


Examining the Translation and the Interpretation of Ἄμπελος (Ampelos) and κλήμᾱ (Klema) as Bobe and Ban/Mman in John 15:1-5 of the Asante-Twi Bible



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ABSTRACT

Jesus used the vine in the last of his “I AM” predictions in the gospel of John. In this discourse, Jesus used the vine which was familiar to his audience for better understanding and appreciation of God’s word. Great work has been done on the analogy of the vine by scholars and theologians however, little work has been done on the translation of the Greek words, ἄμπελος (ampelos) and κλήμᾱ (klema) as used in the Asante-Twi Bible. Using the mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics methodology, this article examines the translation and interpretation of ἄμπελος and κλήμᾱ in the Asante-Twi Bible in comparison with five Ghanaian mother-tongue Bibles namely, the Akuapem-Twi Bible, the Fante Bible, and the Ga, Ewe and the Frafra Bibles. The findings show that translators used varied approaches to render ἄμπελος and κλήμᾱ to suit the understanding of the indigenes. Some translators used transliteration or literal approach, others coined their own words having consulted the indigenes about better terminologies that will suit their understanding of some difficult texts. This article makes a contribution to the need to re-translate and re-interpret the words *bobe* and *ban* particularly in the Asante-Twi Bible to avoid speculation.

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INTRODUCTION

Bible translation dates back to antiquity in which the Rabbinic scholars sought to interpret the word of God in their communities during the exilic period.¹ The Bible which was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek languages for the early recipients began to attract new readers due to the spread of its message. It, therefore, became paramount for new readers to read the Scriptures in their mother-tongues for clarity and understanding.² North Africa became the hub of Bible translation when the Hebrew Bible for the first time was translated into the Hellenistic language and culture for Jewish nationals who have lost their Hebrew language.³

¹ Christian E. Hauer and William A. Young, *An Introduction of the Bible: A Journey into Three Worlds*, Sixth Edition. (New Jersey: Pearson, 2005), 17.

² Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Patronage and Usage of the Mother-Tongue Bibles in Kumasi, Ghana,” *Prime Journal of Social Science*, 1, no 7(2012):3.

³ General Conference of Seventh Day Adventists, *Problems in Bible Translation*, (Washington, D.C, The Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1954), 40.

In Ghana, John D. K. Ekem has noted that earlier attempts made to translate portions of Scriptures to indigenous communities began in the 18th century by Jacobus Capitein, a native of Elmina who used concepts that were understandable to the indigenes.⁴ A. W. Hanson, a Methodist minister also sought to repackage the Gospels of Matthew and John into the Ga language and was printed in 1843 by the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS), sponsored by the American Bible Society.⁵ These initial attempts by Ghanaian indigenes are remarkable, however, Ekem has expressed his disappointment about the failure to capture an innovative and significant attempt made by an African scholar in the area of biblical translation.⁶

The mid-nineteenth century was an era of foreign missions in Africa. The missionaries' desire to introduce the indigenous communities to the Christian faith necessitated the need for Bible translation into Ghanaian mother-tongues.⁷ David N. A. Kpobi writes that missions such as the Basel and the Wesleyan Missions and the North German Missionary Society (NGM) also known as the Bremen Mission made efforts to translate the Bible into the then Gold Coast (Ghanaian) languages.⁸ The missionaries supported by the natives sought to make the Bible not only available but also legible to readers in their mother tongues for understanding and appreciation of God's word. The relevance of reading in one's mother-tongue makes the biblical text applicable to readers and thereby impacts their lives.⁹

Giving an account of Bible translations in Ghana, Ype Schaaf asserts that the Ga Bible was the first to be published in 1866. This was followed by the Akuapem-Twi Bible in 1871, the Ewe Bible in 1913, and the Fante Bible in 1948.¹⁰ In the mid-twentieth century, it became apparent that both speakers of the Akuapem and the Asante Twi dialects need their own versions of the Twi Bible. This is because a committee that was set up to devise a common orthography for a translation that will serve readers of the two dialects could not reach a compromise due to slight differences in sounds and vowels.¹¹ In 1964, translation work on the Asante-Twi Bible was completed and published by the Bible Society of Ghana (BSG).¹² Ekem, asserts that C. A. Denteh prepared an Asante-Twi orthography and some of the key personalities involved in the translation of the Asante-Twi Bible include Eugene Rapp, H. J. Keteku and J. A. Birikorang.¹³

