


Genesis 1:1-3 in Selected Akan Mother-tongues: A Grammatico-syntactic Analysis



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ABSTRACT

The translation of the Bible message from the original language to a receptor language has been challenging due to the lack of equivalent words in the receptor language to convey the exact meaning of the original language. This can sometimes distort the original meaning and create ambiguity in the receptor community. In some Akan dialects such as Asante-Twi, Akuapim-Twi, and Bono-Twi, the translation of Genesis 1:1-3 presents recognizable translational challenges when compared with the Masoretic Text. For instance, all the selected Akan dialects translated the Hebrew word *bereshit*, “In the beginning,” as independent in relation to other parts of the first sentence. However, this paper argued that rendering *bereshit*, with no indication of the temporal dependent relationship function of the clause within the sentence thus without any circumstantial sense, limits the meaning of the sentence and is inconsistent with the source text. Employing grammatical and syntactical analysis, the paper identified some translational inconsistencies in the selected Akan mother-tongue Bibles and accordingly proposed alternative renderings for readers.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to analytically examine how Genesis 1:1-3 has been translated into some selected Akan mother-tongues. Over the years, most of the translated versions of the Bible have come under intense scrutiny by scholars. Some scholars argue that there is a continuous need for revision of many mother-tongue Bibles in Ghana because some of the translations do not reflect and express the meaning and the context of the source text from which it was translated.¹ In some other cases, the translation has created ambiguities in the receptor language, resulting in interpretation and theological flaws. A critical analysis of the translations of Genesis 1:1-3 of the Old Testament (Hebrew Bible) into Akan dialects such as the Asante-Twi Bible (AsTB), Akuapim-Twi Bible (AkTB), and Bono-Twi Bible (BnTB) present some noticeable translation challenges. In view of this, this paper sought to analyze the translations of Genesis 1:1-3 into Asante, Akuapim, and Bono dialects to ascertain the veracity of its rendition. To do this, some philosophies regarding the science of translation have been discussed. The paper also reviewed the historical background of Mother-tongue Bible translations in Ghana. Again, an exegetical analysis of

¹ Foster E Asamoah, “A Study of the Translation of Proseuche (Acts 6: 4) in the Greek New Testament and Asante-Twi Bible,” *International Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Studies* 9, no. 2 (2022): 1.

Genesis 1:1-3 is carried out. As an exegetical study, the source texts are semantically and morpho-syntactically analysed and their renderings in the mother-tongue Bibles are compared. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of Genesis 1:1-3 in the selected Akan Mother-tongue translations is done with the Masoretic text. The paper's final section proposes an alternative rendering of Genesis 1:1-3 in the selected Akan dialects.

Grammatical and Syntactical Analysis of Biblical Text

The study of sacred texts has always been a complex and rich area within biblical scholarship. Scholars use a wide range of analytical tools and methodologies to uncover the deep theological meanings encoded in these ancient works. One of the many methods used to interpret the profound meaning of ancient texts involves analyzing the grammar and syntax of biblical texts. Grammatical analysis of a text is a scientific approach that aims at uncovering the original meaning of a biblical text as intended by its authors. The study of word meanings, grammar, and syntax of the original languages is important for a proper understanding of Scripture.² Syntax refers to a science of analysis of how combined words form phrases and sentences. It is the study of individual words, phrases and clauses in a sentence.³ It focuses on the relationship among individual words, phrases, clauses and sentences, bringing out the sense of units that exist usually in sentences and paragraphs.⁴ This approach aims to reveal the complex linguistic structures and patterns that form the basis of these ancient writings, and it has gained significant prominence in recent decades. It is crucial for understanding the linguistic features of the biblical languages, particularly Hebrew and Greek, and their implications for textual interpretation and historical linguistics.

