesus.[218] Similar to the place of writing, the book is ambiguous about the initial recipients. Some features of the writer suggest that it was written to a Gentile Church outside of Palestine. His meticulous explanations of some Jewish rituals, such as weddings and feasts, and his thorough geographic descriptions of Palestine's locations are directed at an audience that is not familiar with the country.[219] Additionally, it frequently provides brief explanations of Jewish terminology and practices, demonstrating that it was meant for the entire Church around the world rather than just Jewish readers. Gregory Nazianzen; quoted by Ford, stated that Matthew wrote for the Hebrews; Mark for the Italians; Luke for the Greeks; and the great herald, John for all to intellectually defend the faith against Jewish criticisms; to win over Jews and Samaritans; to baptise new converts; and to establish Jesus' superiority over other religious figures.[220]

## The Genre of John

Genre serves as more than just a tool for drawing parallels between John and other modern writings; it also serves as a window into what makes John's Gospel unique in terms of religion, philosophy, and literary creativity.[221] The current book explores the breadth of this metaphor by means of the mosaic genre. John's Gospel may be

[218] Merrill G. Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Eerdmans Publishing Company,1960), 10.
[219] Tenney, *John: The Gospel of Belief* , 10.
[220] Mark Allan Powell, *Introducing the New Testament; A historical, Literary, and Theological Survey* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic Publishing Group, 2009), 177.
[221] Powell, *Introducing the New Testament,* 177.

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viewed as a mosaic of works that can be classified as micro-genre, literary forms or primary genres. The opening chapters (John 1:1–18), judicial discourse (John 5–8), and supplication (John 17) are a few instances of such primary/simple genres that have been provided above.[222] The main goal is to show how genre-critical methods aid in interpreting John's Gospel exegetically.

The predominant approaches to biblical texts in this book often incorporate either a chronological and literary component since the author employs the Gospel as writing in its historical setting. Generalised methods need to be separated from independent literary readings of texts in exegesis that are inspired by the structuralist narrative theory and the philosophy of the New Criticism in terms of the literary component.[223] The genre's critical approach maintains that no text is an island. In a process of imitation, mimicry, and change, writings relate to one another to make meaning. Over time, this interaction creates literary habits and genre conventions that are constantly being altered. While the works which evoke common conventions of form are examined, content, and function are also compared while studying genre in texts.

Alternatively, however, Harold W. Attridge presents a fresh perspective on the generic conventions and transformations associated with the Gospel of John. This approach considers the entire Gospel, including elements such as bios (biography), drama, historiographical writing, and novels, as well as the different specific parts that contribute to the Gospel. He further presented an alternative viewpoint by suggesting a fresh set of conventions and changes that consider the Gospel of John as a unified entity.

[222] Mikhail M. Bakhtin, *The Problem of Speech Genres," in Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 62.

[223] Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky, Stages 8 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 1–10.

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According to this perspective, the Gospel can be understood through different literary genres, such as biography, drama, historical writing, and novels.[224]

**Structure and Outline of John**

Allan Powell posits that four categories can be used to structure the literary outlook of the fourth gospel: (a) The Prologue (1:1–18) mostly relates to the Logos song, which includes the following ideas: the Word with God; believers become children of God; the Word becomes flesh; the Son reveals the Father.[225] The Wedding at Cana (2:1–12); the Temple Purification (2:13–25); Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus (3:1–21); John the Baptist's additional affirmation of Jesus as the coming Savior, Jesus Christ as the son of God (3:22–36); and the encounter with the woman of Samaria (4:1–42) are all included in the Book of Signs (b) (1:19–12:50).[226] He continued with the Bethesda healing in (5:1-47); the fish and bread miracle, (6:1-71); festival of Booths draw near (7:1-52); man born blind and good shepherd discourse; the resurrection of Lazarus; anointing at Bethany (12:1-8); plots to kill Jesus; Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey (12:12-50) etc., (c) In the Book of Glory[227]; (John 13:1-20:31), the content can be divided into several key events. These events include the Last Supper, which involves Jesus washing the disciples' feet (13:1-17), predicting the betrayals of Judas and Peter (13:18-30), delivering farewell discourses (13:31-16), offering a profound prayer (Jesus' great prayer), and recounting the passion narrative (including the arrest, trials, crucifixion, death, and burial). The book also includes accounts of post-resurrection appearances to Mary Magdalene and Thomas

[224]Attridge, "Genre Bending in the Fourth Gospel, 6.
[225] Powell, *Introducing the New Testament,* 177.
[226] Powell, *Introducing the New Testament,* 178.
[227] Powell, *Introducing the New Testament,* 178.

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(18:1-20:29). Furthermore, an epilogue (21:1-25)[228] is present, which mainly consists of another post-resurrection appearance, this time at the Sea of Tiberias/Galilee. During this encounter, Jesus imparts private messages to Peter and to the disciple whom he holds affection for.

**The Setting of The Wedding at Cana**

One of the very significant locations in the life of Jesus Christ is Cana of Galilee. He started demonstrating His message to His disciples, thereby transforming water into wine at a wedding (John 2:1-11). In Cana, there was a wedding feast that Mary attended because of her relationship with the couple.[229]

The Monarchian Prologue, an early introduction to the books of the New Testament, also suggests that the bridegroom at the wedding was John himself, and that his mother was Salome, who was Mary's sister.[230] Whether this account is true or not, the miracle story at Cana is an example of an eye-witness account. Interestingly, there is no mention of Joseph. J.C. Ryle suggests that the omission of Joseph's name in references to the mother of Jesus in the Gospels and Acts has led many commentators to believe that Joseph had passed away before Jesus began his public ministry.[231] The setting of the event is a wedding celebration in a village. In Palestine, weddings were significant events that typically spanned an entire week. According to Jewish tradition, weddings for virgins were held

[228] Powell, *Introducing the New Testament,* 178.
[229] William Hepworth Dixon, Itineraries of our Lord-Cana of Galilee, *Palestine Exploration Fund Quarterly Statement* 10(1878): 70, 55-75.
[230] Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of John,* 113.
[231] J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thought on John Vol. 1,* (Edinburg, The Banner of Trust, 2009), 94.

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on Wednesdays, while widows' weddings took place on Thursdays.[232]

Following a feast, the wedding ceremony occurred in the late evening. After the ceremony, the newlyweds were accompanied to their home by torches and a canopy held over their heads, while they walked through the village streets. This procession was typically long as many people would use the opportunity to offer their congratulations and well wishes to the couple. Newly couples would not go on their honeymoon for one week but would stay at home and keep an open house.[233] They would be dressed in their bridal robes and wear crowns and treated like a king and queen. There must be thorough preparations to host a lot of people who will attend the wedding ceremony to be able to provide them with food, wine and water. According to the Rabbis, for a Jewish feast, wine was essential. "Without wine, there is no joy".[234] In the Middle East, hospitality was considered a holy obligation, therefore it would be a horrible embarrassment for the bride and the groom if the supplies ran out at the wedding.

**Analysis of Text**

This part of the book focuses on the formal exegesis of John 2:1-4. A translation of the text was provided, followed by textual criticism, textual analysis, and an explanation of each text. In addition, the selected text for study is derived from John 2:1-4 as found in the Nestle Aland Novum Testamentum Graece (NA28) critical edition.

[232] Warren W. Wiersebe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament volume 1* (England: Cook Communication Ministries, 2001), 290.
[233]Wiersebe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, 290.
[234] Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of John,* 114.

**The Text (Jhn 2:1-4)**

| **GREEK TEXT (Nestle and Aland, 2005)** | **VERSE** | **TRANSLITERATION** |
|---|---|---|
| *Καὶ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ γάμος ἐγένετο ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας, καὶ ἦν ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκεῖ·* | 1 | *Kai* tē hēmera tē tritē *gamos egeneto en Kana* tēs *Galilaias, kai* ēn hē mētēr *tou* Iēsou *ekei,* |
| *ἐκλήθη δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν γάμον.* | 2 | eklēthē *de kai ho* Iēsous kai hoi mathētai autou eis *ton gamon.* |
| *καὶ ὑστερήσαντος οἴνου λέγει ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν· οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν.* | 3 | *Kai* hysterēsantos *oinou, legei h*ē mētēr tou Iēsou *pros auton, onion ouk echousin"* |
| *καὶ λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὔπω ἥκει ἡ ὥρα μου.* | 4 | *Kai legei* autē *ho* Iēsous, *Ti emoi kai soi, gunai? Oup*ō hēkei hē hora mou*."* |

John 2:1 -4.

1. On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. 2. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. 3. And having lacked wine, the mother of Jesus said to him, “They have no wine.” 4. And Jesus said to her, “Woman, what concern is that to you and me? My hour has not yet come.”

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## Textual Criticism

The text for the above translation is based on the results of the following textual criticism. Starting with John 2:1 τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ, Codex Vaticanus (b) and Codex Koridethi offer variations to the text. The Codex Vaticanus is one of the most valuable manuscripts of the Greeks. The Minuscules family 13 (f13) bear witness to the text Bible.[235]

A manuscript of the Gospel called Codex Koridethi was found in the church of SS sometime between the seventh and ninth centuries. This variation is, however, negligible.[236] P75, Bodmer obtained an additional ancient biblical manuscript, which is a codex containing only a single quire of Luke and John's Gospels. This makes it the oldest documented copy of the Gospel of Luke and one of the earliest copies of the Gospel of John.[237] Within the same line of the text, τῆς is inserted before P75 which is Bodmer. It is a codex of Luke and John in one volume. It originally included approximately 144 pages, each measuring 10% by 5 inches, of which 102 have survived in full or in part. γῆς in the Majuscules D 05, Codex Bezae, and Byzantine Majuscles like K and L in the Minuscules family 13(f13).[238]1424; in the lectionaries l 844. l 2211, and in the Majority text. However, the Majuscules 01 א, B 03, W 032, Δ 037 and the minuscule family f1 omit it just as they have been omitted by the above-mentioned witnesses. Intentional changes account for a good number of textual variations, although

[235] In 1965, the New Testament portion of Codex Vaticanus was photographically reproduced by order of Pope Paul VI and copies were presented to the members and observers of Vatican Council II. The tide page reads as follows: Codex Vaticanus graecus **I** 1209.

[236] Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament*. 3rd ed. (London: United Bible Societies,
1971), 201.

[237] Calvin L. Porter, "Papyms Bodmer XV (p) and the Text of Codex Vaticanus," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Ixxxi (1962), 363 - 76.

[238] Bruce M. Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 218.

the vast majority are attributed to unintentional errors. These intentional errors may have been motivated by good intent. The phenomenon of variant manuscripts is due to errors of the ear that occurred only when manuscripts were copied by a scribe listening. Also, errors of judgement are generally ascribed to dim lighting and poor sight on the occasion of copying the manuscript.[239] This rule is described by Metzger (1968:210) as follows: "Since scribes would frequently bring divergent passages into harmony with one another, in parallel passages (whether involving quotations from the Old Testament or different accounts of the same event or narrative) that reading is to be preferred which stands in verbal dissidence with the other."[240]

**Verse 2:** Some aspects are usually Western and Alexandrian in $P^{66}$, $P^{579}$, Minuscles in the Lectionaries, and the Italian Vulgate. About 440 changes were made to the text, which were added in the margins, over erasures, and between lines.[241] It must be indicated that few of the manuscripts omit *kai*.

**John 2:3.** *καὶ ὑστερήσαντος οἴνου λέγει ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν· οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν.* Codex Sinaiticus majuscule: b**.** The $NA^{27}$ committee selected the text above, but a longer version of this verse appears in ℵ: οἶνον οὐκ εἶχον, ὅτι συνετελέσθη ὁ οἶνος τοῦ γάμου εἶτα. In deference to *lectio brevior*, the authors agree with the committee's shorter rendering of the verse. The presence of the other (elaborated and smoothed out) variants is best explained by the shorter verse being original. Trustworthy, early manuscripts like $P^{66}$ and $P^{75}$ also attest to the shorter version.[242] While this does not affect the meaning of the passage, it does help clarify what John

[239] Norman L. Geisler & William E Nix, *From God to Us*, 178.
[240] Metzger, 225.
[241] Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament*, 201.
[242] Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament*, 201.

brings to the reader's attention. The longer variants focus the reader's attention on the lack of wine. Conversely, the NA[27] text focuses attention on the *people* who would bear the burden of this barrenness-the hosts. In first century, Judaism it would have been catastrophic and socially humiliating if hosts ran out of festive wine for their guests.[243] Furthermore, Mary's terse response shows that her concern is not simply that the *wine* ran out. She is concerned with *their* lack (οὐκ ἔχουσιν: 3rd person *plural*), not *it* lacks (*οἶνον*: *singular* accusative). This means that when Jesus acts to remedy the situation, he will act on behalf of *people* who find themselves in a bind rather than simply restocking a wine cellar so that a party could continue.

**Verse 4*:*** The following are additional witnesses: Codex Sinaiticus, L. Codex Regius is an almost complete eighth-century Gospel codex currently housed in the Bibliotheque Nationale in Paris. In 1846, Tischendorf edited it. Its type of text is good, frequently agreeing with Codex Vaticanus (B), despite being poorly written by a scribe who made numerous ignorant mistakes. Codex Bezae (D) Cantabrigiensis (6th cent., perhaps 5th) contains the Gospels in the so-called Western order (Matthew, John, Luke, and Mark). Therefore, what one has here is a combination of witnesses from three text types with the Western text-type carrying the greatest worth for the text's critical decision at this point. The Washington (W) Freer Manuscript, which dates back to the fifth century, is a significant discovery from the twentieth century. It is a manuscript written in capital letters (majuscule) and contains the four Gospels. The manuscript is kept at the Smithsonian Institution's Freer Museum in Washington, D.C., where Charles L. Freer obtained it

[243] Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 218.

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from Detroit in 1906. It is thought to have been produced in the fourth or early fifth century. Based on the above discussions on the various witnesses which were found at different places and dates, there might be the possibility of Textual lacuna which may affect the translation of the source language.

**Textual analysis**

The aforementioned reconstructed text will be analysed using various techniques of textual analysis, including identifying text boundaries, examining the context, considering syntax, analysing meaning, taking into account pragmatic factors, and determining overall text coherence.[244]

**Text delimitation and contextual analysis**

The delimitation of the text takes into consideration the context of John 2:1-4. The pericope of John 2:1-4 discusses the Setting of the wedding ceremony in Cana and the conversation between Jesus and his mother concerning the shortage of wine at the wedding feast.

