

**A STUDY OF ὄΧΛΟΥΣ (CROWD) IN MATTHEW 5:1:
IMPLICATION FOR ASANTE-TWI BIBLE READERS**
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ABSTRACT

The Bible came to us in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek; through the ages it has been translated into many languages. But does it lose its meaning when translated? This has been a question for most people who read and used the Bible. Using the Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics methodology, this paper delves into the meaning of the *akuakuo* in the Asante-Twi context and its usage in Matthew 5:1 to represent Jesus seeing the multitude; vis-à-vis an exegesis of the Greek word ὄχλος, to find its equivalence in the Asante-Twi. The study brought to light that, *akuakuo* implies groups, which the Greek text does not talk about; and therefore, *ɔm* which refers to crowd or multitude is the best for the rendition of ὄχλος. This paper has thus added a Ghanaian/African interpretation of the text; and it is being recommended that in the future revision of the Asante-Twi Bible, the Bible Society of Ghana should consider using *nnipadɔm* to translate ὄχλος (crowd) Matthew 5:1.

INTRODUCTION

The interpretation of scripture has been one of the most studied area in biblical studies in the contemporary times because of how some people give meanings to some biblical passages. Some scholars have argued that, it is appropriate and essential to go to scripture itself to discover the principle and method of scripture interpretation. The Bible, comprising Old and New Testaments, was written many years ago. It is the word of God in human language; by this we mean God's word is sacred but comes to us through tradition and church teaching. The OT and NT writers used phrases like "Thus says the Lord" (Ezek 2:11), "God said" (2 Cor 6:16), "Holy Spirit says" (Acts 1:16). Their messages sometimes contain phrases as if God himself is delivering his message in person to people.

Translation

Eugene Nida, the proponent of the dynamic equivalence theory in translation argues that, there cannot be absolute correspondence between languages² as far as there are no two languages which are identical in meaning and symbols. He opines that absolute correspondence between languages will cause difficulty in trying to find fully the exact meaning (translation) in another language.³ It may be close to the actual language but all the details would not be able to communicate same in the other translated language. Traditionally, there are many and varied method of translation but the focus of this work is the equivalence used in the contemporary times by scholars - formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. The idea of finding the equivalence of a text in another language means that the writer, the audience, the nature of the

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²E. A. Nida Linguistic Approaches to Translation. Dynamic Equivalence and Formal Correspondence in Translation between Chinese and English (n.p/n.d). <http://heep.unipus.cn/bookdata/9787560085760y.pdf>. Accessed June, 2019.

³Nida, Linguistic Approaches to Translation, 8.

message and the purpose of the author⁴ cannot be undermined. Equivalence is about getting the closest of a translated text in the original language.

Some translators say that, the form of a message can be changed but not the content which communicates the authors intention to his audience; the form of a message is a “straight jacket” but could be altered to communicate to an audience. Notwithstanding, other translators do alter the content of the message in order to communicate well to their present audience.⁵ For example, “out of Egypt have I called my son”(Jer 7:25) originally refers to the calling of Israel from Egypt but later it was translated and interpreted to mean the calling of Jesus from Egypt when his parents send him there to escape Herod’s persecution (Matt 2:15).

Formal Equivalence⁶

Formal equivalence as the name implies, focus on direct content and form; paragraph to paragraph, sentence to sentence, word to word; and this seeks to direct and provide everything straight to the audience, that is, matching the Source Language (SL) straight to the Receptor Language (RL).⁷ Translators who use this method of equivalence translates everything straight to the receptors language whether it makes sense in the translated language or not.

Dynamic Equivalence

The reproduction of the receptor language to the closest natural equivalence of the source language message...” is called dynamic equivalence.⁸ According to Nida in Liu’s work⁹ dynamic equivalence is the reduction of the source text to its simplest and easy form and transferring the meaning of the text to the receptor language in its simplest understanding.¹⁰ This method requires the translator to reframe some of the words which may not be clear in meaning in the translated language. Some of the words needs to be coined in the translated language in cases where there is no exact meaning in the receptor language.