With this analytical approach, there is a significant recognition that texts including those of a sacred nature are fundamentally rooted in the complex systems of languages that have evolved over time and across cultures. As such, a knowledge of the grammatical and syntactical features of a given text provides the literal meaning and the broader context and pragmatic dimensions that shape its interpretation. This is critical because it is essential to recognize the significant cultural and linguistic gaps between modern readers and the original authors and audience when interpreting biblical texts. These differences can present considerable challenges in fully comprehending the comprehensive and nuanced meaning of the text.

A comprehensive exploration of the grammatical and syntactical structures within biblical texts offers scholars valuable insights. This deeper understanding sheds light on how language is used to convey meaning, express theological concepts, and navigate the complexities of the social and cultural milieu in which these texts were created. Such analysis enables a more nuanced and contextually grounded interpretation of biblical texts, moving beyond mere lexical or semantic approaches to engage with the intricate web of linguistic, rhetorical, and pragmatic considerations that shaped the text. This multifaceted approach is essential for comprehending the subtleties of biblical interpretation, as it allows for a comprehensive examination of how language functions within its specific historical and cultural context.

Philosophies of Translations

Translation is an important part of human communication. This is due to the differences in languages from various cultural origins or backgrounds. The language mostly used by individuals in their daily life is an important medium for transmitting the word of God, since it enhances their understanding and application of the Scriptures. This section explores the concept of Bible translation and some translation philosophies that Bible translators mostly adopt for the effective transmission of the word of God in Akan mother-tongues.

Translation as a process could be defined as transferring information from a source or original language to a receptor language without neglecting the specific socio-cultural context of the receptor community.⁵ In simple terms, Boaheng defines translation as 'the act of replacing a text in one language

² Ernst R Wendland, *Interpreting the Bible: An Overview of Hermeneutics* (Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch, 2017), 53.

³ Bruce K. Waltke and Michael Patrick O'Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax* (Eisenbrauns, 1990), 53.

⁴ Ronald Giese, "Literary Forms of the Old Testament," in *Cracking Old Testament Codes: A Guide to Interpreting the Literary Genres of the Old Testament* (Nashville, Tennessee: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 5.

⁵ Basil, Hatim and Jeremy Munday, *Translation: An Advanced Resource Book* (London: Psychology Press, 2004), 6.

with a text in another language.⁶ In other words, translation involves the transformation of texts from the translating language into the language of the receptor community. It refers to the “act of revivifying the ancient Christian scriptures from the source language into a target language, to make them become culturally and essentially applicable and appreciable to the indigenous readers.”⁷ Roman Jakobson’s essay, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation,” classifies translation into three types: thus Intralingual translation or rewording; interlingual translation or translation proper; and intersemiotic translation or transmutation.⁸ Of interest to this present paper is the interlingual translation or translation proper. The interlingual translation is the “transferring of sense from one natural language to another.”⁹ This implies that with interlingual translation, translation is not done within the same source language rather, there is always a target or another language into which the translation of the text is done. From the discussion, it is obvious that this type of translation is what is employed by Bible translators in making the word of God accessible to the receptor community. On this basis, Bible translation could be defined as “the process of rendering a biblical text from the source language to any other language, taking into consideration the religio-cultural and linguistic context of the people for whom the translation is done.”¹⁰ Thus, as avowed by Twumasi-Ankrah et al.,

Translation is not just an act of translating texts but of translating people’s ways of life, cosmology and worldviews. The translation must incorporate fully, the cosmology of both the source text and the target text and their fundamental source values, philosophies and languages. It is expected of a competent translator to be an expert in both the source and target languages as well as grounded in their fundamental worldviews. A translator must be a skilled exegete of the source text and a lucid mother-tongue speaker of the receptor language.¹¹

This implies that the languages and cultures embodied in the biblical texts are not an exclusive property of believers but of all members of the cultures that produced these texts or in which those texts were produced. These texts are only subsets of the larger culture which is by definition larger than the sum of all its parts.¹² “The competent translator would need to go behind the text to harness the historical, cultural, geographical, political, economic and religious background of that source text.”¹³ The goal of every Bible translator, in the broadest sense, is to convey the meaning of the source text in the receptor language.¹⁴

