

A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF QUOTATION MARKS IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE OF THE GREEK NEW TESTAMENT AND THE ASANTE-TWI BIBLE

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ABSTRACT

The Bible was first written in Hebrew and Aramaic (Old Testament) and Greek (New Testament) and later translated into other mother-tongues. This was done because the Bible need to be understood by its readers in their own mother-tongues. A critical reading of the Asante-Twi translation reveals that quotation marks are not used for statements that need to be quoted. This confuses the reader and distorts the flow of the reading process. The Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics approach was used for the research. The researchers interviewed some Asante-Twi Bible readers, teachers and lecturers of Akan and a Bible translator. It was found out that there is quotation mark in Akan Grammar; it is called *nkatumdee* (“ ”). The paper recommends that since Akan Grammar utilizes quotation marks, in the revision of the Asante-Twi Bible, the translators should use them to minimize the problem that Asante-Twi bible readers face.

INTRODUCTION

Bible Translation

Bible translation defies definition since one’s definition of “translation” has a critical impact on the course taken by the translation process. Translation as used here means the process of changing an original written text (source) in an original verbal language (the source language) into a written text (the target text) in a different verbal language (the target language). It is a complex process since it evolves a new text because of decoding the source text on several levels and encoding it into the target language by means of the linguistic, literary, and cultural conventions of the target language. Bible translation is scientific because the translator conveys a message from one language to another that is a valid subject for scientific description. In that sense, the translator is able to know what content and style the source documents are intended to express, and what forms in the receptor language can appropriately be used to express the same content and intent. Bible translation is also interdisciplinary since the translator makes use of theoretical concepts and terminologies from both semantics and pragmatics. Further, Bible translation can be viewed as theology in the sense that the translations contribute to fulfilling the “Great Commission” in Matthew 28:19-20; that is, making disciples, nurturing the baptized with Scripture, and engaging Christians to learn or do theology in context. Bible translation is also “adaptation” of an existing translation into a localized version for communities so that readers will experience the full effect of the original product. Examples are the Swahili Congo Bible (Bukavu Swahili *Biblia Maadiko Matakatifu Kwa Watu Wote*) which is an adaptation of an existing.²

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² For a discussion, see J. E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Assessment of Three Problematic Texts in the Synoptic Gospels of the New Testament of the Dangme Bible.” Doctoral Thesis, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, 2018, pp.66-67; also J.G. Watts & Y. Kruger, “Some considerations on bible translation as complex process”, *Acta Theologica Supplementum* (2), 2002: 1.

John Ekem discusses how the the early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana) – the Gã, Twi, Mfantse and Ewe - were translated.³ The work examines these translations in their historical, linguistic, and theological settings. In the “The Akuapem-Twi and Asante-Twi” section, Ekem discusses the history of the translation of the Bible into the Akan dialects of Akuapem-Twi and Asante-Twi. He pays particular attention to the work of the Basel Missionaries, especially, Johann Christaller and indigenes like David Asante, Clement Anderson Akrofi, and C. A. Denteh. This section of the book details the story of the development of the Akan language, and the politics that went with it.⁴ David Kpobi gives a history of the Bible Society of Ghana whose major tasks involves the production and distribution of the Bible in Ghanaian mother-tongues.⁵ His work traces the history of the Bible in Ghana. It covers the events and developments that took place between the fifteenth and the twentieth centuries. It echoes the speculation by earlier historians that the earliest copy of the Bible in Ghana must have come with the Portuguese explorers in the fifteenth century. Kpobi also tells the story of the earliest attempts to convert Ghanaians to Christianity; an attempt that actually brought Ghanaians into direct contact with the Bible for the first time.⁶

Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics Methodology

Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics is a “discipline devoted to the interpretation and reinterpretation of biblical texts in languages considered by speakers as their first language into which they were born.”⁷ Jonathan Kuwornu-Adjaottor builds on this definition by providing a step-by-step procedure for mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics.⁸

Quotation marks in Bible translation

Quotation marks in a written text are used in identifying the sources of words. Therefore, if quotation marks are not used in a piece of writing, or are not used well, the reading process is distorted. Metzger notes that the beginning of a direct quotation can usually be determined without any trouble when it is indicated by a verb such as "said," "asked," "replied," or the like. The problem that can arise is when to close the quotation and this sometimes depends on the translators.⁹ The danger here is that if translators can decide where to place quotation marks in a text, they may or may not be translating an original text as intended by the author.