From 1964 to date, the Asante-Twi Bible has been revised three times in 1990, 2012¹⁴ and the Diglot in 2018. According to the Bible Society of Ghana, the latest revision of the Asante-Twi Bible; the New Revised Asante Twi Version (NRATV) was translated from the original languages; Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek¹⁵ and not from an eclectic source. The study seeks to examine the translation and the interpretation of the Greek words, ἄμπελος (ampelos) and κλήμα (klema) which have consistently been featured in all the revisions of the Asante-Twi Bible to substantiate whether they are consistent with the original language in terms of meaning and style. Focus will be on the need to re-interpret and re-translate the two Greek words; ἄμπελος (ampelos) and κλήμα (klema) in the Gospel of John to make it more meaningful to the Asante-Twi Bible mother-tongue readers. In view of this, the study considers the translation of ἄμπελος and κλήμα as used in other Ghanaian mother-tongues such as the Akuapem-Twi, Ga, Ewe, Fante and the Frafra Bibles in comparison with the Asante-Twi Bible.

⁴ 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): 66.

⁵ David N. A. Kpobi, *Entrusted with the Word: A History of the Bible Society of Ghana 1965-2015* (Accra: Heritage Publications, 2015), 26.

⁶ John 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 and Manchester, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura and St. Jerome Publishing, 2011), 28.

⁷ Kpobi, *Entrusted with the Word*, 24.

⁸ Kpobi, *Entrusted with the Word*, 27.

⁹ Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*, 140.

¹⁰ Ype Schaaf, *On their Way Rejoicing: The History and Role of the Bible in Africa*, rev. ed., (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2002), 89.

¹¹ Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*, 76.

¹² Kpobi, *Entrusted with the Word*, 120.

¹³ Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*, 75.

¹⁴ Kpobi, *Entrusted with the Word*, 120.

¹⁵ The Bible Society of Ghana, *New Revised Asante Twi Version & English Standard Version DIGLOT*, (Korean Bible Society, 2018).

Scholarly Views on Biblical Translations

The analogy of the vine in John's gospel has become a source of doctrinal interpretations by scholars and theologians. Kwame Bediako rightly posits that Bible translation from the source language to receptor language is and always has been a theological activity.¹⁶ According to Bediako, it means reaching out to people with the gospel for the redemption of their souls.¹⁷ He further explains that translation of the Scriptures in any mother-tongue provides the necessary opportunity and creates an environment for people to receive the gospel and respond to the living God.¹⁸ Lamin Sanneh argues that Bible translation is the driving force in the transmission of the gospel message in everyday language for everyone to hear.¹⁹ Peter Kwasi Sarpong emphasizes enculturation as a means of making the gospel message relevant to the African.²⁰ He further construes that African cultural values should be channeled through the reality of the African context so that the message of the gospel can permeate the African culture. He also asserts that since Christianity is a universal religion, it is not Africa alone that must be Christianized but that Christianity must be Africanized within the African context.²¹

Ekem has described the process of translation as vernacularization.²² In this process, translators seek to unravel the thoughts of the original writers or speakers and to convey them to a people whose worldviews are different from the original recipients of the biblical document. This should be done by observing the relevant theological, cultural and linguistic factors,²³ because the varied mother-tongues in Africa have offered Bible translators and interpreters workable material for interpretation. Apparently, there is a growing concern among African scholars such as David Tuesday Adamo,²⁴ Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole,²⁵ Lamin Sanneh²⁶ and others have who consistently argued that Bible translation in Africa should be contextualized to correspond to the African social context because in most cases, the social-cultural context of the African indigenes is neglected. However, notwithstanding the Eurocentric approach to biblical interpretation in Africa, the introduction of a dynamic equivalent approach to Bible translation by Eugene Nida and Charles Taber gives breathing and leads to the discussion of the problem of the study.²⁷

According to Jonathan Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Patrick Yankyera and Solace Yankson, theological education in Africa as well as in Ghana has for many years remained foreign, all translations have become Eurocentric in thought, language and expression.²⁸ The social-cultural context of the African indigenes is neglected hence the call by African scholars to break the European hegemony and to translate and interpret

¹⁶ Jonathan Edward Tetteh Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Translations and interpretations of baptizontes (Mt 28:19-20) in some Ghanaian mother tongue translations of the Bible, *HTS Theologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 77, 1, (2021): 2.