There are a number of methodologies or theories used in rendering a text from one language into another some of which are literalist, relevance, interpretive, functionalist, descriptive, text-linguistic, comparative, professional, literary-rhetorical, and intercultural approaches.¹⁵ However, a brief description of two of the key theories of Bible translation which include the linguistic approach and equivalence theory are discussed in this paper. The linguistic approach (formal equivalence or literal equivalence) involves the representation of the exact word of the source text in the receptor text.¹⁶ It centers on the form and content of the message of the source text.¹⁷ In this approach, there is a literal translation of the source text into the receptor language. This is done with or without necessarily conveying the sense of the original whole. It is mostly described as a gloss translation. Proponents of this theory are of the view that much focus should not be on what the text means because they are the

⁶ Isaac Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators* (Delaware: Vernon Press, 2022), 6.

⁷ Emmanuel Twumasi-Ankrah et al., “An Analytical Study of the Translations of Genesis 1: 26-27 in the Akuapem-Twi Bible,” *Journal of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics and Theology (MOTBIT)* Vol 4, no. 3 (2022): 47.

⁸ Roman Jakobson, “On Linguistic Aspects of Translation,” in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. Lawrence Venuti, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 1959), 138–43.

⁹ Clare Vassallo, “What’s so ‘Proper’ about Translation? Or Interlingual Translation and Interpretative Semiotics,” *Semiotica* 2015, no. 206 (2015): 161.

¹⁰ Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 7.

¹¹ Twumasi-Ankrah et al., “An Analytical Study of the Translations of Genesis 1: 26-27 in the Akuapem-Twi Bible,” 47.

¹² Aloo Osotsi Mojola, “Bible Translation in the Context of the ‘Text, Church and World’ Matrix : A Post Nida Perspective,” *Journal of Biblical Text Research* 12 (February 28, 2003): 141–61, <https://doi.org/10.28977/jbtr.2003.2.12.141>.

¹³ Twumasi-Ankrah et al., “An Analytical Study of the Translations of Genesis 1: 26-27 in the Akuapem-Twi Bible,” 47.

¹⁴ Kevin Gary Smith, “Bible Translation and Relevance Theory: The Translation of Titus” (PhD diss., University of Stellenbosch, 2000), 24.

¹⁵ Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 89.

¹⁶ Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 89.

¹⁷ Lawrence Venuti, *The Translation Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 148.

responsibility of expositors, commentators, and exegetes rather, the translation should be primarily focused on what the text says. On the other hand, translating with this method has several challenges.

From the foregoing discussions, it could be seen that it pays no attention to the linguistic and socio-cultural context of the receptor community. This proves to be a major setback when one overly relies on this method of translation. Moreover, because the context for the usage of words is not considered, there is a possibility of distorting the message of the original text when picking up a word for it in the receptor language. This is because some words may mean differently in different contexts. Again, the adoption of a word-for-word approach by this method makes it problematic since certain receptor languages may have more than one meaning for the chosen words. Others too may lack single words that could express or mean the word from the source text.

Another method of translation that gained popularity in the middle of the twentieth century is the equivalence theory (Dynamic/functional equivalence). It was a newly suggested approach by Eugene Nida for Bible translators. According to Nida,

A translation of dynamic equivalence aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to mode of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture; it does not insist that he understands the cultural patterns of the source-language context in order to comprehend the message.¹⁸