³ See J. D. K. Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana): The Historical, Linguistic, and Theological Settings of the Gã, Twi, Mfantse, and Ewe Bibles*. Rome/Manchester: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura/St. Jerome. 2011.

⁴ Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast*, 49-78.

⁵ D. A. N. Kpobi, *Entrusted with the Word: A History of the Bible Society of Ghana, 1965-2015*. Accra: Heritage Publications. 2015.

⁶ Kpobi, *Entrusted with the Word*, 39-97.

⁷ Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast*, 10.

⁸ J. E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Doing Biblical Studies using the Mother-tongue Approach”. *Journal of Applied Thought* 1(1) 2012:55-80; see also J. E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “The Practice of Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics in Ghana: A Case Study of *bnyysr’l* [Deut. 32:8] in some Ghanaian Communities. *Journal of Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics* 1(1) 2015: 134-157; 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): (2012): 575-579.

⁹ Bruce M. Metzger, Persistent Problems confronting translators *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150 (July-September 1993): 273-84.

A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF QUOTATION MARKS IN LUKE 18:16 -17 IN GREEK AND ASANTE-TWI

The Greek text

16 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς προσεκαλέσατο αὐτὰ λέγων· Ἄφετε τὰ παιδιά ἔρχεσθαι πρὸς με καὶ μὴ κωλύετε αὐτά, τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ. 17 ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, ὅς ἂν μὴ δέξηται τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ ὡς παιδίον, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθῃ εἰς αὐτήν.¹⁰

Asante-Twi

16 Na Yesu frɛɛ mmɔfra no bae, see asuafoɔ no sɛ: Momma mmɔfra no mmra me nkyɛn, na monnsi wɔn kwan! Na yeinom sɛɛ na Nyankopɔn ahennie no wɔ wɔn. 17 Nokorɛ mese mo sɛ, obiara a ɔrennye Nyankopɔn ahennie sɛ abɔfra no, ɔrenkɔ mu koraa.¹¹

The above verses indicate that, Jesus called His disciples and told them to allow the kids to come near Him of which the Greek New Testament quotes the words of Jesus (*Ἄφετε τὰ παιδιά ἔρχεσθαι πρὸς με καὶ μὴ κωλύετε αὐτά, τῶν γὰρ τοιούτων ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ.*) by using a capital letter to indicate the quotation. But the Asante-Twi text imitates the Greek text by using a capital letter to start the quotation; (Momma mmɔfra no mmra me nkyɛn, na monnsi wɔn kwan! Na yeinom sɛɛ na Nyankopɔn ahennie no wɔ wɔn.). The Asante-Twi phrase *see asuafoɔ no sɛ* (said to them) should have been preceded by a quotation mark but that is not the case. In verse 17 *Nokorɛ mese mo sɛ*, (Truly I say to you that); this phrase ending with *mese mo sɛ* prompts the reader that somebody is talking and it demands a quotation mark to help the reader identify the one speaking in the text.¹² The question then is, are there quotation marks in Asante-Twi grammar?

Interviews

Interview with Asante-Twi Bible readers

Some Asante-Twi Bible readers in churches in Kumasi¹³, teachers of the Akan language, lecturers and a Bible translator were interviewed. Following are excerpts from the interviews.¹⁴

C. A. Osei, a 60-year-old man of the Christ Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, KNUST said that, he has been reading the Asante-Twi Bible more than 30 years and he still reads it often, though he reads the English version alongside at times. The interviewer told Osei that, a critical reading of the Asante-Twi Bible reveals that some passages that are quoted in the Greek New Testament are not quoted in the Asante-Twi Bible and whether he has noticed that. According to him, he is not a translator or a person who knows Greek or a student of the Bible, as such, he may not noticed anything as such and therefore reads the Bible just as he sees it and at times when he gets confused he refers to the English Bible (KJV).

¹⁰ Bible Works 6.

¹¹ Kyere Krokron, Accra: Bible Society of Ghana, 2012 see also the 1964 translation.

¹² It is worth noting that the *Nkwa Asâm Apam Foforô* (New Testament in Asante-Twi), Accra: International Bible Society, 1996, uses quotation marks in Luke 18:16-17, and in the entire New Testament books; *The Holy Bible - Twerâ Kronkron* (New Testament English-Twi Version), Kumasi: New Word Publishing (Ghana) Limited, 2013 also uses quotation marks. The Gã, Dangme and Ewe translations of Luke 18:16-17 use quotation marks; and the whole of the New Testament in these translations employ quotation marks.

¹³ There was an earlier research on mother-tongue Bibles in Kumasi. For a discussion, see J. E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Patronage and Usage of the Ghanaian Mother-Tongue Bibles in Kumasi. *Prime Journal of Social Sciences* 2 (7): (2012): 121-129.