**The Chiastic Structure For John 2:1-4 Can Be Represented As Follows:**

A - On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1a)

B - and the mother of Jesus was there (John 2:1b)

C - Now both Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding (John 2:2)

D - And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, “They have no wine.” (John 2:3)

$C^1$ - Jesus said to her, “Woman, what does your concern have to do with Me? My hour has not yet come.” (John 2:4)

[244] Metzger, *The Text of the New Testament*, 218.

$B^1$ - His mother said to the servants, "Whatever He says to you, do it." (John 2:5)
$A^1$ - Now there were set there six water pots of stone, according to the manner of purification of the Jews (John 2:6a)
In this chiastic structure, the central point (D) focuses on the problem of running out of wine, while the surrounding elements (A, B, C, $C^1$, $B^1$, and $A^1$) provide context and resolution to the situation.

The chiastic structure of John 2:1-4 helps us to understand the passage in a structured manner:
A - The passage begins with "On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee." This sets the scene for the story, indicating the timing and location of the event.
B - The focus shifts to "the mother of Jesus," emphasising her presence at the wedding. This highlights her role in the upcoming events.
C - Both "Jesus and His disciples were invited to the wedding," indicating that Jesus and His followers were part of the celebration, setting the stage for the miracle to come.
D - The central point of the chiastic structure is the problem: "And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Jesus said to Him, "They have no wine." This is the catalyst for the miracle and the main issue to be addressed.
$C^1$ - Jesus responds to His mother, indicating that His time to perform miracles has not yet come. This contrasts with the previous statement (C), creating tension in the narrative.
$B^1$ - His mother instructs the servants, saying, "Whatever He says to you, do it." This emphasises her faith in Jesus and her anticipation of His intervention.
$A^1$ - The passage concludes with the mention of six stone waterpots used for purification. This sets the stage for the miraculous

transformation of water into wine, which follows in the subsequent verses.

In interpretation, this chiastic structure highlights the progression of the story, from the setting of the wedding to the central problem of running out of wine, Jesus' initial response, Mary's faith and instruction, and the anticipation of a miraculous resolution. It underscores the importance of Mary's role in initiating the miracle and Jesus' timing in performing it. The structure helps us see the narrative's organisation and significance more clearly.

**Morphological and Syntactical Analysis of John 2:1-4**

**A - And the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1a)**

**A-*Καὶ τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ γάμος ἐγένετο ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας,***

The phrase starts with the conjunction *kai*, which can signify and, even, or also.[245] The translation of *kai* depends on the sentence's context. In this context, the preferred meaning is "and". *Kai* is sometimes used to modify a word.[246] Sometimes, *kai* means 'but' for example (Matt 11:19). *Kai* is sometimes employed to begin an apodosis of a statement. (James 2:4, Gal 3:28).[247]

The Third Day: The phrase *ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ*. *τῇ* consists of the noun *ἡμέρᾳ*, which is dative feminine singular from *ἡμέρα* (meaning "day"), and the adjective *τρίτῃ* ("third"), also in the dative feminine singular. The article *τῇ* is the definite article, likewise in dative feminine singular, and agrees with both the noun and the adjective.

[245] *Bible Works*, 6.
[246] Maurice A. Robinson and Mark A. House (eds.), *Analytical Lexicon of New Testament Greek* Revised and Updated (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers), 187.
[247] William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishers, 1993), 259.

Together, the phrase means "on the third day." It is the period of daylight that is a civil or legal day, including the night.

The obvious question that follows is from what day was it third? [248] The most likely response to *ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ* is the third day following the final incident recorded in the chapter before, which is the third day after Nathaniel was introduced to Jesus and became a disciple.[249] J.C. Ryle, holds the view that both the writer of the Gospel and its audience were acquainted with τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ, which was derived from the interpretation of Jewish scriptures and the historical account that Jesus' resurrection happened on the third day. The meaning, therefore, is the third day after the conversation between Jesus and Nathaniel. (John 1:45-51).[250] A marriage at Cana, *ἐγένετο ἐν Κανὰ τῆς Γαλιλαίας.* It is important to note that Nathaniel was an inhabitant of Cana (John 21:2). This makes it likely that Nathaniel invited Jesus to his home after he had accepted him as a disciple. The Old Testament makes no mention of Cana. According to Robinson's Biblical Research, the distance between the village and Nazareth was around three hours.[251] The phrase, *τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ* refers to a famous phrase that is commonly used in the New Testament to express how the prophecy was fulfilled and how Jesus' glory was made manifest in his third-day resurrection.[252]

**B - and the mother of Jesus was there (John 2:1b)**

**B- *καὶ ἦν ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐκεῖ·***

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[248] The temporal frame *τῇ τρίτῃ ἡμέρᾳ and τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῇ τρίτῃ* repeatedly occurs in connection with the verb *ἀνίστημι*: Matt 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 27:64; Luke 9:22; 18:33; 24:7.21.46; 1 Cor 15:4.

[249] Jane Webster, *Ingesting Jesus: Eating and Drinking in the Gospel of John*. (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical
Literature, 2003), 38.

[250] Ryle, *Expository Thought on John*, 96

[251] Barclay, *The New Daily Study Bible, The Gospel of John*, 94.

[252] Klink and Arnold. *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament*,404.

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Between verses 1 and 2, the language seems to imply that Mary was already present and that Jesus and His disciples arrived later. The mother of Jesus is the only person mentioned. Her identity, however, is entirely defined by Jesus: the mother of Jesus (*ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ*). She is never named in the text under study.[253] One important question we have to ask ourselves is what was the purpose of inviting Jesus to the wedding with his disciples? Were they invited as partakersof the wedding or because of his mother? Since it was just at the beginning of His ministry, He might not have been popular in the communities. In view of this, it can be concluded that Jesus might have been invited by her mother due to her relationship with the couple.[254] It is fascinating to take into account how the writer introduced Mary as the mother of Jesus.

**C- And Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding**

**C-** ***ἐκλήθη δὲ καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸν γάμον.***

The Greek term *εἰς τούς γάμους*, means to invite properly: Matthew 22:3, 9; Luke 14:8; John 2:2; to a feast, and often so in Greek writings from (Homer, Odyssey 4, 532; 11,187 down). Similarly, *εἰς τί*, means, metaphorically: to invite one, to something i.e. to participate in it and enjoy it. The Greek word *ἐκλήθη* appears in the third person singular aorist passive followed by the compound subject, *ὁ Ἰη σ ο ῦς κ α ὶ ο ἱ μ α θ η τ α ὶ α ὐτ ο ῦ*, thus suggesting Jesus alone was invited and his disciples "tagged along".[255]The narrator adds that Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the wedding. The theological significance of the term *γάμος* is

[253] Edward W. K. Klink and Clinton E. Arnold ed. *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Michigan, Zondervan Academic, 2016), 404.

[254] Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Patrick Yankyera and Frimpong Wiafe, Critical Study of John 2:1-11 and its Implication for African Biblical Exegetes, *in Light in once Dark-World* no.2, vol.1, 2019, 269: 268-286.

[255] Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics, An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament.* (Zondervan,1996), 401.

emphasised through its dual usage in the opening passage (2:1-2). In addition to the account of the wedding at Cana, the term *γάμος* appears in the Johannine writings in the Book of Revelation, where it is also employed in a theological context, referring to the eschatological wedding of the Lamb (19:7, 9). Other authors of the New Testament have also used the term *γάμος* to symbolise salvation and the advent of the messianic era, employing the imagery of marriage.[256] It is also important to note John's curt introduction of the characters in this story. Ridderbos says that his authorial intention is to show that it is the presence of the person of Jesus himself that is the cause of the great change… he himself is the center and cause of the joy, the bliss, which started with his coming.[257] Thus, John introduces Mary merely as the mother of Jesus and mentions the disciples almost as an afterthought.

**D - When the wine was gone, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no more wine" (John 2:3)**

**D - *καὶ ὑστερήσαντος οἴνου λέγει ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν, Οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν*.**

They have no wine: *Οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν*. She is concerned with *their* lack (*οὐκ ἔχουσιν:* 3rd person *plural*), not *it* lacks (*οἶνον*: singular accusative).[258] The reason behind Mary bringing this issue to her son Jesus is not explicitly stated. This part of the conversation is the pivot that set the tone for the miracles. Mary approached Jesus about the problem, but why? Mary must have known who Jesus was since she kept this amazing revelation to herself rather than telling others. Having a personal interest in the success of the celebrations or even

[256] The image of a wedding is one of the characteristics rich in symbolism in the history of the OT; it is an image of the Covenant between God and his chosen people (Exod 34:10-16; Deut 5:2-10; Isa 54:4-10; Jer 2:2; 11:15; Hos 2:4-25; Ezek 16:18); of a pact by which God has called Israel into existence as his own beloved nation.
[257] Herman Ridderbos, *The Coming of the Kingdom*, (Philadelphia, PA: The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1962), 51.
[258] Wallace, *Greek Grammar,* 401..

being aware of the wine scarcity, Mary must have been quite close to either the bride or the groom. It was important for the groom to have enough food because Jewish wedding feasts lasted for a week. But running out of food or wine at a wedding ceremony was humiliating. [259]

According to the sentence structure of the narrative, it suggests that Jesus and His disciples were indirectly obligated to attend the wedding. The adverb "also" indicates that Jesus and His disciples were additional guests who might have been invited by Mary.[260] This might have been the reason for Mary to approach Jesus over the shortage of wine at the ceremony. Additionally, Mary might have a strong conviction that Jesus can turn the situation around to save the couple from disgrace. Mary may have believed that Jesus was to be blamed since she believed the scarcity was brought on by the sudden appearance of Jesus and His company. Mary's appeal to Jesus was both an admission of her own faith in Jesus' authority and of the societal catastrophe that the young couple faced. The host and hostess would have been exiled to practical seclusion if the wine had truly failed since it was viewed as an affront to everyone in attendance.[261]

The Greek term oivnoj is used most frequently in the Bible to refer to wine (Luke 7:33). *Oivnoj* can refer to two very different varieties of wine made from grapes. (1) Juice that has not been fermented and alcoholic wine.[262] During the period of the Bible, Jewish social and religious traditions frequently demanded that wine be blended or diluted, particularly if it fermented. This subject is

[259] Wiersebe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary: New Testament volume* 1, 290.
[260] Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Patrick Yankyera and Frimpong Wiafe, Critical Study of John 2:1-11, 279.
[261] Leadership Ministries Worldwide, *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible Volume One Matthew-John* (Chattanooga: Zondervan Bible publishers, 2000), 1453.
[262]Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Patrick Yankyera and Frimpong Wiafe, Critical Study of John 2:1-11, 279.

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covered multiple times in the Talmud, a Jewish literature that describes Jewish religious law and tradition between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. Some Jewish rabbis held that fermented beverages, such as potentially intoxicating wine, could not be blessed and would contaminate or spiritually corrupt anyone who drank them unless they were blended with at least three partswater. The Greek word oivnoj is used most frequently in the Bible to refer to "wine" (Luke 7:33)."[263]

Donald Stamps makes the following arguments in support of this assertion and offers the supporting data: (1) Fresh grape (non-fermented) wine was commonly referred to by the Greek word oinoj in pre-Christian and early Christian writings.[264]
(2) *Oivnoj* was employed to translate several Hebrew words for wine by Jewish academics who translated the Old Testament into Greek around 200 B.C. That is to say, the NT authors were certainly aware that oivnoj may be fermented or unfermented grape juice.[265]

This interpretation is supported by the steward's words to the bridegroom, You have kept the good wine until now (2:10), and by the evangelist's statement, This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana (2:11 According to Donald Stumps, among the seven miracles of Jesus, the miracle of changing water into wine became the greatest sign that indicated that Jesus was the Messiah of Israel (1:14-17). This miracle also heightened the concept of newness in the opening chapters, which includes (new wine, new temple, new birth, and new life as indicated in 2:1-11, 2:14-22, 3:1-8, and 4:4-26, respectively. In the history of God's interaction with humanity, something entirely new and unheard-of was unfolding in the person

[263] Donald Stamps, J. Wesley Adams, Fire Bible: *Global Study Edition* (Peabody: Life Publishers International, 2009), 1911.
[264] Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Patrick Yankyera and Frimpong Wiafe, Critical Study of John 2:1-11, 279.
[265] Donald Stamps, J. Wesley Adams, Fire Bible, 1911.

and mission of Jesus Christ. The new things that Jesus was bringing, however, were being resisted, opposed, and rejected by traditional Judaism.[266]

**$C^1$ – And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what do I have to do with you? My hour has not yet come." (John 2:4).**

**$C^1$ -** ***[καὶ] λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὔπω ἥκει ἡ ὥρα μου.***

Verse four is the most theologically loaded and difficult verse in this pericope. It has three components. It is unclear and challenging to understand the idiomatic term *τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί*. The translation of *οὔπω ἥκει ἡ ὥρα μου* presents another challenge in this verse. Determining whether this phrase should be viewed as a statement or a rhetorical question is difficult. After refusing his mother's request (v. 4), Jesus performed this miracle. Jesus' response to his mother is inconsistent with what he continues to perform. Several commentators, including Nida, Raymond Brown, and Kneeper, have referred to the term *γύναι* that Jesus used to address his mother. The relationship between Jesus and his mother is frequently debated in enough circles due to these three factors.[267]

A.*τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί γύναι* - what do I have to do with you, Woman? *ἐμοὶ* is dative and thus, "to me" *σοί* is dative and thus, to you/thee (singular). The expression *τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί*; may be rendered what have I to do with you? What have we in common? Leave me alone! Never mind! This is no affair of yours! Mk 5:7; Lk 8:28; J 2:4; cf. Mt 8:29; Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34. (egotism).[268] The phrase *ti* is joined by a dative personal pronoun *kai* and another dative stands out among all the Greek attestations from both the classical and the Patristic

[266] Donald Stamps, J. Wesley Adams, Fire Bible, 1911.
[267] Eugene Dickey, *Greek Forms of Address. From Herodotus to Lucian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 86.
[268] Bible Works, 6.

eras. The findings from a search of the entire body of Greek literature contained in the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae' (TLG) are incredibly telling and essential to comprehending John 2:4. The Septuagint (LXX) and the New Testament (NT) are two texts with a strong Jewish background where these expressions first appear, which is remarkable. In fact, the phrase *'O'* + another dative is first seen in the Septuagint; often, such statements are said by someone who, for one reason or another, wishes to be left alone.