The theory's prime focus is on achieving effective communication by conveying the intended meaning rather than strictly adopting a literal word-for-word translation. It portrays that since there are variations in language and cultural contexts, an effective and successful translation should be able to resonate with the target audience. That means that an effort must be made in creating a translation that is culturally appropriate and relatable to the target audience which intends to enhance effective communication and understanding. It intends to produce in the target audience the same response as received by the original hearers of the text.¹⁹ In order to accomplish this, Nida outlined a three-step approach for dynamic equivalence translation: analysis, transfer, and restructuring.²⁰ In this three-step approach, the translator analyzes the source text focusing on the meaning, structure, and cultural context, and transfers the meaning and impact of the source text into the receptor language (thus making decisions in relation to language choices, cultural adaptation and finding equivalent expression which can express the intended meaning effectively), and reconstruct the text in a way that is natural, relevant, and resonate with the receptor culture.²¹ In spite of its usefulness in clarifying difficult theological concepts and ideologies, dynamic equivalence has never been employed without criticism. The major among them is the loss of form, style, and grammar of the source text by the readers. Although this theory has received some criticism, it is widely embraced by many modern Bible translators, particularly the Akan Mother-tongue Bible translators. The paper discusses the history behind the Bible translation into mother-tongues in Ghana.

Historical Background to Mother-tongue Bible Translations in Ghana

It is statistically proven that African languages make up one-third of the world's six thousand languages. This makes it a difficult task to translate the entire Bible into each of the dialects considering the cost involved. However, in spite of this challenge, for effective and better assimilation and applicability of the Bible, translation into a mother-tongue dialect is an all-important tool that must be considered. As cultures and languages continue to develop, translations are necessary to effectively communicate with receiving communities. Sanneh observes that for the scripture to be translated from Jewish culture thus Aramaic and Hebrew into the Gentile culture, gives a great precedent for translation appropriation and assimilation of language and culture.²² This implies that the act of translating sacred scriptures into a foreign group's language and cultural context considers that group's language, customs, and worldview in the translated

¹⁸ Eugene Albert Nida and Charles Russell Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, vol. 8 (Brill Archive, 1974), 159.

¹⁹ Glenn J Kerr, "Dynamic Equivalence and Its Daughters: Placing Bible Translation Theories in Their Historical Context," *Journal of Translation* 7, no. 1 (2011): 1–2.

²⁰ Kerr, "Dynamic Equivalence and Its Daughters: Placing Bible Translation Theories in Their Historical Context," 3.

²¹ Nida and Taber, *The Theory and Practice of Translation*, 33.

²² Lamin Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Orbis Books, 2015), 52-53.

Scriptures. It recognizes that translation is a cultural endeavor in which the target culture's language and cultural characteristics are included in the translated text. It was for this reason that mother-tongue Bible translation became a crucial part of the missionary activities in Africa, West Africa, and Ghana to be precise.

The introduction of Christianity to Ghana dates to the 1470s with the arrival of the Portuguese.²³ However, it was not until the emergence of Dutch missionaries in the seventeenth century that Biblical translation began to be explored.²⁴ Upon the arrival of the missionaries, they encountered difficulties in communicating the message of God to the Ghanaian people due to language barriers. As a result, the development of a new approach became necessary.²⁵ The need to translate the Bible and other Christian literature into some local dialects became very crucial. This was done through a joint effort between the missionaries and the indigenes.²⁶ For instance, an indigenous minister, named Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein was a pioneer in his time, being the first known sub-Saharan African to attend a European University and one of the earliest ministers ordained in the Dutch Reformed Church (1717-1747). He notably translated the Lord's Prayer from Old Dutch to Fante,²⁷ the 'Lord's Prayers,' the 'Ten Commandments,' and the 'Apostle's Creed' in 1744.²⁸ ²⁹Moreover, the Ga, Akuapim-Twi, Ewe, and Fante were the earliest languages the Bible was translated into. At first, the missionaries translated certain sections of the Gospels, and then they proceeded to translate the remaining portion of the New Testament. For instance, Johanne Gottlieb Christaller translated the four Gospels and the Acts into Akuapim-Twi and later published a comprehensive Twi-Grammar book in 1875.³⁰ This facilitated the translation into various Akan dialects, including Akuapim-Twi and Asante-Twi. It is worth noting that the Akuapim-Twi New Testament was published in 1863, before the complete translation of the Bible into Ga, Akuapim-Twi, Ewe, and Fante in 1866, 1871, 1913, and 1948, respectively.³¹ Currently, there exist Fante, Asante-Twi, and Akuapim-Twi Bible for the Akan community. Although we must recognize the significant accomplishment of translating for the Akan community, it is important to note that they still face challenges in their translations when compared to the Masoretic text or the original source.