The Question of “Equivalence”

Despoina Panou assert that, even the concept of the translation equivalence has a particular concern because both the definitional and practical aspect of the translation (formal and dynamic equivalence) somehow differ. The “source text” and “the target text” are said to have some kind of sameness in view; but the question is how closer are the “sameness.”¹¹ According to Eugene Nida, one must seek to find the closest possible equivalence in translation¹² but because of the closeness issue in equivalence, it has paved way for different types of equivalence in hermeneutics today. How close is the equivalence of a translated text compared to the original text? Is it the same in meaning or similar in meaning? Some of these questions at times make the work of a translator difficult since there are no identical languages. This study seeks to find out the meaning of *akuakuo* in the Asante-Twi context and its usage in Matthew 5:1 vis-à-vis an exegesis of the Greek word *ὄχλος*, (crowd) to find its equivalence in the Asante-Twi.

⁴ Nida, *Linguistic Approaches to Translation*, 8.

⁵ Nida, *Linguistic Approaches to Translation*, 9.

⁶ Cf. J. E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Patrick Yankyera, & Solace Ago Yankson, *Dynamic Equivalence and Mother-Tongue Translations of the Bible*, *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*, 3(1) Sept. (2018): 244.

⁷ Nida, *Linguistic Approaches to Translation*, 12.

⁸ See Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Yankyera, & Yankson, *Dynamic Equivalence*, 244.

⁹ Liu Dayan, *Dynamic Equivalence and Formal Correspondence in Translation between Chinese and English*, *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science* Vol. 2 No. 12 (2012):242.

¹⁰ Robert L. Thomas., *Dynamic Equivalence: A Method of Translation or A System of Hermeneutics?* *The Master's Seminary Journal*, (1990):153.

¹¹ Despoina Panou *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science (Equivalence in Translation Theories: A Critical Evaluation)* Vol. 2 No. 12 (Finland: Academy Publisher, 2013), 5.

¹² E. A. Nida, *Linguistic Approaches to Translation*, 12.

METHODOLOGY

The study employs the Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics approach which borrows from the biblical studies. Bible translation studies, biblical languages – Hebrew, Aramaic and New Testament Greek; and also from the local languages of indigenes.¹³

EXEGESIS OF MATTHEW 5:1

The Text in Greek

Ἰδὼν δὲ τοὺς ὄχλους ἀνέβη εἰς τὸ ὄρος· καὶ καθίσαντος αὐτοῦ προσῆλθαν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ.¹⁴ (Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him).

The Text in Asante-Twi

Na chunuu nkurɔfo akuakuo no, akɔ beɔ no so; na ctenaa aseɛ no, n'asuafoɔ baa ne nkyen.

The Wider Context of the Text

The region at which Jesus was preaching was populated because it was located at a major trade route (Mat 8:16 12:15 14:25). Jesus was surrounded by his disciples and a large crowd of people who heard his teachings and some who might have witnessed some of his miracles.¹⁵¹⁶ The Jewish style of teaching was assumed by Jesus in his presentation of the sermon on the Mount¹⁷ to the large followers.¹⁸ This position is a regular thing Jesus does when speaking to his audience and sometimes his followers being offered an invitation to discipleship.¹⁹

The Immediate Context of the Text

Kuwornu-Adjaottor adds that, Jesus spent his early month of public ministry wandering throughout Galilee doing His work.²⁰ (Mat 8:16 12:15 14:25) Jesus was surrounded by his disciples and a large crowd of people who heard his teachings and some for healing mercies.²¹ He started teaching them about ethics of life as believers²² and to the large followers²³. The people were chanced to be ushered into discipleship.²⁴

¹³ See J. E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics: A Current Trend in Biblical Studies in Ghana. *Journal of Emerging Trends in Educational Research and Policy Studies* 3 (4): 575-579. _____, Doing Biblical Studies using the Mother-tongue Approach. *Journal of Applied Thought* 1(1):55-80.

¹⁴ Bible works 6

¹⁵ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *African bible backgrounds and commentary* vol. 1 (Nairobi: Zondervan, 2002), 1117.

¹⁶ See J.E.T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, A Study of the Translation of anoixas to stoma auto [Matthew 5:2] in some Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Translations of the Bible. *International Journal of innovation Social Science and Humanities Research*, (Seahi Publication, 2013), 2.

¹⁷ J.E.T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, A Study of the Translation of anoixas to stoma auto [Matthew 5:2] in some Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Translations of the Bible. *International Journal of innovation Social Science and Humanities Research*, (Seahi Publication, 2013), 1.

¹⁸ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *African bible backgrounds and commentary* vol. 1 (Nairobi: Zondervan, 2002), 1117.

¹⁹ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan illustrated bible background commentary* vol. 1 (Michigan: Zondervan /Grand Rapid, 2002), 33.