Maynard demonstrates that this phrase is a Greek idiom used frequently in the LXX and John 2:1-4. It is always used in the context of "a situation in which two parties have nothing in common or no relationship to each other."[269] In addition, Wallace posits that in this perspective and in other places, the phrase conveys a sense of one person making a point of distinction between himself and another.[270] In the Diatribes of Epictetus, Arrianus uses the Greek phrase *τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, οὔπω* to indicate an absence of anxiety for the first time outside the Bible and, importantly, in the second century after the Bible. Giblin perceptively notes that a similar narrative structure is found throughout John's gospel and follows asuggestion, negative response, and positive action pattern.[271] Bruce claims that although Jesus had plans to fix this humiliating situation, He kindly reminded Mary that His mission in coming to earth was not just to perform miracles. He went on to say that although using the term "woman" to refer to His mother would appear odd to a reader today, however, He did it in a way that was respectful and loving since John 19:26 perfectly encapsulates this truth. But

[269] Albert Hartherly Maynard. "*TI EMOI KAI ΣOI*." *New Testament Studies* 31. (1985): 584.
[270] Wallace, *Greek Grammar: Beyond the Basics—An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament,* 401.
[271] Charles H. Giblin. "*Suggestion, Negative Response, and Positive Action in St. John's Portrayal of Jesus*." *New Testament Studies* 26 (1981): 197-211.

Woman, "What do I have to do with you?" was a translation of an expression that read "leave me to follow my own course" in both classical Greek and Hebrew.[272] Matthew Black posits that the reply, "O woman" is not harsh but "what have you to do with me?" emphasizes the complete independence of Jesus; as in other miracles (e.g. 6:5; 11:6). He acts to bring out the fact that family, friends, nor circumstances can dictate to Him.[273]

The dynamic equivalent of the Hebrew word *ishshah* is the noun *γύναι* /gunei, which appears more than 200 times in the New Testament.[274] The vocative *gunei* could be translated as "Woman" or "wife". The term could be used to refer to a lady, whether married or single. Several contexts in the Bible (Matt. 5:28, 9:20ff, 11:11, Mark 7:25; Luke 7:37ff; 8:2ff; Acts 1:14, 8:12; Rev. 14:4) give the word "woman" a wide meaning.[275]Also, John 4:7, 8:3, and Acts 16:14 all refer to specific people. Among the laws concerning marriage, *γύναι* is used to refer to "married womem" or a "wife" in Romans 7:2 and 1 Cor.7:1ff. In the context of worship, a woman's role or function is described in 1 Corinthians 11:3–ff and 14:34–ff. Similarly, *γύναι* is used to describe (godly women) in 1 Timothy 2:9ff.

In John's vision, the term "woman" (gunei) is used metaphorically to refer to Mary, the mother of Jesus (Rev. 12:1–ff; 2:20).[276] The vocative, *"γύναι"* is always used to denote someone who is the opposite gender of a man.

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[272] F.F. Bruce, *The International Bible Commentary with the NIV* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House 1986), 1236.
[273] Matthew Black, H.H. Rowley, *Peake's Commentary on the Bible* (Toronto: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, 1962), 848.
[274] Stephen D. Renn, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Bible Words, Word Studies for Key English Bible Words Based on the Hebrew and Greek Texts* (Peabody: Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers 2014), 420.
[275] Renn, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Bible Words,* 420.
[276] Renn, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Bible Words,* 420.

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In addition, he understands these puzzling sentences in verse 4 to suggest that, if Jesus does something (in speech or deed or both), he will do it following his conscious purpose. He will not carry out his plans precisely because of a person's concern or out of necessity.[277] Thus, if Jesus decides to act in this situation, it will be according to his Father's restorative agenda rather than according to his mother's desire.

B. *οὔπω ἥκει ἡ ὥρα μου*. What does Jesus mean when he says to Mary, My hour has not yet come? *ὥρα* is a noun nominative feminine singular which denotes the time of an occurrence Mt 8:13; 18:1; Mk 13.11; Lk 1:10; 10:21; J 2:4. J.C. Ryle correctly answered that according to the Gospel of John the hour of Jesus is the time of his death, which is presented as the hour of his humiliation and glorification (John 12:23, 27, 17:1), but also to anticipations of this moment in which the glory of Jesus is manifested (v.11).[278] Throughout the gospel, this phrase appears so frequently that the narrative could be seen as a steady march toward Jesus' hour when he will be lifted up and glorified on the cross. In his Gospel, John emphasises that Jesus strictly adhered to a divine schedule set by the Father (John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1) and faithfully followed the Father's will.[279] The words were meant to remind her that she must henceforth leave the Lord to choose His own times and modes of acting by the promptings of the Father. Thus, it is extremely important that Jesus connects his redemptive actions at Cana to his redemptive action on the cross. The most straightforward and logical way for me to interpret these statements is to refer to them as Christ's allotted time or Christ's hour. That is the right time to start

[277] Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament*, 203.
[278] J.C. Ryle, *Expository Thought on John*, 96.
[279] Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu- Adjaottor, Patrick Yankyera, and Frimpong Wiafe, Critical Study of John 2:1-11 and its Implication for African Biblical Exegetes, *AJBT*. 19, no. 22 (2018) :6, 2-24.

working on the Signs that would result in his father glorifying him, similar to the phrase “My time is not yet fully come" (John 7:8).

Jesus’ mother is unaffected by the formality of his response. She does not fade into the background; rather, she assumes leadership and shows her faith in Jesus by commanding the servants to, “Do whatever he tells you” (v. 5). This appears to be a case of faith before the sign in terms of Johannine discipleship. At that point, the relationship between Jesus and his mother could be said to have transitioned from a mother and son relationship to discipleship. This subject is best understood in the conversation between Jesus and the mother at the foot of the cross, as recorded in (John 19:26).[280] As we come to the end of this pericope, it is also significant to recall that Jesus’ first miracle was performed with some improbable vessels. Six huge stone vessels, totaling between sixteen and twenty-seven liters of water each, were present. The Jewish people used this water to purify themselves from contamination. The water in the jars was later transformed into wine by Jesus Christ.

**The Role of Women in Ancient Jewish Society**

In the time of Jesus, the tradition did not favor the treatment of women in any special way. They did not receive the same treatment as men. Peter labeled them as weaker vessels, weaker partners, or weaker sex (1 Pet 3: 7).[281] They were also objectified in that all it took for men to transform them was the issuance of a letter of repudiation or a divorce decree (Matt. 19: 3–12). However, women were unable to divorce their husbands voluntarily or in any other circumstances. If they were discovered committing adultery without

[280] Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Patrick Yankyera and Frimpong Wiafe, Critical Study of John 2:1-11, 282.

[281] Stanley Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 65.

the males concerned about their responsibility to be faithful to their relationships, they were condemned (John 8: 2-11).[282]

Jewish women had no business participating in politics, academia, or the religious world. They had the right to procreate (1 Tim 2: 15). Their entire existence was spent depending on a man; After their father, it was either their spouse or their oldest son who functioned as their guardian (Jhn 19:25–27). They were perpetually regarded as minors in the legal meaning of the word.[283] They were never truly independent. They were considered responsible for managing the affairs of the home. They were not pushed to participate actively in society or the political system.

In the words of Pamela Scalise, women's role in Israelite culture was severely constrained by both law and tradition. According to the law, an adult woman was still considered a minor, and she was in the care of her closest male relative. Her father or spouse could revoke even her vows to God (Num. 30: 3–16). She was unable to file for divorce even though her husband was permitted to do so as indicated in Deut. 24: 1-4, or take another wife as found in Ex 21: 10; Deut 21: 15–17. If her husband even had the slightest suspicion that she had been unfaithful, she would face severe suffering (Num 5: 11–31). She must only marry someone from her own clan since her spouse would then inherit the family land if there were no male heirs (Num 27: 1–11; 36: 1–13).[284]

Women in Greek, Roman, and Jewish civilizations did not actively participate in politics and any decision-making. In the period of the New Testament, women were not particularly valued in their community and were often even viewed as unnecessary, embarrassing, and not really an asset to society. Women were

[282] Grenz, and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 65
[283] Grenz, and Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 66.
[284] Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church*, 65.

limited by different circumstances, thereby preventing them from playing an active role in the Jewish traditional society.

**Linguistic Analysis of "the Vocative *Γύναι* "Woman" and *Τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί,* My time is not up" in John 2:1-4.**

Translators disagree about the correct meaning of the word *γύναι*. Keeper indicated that it as Jesus' harsh rebuke of Mary while others think otherwise.[285] Although this is not supported grammatically or historically. However, *γύναι* appears in the vocative voice-indicating an emotional depth to the word. The mere presence of the vocative voice does not indicate this, but strongly suggests it.

This ongoing conversation reexamines the question of whether it is acceptable to translate the specific instance of the vocative *γύναι* as "mother" in certain languages. This translation choice has been suggested by commentators and translation scholars, notably Nida, and has been adopted in modern Bible translations in different languages[286] However, Gert Knepper, vehemently argues that the word *γύναι* should never be understood to signify "mother", given the language so obviously avoids addressing this.[287] Knepper contends that Jesus' salutation to his beloved mother is really harsh in the Greek language and even in the English language, but not probably with connotations of insolence. This essay contends that such oppositions are exaggerated and fail to adequately consider the crucial contextual pragmatics, linguistic considerations, such as the nature of corpus analysis, and audience expectations that Bible translators must be aware of when creating a new Scripture version. The cultural component, particularly African socio-cultural circumstances, is a key factor to take into

[285] Knepper, "Nida's Γύναι: Eugene Nida's Views on the Use of Γύναι in John 2:4", 165.
[286] Johannes Petrus Louw and E. A. Nida, eds., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1988), 56.
[287] Knepper, "Nida's Γύναι: Eugene Nida's Views on the Use of Γύναι in John 2:4", 167.

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account. The authors concur that, according to both exegetical and translational considerations, the choice to render the address phrase in John 2:4 as "mother" is quite viable as a plausible rendering.

## The Debate

This section begins by outlining the main arguments Nida and others have made over the years as to why some languages translate the word "mother" in John 2:4 as *γύναι*. This discussion centers on the logical or pragmatic meaning of the original language.[288] In the words of Eleanor Dickey, the word *γύναι* is a "neutral" form of address for a woman.[289] The concept of linguistic neutrality is referred to as the politic of linguistics. In contemporary studies, it is more accepted than "neutral".[290] Politic linguistic forms are those that are anticipated in a given situation based on a particular sociocultural norm. Politic terms are not offensive, but neither are they seen as extra-polite or courteous by language speakers.

Therefore, the presence of vocative *γύναι* in other NT passages and Greek literature cannot be used to support the claim that Jesus addressed his mother in John 2:4 in a political manner. According to Knepper, Jesus used this address form deliberately to distance himself from Mary and depict their relationship as one that was not familial.

Nida and others also make a second, equally important argument that also relates to the pragmatics of the original language. They contend that Jesus' identical use of the same address language

[288] Eugene A. Nida, "Translators' Creativity Versus Sociolinguistic Constraints", A. Beylard- Ozer off, J. Králová, and B. Moser-Mercer, eds., *Translators' Strategies and Creativity: Selected Papers from the 9th International Conference on Translation and Interpreting, Prague, September 1995* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1998), 127-136.

[289] Eugene Dickey, *Greek Forms of Address. From Herodotus to Lucian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 86.

[290] Richard J. Watts, *Politeness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003). 56.

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to refer to his mother in John 19:26 amply supports their claim that he did not intend to be rude as stated in John 2:4.[291] This argument about the translation of the vocative *γύναι* as mother was not originally proposed by Nida alone. E. J. Goodspeed also presents a similar viewpoint, questioning whether Jesus would disrespectfully address his mother, particularly considering the Gospel of John's portrayal of Jesus displaying consideration and affection for her John 19:25-27.[292]

As a result, Knepper's argument against the possibility of translating *γύναι* as mother in this paragraph really begins with a defense of silence. It basically works as follows: It is impossible for Jesus to address his mother politically in John 2:4 or 19:26 because there is no instance of using the vocative case to refer to one's mother in a political context in ancient Greek literature. It is not acceptable to use similar vocative uses that occur in settings other than the address of one's mother to support the validity of this usage in John 2:4 and 19:26. Therefore, translations of these passages should not convey the idea that Jesus was addressing his mother in a political sense in any recipient language, especially if the recipient language's phrase implies incorrectly that Jesus was referring to her as his mother.

**The Pragmatic force of *γύναι.***

The authors are of the view that John 19:26 has been unjustly glossed over by Knepper and other scholars who share his viewpoint on the subject without giving it the significant theological weight it deserves. In a spoken act that satisfies his filial obligation, Jesus

[291] Alan R. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 133.
[292] Edgar Johnson Goodspeed, "Problems of New Testament Translation", *The Bible Translator* 3:2(1952), 70.

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addresses his mother as *γύναι* while he hangs on the cross,[293] by giving her to a different man who will take care of her just as his own son would. Jesus is not just demonstrating his love for his mother by speaking to her and to his devoted disciples. He is also explicitly acting in the socially accepted son-to-mother relationship. This is the contextual framework that enables listeners to assess the pragmatic potency of each word used during the speech act. It is not a supposition but a conclusion based on context analysis to interpret the vocative as a political form in this sentence. It is completely illogical to claim that, contrary to what Knepper would have us believe, Jesus openly denies being Mary's son in the first half of this speech act (*Γύναι*), while doing so in the speech act's second section. In light of what is known about how human communication functions in the real world, this line of thinking is utterly absurd. Nida and many Bible translators correctly inferred from the context of John 19:26 that Jesus was not establishing a distance between himself and his mother in terms of their familial ties. If Jesus used an address phrase that explicitly undermined the value of his speech act while carrying out this specific social obligation, it would be an unimaginable behavioral contradiction. This is the main justification for the authors 's acceptance that John 2:4's γύναι serves the same political purpose. However, there are also other elements that lessen the strength of Knepper's claim. The following sections discuss these elements.

First of all, as noted by Dickey, *γύνα*ι may also be used by a man in ancient Greece to address a close family member, specifically his wife. [294] Arthur Quinn stressed that the use of *γύνα*ι which may be found in numerous ancient Greek writers from

[293] John McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1975), 403.
[294]Dickey, *Greek Forms of Address*, 86, 242.

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various eras, shows that a male might address an in-group member politically while not intending to distance her. This is an indication that a man may politely use this vocative to address his own mother,[295] but it does move scholars closer to this possibility by demonstrating that the pragmatic positioning of the addressee as being in a non-family relation to the speaker does not result from the vocative *γύναι* on its own. As Knepper claims, it is deceptive to imply that is pragmatically comparable to the address phrase, which, when used between people who know each other, is the opposite of polite.[296] When addressing their wives as *γύναι*, husbands clearly knew who they were talking to and did not use inappropriate or derogatory language.