¹⁴ For detailed interviews, see Samuel Kodom, BA Long Essay, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, 2018.

In response to a question by the interviewer on omission of quotation marks in the Asante-Twi translation, Osei said the omission of quotation marks may affect the reading and understanding of texts in the Asante-Twi Bible. However, for him, since he is well versed in punctuations, he is able to identify and get the concept. He added that what helps him to identify a quotation is that, when he reads a whole chapter, he see the one speaking and when the person is about to quote something he or she sometimes mentions that in the preceding verse. For instance, in Mark 1:2 *Sɛdɛɛ wɔatwɛrɛ no wɔ Odiyifoɔ Yesaia nwoma no mu se: Hwɛ, meresoma me bɔfoɔ adi w'anim ɔno na ɔbesiesie wo kwan.* (As it is written by the prophet Isaiah, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare you way before me) The underlined phrase helps him to know that the writer is quoting somebody. Also in Mark 1:7 *Na ɔpaɛɛ mu kaa se: Deene ho yɛ den sene me di m'akyi reba a mense sɛ mekoto mesane ne mpaboa homa.* The *kaa sɛ* (said that) in this verse helps the reader to expect a direct quotation.

Joseph Ohemeng Mensah, a 30-year-old man, a Bible reader at Christ Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, KNUST, Kumasi said he reads the Asante-Twi Bible alongside an English translation daily for devotions. When he was asked whether he has noticed that some passages that are quoted in the Greek New Testament are not quoted in the Asante Twi Bible, he said “since I have not done Greek and I have not gone to Bible school, I will not be able to see that, so I have not noticed that”. The interviewer asked him again whether the omission of quotation marks in the Asante-Twi Bible affects his reading and understanding of Bible passages. He said that, when it comes to any difficulty in the Asante-Twi Bible he refers to the English Bible. He cited examples to illustrate his point; *fa* and *mfa*, (take and don't take), *nom* and *nnom*, (drink and don't drink), *nnom* and *nnnom* (he or she should drink and he or she shouldn't drink) in the Asante-Twi Bible which sometimes confuses him so he refers to the English for clear understanding. He suggested that Bible translators should render the meaning of words in the original Greek in the context of Twi grammar. He brought to light that sometimes sentences are too long and it makes reading difficult; so one has to sometimes imagine and fix one's own comma and full stop. He was of the view that, Twi grammar lack vocabulary; it has many ambiguities and this compels him to use the English translation alongside the Twi translation. For instance, *mma* could mean “do not” or “children”; *nna* could mean “days” or “do not sleep” and *na* could mean “mother”; *ɔsebɔ* could mean “tiger” or “praises”. In texts where these words are used, one has to read the whole verse or sometimes the chapter before understanding what the text is saying. He said, “Translators should try and solve the anomalies in the Asante-Twi translation”.

Rita Osei, a 35-year-old woman and Asante-Twi Bible reader of the Christ Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, KNUST, Kumasi said, she has not noticed that there are no quotation marks in the Asante-Twi Bible; and this does not affects her reading and understanding of the Bible. She added that when reading a text like Luke 1:13 which says *Na ɔbɔfoɔ no see no sɛ: Sakaria, nsuro, na wɔatie wo mpaebɔ, na wo yere Elisabet bewo ɔbabarima ama wo, na woato ne din Yohane;* as soon as a reader see *see no sɛ* (said to him or her): he or she notices that it is someone's word and therefore there must be quotation marks though the sentence is not punctuated as such. Nevertheless, she was of the view that some of the words in the Asante-Twi Bible are difficult to understand and most at times, she has to read the English version for clearer understanding.

Gloria Adu Darko, a lady in her early thirties, and an Asante-Twi Bible reader of the Christ Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana KNUST, when asked whether the absence of quotation marks in the Asante-Twi affects her reading she said, that does not affect her reading. She said since she is an Asante, she knows the Twi autography and that helps her understand when reading the Asante-Twi Bible. She said sometimes the words used in the Asante-Twi Bible are too high or difficult to understand and this force her personally to compare with the English Bible and therefore translators should consider this too though she could not give an example of such difficult words.

Kwame Owusu is a 30-year-old member at the Bethel Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana, Boadi; has been reading the Asante-Twi Bible. He was asked whether he has seen the omission of

quotation marks in the Asante-Twi translation; he said has not seen that though but he and the other readers do not understand Greek so the translators should understandable words because at times the words are different as compared to other translations of Bible. He went on to say that their former Pastor, has been drawing their attention to some of these anomalies in the cause of reading the Bible during church services. Again he said, “The Bible should be clear, simple and appealing for the younger generation to able to read since they do not like reading the Asante-Twi Bible”.