²⁰ J.E.T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, A Study of the Translation of anoixas to stoma auto [Matthew 5:2] in some Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Translations of the Bible. *International Journal of innovation Social Science and Humanities Research*, (Seahi Publication, 2013), 1.

²¹ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *African bible backgrounds and commentary* vol. 1 (Nairobi: Zondervan, 2002), 1117.

²² J.E.T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, A Study of the Translation of anoixas to stoma auto [Matthew 5:2] in some Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Translations of the Bible. *International Journal of innovation Social Science and Humanities Research*, (Seahi Publication, 2013), 1

²³ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *African bible backgrounds and commentary* vol. 1 (Nairobi: Zondervan, 2002), 1117.

²⁴ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan illustrated bible background commentary* vol. 1 (Michigan: Zondervan /Grand Rapid, 2002), 33.

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF ὄχλοις IN THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT AND ITS TRANSLATION IN THE ASANTE-TWI BIBLE

Greek Test	Asante-Twi	Back Translation
Matthew 4:25 καὶ ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοὶ ἀπὸ τῆς Γαλιλαίας καὶ Δεκαπόλεως καὶ Ἱεροσολύμων καὶ Ἰουδαίας καὶ πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου.	Matthew 4:25 Na nkurɔfoɔ akuakuo pii a wɔfiri Galilea ne Dekapoli ne Yerusalem ne Yuda ne Yordan agya dii n'akyi.	Matthew 4:25 And great groups of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judea, and from far beyond Jordan followed him.
Matthew 7:28 Καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς λόγους τούτους ἐξεπλήσσοντο οἱ ὄχλοι ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ.	Matthew 7:28 Na ebaa se Yesu wiee nsem yi ka no, ne nkyerekyerɛ no maa nkurɔfoɔ akuakuo no ho dwirii wɔn,	Matthew 7:28. And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, his teaching made the people astonished
Matthew 8:1 Καταβάντος δὲ αὐτοῦ ἀπὸ τοῦ ὄρους ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ ὄχλοι πολλοί.	Matthew 8:1 Na eberɛ a wɔfiri beɔ no so sianeeɛ no, nkurɔfoɔ akuakuo pii dii n'akyi.	Matthew 8:1. And when he came down from the mountain, different group of people followed him.
Matthew 8:18 Ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ὄχλον περὶ αὐτὸν ἐκέλευσεν ἀπελθεῖν εἰς τὸ πέραν.	Matthew 8:18 Na Yesu hunuu nkurɔfoɔ akuakuo pii wɔ ne ho no, wɔhyɛ se wɔbekɔ asuogya nohoa.	Matthew 8:18. Now when Jesus saw great groups near him, he commanded to go to the far end of the river
Matthew 9:8 ἰδόντες δὲ οἱ ὄχλοι ἐφοβήθησαν καὶ ἐδόξασαν τὸν θεὸν τὸν δόντα ἐξουσίαν τοιαύτην τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.	Matthew 9:8 Na nkurɔfoɔ akuakuo no hunuie no, eyee wɔn nwanwa, na wɔhyɛ Onyankorɔn a wɔde saa tumi no ama nnipa no animuonyam.	Matthew 9:8. But when the groups of people saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.
Matthew 9:33 καὶ ἐκβληθέντος τοῦ δαιμονίου ἐλάλησεν ὁ κωφός. καὶ ἐθαύμασαν οἱ ὄχλοι λέγοντες, Οὐδέποτε ἐφάνη οὕτως ἐν τῷ Ἰσραὴλ.	Matthew 9:33 Na wɔtu honhommɔne no no, emum no kasae. Na eyee nkurɔfoɔ akuakuo no nwanwa, na wɔkaa se: Wɔnhunuu saa bi da wɔ Israel.	Matthew 9:33. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke: and the groups of people marveled, saying, it was never so seen in Israel.
Matthew 11:7 Τούτων δὲ πορευομένων ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγειν τοῖς ὄχλοις περὶ Ἰωάννου, Τί ἐξήλθατε εἰς τὴν ἔρημον θεάσασθαι; κάλαμον ὑπὸ ἀνέμου σαλευόμενον;	Matthew 11:7 Na yeinom rekorɔ no, Yesu firii aseɛ kaa Yohane ho asem kyereɛ nkurɔfoɔ akuakuo no se: edeen na mofirii adi kɔw sere so kɔhwɛɛ? Mmewa a mframa rehim anaa?	Matthew 11:7. And as they departed, Jesus began to say something concerning John to the groups of people that; what are you going to the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?