Second, the question *τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί* in John 2:4 (which is translated as what to me and to you?). Scholars contend that, in contrast to Knepper's assertion, this sentence is not consistently accepted by Bible commentators and translators by any means as putting Jesus and his mother in this passage. Likewise, it is clear from various Old Testament verses that the speaker is not attempting to put distance between himself and the listener in this statement. The phrase in 2 Chronicles 35:21, according to Pahaoh Neco, could be translated as What concern is this situation to me and you? Or, to use more colloquial language, Why do you involve me in this matter? The NRS, along with several other translations, such as the NAS, NLT, Message, CSB, ISV, and WEB, take this phrase's function in this exact sense in John 2:4, indicating that the distance is between Jesus and his mother on the one side and the shortage of wine at the wedding on the other side. John McHugh agrees with

[295]As pointed out by Joshua Jensen (p.c.), in many traditional cultures, the relative social standing of husband-to-wife (higher to lower) is the opposite of son-to-mother (lower to higher), which weakens the possibility of drawing a parallel from this politic usage in the son-to-mother context.

[296] Knepper, "Nida's *Γύναι*: Eugene Nida's Views on the Use of Γύναι in John 2:4", 166.

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this interpretation of Jesus' remarks to his mother in this passage as well.[297] The phrase *τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί* an is described as an ambiguous expression by Beasley-Murray, who also draws attention to an analogous term from East Syrian Chaldee that denotes thinking unity rather than division. That is, the alleged alienation between Jesus and his mother on this line is only one possible interpretation rather than an inevitable conclusion, which implies that the vocative *γύναι* must also serve as a distancing function in this context.

The corpus size is a major strong point that cannot be discussed in this discussion. It has a significant impact on the nature of linguistics analysis. In terms of size, the mass of the earliest Greek manuscript that is referenced for failing to identify the letter *γύναι* in one's mother's address is not particularly extensive. The reason for this is that linguistic function can vary significantly among a language's various registers, meaning that some statements with a particular function in spoken language may only very infrequently have the same purpose in a corpus of written texts.[298]

This does not necessarily mean that the specific pragmatic situation in which individuals address the mothers they love happens frequently enough in this corpus to infer that the absence of vocative in such a scenario is important. The vocative form *γύναι* is used quite frequently in the corpus of ancient Greek literature. The main argument here is that John presents Jesus as addressing his mother in the first century in a way that was actually polite in spoken Koiné Greek. We should note that politeness standards can quickly change over ages as human beings progress from one era to another. There is no reason to believe that this specific usage should fundamentally be seen in other Greek translations, especially those from ancient

[297] John McHugh, *The Mother of Jesus in the New Testament*, 476.
[298] Douglas Biber, *University Language: A Corpus-based Study of Spoken and Written Registers* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2006), 252.

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times. Furthermore, the small size of the corpus currently available must be considered. Given the nature of the corpus, there is no compelling evidence to believe that the spoken Koiné Greek vocative *γύναι* is unique when referring to one's mother. This conclusion cannot be supported by the data. If this argument is correct, there is no longer any basis for viewing this vocative as distant or as a sign of a rupture in the relationship between the divine and humans which could be found in John 2:4 and John 19:26.

**Conclusion**

These linked issues regarding the characteristics of corpus material significantly undermine Knepper's primary argument from silence, which sought to rule out the possibility that the letter *γύναι* in the Koiné Greek address of one's mother may have been political. Reading from the Gospel according to John, Jesus never addressed Mary as "my Mother" but "woman" *γύναι***.** In addition to that, both Jesus and the angels refer to Mary Magdalene as "woman" in the vocative *γύναι* in John 20:13-15.

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# CHAPTER FOUR
# WOMEN, CULTURE AND CHRISTIANITY AMONG THE EWE OF GHANA

The previous chapter presented a discussion on the Textual and Contextual Analysis of John 2:1-4. The work also reviewed the Linguistic Analysis on the Vocative *Γύναι*, Woman, what concerns you and me, my time is not up in John 2:1-4. This chapter provides a succinct history of the Anlo-Ewe people in the research's study area, the Volta region, as well as information acquired from fieldwork through conducted, analyzed, and discussed interviews. This will support the achievement of the objectives and aims of this book as well as providing answers to the research questions.

## The Ewe People's History, Religion, and Culture

Ghana is administratively divided into sixteen regions. The Volta region is one of the sixteen regions with Ho as its capital. The region is west of the Republic of Togo and east of Lake Volta. Twenty-five administrative districts make up the region, which is inhabited by several ethnic and linguistic groups, including the Ewe, Guan, and Akan peoples.[299] The Guan people are made up of the communities of Akpafu, Buem, Likpe, Lolobi and Nkonya which are currently found in the Oti Region. The establishment of the Oti Region took place in December 2018 when it was separated from the Volta Region under the administration of the New Patriotic Party. The old British Togoland and the German protectorate of Togoland were

[299] Yves Beigbeder, *International monitoring of plebiscites, referenda and national elections - Self-determination and Transition to Democracy* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1994), 131.

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combined to establish the Volta Region.[300] The region was governed by the British as a region of the Gold Coast and was later given the name Trans-Volta Togoland. The Ewe people, who make up 68.5 percent of the largest population, are the native ethnic group in the Volta Region. The Ewes are divided into several subgroups, including the Vedome, Ave, Avenor, Tongu, and Anlo Ewes. The Guan people, who make up 9.2 percent of the population, the Akan people, who make up 8.5 percent, and the Gurma people, who make up 6.5 percent, are among the other ethnic groups. The Ghana-Ewe constitute about 3,902,009 which represents 12.8 percent of Ghana's population according to the 2021 Census. In Ghana, they are the third-largest ethnic group.[301] A second Ewe word, gbe, denotes language or voice. When the term Ewe is used, it refers exclusively to the Ewe people and their native tongue, Ewegbe (Euegbe). After migrating from *Oyo* in southwest Nigeria, the Ewe made their way to the present-day areas in the 17th century CE.[302] According to Nukunya, the people travelled through Ketu, which is located in Benin and Notsie in Togo.[303]

The modern Ewe are primarily found in Ghana, Togo, and Benin, with a smaller population in the southwest of Nigeria. The Ewe and their associated people, according to Ansre, moved from Oyo in Nigeria to Ketu in south-eastern Benin.[304] According to history, they lived in Ketu and were ruled by King Agorkoli, a cruel king.[305] The Ewe are a diverse and frequently divided people,

[300] Beigbeder, *International monitoring of plebiscites, referenda and national elections*, 131.
[301] *Ethnic Group Distribution of the Population in Ghana 2021 from 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC)* (June 21, 2022), Accessed 19th July 2022.
[302] G. K. Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe* ( London: Atlone 1969), 1
[303] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 2.
[304] Gilbert Ansre, *Evangelical Presbyterian church 150 years of evangelization and development 1847-1997*. Ho: EPC, 67.
[305] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 3.

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despite sharing a shared language and a set of customs and religious beliefs. On their migration to their current places, the Ewe fought countless wars for territorial gains, and if they could, they thoroughly routed their foes.

**The Anlo-Ewe's of Ghana**

The book focused mainly on the Anlo-Ewe in the south of the Volta Region. There are thirty-six (36) states in the Anlo land. Some of the states are Whuti, Atorkor, Dzita, Tegbi, Agbozome, Klikor, Tsiame, Atiavi, Asadame, Sasieme, Dzodze, Abor, Akatsi, Avenorfeme, Avenorfedo and Anloga, which serves as the Anlo State's capital. The Anlos, also referred to as the Adzovia and Bate clans, have a historical link to Awoamefia, originating from the town of Ketu. According to Nukunya, Ketu was the dwelling place of the forefathers of the Anlos and other Ewe-speaking people communities before they migrated to their present homeland.[306]

The Adzovia clan's progenitor and hunter Adela Adzavoe is credited as being the first person to sit on the stool or *zikpui* of leadership throughout the indeterminate period when these people resided in Ketu. The Anlo ancestors, the Fon who are now in Benin and Be who are currently close to Lome, Togo, decided to leave the area though due to a series of wars in the area.[307] Amid this move, Adela Adzavoe passed away. He was shortly replaced by his son Adza Asimadi after the immigrants founded their new settlement of Dogbonyigbo, which is believed to have been in southern central Benin. The group was divided into three after disagreements broke out in the new town. The Fon proceeded even further south to settle in their current location, while a second group led by Adza Asimadi

[306] [306] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 2.
[307] Sandra E. Greene, "*Field Notes," No. 11, Interview with T.S.A. Togobo, 7 August 1978.* (Evanston, Illinois, 1978), 3.

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traveled to Tado in northern Benin and a third relocated to Notsie in south-central Togo by traveling west. The quarrel between Adza Asimadi's sons in Tado began while they were there.[308] One of his sons, Kponoe, stole the stool after his death and fled to Notsie with it and his supporters, reuniting his group with those who had traveled directly from Dogbonyigbo. Once at Notsie, Kponoe was formally installed as the head of the two tribes, which were formerly referred to as the Dogbos, and given the name Fia Sri. There were numerous conflicts between the Dogbos and the Notsie population, led by King Agokoli, while Fia Sri was in power. These disputes caused many divides among them.[309]

The fight between the sons of Agokoli and Sri is the one that appears in the stories most frequently. Agokoli was informed that Sri's son had been killed although he had only been wounded. As a result, Agokoli's son was put on trial, given a death sentence, and hanged for the purported murder. Later, when Agokoli discovered that Sri's kid had not been killed, he consented to refrain from exacting revenge only in exchange for the Dogobos submitting themselves completely to him. The Dogbos were made to undertake some horrific and seemingly impossible chores in exchange for which they were made to build a wall for Agokoli's palace.[310] The challenges the Dogbos faced while constructing the wall, including demanding to knead sand that had been mingled with thorns with their bare feet, eventually influenced their choice to go. The Anlo ancestors departed the town with other unhappy groups after the clay wall that surrounded it was softened by water. Soon after Sri arrived in Anlo, it was discovered that the office stool had been left in Notsie during their hurried departure.[311]

[308] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 1.
[309] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 2.
[310] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 2.
[311] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 4.

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Boko Seke Axovi and T.S.A. Togobo, two Anlo elders, describe what is said to have happened following the finding. A decision was made to transport the stool from Notsie after a meeting was held. They sent a delegation that included Adeladza, the founding member of the Bate clan and Sri's nephew, together with Amesimeku Atogolo, the founding member of the Like clan and another nephew of Sri, in an effort to persuade Togbui Agokoli to give up the stool. To receive the stool, Togbui Agokoli required them to bring the head of Togbui Sri I when they arrived.[312]

The nephews Adeladza and Amesi-meku Atogolo conferred with one another before discreetly departing. They relayed the message when they got back to Anlo. There was no other option. They turned to look around and saw that Amega Le I, the founder of the Wifeme clan, had a disciple whose arm was similarly marked by yawns to Sri's arm. Le agreed to let their servant Foli transport their possessions and accompany them to Notsie after discussing with them but kept secret from him their plan to kill Foli and deliver his arm to Agokoli in place of Sri's skull. Foli completed the work without sufficient knowledge. When Foli was near Notsie, Amesimeku killed him. She then took the arm with which she had been killed to Togbui Agokoli. Since Togbui Sri is elderly and frail, we decided against killing him and bringing the head. Instead, we cut off his arm, they explained to him.[313]

Agokoli acknowledged the justification and let go of the stool. It is reported that just before he passed away, Sri gathered his family and told them that his maternal nephew Adeladza, the clan founder of the Bate clan, would succeed in the position of Awoamefia in recognition of the part he played in retrieving the stool. The fact that Sri's own sons had opted out of the recovery

[312] [312] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 3.
[313] Greene, "*Field Notes,*" No. 11, Interview with T.S.A. Togobo, 7 August 1978, 5.

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because their mother had found it to be too dangerous a task was not taken into account. Amesimeku Atogolo, a nephew of Sri who also participated in the retrieval, was ruled ineligible for such a distinction because he was responsible for the death of the servant Foli. As a result, the Adzovia and Bate clans were alternately chosen as the Awoamefia.[314]

**Political traditions of the Indigenous Ewe**

The Ewe's political traditions are not uniform. Numerous conflicts were waged against Ewe opponents during the Ewe people's history. Political coalitions have been formed to defend the Ewe against shared foes, but the Ewe have never had a centralised state or kingdom like the Ashanti or Yoruba.[315] The Ewe people have been described as a diverse community, consisting of multiple tribes and sub-tribes with varying sizes, levels of influence, and degrees of self-governance.[316] The Anlo-Ewe appear to be the largest political group among the Ghana-Ewe, with the Awomefia serving as the Fiaga of the Anlo state. Every Anlo resident owes loyalty to the Awomefia. However, the majority of Ewe communities are organised into smaller chiefdoms, with one paramount chiefdom. In each of these chiefdoms, a paramount (head) chief assumes the role of leadership. Certain political structures were established by colonial administrators, and in present-day Africa, democratic governments show little concern for the expansion of the chieftaincy institution within their countries.

[314] Jean Claude Pauvert, "*L'evolution politique des Ewe," Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines, Committee of Enquiry* (Volta Region) Seventy-Eighth Sitting (Thursday, 17 October 1974), no. 2 (16) 1960),162: 161-192.
[315] Anselmus Paaku K. Kludze, *Ewe Law of Property.* 2nd edition, (Accra: Sonlife, 2012), 16.
[316] UMUNA Report 2015:8.

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There are also female chiefs, known as nynufiawo (plural: *nyɔnufia*), who carry out similar duties to the male chiefs but do not 'sit' on stools (traditional seats) as a mark of office or have the same authority. They have a historical right to organise women. As their representative, each nynufia has authority over all women under her control.[317] The male chief, whose job is similar to hers, is consequently not equal in prestige and influence to the nynufia. For example, although they both have jurisdiction over the same area, she reports to a male chief. She has control over the female residents of that jurisdiction, whereas the male chief has control over both male residents and female residents as well as the nynufia.

Every male chief has the ability to enact new legislation by using his legislative authority (*se*). As a result, the human self is dynamic. The *se* can be modified, reinterpreted, or updated by certain methods. Kludze has noted that the tribunal hearings that are frequently held to decide cases are typically when the chief's judicial and legislative authority is used.[318] As a result, the creation of legislation is greatly influenced by legal precedent rather than direct promulgation.[319] There is another aspect that Kludze did not include, according to Speith's research on how laws are made in chiefdoms.