Harriet Asante is a young lady who is an Asante-Twi Bible reader of the Bethel Congregation of the Presbyterian Church of Ghana. She said, she does not expect any quotation marks when reading but as soon as she comes across *ɔsee no se* (he or she said to him or her), she knows what follows is a quotation. She said sometimes she reads the whole passage before getting to know the one speaking and this prevents her from reading the Asante-Twi Bible impromptu. When one is asked to read the Bible impromptu in the congregation, one might pronounce wrong words and improper punctuations and mispronounce ambiguous words in the Asante-Twi Bible like *ɔsebɔ*. She suggested that translators should interpret those ambiguous words that are difficult to understand and put them as footnotes, to help readers.

Daniel Amankwah, a theology student of the Christ Apostolic Bible School in Kumasi, and a reader of the Asante-Twi Bible said that, he has noticed that there are no quotation marks in the Asante-Twi Bible. He suggested that since there is a style of quoting in the Greek New Testament the translators should also use quotation marks in the Asante-Twi Bible.

Interview with Twi teachers and lecturers

Amofoah Amponsah teaches Twi at T. I. Ahmadiyya Senior High School in Kumasi. She said she reads books and stories in Asante-Twi in which there are quotation marks and thus there is a style of quoting in Asante-Twi. According to her, there are three ways in quoting in Asante-Twi, for instance, when one is quoting a proverb she says, *mpaninfoɔ se* then she brings *nkatomdeɛ* which is the quotation mark or *osiprenu* which is column or *osisan* which is semi column and all these have been in Twi books. Each writer adopts a style of quoting. When she was asked whether she has seen that there are no quotation marks in the Asante-Twi Bible she said "no", but it was not a mistake since in Asante-Twi autography a writer can choose to use any of the quotation marks, column or semi-column. She later said that language is not static but rather dynamic so translators should do well to update some of the words used in the Bible to help contemporary readers. For example, she said, writers used to write *wei* (this) in Twi but *yeyi* is used instead.

According to Lovejoytor Kwakye, as a teacher of Akan at Adventist Senior High School who is an Asante; there is a quotation mark in Asante-Twi autography because they are used in the books (*ɛnɛ nso biom, Guasohantan*) has been reading in Asante-Twi and this is called, *nkatumdeɛ*. He said when punctuations are not used where they are supposed to be used, it distorts ideas and makes it difficult for the one reading to identify the speaker. He suggested that the translators should do more research and consultation with Asante-Twi speakers because at times the words used are difficult for lay people.

Afia Dufie, an Akan lecturer at Prempeh College of Education, Kumasi said *nkatomdeɛ* is the Twi name for quotation mark and it has been used in some books in Asante-Twi (*Brako, ɛnɛ nso biom and Guasohantan*). She said if one omits quotation marks it makes it difficult to identify the one talking or whom a writer has quoted unless maybe one reads the whole chapter before one could understand. She added that, the translators for easy understanding by readers should simplify some words in the Asante-Twi Bible.

Emmanuel Fordjour and Isaac Forson, lecturers of Akan at the Department of Modern Language in Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology affirmed that *nkatomdeɛ* is the Twi name for quotation mark. They said whenever a writer refuses to place it where necessary, makes the meaning of the word not clear and sometimes makes it difficult for the reader to know the real speaker in a text. Fordjour said he has been reading the Asante-Twi Bible for years and have noticed that there are passages that should have been quoted by the translators but they did not put quotation marks. He said the translators should

have used quotation marks since there is a style of quotation in Asante-Twi autography; and is used in some Twi books. Notwithstanding, Forson said, in dialogue and other formal and long speeches sometimes, quotation marks could be replaced by column and for him, he thinks that is the why the translators did not use quotation marks. This does not however, mean that they should omit quotation marks *nkatomdee* (“ ”).¹⁵

Ernest Kwaku Boateng, a publishing officer, and a translator at the Bible Society of Ghana (he was the schedule officer for the 2012 Asante-Twi Bible revision). When asked why column (:) instead of quotation marks are not used in the Asante-Twi Bible to indicate when a writer is quoting a speaker in a text, said, “This is not a mistake; it was deliberate on the part of the translators in the view that the use of column is accepted in translation.” Further, “We have not received any report from the readers that they do not understand what they read in the Asante-Twi Bible because of the omission of the quotation marks”. He said that Bible translation and revision is a huge task; he requested that researchers of mother-tongue translations of the Bible should make their findings available to Bible Society of Ghana so that the translators could consider them in future revisions. He added nobody should be afraid to analyze the translated Bible and critique the versions because even though Bible translation is a spiritual work, it is also an academic exercise.