Matthew 13:2 καὶ συνήχθησαν πρὸς αὐτὸν ὄχλοι πολλοί, ὥστε αὐτὸν εἰς πλοῖον ἐμβάντα καθῆσθαι, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ὄχλος ἐπὶ τὸν αἰγιαλὸν εἰστήκει.	Matthew 13:2 Na nkurɔfoɔ akuakuo pii boabooa wɔn ho ano baa ne nkyen, eno nti akɔɔ kodoo mu kɔtenaa mu; na nkurɔfokuo no nyinaa ginyinagina mpoano.	Matthew 13:2 And great groups of people were gathered together near him, that is why he went and sat in the ship, and the whole groups of people stood on the shore.
Matthew 13:34 Ταῦτα πάντα ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐν παραβολαῖς τοῖς ὄχλοις, καὶ χωρὶς παραβολῆς οὐδὲν ἐλάλει αὐτ	Matthew 13:34 Yeinom nyinaa Yesu ka kyereɛ nkurɔfoɔ akuakuo no abebuo mu, na wankwati be anka asem biara ankyere wɔn.	Matthew 13:34. All these things Jesus said to the groups of people in parables; and without a parable he didn't say any word to them:
Matthew 13:36 Τότε ἀφείς τοὺς ὄχλους ἦλθεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν. καὶ προσῆλθον αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λέγοντες, Διασάφησον ἡμῖν τὴν παραβολὴν τῶν ζιζανίων τοῦ ἀγροῦ.	Matthew 13:36 Afei ɔgyaa nkurɔfoɔ akuakuo no ho, na obaa fie. Na n'asuafoɔ no baa ne nkyen bebisaa se: Kyere yen afuo mu wura bone ho be no ase.	Matthew 13:36 Then he let the groups of people there and came home. And his disciples came to his side and ask that; teach us farm bad leave parable meaning
Matthew 14:13 Ἀκούσας δὲ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀνεχώρησεν ἐκεῖθεν ἐν πλοίῳ εἰς ἔρημον τόπον κατ. ἰδίαν· καὶ ἀκούσαντες οἱ ὄχλοι ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ πεζῆ ἀπὸ τῶν πόλεων.	Matthew 14:13 Na Yesu tee no, ɔtenaa kodoo mu firii ho koo esere so, nkyen baabi. Na nkurɔfoɔ akuakuo no tee no, wɔfirii nkuro so nam fam tii no	Matthew 14:13 When Jesus heard it, he sat in the ship and went to the desert place apart: and when the groups of people heard, they followed him on foot out of the cities.

The word translated as *akuakuo* in Matthew 5:1 implies in the Asante-Twi context that, the people whom Jesus spoke to were in groups. But the original Greek word means more people coming from Galilee, Jerusalem, Judea, Decapolis and beyond Jordan, some to be healed, some for food and some for miracles, and some were doubters; and some were there to find fault with him in order to accuse him²⁵ and a great crowd followed him in chapter 4.

The *akuakuo* had brought to the mind of Asante-Twi readers that, the people who were following Jesus were in groups and it could be that, the Pharisees were there as a group, the Sadducees, zealots and the Essenes or the Sanhedrin. One could argue that, if they were in groups, it could be that, they were divided into the Twelve Tribes of Israel or from the cities they certainly from.

Jesus was found been followed by close-knit disciples and others who heard his teachings and witnessed his miracles.²⁶ His ministry developed and people classify it into two parts that is; healing the sick and teaching the people. The end part of chapter four of Matthew give the summary of Jesus ministry and how the gospel was spread across the region (located at major trade route that link Damascus to the north and with Egypt to the south). The villages were populated because of their geographical position.²⁷

The meaning of *akuakuo*

ὄχλος which is translated as *akuakuo* in the Asante-Twi Bible etymologically is a combination of words (one word) which is repeated twice and being joined together. *Kuo* in a layman understanding simply means group and when there are different groups in a certain or a particular domain at the same period, they refer

²⁵ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *African bible backgrounds and commentary* vol. 1 (Nairobi: Zondervan, 2002), 1117.

²⁶ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *African Bible Backgrounds and Commentary* vol. 1 (Nairobi: Zondervan, 2002), 1117.