According to Speith, the chief first consults with his elders in the council before making any changes to the laws of a particular chiefdom.[320] The chief will notify the *sɔhefia* (chief of the youth) if the elders approve of his proposal. The *sɔhefia* also has a conversation with the young people about the issue before reporting

[317] Kludze, *Ewe Law of Property*, 33.
[318] Kludze, *Ewe Law of Property*, 33.
[319] Kludze, *Ewe Law of Property*, 34.
[320] Jakob Spieth, *The Ewe people: a study of the Ewe people in German Togo* (Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 1906), 48.

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back to the chief. The legislation can only be amended once the youth and the elders have come to an understanding. The entire community is then informed by the announcer (*kpdola*).

**Christianity Among the Ewe**

In 1847, Christianity first spread among the Ewe. In May 1847, a group of four missionaries, namely Luer Bultman, Karl Flato, James Graff, and Lorenz Wolf, hailing from the North German Mission in Bremen, Germany, arrived at Cape Coast on the Gold Coast. Upon their arrival, they joined forces with their Basel counterparts, who had been present since 1828 and were actively spreading the teachings of Christianity in the region then known as the Gold Coast. The North German missionaries decided to carry out a mission in Gabon after discussions. However, this attempt was a failure because the Gabon mission perished. The four missionaries left for the Gold Coast.[321] They encountered Prince Nyangomango, the son of the Togbe Kodzo Dei, Fiaga of the Peki chiefdom, when they got to Accra. In the Volta Region of modern-day Ghana, in Peki, Nyangomango pointed them in the direction of his father's kingdom. Evangelical activity among the Anlo in Keta was started by European missionaries from the German Nord-deutsche Missions in 1853. In 1857, they established a second station in Anyako, which is on the north side of the Keta Lagoon. Of the initial four, only Lorenz Wolf was able to live for nearly six months. Wolf constructed a manse in 1848 with the assistance of the neighborhood residents, where he also ran a school for thirteen students.[322]

The other three missionaries perished fairly early in the trip due to the terrible tropical weather and bug attacks. In 1851, Wolf himself passed away while traveling home after being ill. The

[321] Kludze, *Ewe Law of Property*, 34.
[322] Kludze, *Ewe Law of Property*, 34.

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mission was initially so challenging that after seven years of struggle, just seven converts had been gained. Two churches were established as a consequence of the work of these early missionaries. The missionaries wanted to start simply one church, but due to the situation, this was not possible. For instance, the division of Africa and the two world wars caused the Ewe (and the Ewe religion) to be divided into multiple country states.[323]

Since then, the two sister churches have created distinct histories for themselves, particularly as a result of the two world wars that disrupted the mission and division of Africa by European explorers and colonial rulers. Fortunately, the mission body had an intricate mission strategy in place that it had begun to follow before the wars interfered with its schedule. However, at first, there were few conversions, and the majority of those associated with the church as Christians were local immigrants from Sierra Leone or liberated slaves from the region.[324] Although the expansion was sluggish, it was consistent, and by 1906, seven further church branches had been established, with 869,869 total members. Subsequently, churches and schools were opened along with the ordination of Africans into the clergy. By the mid-century, the Church, which is now recognised as the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, had expanded to become a prominent institution in the region.

**Some Religious Beliefs of the Ewe**

The Ewe believe in a Supreme God they worship, known as Mawuga (or Mawu), who made the universe and everything in it. This god is responsible for the creation of the universe and all of its creatures. Additionally, the populace worships *trɔwo* (lesser

[323] Kludze, *Ewe Law of Property*, 35.
[324] Kludze, *Ewe Law of Property*, 35.

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gods/deities), and ancestral spirits, including *tɔgbuiwo* (male ancestors) and *mamawo*[325] (female ancestors) and *dzokawo* (other spirits). The Ewe, like many Ghanaians and other Africans, have a very patriarchal social structure, raising questions about the participation of *mamawo* (female ancestors) in the hierarchy. However, at both traditional festivals and official ceremonies, *tɔgbewo* (male ancestors) and *mamawo* (female ancestors) are invoked. In addition, some Ewe people follow the matrilineal system, and for them, a person is defined by the *bome* (womb) from which they are born. The female heritage is so essential to such Ewe communities. Despite being a monotheistic people, the Ewe believe in a hierarchy of gods. Since the other deities are *Mawuga's* offspring, *Mawuga* is the supreme deity to which the others must submit. As a result, the Ewe practice an unusual form of monotheism.[326]

**The Supreme God (*Mawuga*)**

*Mawuga* means "the great God" or "the big God" as it is made up of the two terms *mawu* (God) and *ga* (big/great). According to some academics, *Mawu* was initially one of the many Ewe gods, and the Bremen missionaries in northern Germany raised *Mawu* to the rank of the Christian God. Other academics, like Nukunya, contend that all Ghanaians, including the Ewe, shared a common belief in the existence of a "High God" prior to the entrance of the

[325] The inclusion if *mamawo* (female ancestors) in the hierarchy is a matter of debate because the Ewe, like many Ghanaian and other African people, are highly patriarchal in their social ordering. Yet one hears the mention of *tɔgbewo* (male ancestors), *mamawo* (female ancestors) in invocations at both traditional festivals and state ceremonies. Besides, some Ewe people are matrilineal and for them, the *fome* (womb) from which a person comes into the world defines that person. Therefore, female ancestry is vital to such Ewe communities.

[326]Nigel Lovell, The Watchi-Ewe: Histories and origins, in B. N. Lawrence (ed.). *The Ewe of Togo and Benin, (*Accra: Woeli: 2005), 90-114.

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missionaries.[327] In his major work, The Ewe People, which was published in 1906, Spieth, the first missionary anthropologist to conduct a thorough anthropological study among the Ewe, supports the idea that *Mawuga* was the Supreme Being of the Ewe long before the coming of the missionaries.[328]

## Ewe Anthropology and Gender Constructions -Woman versus Mother

Woman is a generic term for females and culturally, it seems to suggest a complete distance between him and the mother. Among the Ewe, *Nyɔnu* is the opposite of *ntsu* (man). Similarly, *Nyɔnu* is the counterpart of *ntsu* (man). It shows the physiological difference between a man and a woman. *Nyɔnu* is the general term for the female gender.[329] A woman is an adult human female. It is a term used to describe the gender identity of individuals who identify with or are assigned female at birth. The term *Nyɔnu* (woman) encompasses a broad range of characteristics, experiences, and roles that vary across cultures and societies. Women can have diverse interests, professions, relationships, and life experiences.[330]

On the other hand, a mother is a specific role that a woman can assume when she gives birth to a child or adopts. A mother is a female parent who nurtures, cares for and raises a child or children. That is why among the Ewes of the *Vedome* area *nɔ* (mother) is a symbolic meaning of someone who sits. The act of sitting is called *nɔ anyi* (sit down). It has its roots in the point of marrying and living together as couples and the act of having sexual intercourse that is "*Ntsu kple Nyɔnu ya wonɔ anyi gyi vi"*(This man has lived with this woman and they have a child).

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[327] Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana*, 70.
[328] Jakob Spieth, *The Ewe people*, 48.
[329] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 71.
[330] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 71

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Furthermore, among the Ewe, *Nɔ* also means the act of sitting down to give birth or giving life to another human being. The child becomes the end product of the process which begins by living together as couples and bringing offspring. In the Ewe cultural setting, the woman is expected to sit and give birth to a baby who is alive. "Stil birth" is not considered as birth since the baby cannot survive. That is why couples that do not produce children are advised to adopt someone they can take care of in order for the person to give life to that individual.[331] The woman who sits down to give birth to another human being becomes *Nɔ* (mother). Being a mother involves a unique set of responsibilities, including providing emotional support, guidance, and care for the child's well-being and development. Motherhood is often associated with a deep emotional bond between a mother and her child. It is important to note that, not all women are mothers, as motherhood is a personal choice and not all women have children. Similarly, some women may become mothers through various means, such as giving birth, adopting, or fostering children. The distinction between being a woman and being a mother reflects the diversity of experiences and roles that individuals can have in relation to their gender and parenthood.

**Motherhood in the Ewe Culture**

The basic unit of the society is the family. Motherhood in the Ewe Culture is highly revered and cherished. This is because of the Ewe belief that childbearing is a means to continue family succession and family inheritance.[332] Therefore, during marriage ceremonies special libations (prayers) are offered to the couples so that they can give birth to continue the family lineage. When a child is born, it is

[331] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 72.

[332] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 71

the responsibility of the father to consult with the extended family to organise a naming ceremony for the child. This is called vihehedego, which is bringing the child out into the public domain. It is an act to name and announce the child to the public.

The identity of the child is given during such ceremonies. It is the responsibility of the man to name his children due to the patrilineal inheritance. In Ewe traditional settings, the father is called *tɔ/Papa* and the mothers are *nɔ.* In the Ewe traditional settings, mothers are mainly responsible for the informal education of their children in communication skills like the acquisition of the language (L1 language) and that is the reason why there is the mother-tongue language.[333] They teach children basic knowledge in toilet training, respect for the elderly and running basic errands. Tradition demands that children show great respect to their mothers wherever they find themselves. Other names are used to refer to mothers depending on the cultural norms of the area.

Among the Anlo-Ewe, custom demands that children call their parents *nɔnyɛ/Daa or Dannyɛ.* Among the Anlo-Ewe children are great assets that need to be well protected and cared for. It is the responsibility of parents to take good care of their children and teach them the customs of their tribe until they reach adulthood. Parents must train their children well so that they will grow to bring honour to the family anytime they step out and by so doing become responsible adults in the family.

**Political Leadership**

There is no single political entity among the Ewe. The chieftaincy institution serves as the focal point of the political organisation of the Ewe. The Ewe leader is referred to as *fia*. The political master of the *du* or *dukɔ* is typically a *fiaga* (head chief). All other people are

[333] Kludze, *Ewe Law of Property*, 34.

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under his authority.[334] The *dufia*, who is the *fia* of the *duta*, comes next after the *fiaga*. Each *duta* has a *sawo* and a *samefia* in addition to being further divided into *dutas*. The chief has executive, judicial, and legislative authority. Chieftaincy divisions represent tight adherence to hierarchical lines of authority. The *fiaga* ensures that all pertinent division heads are involved in the administration of the sɑ̃awo and *dutawo*. Despite being hierarchical, Ewe chieftaincy power is not despotic. The Ewe family, also known as *dzotinu* or *tɔgbevime* or aʋadzidzi or a*f*edo, is said by Kludze to be a fundamental part of the society.[335] He adds that while aʋadzidzi is the more exact word, it has the drawback of being a little too raw for use in public. Kludze could have opted not to include the expression entirely, but given his focus on Ewe inheritance law, he aimed to emphasize the Ewe community's entitlement to transmit property rights.[336]

**Women in Ewe Culture versus Jewish Women**

In earlier submissions in Chapter Three about the role of women in ancient Jewish Society, it was noted that women in the Jewish culture were not treated with respect as people created in the same image of God as their male counterparts. They were considered weak vessels who could not offer anything better to their generation and their society. Their ability and intelligence were despised in any form. However, this situation is different among the women in the Ewe Culture of Ghana. Although the Ewe culture is similar to that of the Jewish culture, there are some differences. In Ewe culture, mothers play significant roles and hold various responsibilities that

[334] Kludze, *Ewe law of property*, 38.
[335] Kludze, *Ewe law of property*, 38.
[336] Kludze, *Ewe law of property*, 41.

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contribute to the functioning of their communities. Below are some general roles and responsibilities of women in Ewe culture.

**Household Management**

Mothers are often responsible for managing the household, including tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and caring for children. They ensure the smooth running of the household and the well-being of family members. Mothers play the primary role in raising and nurturing children. They are responsible for the children's care, upbringing, and education, imparting cultural values, traditions, and societal norms. Some also engage in farming and agriculture to meet the needs of their families.[337] They are activities like planting, weeding, harvesting, and processing crops. They may cultivate staple crops like maize, cassava, yam and vegetables, contributing to the family's food security and income generation. Others also engage in trade and commerce both within their communities and beyond. They may sell agricultural produce, handmade crafts, and textiles, or engage in small-scale businesses, contributing to the local economy. Women in Ewe culture are renowned for their artistic skills. They engage in activities such as pottery, weaving, beadwork, and basketry, creating beautiful crafts that are both functional and artistic.

**Mothers play the role of agents of cultural preservation.**

Ewe mothers play a vital role in preserving and transmitting Ewe cultural practices, traditions, and transmitting Ewe cultural practices, traditions, and oral history to future generations. They participate in ceremonies, rituals and festivals, often taking leading

[337] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 3.

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roles as singers, dancers and storytellers. Women provide support and solidarity to one another within their communities. They form social networks, support groups, and cooperatives, assisting each other in times of need and working together for common goals.

**Women Priestess and Community Leadership**

Although male leadership is more prevalent in Ewe society, women also hold positions of authority and influence. They may serve as elders, advisors, or respected community members, contributing to decision-making processes and conflict resolution. Women provide support and solidarity to one another within their communities. They form social networks, support groups and cooperatives, assisting each other in times of need and working together for common goals.[338]

There are also female chiefs, known as *nyɔnufiawo* (plural: *nyɔnufia*), who carry out similar duties to the male chiefs but do not 'sit' on stools (traditional seats) as a mark of office or have the same authority. They have a historical right to organise the women. As their representative, each *nynufia* has authority over all the women under her control. The male chief, whose job is similar to hers, is consequently not equal in prestige and influence to the *nyɔnufia*.[339] For example, even when they both hold authority over the same jurisdiction, she remains under the leadership of a male chief. She has control over the female residents of that jurisdiction, whereas the male chief has control over both male residents and female residents as well as the *nynufia*. Every male chief can enact new legislation when using his legislative authority (se). As a result, the human self is dynamic. The *se* can be modified, reinterpreted, or updated by certain methods Kludze has noted that the tribunal

[338] Nukunya, *Kinship and Marriage among the Anlo Ewe*, 3.
[339] Kludze, *Ewe Law of Property,* 34.

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hearings frequently held to decide cases are typically when the chief's judicial and legislative authority is used. As a result, the creation of legislation depends heavily on judicial precedent rather than direct promulgation.[340] According to the doctrine of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church, women are allowed the chance to hold every kind of leadership position. Women are group leaders (*hamedada*), guiding their members in all facets of life. The Church also ordains women as Ministers of the Gospel as part of their doctrine; these individuals then serve as the congregation's spiritual leaders. Young women in their communities look up to these female pastors as role models and sources of inspiration.