¹⁷ Kwame Bediako, "The Importance of African Mother Tongues and Bible Translation for Christian Mission and Theology in Contemporary Africa," *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 22, no. 1, (2019): 7.

¹⁸ Bediako, "The Importance of African Mother Tongues and Bible Translation for Christian Mission and Theology in Contemporary Africa," 7.

¹⁹ Lamin Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity? The Gospel Beyond the West*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William Eerdmans, 2003), 98.

²⁰ Frank K. Adams, "Odwira and the Gospel: An Exploratory Study of the Asante Odwira Festival and Its Significance to Christianity in Ghana," (PhD Diss. University of Wales, July 2002.), 155.

²¹ Bishop Peter K. Sarpong, "Inculturation," Paper presented at Special Assembly for Africa of the Synod of Bishops in Rome, 1994. Bishop Sarpong is the Archbishop Emeritus of Kumasi.

²² Ekem, "Jacobus Capitein's Translation of 'The Lord's Prayer' into Mfantse," 66.

²³ Ekem, "Jacobus Capitein's Translation of 'The Lord's Prayer' into Mfantse," 66.

²⁴ David T. Adamo, "The Task and Distinctiveness of African Biblical Hermeneutic(s)," *Old Testament Essays* 28, no.1 (2015): 33, DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2015/v28n1a> Adamo argues that the African social cultural context should be a subject of interpretation.

²⁵ Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole, "History and Theory of Scripture Translations," *HTS* 64:1, (Department of New Testament Studies, University of Pretoria, 2008), 259. further explains that African biblical translation is often not African enough, because it does not readily engage with African realities as the *subject* of its scholarship.

²⁶ Sanneh, *Whose Religion is Christianity?* 97. Sanneh posits that even the disciples of Jesus adopted a translation form of Jesus' message for their mission

²⁷ Eugene A. Nida and Charles R. Taber, *The Theory of and Practice of Translation*. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), 251.

²⁸ Jonathan Kuwornu -Adjaottor, Patrick Yankyera and Solace Yankson, "Dynamic Equivalence and Mother-Tongue Translations of the Bible," *E-Journal of Religious and Theological Studies*, no. 1, (2018): 243.

words and phrases that seem confusing to bring meaning to indigenous readers.²⁹ They also argued for the need to discontinue reading from alien perspectives and to re-focus the curriculum on African cultural and religious heritage that will be relevant to the African indigenes.³⁰ This focuses on what can be described as ‘inappropriate terminologies’ used in the translation and interpretation of two Greek words in John 15:1-5 in which Jesus made the last of his ‘I AM’ claims.³¹

In this passage, the Greek word ἀμπελος (ampelos) which is translated as the vine in English is rendered as *bobe* in the Asante-Twi Bible and κλήμα (*klema*) is translated as a branch and *ban* in English and Asante-Twi Bible respectively. Though the Asante-Twi Bible has been revised with the latest revision in 2018, however, the words *bobe* and *ban* have consistently been featured in all the revisions. One will ask, are the renderings of these words (*bobe* and *ban*) a problem to the Asante-Twi mother-tongue Bible reader? The answer to this question is affirmative, it shows a communication gap between Biblical studies and the African context. It is a gap in which foreign idiomatic expressions dominate indigenous thinking and worldview.³² In the researcher’s pastoral ministry, it has been personally observed with keen interest a state of ambiguity and speculation mother-tongue readers make in an attempt to explain the word *bobe*. For some people, the *bobe* is a fruit and not a plant, some also relate it to the palm tree with the idea that both are a source of alcoholic beverages. The question still remains unanswered about the nature of *bobe*; a fruit, plant or what?