²⁷ Tokunboh Adeyemo, *African bible backgrounds and commentary* vol. 1 (Nairobi: Zondervan, 2002), 1117.

to literally as *group-group* (groups) and this combination brought the word *akuakuo*. But the text implies that, Jesus saw the multitude²⁸ of which the verse did not mention any category of people who were following Jesus. Therefore, what can be deduced out of the word *ὄχλος* (crowd/multitude) is that the people who were following Jesus were many and this could be confirmed at the later part of Matthew chapter four which points to the crowds of people following Jesus before the incidence in chapter five. Although J. O. Anane opines that crowd means at times *nnipakuo*²⁹ (literally groups of people) it falls short in a way because it could mean that, the author did not do a critical analysis of the word to find the real meaning in Asante-Twi; that is why he uses *kyere so*³⁰ as alternative in his work.

According to Scripture Direct, a casual non membership of people, fairly large in size and assembled for a common goal, forms a crowd or multitude or a large number. In a number of languages there is no direct word corresponding to crowd.³¹ Thus, depending on the context, it may be necessary to indicate relatively difference in size. If a crowd or a multitude means a large number of people, it is possible that *ὄχλος* denotes a larger number of people.³²

Interpretation of the English word crowd in some Twi books

The word crowd is used in some Twi books in different ways. In the *African Language of the Akan-Twi*, K. O. Osafo uses *edɔm*³³ to mean crowd or multitude. This is asserted by Adwoa Apraku, who translates crowd as *nipadɔm*³⁴ which connotes a multitude of people in a particular domain. The word as used in *Akan Terminologies English-Akan Linguistics and Media Glossary* also has *ekuw*³⁵ (Akuapem-Twi) which is *akua-kuo* in Asante Twi meaning groups. This means people with common idea or goal. In *Twi Kasa Mmara, Nsemkuw ahorow ho nsem*³⁶ in its table of content implies word classes which means group of words. The Twi word *ekuw* and *nsemkuw* which has been critically analyzed makes it clear that, *kuo* or *ekuo* (*ekuw*) simply means group but crowd in the Asante-Twi context implies *dɔm* and this is affirmed by *Akan Nsemfua Kyerebea* that *nnipadɔm*³⁷ is crowd (of people) or multitude. When an Asante wants to say that somebody has organized a *coup detat* to overthrow a president, it is put in the following: Kofi *aye* Kwame *dɔm*, meaning Kofi has overthrown Kwame. The etymology of *dɔm* used in this case means that, Kofi has organized a multitude or a crowd of people to overthrow Kwame and that is why *dɔm* is used for crowd or multitude in Asante-Twi.

CONCLUSION

To contextualize the Greek word *ὄχλος* in Asante-Twi, there is the need to understand first the meaning and implication of the word in its original Greek setting to help the translator interpret it into another language. The study has demonstrated that, the Greek word *ὄχλος* points to a populated people in a confined area in a particular time. *Kuo* according to Akan linguists and some Akan books, means group; *akuakuo* means groups. *Dɔm* however means crowd. Therefore, *nnipadɔm* which refers to a crowd or multitude of people is best and naturally fit into Matthew 5:1 in the Asante-Twi Bible as follows: *Na shunuu nnipadɔm no, ...*; The finding of this study has thus given a Ghanaian/African interpretation of the text. It is being recommended that in the future revision of the Asante-Twi Bible, the Bible Society of Ghana should consider using the finding of this research.

²⁸ J.E.T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, A Study of the Translation of *anoixas to stoma auto* [Matthew 5:2] in some Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Translations of the Bible. *International Journal of Innovation Social Science and Humanities Research*, (Seahi Publication, 2013), 1.

²⁹ J. O. Anane., *Advanced Akan Dictionary* (Prisebs Business Service, Kumasi, 2000), 69.

³⁰ Anane., *Advanced Akan Dictionary*, 69

³¹ Apk., Scripture Direct

³² Apk., Scripture Direct

³³ Osafo K. O., *African Language of the Akan-Twi* (Accra: Graphic Packaging Ltd 1979), 56.

³⁴ Adwoa A., *Borfo Kasa Nsemfua Nkyereasee* (Accra: Kahyɛn Koduro Publication 2005), 46.

³⁵ Kofi Agyakum, E. K. Osam, and Apentens S., *Akan Terminologies English-Akan Linguistic and Glossary* (Accra: Adwinsa Publications GH Ltd, 2011), 3.

³⁶ C. A. A. Akrofi., *Twi Kasa Mmara* (Accra: Waterville Publication House, 2011), xiii.

³⁷ Akan Language Committee., *Akan Nsemfua Kyerebea* (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1995), 50.

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