**Aspects of Family Law of Inheritance Among the Ewe**

Like many other communities worldwide, marriage within the Ghana-Ewe community entails specific rights, responsibilities, and obligations for both the couple and their respective kin groups.[341] In traditional Ewe society, a woman is constantly under the guardianship of a male figure, which may be her father, the head of her lineage, elder brother, or husband, depending on her status at any particular moment. [342] In the traditional Ewe society, the system is not as rigid as in some other cultures, where a woman is consistently under the care of a male guardian, often her father, lineage head, elder brother, or spouse, depending on her status at any given time. However, despite this arrangement, a married Ewe woman's rights are limited, not only to her husband but also regarding her own younger brothers born from the same father. For example, she possesses limited inheritance rights in both her father's and husband's families. While indigenous marriage grants her the

[340] Kludze, *Ewe Law of Property,* 34.
[341] Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana,* 57
[342] Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana,* 57.

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status of a member of her husband's family, it does not entitle her to inherit her husband's possessions if he were to pass away without a will.

Similarly to this, even if she has a lot of independence, she is still seen as a minor in terms of some customs and cultural practices. When organising a funeral for a member of her father's family, her input might be considered, but unlike the male family members, she cannot actively engage in the discussion unless she receives a specific invitation to do so. The Ewe organise their funerals under certain cultural customs. The guidelines state that only recognized clan heads are invited to participate in the planning discussions. This kind of custom is also connected to how the Ewe celebrate marriage. No woman is allowed to take direct charge of arranging the marriage when the bride's and groom's families come together to pay the dowry. Only the traditional fathers of the bride and the groom are explicitly acknowledged as the representatives responsible for contracting on behalf of the extended family that the marriage unites.

Within patriarchal Ewe tribes, the inheritance rights are consistently passed to the eldest male child, granting him the responsibility of caring for any younger siblings born from the same father.[343] This is how family inheritance rights are transferred from father to children. If a woman is the first child, she loses this privilege and the first male born after her inherits it. Inheritance is typically passed down patrilineally in Ewe villages, and the culture is notably patriarchal. An Ewe husband, for example, has total control over his wife's sexual needs.

Therefore, if she has an affair, it will be a major breach of the marriage contract. Such behavior can result in a divorce. On the

[343] Kludze, *Ewe Law of Property*, 34.

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contrary, the wife's entitlement is limited to receiving sexual fulfilment from her husband, in addition to being financially supported by him. As Ewe traditional marriage permits polygyny, the wife has no grounds to object to her husband's unilateral decision to take another wife.[344] However, before adopting a new wife, the husband must consult with his wife or wives. Ewe family law includes these customary guidelines governing the union of an Ewe husband and an Ewe wife. They are an element of the Ewe indigenous religion and are related to cultural and societal standards among the Ewe. They also establish a correlation between Ewe indigenous religion and Ewe traditional law, embodied by the Ewe chieftaincy, which stands as the exclusive political structure in traditional Ewe society. As was previously mentioned, when a breach occurs, both spouses have rights; as such, whichever spouse feels insulted may request a divorce.

## Field Report and Analysis of John 2: 1-4: Implications For Ewe Mother-Tongue Bible Readers

This part of the study presents data acquired through fieldwork conducted, analysed, and discussed in interviews. This is to help in answering the research questions and achieving the objectives. Out of the thirty individuals selected for the interview, twenty-five respondents participated, including theologians, pastors, leaders and Church members from the Volta region of Ghana. The purpose of the fieldwork was to identify the most fitting words within the Ewe context to address the translation challenges encountered during the exegetical interpretation of the text. Additionally, it aimed to examine the homiletical implications of the text for Ewe

[344] Nukunya, *Tradition and Change in Ghana,* 58.

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speakers reading the Bible in their mother tongue. The data gathered from the field was collected and analysed for further study.

**a. Contextualisation of the Text**

From the discussions above, the text was situated in the Ewe socio-cultural settings. Considering the question asked by the mother of Jesus and the reply given, one can easily conclude that the reply could mean some kind of disrespect. Many other interpreters who have written about John's Gospel have accepted this line of thinking as important. Knepper, however, challenges the relevance of this verse by arguing that no one ever refers to their mother as "woman" in any Greek literature; therefore, it cannot be inferred that Jesus is using this vocative graciously in this context.[345] The authors strongly support this argument because, in the African socio-cultural setting, the translated answer in the Ewe mother-tongue Bible could never be accepted as a polite address to one's mother.

This point is supported by an argument by Nida which focuses on recipient-language use. As a result, it is impossible to interpret the vocative as "woman" in several languages because doing so would imply to readers that Jesus is deliberately disparaging his mother. This statement could be said to be true, reading from the translated version in the Ewe language of Ghana. According to J. P. Louw and Nida, in certain languages, the only politically appropriate way to refer to one's mother is by using the term mother, leaving no other acceptable alternative.[346] A good example of this can be found in Tabalaka's article for proof of this perspective in the southern African language of Setswana.[347]

[345] Knepper, "Nida's Γύναι: Eugene Nida's Views on the Use of Γύναι in John 2:4", 163.
[346] Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament,* 109.
[347] Abel Tabalaka, "A Tension Between Linguistic Semantics and Pragmatics: The Translation of the

According to Knepper, translators of this section should adopt an address term that is sufficiently reserved in the recipient language, even if it shocks readers because the address form in John 2:4 must have shocked even the original Greek-speaking audience.[348]

### b. Meaning and Significance of Mother-Tongue Bible Translation

Twenty-five out of the thirty people who were supposed to participate in the interview replied. Pastors, leaders, and church members from Ghana's Volta region were among them. To address the translation problems discovered during the exegetical reading of the text, the fieldwork's goal was to pinpoint the appropriate phrases within the Ewe context. It also sought to assess how the information might be applied in a sermon for Ewe Bible readers. Numerous mother- tongue translations of scripture were gathered and assessed from the field. The purpose of the exercise was to gather their viewpoints on whether the endeavors of Bible translators in Africa and Ghana should receive support and encouragement. This is because the formal language used in Ghana for instruction and testing in schools is English. The fact that so many students struggle in their mother tongues raises the question of whether Bible translations into these languages need to be promoted. Some respondents noted that in recent times, many parents encourage their children to study English very well in order to pass exams and get better professions in the future, often at the expense of the study of their mother tongues. All interviewees concurred that, instead of using the official English language imposed during colonial times, it is crucial to translate Scripture from the original languages into

Word 'Woman!' (Gunai) Into 'Mosadi!' in the Setswana Bible", *Scriptura* 81 (2002), 453-461.

[348] Knepper, "Nida's Γύναι: Eugene Nida's Views on the Use of Γύναι in John 2:4", 166.

the local dialect to fulfill the Church's mission of successful evangelism and spiritual growth in Ghana.[349] Nearly all of the respondents expressed worry about the fact thatmost of their children are not showing interest in reading their mother-tongue Bibles.

One respondent, who is the president of the Women's Ministry of E.P Church, stated that it would be pointless to try to reach a culture by introducing Jesus without also giving them the Bible in their mother tongue.[350] It does not imply, however, that the gospel cannot be shared with the natives without using their language. When the gospel is proclaimed in a church or other religious setting, local interpreters are typically requested to do so, but the results of this technique are minimal. Due to this, all parties involved in the evangelistic effort must prioritise using the local dialect as the primary means of communication.

It is crucial to communicate the Gospel in a way that would easily evoke a sense of community among the target audience. From the perspective described above, it is possible to argue that the Bible and the Christian faith, when delivered in a foreign language, might just as easily be classified as a foreign religion. It is obvious that language is an essential component of all cultures and worldviews, so the Christian community and all missionaries alike should give the mother-tongue Bible translation project their full attention.

The actual influence of the Gospel is apparent in people's lives through assimilation, which lends confirmation to the aforementioned opinions of the respondents. The indigenous people's mother tongue has historically served as the most effective means of spreading the gospel. Some of the respondents stated that it will support socioeconomic development, the development of

[349] Interveiw with Mr. Johnson Agboada, ( 6th June, 2023).
[350] Interview with Mr. Godfred Vifah, (7th June, 2023).

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official and informal education, and the preservation of ethnic communities' cultures and customs. This suggests that when the language is encouraged within the society, elders may readily teach moral instruction in the home and the larger community. Another benefit, according to some respondents, is that the curriculum in the educational context may be efficiently transmitted to the relevant students in the nation. This, they claimed, is because the decision to translate biblical texts into the intended local language entails the obligation to put the language into writing. When discussing the historical background of translation in chapter three, it became evident that the labor done on the African continent to translate the Bible was one of the elements that contributed to the reduction of languages into writing.

Only until the language is accessible and writable will mass education and societal literacy initiatives be successful. The degree to which a language has developed will determine how successfully a people can preserve their culture and legacy; if the language is unwritten, the process will be more challenging. It is crucial to translate into a language that accurately reflects the culture and tradition of the target audience. The Ewe dialect has been used to develop dictionaries and other significant literature as a result of mother-tongue Bible translations. According to the history of Bible translation in the previous chapter, writing down the oral language in Africa was not a deliberate endeavor. It was made necessary by the ongoing impact of the Bible translation industry since, in the absence of it, the entire project could have been postponed with little advancement. Scripture translation undoubtedly contributed to the spread of literacy in this region of the world and raised the Ewe regional dialect to a higher level to support education.

Additionally, another respondent noted that there are regions with different dialects even within Ewe Bible readers and that Bible

translators would do well to address the issues of the people in the Ewe language communities.[351] One respondent who was asked about the significance of mother-tongue translation noted that there are slight variances in the various local dialects, which occasionally lead to certain difficulties. This means that each dialect has specific expressions that are unique to the speakers who speak it. This furthers the validation of the field's opinions that the translation of the Bible into regional languages is crucial. It also made clearer the necessity of re-translating the Bible into new editions to improve the earlier translations and better adapt them to the people's worldview.

**a. Relationship between Bible Translation and Inspiration**

In this section, respondents were asked to respond to the question about their understanding of Bible Translation and Inspiration.

One Minister of the Presbyterian Church in the Volta region commented that the relationship between Bible translation and inspiration is complex and multifaceted. The concept of inspiration refers to the belief that the Bible is divinely inspired, meaning its authors were guided or influenced by a higher power, typically understood as God.[352] When it comes to Bible translation, the challenges arise from the fact that the original texts of the Bible were written in ancient languages such as Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. These languages differ significantly from modern languages in terms of vocabulary, grammar and cultural context. Translating the Bible requires careful interpretation and linguistic expertise to convey the original meaning of the texts accurately. One of the key aspects of translating the Bible is striking a balance between fidelity to the original text and readability in the target language. Translators must make choices regarding word choices, sentence structure, and

[351] Interview with Mr. Godfred Vifah, (15th June, 2023).
[352] Interview with Mr. Godwin Vifah, (20th July, 2023).

cultural references to ensure that the translated text effectively communicates the intended message to the readers.

Another Minister of the E.P. Church opined that translators who hold the concept of inspiration in high esteem typically approach the task with deep reverence for the original text and a commitment to accurately conveying its intended meaning. They strive to faithfully transmit the message of the inspired text while taking into account the linguistic and cultural context of the target language. Also, translators influenced by the concept of inspiration also consider the clarity and readability of the translated text. They strive to make the message accessible to the target audience while maintaining the integrity of the inspired content. This may involve finding suitable equivalents for cultural or linguistic expressions present in the original text.

A female Presbyter of the E.P. Church at Abor pointed out that she has always had the view that the word of God is an inspired word handed down to man from heaven. Given that she has had difficulty questioning some of the translation challenges she has identified in the Ewe Mother- Tongue Bible. She further added that any attempt to identify translation challenges in the Bible could be a sinful act, so anytime they identify such challenges, they are silent over them because nobody wants to incur the wrath of God since their Pastors have always stipulated that the Bible represents "that says the Lord".[353]

b. **Translation Challenges and Their Implications in John 2:1-4.**
Translation Challenge of the word **"**Wine as *wein*" in John 2:3.

[353] Interview with Mrs. Rita Vifah, (23rd June, 2023).

Fifteen out of the twenty-five respondents interviewed during the research agreed that there are challenges with the translation in John 2:3-4, where "wine" was translated as "*Wein*" in the Ewe Bible.
John 2:3 in the Ewe language is translated as *Eye esi **wein** mede wo nu la, Yesu dada gblɔ nɛ bena: **Wein** mele wo si o.* Responses from the respondents indicate that, in the Ewe traditional setting, the general term for wine is *aha*. It was established that the term *wein* as used in the Ewe Bible is a transliteration of the English word "wine". Some of the respondents argued that there are two forms of the "*aha*" (wine). "*Aha vivi*" represents all manner of beverages classified as soft drinks. The word "*vivi"* means sweet. In other words, this represents all manner of drinks which are non-alcoholics or soft drinks. However, "*Aha sɛsɛ"* represents all manner of drinks with alcoholic contents. The Ewe term "*sɛsɛ*" means hard. Therefore "*Aha sɛsɛ"* means liquor or alcoholic beverages. By this understanding, it is important to render the word "*wein as aha*" in the Ewe Mother tongue Bible.

**c. Translation Philosophy Employed in Rendering John 2:1-4**

**Greek: John 2:3** *καὶ ὑστερήσαντος οἴνου λέγει ἡ μήτηρ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ πρὸς αὐτόν· οἶνον οὐκ ἔχουσιν.* (Joh 2:3 BGT)
**Transliteration**: *Kai hysterēsantos oinou, legei hē mētēr tou Iēsou pros auton, onion ouk echousin".*
**Trans. into Ewe**: "*Eye esi **wein** mede wo nu la, Yesu **dada** gblɔ nɛ bena: **Wein** mele wo si o.*
**Back Translation in English:** And having lacked wine, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine."
**Proposed Translation**: *Eye esi **aha** mede wo nu la, Yesu dada gblɔ nɛ bena: **aha** mele wo si o".*

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The second part of the discussion has to do with Jesus's response to his mother in John 2:4. Majority of the respondents indicated that, anytime they read the text at Church, they are hit by the response Jesus gave to his mother but since they have no idea in translation studies and translation philosophies, it is difficult to appreciate it better. Five of the Pastors added that some elderly women have even confronted them by asking, "What at all would let Jesus speak to his mother like this in public?