METHODOLOGY

The study applied the Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics methodology (MTBH) because of its dynamism; the text can evolve a new meaning within a particular context.³³ This methodology is underpinned by the post-positivist philosophical framework which allows researchers to come up with different findings based on their perspectives. In this framework, theories, background, knowledge and values of the researcher can influence what is observed.³⁴ The study sought to interview stakeholders from diverse opinions. This includes Bible translators such as Ernest Kwaku Boateng, the facilitator of the first revised Asante-Twi Bible and Wonderful Arthur who is currently working in the Sefwi dialect Bible translation. Heads of religious bodies from the Orthodox and Charismatic and Pentecostal churches were consulted. These are the Most Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Emeritus, Rev. Dr. Kojo Osei-Wusu, the former president of the Ghana Baptist Convention, Pastor Ransford Obeng, The Founder and Head Pastor of Central Charismatic Church. Traditional leaders such as Nana Kofi Agyei Twum, the Abrankese Nyameani Ankobeahene and a queen mother who wanted to remain anonymous shared their views. Also, some selected key church leaders such as elders and deacons were consulted in this regard.

A Call for Retranslation/Reinterpretation

Kofi Agyekum has stated that the Akan language which the Asante-Twi is a part has been well researched not only in Ghana but also in other parts of the world.³⁵ An investigation conducted by Kuwornu-Adjaottor, reveals that 43.7% of the people interviewed use the Asante-Twi Bible as their major source of reading material in Kumasi.³⁶ Therefore, translation into the Asante-Twi Bible should be accurate, clearer and relevant to mother-tongue readers. This study strongly argues that the ambiguity and the speculation about the *bobe* do not make the biblical text relevant to the Asante-Twi mother-tongue readers and also does not help them to properly understand and to appreciate God’s word. Secondly, the Greek word, κλήμα which is translated as a

²⁹ Adamo, “The Task and Distinctiveness of African Biblical Hermeneutic(s),” 33.

³⁰ Kurwornu-Adjaottor, Yankyera and Yankson, “Dynamic Equivalence and Mother-Tongue Translation of the Bible,” 243.

³¹ Cory Marsh, “Jesus, The True Vine: An Exegesis of John 15:1–5,” (M.A. Diss., Southern California Seminary, 2017), 3.

³² Bernhard Y. Quarshie, “Doing Biblical Studies in the African Context: The Challenge of Mother-tongue Scriptures,” *Journal of African Christian Thought*, 5, no 1 (2002): 8.

³³ Jonathan E. T. Kurwornu-Adjaottor, “Assessment of the Three Problematic Texts in the Synoptic Gospels of the New Testament of the Dangme Bible” (Ph.D., Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, 2018), 15.

³⁴ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Research Philosophies and Approaches,” (Lecture, Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology, Kumasi, Ghana, June 19, 2020).

³⁵ Kofi Agyekum, *Akan Body Parts Expressions: Cognitive Semantics and Pragmatic Approach*, (Accra: Adwinsa Publications (GH) Ltd., 2018), 9.

³⁶ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Patronage and Usage of the Mother-Tongue Bibles in Kumasi, Ghana,” 12.

branch in English and *ban* in the singular form is both inappropriate and also inconsistent with its plural form κλήματα (klemata) translated as *mman*. It is therefore envisaged that the translation and the interpretation of ἄμπελος (ampelos) and κλημα (klema) as *bobe* and *ban* respectively in the Asante-Twi Bible do not bring out the meaning and import of the message of the biblical text to mother-tongue Bible readers and thus, requires a lucid translation.

In responding to the question as to how pastors interpret the vine to their congregation, Ransford Obeng on his part said, he always uses a cocoa tree to illustrate the vine because it is familiar to his audience and also brings out the fruit-bearing concept emphasized in the analogy.³⁷ How will a new translation contribute to readers' understanding and appreciation of God's word? Respondents are of the view that since God is the source of every mother-tongue, the biblical text should not be abstract to readers but should speak to readers in words and phrases that are understandable to them in their own mother-tongues for clarity and assimilation. An instance to support this assertion occurred in a prayer session, where a Pastor asked his Congregation to pray to ask God to intervene in their personal affairs. A week after the prayers, a woman shared her testimony about what God had done in her life and was full of praise to God. In her words, she said, "I didn't know God understands 'Frafra' dialect," (a dialect spoken by people from the northeastern part of Ghana).³⁸ This underlines Hill's assertion that when God speaks to people in their mother-tongue, it shows the importance of people's linguistic and ethnic identity in God's plan.³⁹ In view of this, the mother-tongue becomes a means of empowering people when the transcendent becomes immanent and communicates with people in their mother-tongues.⁴⁰ According to Amonoo, "mother-tongue is the medium of our innermost feelings and thoughts; it is the embodiment of our culture and our being."⁴¹