Analysis of the interview from respondents

The respondents were in three categories: seven Bible readers, three teachers and two lecturers of Akan and one Bible translator. All the thirteen interviewees are Asante; they all read the Asante-Twi Bible regularly. Thus, their responses could be relied upon.

The seven people who read the Asante-Twi Bible in their various churches (three churches) all said they have not noticed that some quoted passages that are in the Greek New Testament have not been quoted in the Asante-Twi Bible since they have not been to any theological school or have not studied Greek. However, one of the respondents who is a theology student at the Christ Apostolic Church Bible School said he had noticed that; and according to him and the other seven respondents, since the Asante-Twi Bible was translated from the Greek New Testament and it has quotation marks (or style of quoting), the Asante-Twi Bible translators should bring quotation marks wherever they are supposed to be in the Asante-Twi Bible.

He and seven of the respondents suggested that if there was a quotation mark in the Asante-Twi autography, then translators should revisit and place quotation marks where necessary to avoid them reading the Asante-Twi Bible alongside the English version (most times KJV) because it seemed to them (the readers) that the Asante-Twi Bible could not stand on its own. Harriet Asante pointed out that the above reason was why most times in church when a preacher asked someone in the congregation to read a text from the Bible people refuse because they fear they would make mistakes in reading unless the text had been given to them to read through before. Joseph Mensah Ohemeng was of the view that, the translators

¹⁵ Some Twi books that use *nkatomdee* (“ ”) cited by the respondents: E. N. Safo, *Afrakoma* (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1996), 88; O. Kwadwo, *Owuo Apakan* (Kumasi: O. Kwadwo Enterprise), 94; B. O. Amoako, *Etire Nni Safoa* (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1976), 68; M. B. Amanfo, *Se ebewie* (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1991), 22; A. A. Anti, *Obeede* (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1990), 82; K. Benefo, *Owuo Safoa* (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1980), 4; J. Gyekye-Aboagye, *Me Ne M'akyinkyinyinkyinyi Yi* (Accra: Bureau of Ghana Languages, 1980), 1-13; V. Amarteifio, *Bediako* (Accra: Amaabooks Publications, 2010), 9-11.

should understand the meaning of the Greek and its equivalent in the Asante-Twi well; he added that even though he does not understand Greek, he was sure that there is a reason why the Greek did not use column in the Greek but used quoted direct speeches. Therefore, Asante-Twi translators should use the quotation marks.

Two of the three teachers of Akan said, *nkatomdee* is the Twi name for quotation mark and this is used in a direct quotation in many Asante-Twi books. With their assertions, so long as *nkatomdee* is used in Twi books, the Bible is also a book and therefore quotation marks should be employed. Amofoah Amponsah said *nkatomdee* (quotation mark) should be used to facilitate the reading and understanding of a biblical text.

A joint interviewed of the two lecturers confirmed that quotation marks are not to be ignored in cases where there are direct quotations. Ernest Kwaku Boateng, a Bible translator of the Bible Society of Ghana who revised the 1964 translation of the Asante-Twi Bible into the 2012 edition said that, the use of the column instead of the quotation marks in the Asante-Twi Bible is accepted in translation. However, quotation marks are the best equivalence since they give appropriate meaning to readers of the Asante-Twi Bible.

Findings

From the above analysis of what the respondents say, it is clear that there is quotation mark in Asante-Twi autography called *nkatomdee* which are used in most Asante-Twi books. All the respondents apart from the translator said that, if there are quotation marks in Asante-Twi autography, then translators should use them in the Asante-Twi Bible. All the books quoted by some of the respondents have *nkatomdee* (quotation marks) in them and as such, the Asante-Twi translators must employ them in the Bible.

CONCLUSION

Quotation marks are important in written texts; they identify a speaker. Their omission in written texts could create slow the reading process by a reader and impede understanding. There are no quotation marks in the New Testament mother-tongue translation of the Asante-Twi Bible. Since there is quotation mark in Asante-Twi orthography and other Ghanaian mother-tongue translations of the Bible employ quotation marks, it is being recommended that in the future revision of the Asante-Twi New Testament (and the Old Testament as well), the Bible Society of Ghana should consider using quotation marks.

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