A response from one female Minister of the Presbyterian Church was that, if this statement in the Bible is not corrected, there is the tendency for someone to hide behind this response in John 2:4 and speak to an elderly person or his/her parents in such an impolite manner.[354]

Another Presbyterian Minister responded that the Ewe language has differing and diverse dialects within them. These variations can be heard in the vocatives and modest variations in pronunciation. By this, the populace recognises the biblical message's carrier as truly one of their own.[355] Given that different terms might have diverse meanings to members of the same tribe, it is an extremely significant worry that has been raised. They were, in essence, advocating for a greater focus on language development that would build on the earlier work in the Ewe Bible and completely benefit other clans. These variations can be heard in the vocatives and modest variations in pronunciation. By this, the populace recognises the biblical message's carrier as truly one of their own. Given that different terms might have diverse meanings to members of the same tribe, it is an extremely significant worry that has been raised. They were, in essence, advocating for a greater focus on

[354] Interview with Rev. John Kwame Donkor (5th July, 2023).
[355] Interview with Rev. William Ameka (7th July, 2023).

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language development that would build on the earlier work in the Ewe Bible and completely benefit other clans.

A Presbyter in the Avenorfeme E.P. Church observed that there are few variations in the vocatives in the local dialects. When the preacher is familiar with the people, it enhances their reception of the individual and their message. He gave an example that when one uses n*ɔ/Nɔnye,* to call a woman in the *Vedome* part of the Volta region, the person will immediately recognise that you are one of their own. *Nɔ* (mother) is the counterpart of *tɔ* (father*).* In other words, *Nɔ* (mother) is the opposite of *tɔ* (father). It shows the physiological difference between a man and a woman. To call a person "*Nɔ* (mother)" in the Vedome area, the person will easily open up to you instead of "*Daa*/*Danye"* which is used in the *Avenor* area.[356] This means that each dialect has specific expressions unique to the people who speak it. This solidifies the field consensus that improving the original translations and appropriately integrating them into people's worldviews are goals of scripture translation into new translations of the Bible. The necessity for new translations to fit the present generation and the people's culture arises as a result of the dynamic nature of language.

### d. Jesus' Relationship With His Mother

This question, 'What is your understanding of John 2:3-4 in the Ewe Bible which reads: *Eye esi wein mede wo nu la, Yesu dada gblɔ nɛ bena: Wein mele wo si o. 4. Yesu gblɔ ne bena: Nyɔnu, nya kae le mia kple wo dome maha? Nye gafofo medo hade o* Verse (3)?' was asked.

[356] Interview with Mr. Freeman Agbeve ( 10th July, 2023).

Nine respondents agreed with one respondent who is a Catholic priest in the Academia and a native of the Ewe land indicating that, in John 2:4, Jesus addressed his mother Mary as "*Nyɔnu*" rather than using a more personal term like "*Danye*" (my Mother).[357] He further explained that it is important to understand the cultural and linguistic context of the time to fully grasp the significance of his address. He added that, in the Bible, Jesus often used the term "*Nyɔnu*" (woman) when addressing women, including his mother Mary (John 19:26). Significantly, it is true to admit that this form of address may seem odd and disrespectful to our modern sensibilities. In so many cultures in the world today, it will be a grave offense to call your mother *Nyɔnu* (woman). However, it was not intended as such in the Jewish cultural context of that time. The use of *Nyɔnu* (Woman) was a common way to address women respectfully during Jesus' era.

Furthermore, the title "Woman" used by Jesus in this context carries deeper meaning and symbolism. According to one respondent, Jesus called his mother "*Nyɔnu* (Woman) in public in an attempt to present her as the "universal mother" to represent womanhood so all other people who will relate with Him (Jesus) may experience the joy of motherhood from her. By calling Mary as "my mother" means he would have excluded all manner of persons from calling on Mary as Mother. To buttress this point, another respondent, who is a Rev. minister opined that "Jesus's mother knew that he is capable of doing wonders because he is from God or God himself in human likeness.[358] However, the timing of the request was not the best. Since the scripture says there is time for everything." Furthermore, one respondent indicated that, "since Jesus was not invited to perform a miracle but to grace the occasion,

[357] Interview with Rev Dr. Fr. Fabian ( 15th July, 2023).
[358] Interview with Rev Dr. Fr. Fabian ( 15th July, 2023).

there was nothing wrong with the response because he went as a guest."[359]

Contrary to the above-stated view, about fifteen respondents, including Pastors and scholars from the Anlo speaking area, were of the view that Jesus' answer to his mother in John 2:4 is very unfortunate. According to these respondents, "Jesus' choice of words to his own mother seems to be harsh considering the harmless manner in which she approached him". Reading from verse three, "*Eye esi wein mede wo nu la, Yesu dada gblɔ nɛ bena: Wein mele wo si o".* Culturally, a true mother knows the strength and abilities of her child to some extent. As a mother, she kept to heart all that the Angel had said concerning her child. It is out of these beliefs that she approached her son to take away the shame of the couple at the wedding.[360]

### e. Jesus' Response to His Mother

**Verse four "***Yesu gblɔ ne bena: Nyɔnu, nya kae le mia kple wo dome maha? Nye gafofo medo hade o.*

All the people interviewed were asked to share their views on the translation challenges identified in John 2:4 and their cultural implications. The majority of the people interviewed opined that, culturally Jesus' words to his mother do not reflect the kind of relationship that should exist between a mother and her child.

His response was considered harsh and disrespectful according to most respondents. From the scriptures, Jesus Christ is presented as the Savior of the world and the epitome of morality to the world. The response from Jesus Christ to his mother suggests a lack of respect for his mother in public.[361]

[359] Interview with Rev Sampson Adonu ( 18th July, 2023).
[360] Interview with Mrs. Mary Kodom (16th July, 2023).
[361] Interview with Mr. Freeman Agbeve (19th July, 2023).

Another respondent stated that Jesus' response to his mother is like "a son speaking arrogantly to his mother when called upon." Another stated, "No.....you dare not". Others added that his response depended on the relationship he had with his mother. Furthermore, others stated, "The response does not show respect, calling your mum *Nyɔnu* in public is degrading to her.[362]

Another responded that his response portrays a disrespectful vagabond or someone who does not recognise the person as his mother. However, another indicated that "some will see it as a disrespectful act for a child to answer his mother in that manner and others will see it to be normal depending on the relationship with your mother".[363]

One respondent posed the question: How could Jesus Christ address his mother this way? The act of motherhood is not something that should be taken lightly. One female respondent recounted the ordeal a woman often has to go through to be able to deliver after nine months. She further added that the challenges of nurturing a child to become an adult are not an easy task. As a mother, she is always worried whenever she reads this scripture from the Bible. Is Jesus Christ degrading motherhood? According to her, it is very disrespectful for a child, irrespective of age, in the Anlo-Ewe culture, to treat her mother like that in public by calling her *Nyɔnu*. In the Anlo-Ewe traditional setting, *Nyɔnu* is a general term for all women. One respondent asked this question: "Was Jesus invited to perform a miracle at the wedding"? He stressed that "if he (Jesus) was not invited to perform a miracle then there is no problem with his response. It means he was waiting for the appointed time to

[362] Interview with Rev. William Ameka (21st July, 2023).
[363] Interview with Rev John Kwame Donkor ( 22nd July, 2023).

come".[364] The implication is that if care is not taken, one might use it as a reference to address someone in the future.

Suggested address for mothers among the Anlo-Ewe people.

Mothers are addressed as

a. *Daa/ Dadaa* ---------- Mother/ Mum
b. *Đaɖa or nŋɔ* ---------- Mother/Mum
c. *Danye*/ *Dada* / Nɔnye -------- My Mother/My Mum
d. *Afenɔ or Davi* ----------Mother/Mum

The second part of the response, *"nya kae le mia kple wo dome maha"? Nye gafofo medo hade o".* According to the majority of the respondents, this phrase indicates that Jesus was completely distancing himself from his mother in public. The statement, *nya kae le mia kple wo dome maha?* reveals some form of hatred amongst them because it seems Jesus was being forced to act against his will or the will of his father. However, a Rev Minister argued that "The words used may not be culturally acceptable. For example, a son addresses his mother and calls her *Nyɔnu.* "No Ewe child will call his/her mother like that. The tone of the translation on the words that follow is not culturally sensitive as well", he added.[365] Another respondent, of the E. P. Church at Abor, "the response from Jesus seems to suggest that Jesus did not know Mary from anywhere."[366] He added that, in the Anlo-Ewe traditional setting, this act is disrespectful. He, therefore, requested that a humbler response should be considered.

a. *Danyɛ nyɛ yɛyiyi la mede o*- Oh mother it is not time.
b. *Danyɛ medekuku gafofo la medo hade o*.- Mother, please the hour has not come.

[364] Interview with Rev Sampson Adonu ( 18th July, 2023).
[365] Interview with Rev. Francis Fiahenoo, ( 23rd July, 2023).
[366] Interview with Mr. Stephen Agor, (26th July, 2023).

c. *O Danyɛ nyɛ gafofo la medo hade o.*- Oh Mother, my hour has not come.
d. Other respondents provided additional responses to support his position.
*e. Yesu gblo ne bena; Danye, nya kae Le mia kple Wo dome Maha? Nye gafofo mede hade o.*
*f. Danye medekuku gafofo la mede hade o.*

**f. Translation Philosophy Employed in Rendering John 2:1-4**

**Greek: John 2:4** [καὶ] λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· τί ἐμοὶ καὶ σοί, γύναι; οὔπω ἥκει ἡ ὥρα μου. (BGT)

**Transliteration**: *Kai legei* autē *ho* Iēsous, *Ti emoi kai soi, gunai? Oup*ō hēkei hē hora mou*."*

**Trans. into Ewe**: "*4. Yesu gblɔ ne bena: Nyɔnu, nya kae le mia kple wo dome maha? Nye gafofo medo hade o.*

**Back Trans. in English:** And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come."

**Proposed Translation**: *Yesu gblɔ ne bena: **Danyɛ**, nya kae le mia kple wo dome maha? **Medekuku** Nye gafofo medo hade o*

**Translating *γύναι* as *Dada/Danyɛ* (mother) may be better than leaving it untranslated.**

Furthermore, the authors would like to reconsider the proposal put forth by certain scholars, including Goodspeed [367] and Knepper,[368] that given the difficulty in finding a suitable translation equivalent

[367] Goodspeed, "Problems of New Testament Translation", 71.
[368] Knepper, "Nida's Γύναι: Eugene Nida's Views on the Use of Γύναι in John 2:4", 167.

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for this vocative *γύναι* (with mother being too tender and woman being too harsh, according to Goodspeed), the best translation approach in some languages may be to simply omit any rendering of *γύναι* in John 2:4 and 19:26. In his Dutch-language study on the same subject, Knepper refers to this as the *nuloptie*, or "zero option".[369] It is tempting to avoid having to decide what Jesus meant precisely when he addressed his mother as *γύναι* in John 2:4 and 19:26. Closing readers' eyes to this query, though, in the hopes that the interpretational issue will go away, could backfire and create an even bigger issue with the translation's acceptability.

A good translation universally recognized among Bible translators comprises not only correctness, clarity, and naturalness but also acceptability or perceived authenticity.[370] In reality, if the new translation's target audience is already conversant in the translation of John's Gospel into a more accessible language, they may find it unacceptable to learn that the word "woman" or an equivalent has simply been left out of the translation, as is the situation in many Scripture translation projects today. To determine whether they can trust the new translation, many churchgoers compare it to earlier versions of the Bible. If readers notice such a glaring omission, they will probably assume that the translation crew merely erred by leaving out this word. For a lay Bible reader, it is considerably more difficult to accept a non-literal reading as legitimate than it is to comprehend how a complete omission could be possible. As R. F. Weymouth did in his translation of John 2:4 and 20:13, a translator who employs this tactic can, of course, try to

[369] Mike G. Knepper, "Wat aan mij en aan jou? Betekenis en vertaling van *gunai* in Johannes 2:4 en19:26", *Met Andere Woorden* 34:2 (2015), 9.
[370]Tommy David Andersen, "Perceived Authenticity: The Fourth Criterion of Good Translation", *Notes on Translation* 12:3 (1998), 1-13; I. Larsen, "The Fourth Criteria of Translation", *Notes on Translation* 15:1 (2001), 40-53.

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cover their tracks by including a footnote to demonstrate that the omission was deliberate. However, this technique is not very helpful if the Gospel text is provided as an audio recording (in which case, footnotes are difficult to recreate), or if the culture in question is not accustomed to paying attention to textual footnotes.

Therefore, the authors is of the view that "mother" is the best option if a translator is given the choice between translating it. Since no other term in the target language adequately addresses one's mother, it becomes essential not to omit the rendering of *γύναι* entirely. The language Jesus used to refer to his mother in John 2:4 and 19:26 was probably a political address form, as has been explained above. As a result, the translation should use a suitable political address term, even if that term happens to mean "mother" as the most or only acceptable term.

**g. Lack of Interest and Usage of the Ewe Mother Tongue Bibles**

The Future of the Ewe Mother Tongue Bible is bleak. As part of the survey, members were asked to indicate their ages and the number of times they read the Ewe Mother-Tongue Bibles in a week. The age range of respondents who indicated their ability to read the Ewe Bible was between the ages of 40- 75 years. They constitute about eighty percent of the respondents. The number of respondents who were between the ages of (18-40) years constitutes about.[371] This means that the readership population of the Ewe Bible can be classified as adult or aged. This is a great worry since the majority of youth have developed a taste for reading the English Bible more than their mother tongue Bible. Parents and teachers need to improve their efforts to get their children to read their mother tongue rather than a foreign language. Some of the respondents indicated

[371] Interview with Mr. Daniel Edo, (27th July, 2023).

that, due to migration, they have all left their homelands and are residing in different parts of the country where speaking of the *L1* is not as common as it is spoken in their hometown.

Despite the efforts the various Bible Society groups are making to translate the Bible into the various mother tongue languages and the progress made so far, much work remains to be done. In Kumasi, a study examining the use of mother tongue scriptures in December 2009 by Kuwornu-Adjaottor found that Ghanaian Christians under the age of 40 use mother tongue Bibles far less frequently than those over the age of 40. This finding lends credence to the claim that the younger generation of Christians is less likely to utilise mother-tongue scriptures.[372] Sadly, his study could not uncover the factors that lead younger people to favor English Bible translations over those in their native tongues. In the same vein, he noted that "old people read the mother tongue Bibles in the Kumasi Metropolis."[373] This is a true reflection of what has been identified in this research among the Ewe mother-tongue Bible readers. According to the 2021 Population and Housing Census, 52 percent of the literate population aged 60 and older can read and write in at least one Ghanaian language, with some variance between urban and rural areas, while a little more than 96 percent can read and write in English.[374] Unfortunately, younger generations are either uninformed of or unpersuaded by the necessity for mother-tongue Bibles, although scholars are certain of this need. This shows that for MTBH to survive, it could be vital to educate Ghanaian youth and promote mother tongue Scriptures.