Ekem defines mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics as a discipline devoted to the interpretation and reinterpretation of biblical texts in languages considered by speakers as their first languages into which they were born.⁴² Kuwornu-Adjaottor explains Ekem's expansion of his definition from interpretation to the reinterpretation of the biblical texts that the biblical text is not static but dynamic and can evolve a new meaning or understanding in a particular language or culture.⁴³ It means that any attempt to re-read the biblical text from one's mother-tongue presupposes that a new interpretation of the text will result in a new understanding and appreciation of the unchanging word of God.

Exegetical Insights

The task of translating the Bible involves a dynamic process which Ekem describes as 'vernacularization' in which thoughts revealed to the original receptors are repackaged for contemporary readers in their language.⁴⁴ He further asserts that mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics will help shape the future of biblical studies in Africa because the varied Ghanaian /African mother tongues have a lot to offer by way of biblical interpretation, study Bibles and commentaries.⁴⁵ This assertion implies that studying the biblical text in the context of the varied mother-tongues in Africa and for that matter, Ghana, will result in producing resources in terms of commentaries and concordances that will bring clarity and understanding to mother-tongue Bible readers in their contexts.

³⁷ Ransford Obeng, Head Pastor of Calvary Charismatic Centre (CCC), Ayigya, Kumasi –Ghana, 10th September 2021.

³⁸ A Pastor of a Frafra Community Church who shares his experience about how God is doing in his church in the Northern part of Ghana during a two-day seminar on church leadership of the Ghana Baptist Convention, Ejura, Kumasi, 2018.

³⁹ Harriet Hill, "The Vernacular Treasure: A Century of Mother-Tongue Bible Translation," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, 30, no.2, (2006): 82.

⁴⁰ Hill, "The Vernacular Treasure," 82.

⁴¹ Quarshie, "Doing Biblical Studies in the African Context," 4.

⁴² Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*, 11.

⁴³ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, "Assessment of Three Problematic Texts in the Synoptic Gospels of the New Testament of the Dangme Bible," 11.

⁴⁴ Ekem, "Jacobus Capitein's of the Lord's Prayer into Mfantse," 66.

⁴⁵ John David Kwamena Ekem, "Interpreting 'The Lord's Prayer' in the context of Ghanaian Mother-tongue Hermeneutics," *Journal of African Christian Thought* Vol. 10, 2, (2007), 48.

Meaniing of Ἀμπελος (Ampelos)

Ἔγώ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος ἡ ἀληθινή, καὶ ὁ πατήρ μου ὁ γεωργός ἐστιν ὁ πᾶν κλῆμα ἐνέμοι μὴ φέρον καρπὸν αἶρει αὐτό, καὶ πᾶν τὸ καρπὸν φέρον καθαίρει αὐτὸ ἵνα καρπὸν πλείονα ἵ φέρῃ. (John 15:1,2)

Ἔγώ εἰμι ἡ ἄμπελος ἡ ἀληθινή, πᾶν κλῆμα ἐν ἐμοί, translated as, “I am the vine, the true every branch in me.” Ἀμπελος is a third declension genitive feminine singular⁴⁶ interpreted as vine or grapevine; a plant that coils about for support.⁴⁷ Since ἄμπελος is genitive, it is in a possessive mood with κλῆμα as its direct object.⁴⁸ It, therefore, suggests that the vine Jesus used in this analogy is not a tree but a creeping plant that climbs by tendrils. The word ‘vine’ which is גֶּפֶן (*gephen*) in Hebrew and ἄμπελος in Greek has been stated in the Bible several times and it is sometimes referred to as grapevine or vineyard and are all interpreted as *bobe*, *bobeturo* or *bobeaba* in the Asante-Twi Bible. Looking at the nature of the vine in the analogy and the translation and interpretation of the text in the Asante-Twi Bible, it seems it has no link with the translated word. In 2001, after 37 years (1964 – 2001), of its first publication, a team was formed to revise the Asante-Twi Bible. According to Ernest Kwaku Boateng, the leader of the revised team, their goal was to retranslate obsolete words in the Asante-Twi Bible. The team however, did not consider retranslating the word *bobe* with the assumption that it has been understood and accepted by readers.⁴⁹ Arthur, a translator in the Sefwi dialect is of the view that changing the *bobe* will not add or change the concept Jesus was addressing and for that reason, the *bobe* should be left unchanged.⁵⁰ Ekem has observed that the Akan Bible was originally written in the Akuapem-Twi dialect and its orthography was adapted from a German writing system.⁵¹ It is therefore envisaged that the word *bobe* which was borrowed from the Akuapem-Twi Bible was adapted from a German writing system or a coined word. This is because investigations conducted by native speakers and translators have shown that there is no tree or plant known as *bobe* in the Asante socio-cultural system.