[372] Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Patronage and Usage of the Mother- Tongue Bibles in Kumasi, Ghana" *Prime Journal of Social Science* 2 (2012): 129, 121-129.
[373] Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "*Patronage and Usage*,"125.
[374] Ghana Statistical Service Ethnic Group Distribution of the Population in Ghana 2021, *from 2021 Population and Housing Census (PHC)* (June 21, 2022), Accessed 19th July 2022.

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Languages all around the world have been irrevocably impacted by globalisation and urbanisation. English is used in all official governmental functions and is used as the official language of instruction in Ghanaian schools, as well as for discussions in all arms of the government. English is not just a second language for people all over the world.[375] Ghana does not have a mother tongue that is the official national language and favoring one mother tongue over others can accidentally cause ethnic unrest. This is understandable. In such circumstances, there is frequent disagreement on the appropriate language to utilise in the classroom, particularly at the lower primary level in a multilingual culture like Ghana.

## Conclusion

Twenty-five participants were interviewed with the purpose of gathering, presenting, and analyzing data from the field. The participants considered the value of mother-tongue translations of the Bible and agreed that it is an extremely beneficial practice. When indigenous people can read the Bible in their own language, it is thought to play a significant role in strengthening their faith. It was discovered that translation efforts have influenced the growth of non-written languages. The relationship between inspiration and translation was highlighted by the analysis. It was made clear that the authority of God in the Bible is unaffected by translation.

Again, the majority of the respondents confirmed that Jesus calling his mother *Nyɔnu*, in the Ewe Bible, is not appropriate but disrespectful to motherhood. In many African societies, mothers hold a significant role and are highly respected for their role in

[375] Patrick Plonski, Asratie Teferra, and Rachel Brady, "*Why Are More African Countries Adopting English as an Official Language*?" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the African Studies Association, Baltimore, MD, 2013), 3.

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giving birth to and nurturing children. How one addresses their mother can carry implications and is often considered a matter of respect and honour. Calling one's mother "Woman" in the Ewe socio-cultural setting can be seen as disrespectful or dismissive. In the Ewe cultures, specific terms of endearment or respectful titles used to address one's mother. These terms often reflect the importance of the mother-to-child relationship. They signify the love, reverence, and recognition of the mother's role in the family and society. Using the term "Woman" to refer to one's mother might be perceived as a lack of acknowledgement of her maternal role, diminishing the respect and honor traditionally accorded to her. This kind of address can be seen as impersonal, distant, or even offensive in the Ewe socio-cultural context in Ghana. It is important to note that cultural practices and perceptions can differ among various African societies and there might be exceptions or variations within specific communities in Ghana. To fully understand the cultural implications, the following were discussed in the chapter: the specific cultural norms, values, and traditions of the Ewe traditional society.

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# CHAPTER FIVE
# CONCLUSION

This chapter is the conclusion of the book. It provides a comprehensive overview of the book, a summary of the findings, the identified issues arising from the research, recommendations, and the conclusion.

## Summary

Concerns about John 2:1–4's contextual meaning in Ewe socio-cultural contexts are raised by the difference between the original Greek text and the translation in the Ewe Mother Tongue Bible. This study looked at the exchange between Jesus and his mother in John 2:1–4. It investigated the semantic range of translation that was appropriate in the Ewe language. The main objectives of this book were to examine the Greek text in John 2:1-4 and assess whether the Ewe Bible (2012 version) achieved an accurate translation. The book also sought to determine any potential difficulties in translating John 2:1-4. It was designed to determine how the text's difficult translation might affect Ewe Bible readers in terms of exegetical consequences. Additionally, the task involved coming up with a suitable translation of John 2:1–4 for the Ewe reading group and their culture that would be seen as more sensitive and meaningful based on the original Greek language. The Ewe Bible (2012) translators put in a lot of work; therefore, this was not meant to diminish their efforts, but rather to improve the translation.

Chapter two of the work discussed the sub-topic; Bible Translation and Interpretation. Other themes discussed included Bible Translations Philosophies, Exegetical Considerations in Bible Translations, Relative Value of Language, Linguistic Exegesis, Contextual Exegesis, Translation and Interpretation, Biblical Interpretations in Africa: MTBH and Translation of the Ewe

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Mother-Tongue Bible. These discussions were intended to shed light on how the Bible had affected the people's lives as the Gospel spread throughout their country.

The background of the Johannine Gospel, the delimitation of the text to establish the pericope, some English translations, and the text's structure, which establishes the framework for the exegetical interpretation of the text and provides a general outline of its flow of thought, were all covered in chapter three of the work.

Chapter Four was under the theme, Women, Culture and Christianity Among the Ewes of Ghana. It discussed a brief history of the religion and culture of the Ewe people. The second part of this chapter presented the analytical implications of John 2:1-4 for the Ewe Bible readers in the Volta region of Ghana. Twenty-five (25) respondents out of the thirty (30) were interviewed for this research work. Five of them were native Pastors in different congregations. The interview covered issues such as the Meaning and significance of Mother-Tongue Bible translation, the Relationship between Bible Translation and Inspiration, Translation Challenges and Its Implications, Jesus' relationship with his Mother, Jesus' Response to his Mother, Translating *γύναι* as *Dada/Danyε* (mother), Translation challenges of the word *"Wine as wein",* and the Lack of Interest and Usage of the Ewe Mother Tongue Bibles.

The implications of Jesus' reaction to his mother have been translated into the Ewe Bible while taking into account their cultural sensibilities. Jesus' relationship with his mother was also looked at, as well as the translation of *γύναι* as Dada/Danyε (mother). The exegetical conclusions from chapter three were put to the test in the field study during the open-ended interviews. The chapter also discussed how the text should be used in a sermon for Ewe Bible readers.

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**Summary of Findings**

The study revealed that Jesus' response to his mother in John 2: 4 "*Yesu gblɔ ne bena: Nyɔnu, nya kae le mia kple wo dome maha? Nye gafofo medo hade o"* in the Greek Bible may be accepted in the Jewish culture since it relates to their culture. However, in analysing the translated statement with the Anlo- Ewe tradition of Ghana, it was revealed from the interview response that the translated answer in the Ewe Bible is insensitive to the Ewe socio-cultural community, hence the need for another translation to render *γύναι* as *Dada/Danyɛ"* (my mother).

The study also discovered that the growth of missions, evangelism, and church planting is greatly impacted by the translation of the Bible into mother tongues. According to the field study, translating the Bible into different tongues and languages helps to grow the Christian faith. It helps people comprehend the Bible's explanation of God's word in their mother tongue because they are native Bible readers.

It was also found out that there is also a translation challenge in John 2:3 in the Ewe language, which was translated in verse 3, "*Eye esi* ***wein*** *mede wo nu la, Yesu dada gblɔ nɛ bena:* ***Wein*** *mele wo si o".* The translation of wine in the Ewe Bible is wrong since the appropriate rendering of wine in the Ewe language is "*aha*" (wine).

**Proposed Translation of John 2:1-4**

And on the third day [there] was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and Jesus' mother was there. (2) Jesus also was invited to the wedding [with] his disciples. (3) and when [the] wine gave out, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no wine!" (4) And Jesus said to her, "What do you and I have in common, my dear Mother? Please my hour has not yet come."

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| **Ewe Mother-Tongue Bible (2012)** | **Proposed Translation** |
|---|---|
| **1.** *Eye le ŋkeke etɔagbe la wo du* sr*ɔdenkekeyuie le Kana le Galilea, eye Yesu dada le afima;* | 1. *Eye le ŋkeke etɔagbe la wo du srɔdenkekeyuie le Kana le Galilea, eye Yesu dada le afima;* |
| ***2.*** *eye wokpe Yesu ha kple efe nusrɔlawo va srɔdefe.* | **2.** *eye wokpe Yesu ha kple efe nusrɔlawo va srɔdefe.* |
| **3** *Eye esi* ***wein*** *mede wo nu la, Yesu* ***dada*** *gblɔ nɛ bena:* ***Wein*** *mele wo si o.* | **3.** *Eye esi* ***aha*** *mede wo nu la, Yesu* ***dada*** *gblɔ nɛ bena:* ***aha*** *mele wo si o.* |
| **4.** *Yesu gblɔ ne bena:* ***Nyɔnu,*** *nya kae le mia kple wo dome maha? Nye gafofo medo hade o.* | **4.** *Yesu gblɔ ne bena:* ***Danyɛ****, nya kae le mia kple wo dome maha?* ***Medekuku*** *Nye gafofo medo hade o.* |

**Issues Emerging out of the Study**

**The following issues emerged from the research:**

The study revealed that, in Bible translation, the translators must take critical study into the culture of the targeted language. It was revealed that the translator employed two different philosophies of translation in translating the text under review. The translator employed both Formal and dynamic equivalence in the translation into the Ewe Bible. The study has also revealed that the culture of the people must be properly considered because there is an interpretation in translation.

It emerged that native Ewe traditional speakers disapprove of children referring to parents or other older people as friends. According to the text's Greek translation of the original language, Jesus addressed his mother as *Nyɔnu*, a "woman" in his response.

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The Anlo-Ewe reader finds it difficult to balance the response with the proper reception of the Ewe language. How can the Ewe Bible translators improve the current translation to make it more suitable for the Ewe language readers? The study uncovered that in the Anlo-Ewe language, addressing one's mother as "Nyɔnu" (woman) would be considered insulting, and it might even imply that Jesus was renouncing Mary as his mother. The closest equivalent in the Anlo-Ewe language should be *Dada (*Mother*) /Danyɛ(*My Mother*).*

It also emerged that this section of the Ewe Bible (2012) has to be revised to improve its comprehension and appreciation by Bible readers. The adjustment should be made in a way that enhances rather than undermines the current edition to appeal to native Ewe language readers.

**Recommendations**

From the findings, it is recommended that:

1. For academic purposes, postgraduate students and authors in Biblical Studies approach mother-tongue translations with the right methodology to improve upon the challenges in mother-tongue Bibles. They should identify problematic idioms and expressions and analyse them using the method of mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics employed in this book. This is crucial because the translation issues discussed here are not limited to the Ewe Bible alone but also occur in other Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of the Bible. Therefore, it is advised that Ewe biblical scholars explore the problematic renderings of texts found in the Ewe Bible and conduct further research on them.
2. In further revisions of the Ewe Bible, "The Bible Society of Ghana (BSG) should re-examine the translation of the Greek

terms (woman) and (wine) as used in John 2:1-4 when they have access to this book's findings.

3. The extension of the development of vocabularies should receive serious consideration and a high level of dedication, utilizing the SLs as a guide. The goal is to ensure a gradual and seamless translation of the Greek Bible into mother tongues, including the Ewe Bible. It is recommended to expand the Ewe language's word list to incorporate new phrases and terms that can help in distinguishing words that appear synonymous but hold different meanings.
4. It is advised that revision or re-translation efforts of the Ewe and other mother-tongue Bible works be taken seriously and supported until the scripture really becomes "our own". That is when the locals, referring to dialect-specific translations, regard it as God's Word addressed specifically to them in their tongue.
5. The Religious Studies Department and the Bible Society of Ghana could periodically organise combined programs for students learning mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics. The team could visit various regions of the nation during such programs and share some of the department's mother-tongue research findings with Churches and traditional authorities. This could be an opportunity to inform the locals about the future course of their dialect or language.
6. Again, it is advised that candidates offering mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics should take core courses in the particular mother tongue they are working on. For mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics to be successful, knowledge of the Biblical languages is a must. However, basic mother-tongue language instruction is typically given in elementary schools.

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## Conclusion

Due to the inherent differences between languages, when translating a written document from one language to another, there will inevitably be modifications, including additions and omissions. This statement is true of Bible translation. Although some individuals may perceive interpretation in Bible translation as a challenge, its advantages surpass the disadvantages because readers of the Bible in their native tongues long to hear God's voice in their languages. Therefore, Bible translators must convey the meaning of words and idioms from the SL rather than their exact equivalents. This implies that Bible translators should translate phrases and expressions that are incomprehensible in RL into the SL.

For readers to accept God's message to them effectively, Bible translators must be mindful to translate the Bible using appropriate lexical yet culturally relevant terminology that develops from the history, worldview, language, and literature of mother-tongue speakers. It is not easy to translate the Bible from its original languages into other languages. It necessitates interpretation in the SL and reinterpretation in the RL. This book has further demonstrated that to adapt texts to readers' religious and cultural settings, Bible translation also necessitates reinterpreting existing mother-tongue interpretations. Bible translation is a dynamic and continuing endeavor rather than a static one. Scholars should approach Bible translation and interpretation from this angle. This means that to interpret the Bible for mother-tongue reading populations, biblical scholars need to be familiar with their cultures and mother tongues in addition to Hebrew and Greek, theology of the Bible in general and of the biblical books in particular, and exegetical techniques. Indeed, there are issues with the translation of the Bible in general and semantic issues in particular. A word's meaning might change depending on the context in which it is used.

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Words can become ambiguous, confusing, misunderstood, and misinterpreted by readers when their meaning is forced to fit into a situation.

The idea that translation does not require interpretation and that translation should not be based on dogmatic presuppositions supported by the mechanical theory of inspiration of Scripture should be avoided by Bible translators. Instead, a dynamic, adaptable concept or idea should serve as the foundation for Bible translation.

The results of this study on "the Critical Study of John 2:1-4; Its Implications for Ewe Mother-Tongue Bible Readers" support a meaning-based method of translating the Bible. Mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics, a technique that appropriates biblical texts' terms and phrases to indigenous Bible-reading populations, aids translators in interpreting the Bible so that readers can understand it. The results of this study have proposed a new rendering of the texts' accepted readings. Even if the original author's intended meaning may have changed, the Ewe Bible-reading culture's understanding has been made clearer by the new discoveries. The mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics methodology employed for this study has been helpful in contextualization. The study has enhanced the clarity of the mother-tongue method of biblical hermeneutics. The process has shown that, apart from the commonly used Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and Greek New Testament in Biblical Studies, mother-tongue Bibles can be academically examined by religious studies departments and theological seminaries in Ghana and Africa. By scientifically studying mother-tongue Bibles, the divide between biblical studies conducted in universities and Bible studies carried out within mother tongue Bible reading communities can be bridged.

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