Comparatively, the Fante and the Ewe translations take a different approach using wine instead of the vine in its translation and interpretation. The Fante translation adapted the Hebrew writing system in which the Hebrew word יַיִן *yayin* is interpreted as wine.⁵² Thus, the Fante Bible rendered it as “*Emi nye nokwar wenyindua no*” *wenyin* – wine and *dua* meaning tree. (I am the true wine). Similarly, the Ewe translation also rendered it *wein-ti*; with *wein* as wine and *ti* as a tree. The Frafra translation on the other hand, is a departure from both the Hebrew and the Greek renderings. It does not give any specific name to the tree or plant but, *Tia teba séla* meaning I am the tree that is planted. In the *Frafra* dialect, *tia* means tree and *teba séla* is something planted. The Ga Bible translation rendered the vine as *waintso* and branch as *nine* which means hand or branch with *ninjii* as its plural.

Meaniing Of Κλημα (Klema)

κλήμα is a third declension accusative neuter singular with its plural form κλήματα. It is interpreted as branch and branches in the singular and plural forms respectively in English and *ban* and *mman* in the Asante-Twi Bible. In the Asante-Twi dialect, the word *ban* is mostly used as either a prefix or suffix. In the prefix sense, it is used as *ban-bo*, *ban-bɔfoɔ* or *ban-sere*, meaning protection or protector. In the suffix sense, it is used as *ε-ban*, fence or wall, *su-ban*, character, *a-ban*, government, *gye-ban*, make a wall, *ban-mu*, a place where royals are buried, etc. When someone mentions ‘*ban*,’ in most cases, the person is referring to a wall or fence. In its earlier usage in the gospel of John, the word *ban* was used to translate the English word ‘fold’ or ‘pen’ when Jesus said, “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold.” (John 10:16 NRSV) translated as, “*mewɔ nnwan foforɔ a wɔmfiri ban yi mu,*”

⁴⁶ William D. Mounce, *Basics of Biblical Greek Grammar*, Second ed. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003), 343.

⁴⁷ Barbara Aland, et al. eds., *The UBS Greek New Testament: A Reader's Edition*, (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, 2001), 291.

⁴⁸ James Strong, “New Strong’s Concise Dictionary of the Words in the Greek Testament,” *The New Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Comfort Print Edition. (Nashville, USA: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 5.

⁴⁹ Ernest K. Boateng, An Interview on the translation of the word *bobe*, August 30, 2021. Rev. Boateng was the lead translator of the 2012 revised Asante-Twi Bible and currently a pastor of The Apostolic Church of Ghana.

⁵⁰ Wonderful Arthur, An Interview on the translation of the word *bobe*, August 4, 2021.

⁵¹ Ekem, *Early Scriptures of the Gold Coast (Ghana)*, 52.

⁵² Francis Brown, S. R. Driver and Charles A. Briggs, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic*, (U.S.A: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 406.

According to Johann G. Christaller, the word *ban* refers to a row, a fence or an enclosure.⁵³ It is never used in connection with a branch or in relation to a tree or river. Christaller used *mān*. with an accent on top of the letter ‘a’ to stretch the vowel and also to distinguish it from man or human being. *Mān* is a verb, it means to turn aside or to turn in some direction. When a tree begins to grow and sprouts out its branches, it is said in the Asante Twi dialect that, *dua no ayi mman*, meaning the tree has sprouted out branches with *mman* as the plural form of *mān*.⁵⁴ However, according to Boateng, in the opinion of those who revised the Asante-Twi Bible, the word *mān* with an accent has become obsolete. He posits that *ban* can have two meanings; it can mean fence and also branch depending on how it is used, thus, in John 15: 2, it is used with a preposition, “*me ho ban.*”

Some of those interviewed agreed with Christaller’s definition of branch as a *dubaa* or *duabasa* for the purpose of clarity and understanding and also as an alternative word for *ban* in the Asante-Twi Bible. However, on the contrary, Bishop Sarpong recommends that the word *ban* is more preferable to *dubaa*, *duabasa* or *nkorabata*.⁵⁵ According to Bishop Sarpong, *nkorabata* can better be used for a tributary than branch.

On the issue of *baa* in the Akuapem-Twi dialect, Christaller explains that *baa* refers to a place or spot. It also refers to a branch of a tree or river, it is written with an accent on top of the ‘a’ vowels e.g., *bāā*. The plural form, ‘*abaa*’ refers to a small branch, a rod, whip/cane or stick for beating.⁵⁶ In the Frafra dialect, branch is translated as *yila* and can be used for both singular and plural tenses. The Ga Bible translates branch as *nine* which means hand; the hand of a tree or branch with *ninjii* as its plural. The Fante Bible has *abaw* as branch and it is used for both singular and plural. Among the translations that were examined, the *Frafra* translation comes out more clearly, it does not refer to any specific tree but “a tree that is planted.” This allows the readers to relate the tree to any tree in their context. It affirms the post-positivist philosophy framework which permits researchers to come up with different findings based on their perspectives.⁵⁷

RECOMMENDATION

It has been stated earlier in this paper that biblical translation from the source text to the receptor text should be substantially the same as in the original language in terms of meaning and style. However, findings have shown that the translation of the *bobe*, in particular, does not conform to these two components; meaning and style. The study, therefore, recommends a re-translation and re-interpretation of the word using a familiar tree or plant which fits the socio-cultural context of the indigenes to communicate the truth of the gospel. It can also be translated in line with the *Frafra* translation which does not mention any specific tree; for example – “*Me ne dua pa no,*” (I am the good tree.) This is because repackaging the Biblical truth in the context of the Asante culture is paramount in the field of translation. Again, using a familiar tree will not negate the concept Jesus put forward in this analogy which emphasizes fruit-bearing but rather, it will be refreshing for readers to read or hear God speaking to them in their mother-tongue. On the issue of the branch which is translated as *ban*, both Boateng and Bishop Sarpong recommend maintaining the *ban* because the alternative words proposed by Christaller are not appropriate enough to replace the *ban*. This shows the limitation of the Asante-Twi dialect.

CONCLUSION

The Asante-Twi Bible translators did not use a word-for-word approach or transliteration as seen in the Fante and Ewe translations but rather sought to use a coined word in translating the Greek word ἀμπελος (*ampelos*). This approach comes under what Ekem describes as ‘vernacularization’ in which thoughts revealed to the

⁵³ Johann G. Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language: Called Tshi (Twi) Second Edition Revised and Enlarged*, (Basel: Basel Evangelical Missionary Society, 1933), 2.

⁵⁴ Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language*, 304.

⁵⁵ An Interview with the Most Rev. Peter Kwasi Sarpong, the Roman Catholic Archbishop Emeritus of Kumasi on the translation of the word *bobe* in the Asante-Twi Bible, 15th September 2021.

⁵⁶ Christaller, *Dictionary of the Asante and Fante Language*, 304.

⁵⁷ Kuwornu-Adjaottor, “Research Philosophies and Approaches,”

original receptors are repackaged for contemporary readers in their language.⁵⁸ However, the translation failed to capture the meaning or concept of the vine because the *bobe* is an unknown tree or plant found in the Asante socio-cultural context and is mostly abstract to the Asante mother-tongue Bible readers. This can have influence on readers' understanding or interest in reading the Bible for the desired positive transformation of individuals and the society in general. It is believed that in societies where biblical principles are applied, there is a high positive social change. The revised team of the Asante-Twi Bible maintained the original translation because they thought the *bobe* has been accepted and understood by readers, however, none of the people interviewed (both pastors and laity) understand or know what the *bobe* is; they always use a familiar tree or plant in their interpretation.

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⁵⁸ Ekem, "Jacobus Capitein's of the Lord's Prayer into Mfantse," 66.

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