Exegetical Analysis of Genesis 1:1-3

In Westermann's view, "textual questions are one of the determining factors in the discussion of the relationship of the first three verses of Genesis 1 to each other."³² This suggests that with a good analysis of the details and nuances, one uncovers insight into the intended meaning and the relationship that exists between the verses. By his statement, one is invited to consider word choice, syntax and sentence structure, literary devices, and contextual consideration (historical and cultural context) in which the text was written. This will be very helpful in providing a more accurate translation of the text. The Hebrew text under consideration reads as follows:

הָאֵרֶץ: וְאֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֵת אֱלֹהִים בְּרָא בְּרֵאשִׁית
 הַמַּיִם: פָּנֵי עַל מְרֻחָת אֱלֹהִים וְרוּחַ תְּהוֹם פָּנֵי עַל וְתִשָּׁר וְבָהוּ תְהוֹ הַיָּמָה וְהָאֵרֶץ
 אֹר: וַיְהִי אֹר וַיְהִי אֱלֹהִים וַיֵּאמֶר

¹In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, ²the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. ³Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light (NRSV).

²³ John D K Ekem, "Early Translators and Interpreters of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures on the Gold Coast (Ghana): Two Case Studies," *Journal of African Christian Thought* 13, no. 2 (2010): 34–37, 34.

²⁴ Ekem, "Early Translators and Interpreters of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures on the Gold Coast (Ghana): Two Case Studies"

²⁵ Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 76.

²⁶ Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 81-82.

²⁷ John D. Kwabena Ekem, "Jacobus Capitein's Translation of the 'The Lord's Prayer' into Mfante," *Ghana Journal of Religion and Theology* 2 (2007):66-79, 75.

²⁸ Ekem, "Early Translators," 34.

²⁹ John David Kwamena Ekem, "Jacobus Capitein's Contribution to Mother Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics: A Case Study of His Translation of the Apostles' Creed into Mfantse," in *Trajectories of Religion in Africa* (Brill, 2014), 395–411; Ekem, "Early Translators and Interpreters of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures on the Gold Coast (Ghana): Two Case Studies," 34.

³⁰ J. Kofi Agbeti, *West African Church History: Christian Missions and Church Foundations; 1482-1919* (Brill, 1986), 69.

³¹ Boaheng, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, 82-83.

³² Claus Westermann, "Genesis 1-11: A Commentary" (Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 78.

The first Clause: הָאָרֶץ: וְאֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם אֵת אֱלֹהִים בְּרָא בְּרֵאשִׁית

This first sentence in Genesis has attracted endless discussions among scholars regarding its translation. This stems from the fact that scholars are divided on whether to take the first clause as a main clause or as a subordinate temporal clause. Hamilton states the proposals for the four different positions:

1. The first word, תִּישָׂאֲרֶךְ *bereshit*, is in the absolute state (i.e., it functions independently of any other word) and all of verse 1 is an independent clause and a complete sentence.
2. The first word is an indeterminate noun, used as a relative temporal designation, which denotes, “initially” or “first,” “to start with,” “principally,” God created....”
3. The first word is in the construct state (i.e., it functions in close connection with another word, usually a noun) and the verse is a temporal clause subordinated to v. 2: “When God began to create...the earth was without form and it was void.”
4. The first word is in the construct state and the verse is a temporal clause subordinated to v. 3, with v. 2 taken as a parenthesis: “When God began to create the heavens and the earth – the earth being without form and being void, – God said...”³³

These four main arguments have been popular among scholars with (1) and (4) receiving much support in modern scholarship.³⁴ Scholars such as Westermann, Strack, Gunkel, Procksch, Zimmerli, von Rad, Eichrodt and Cassuto as well as Bible translations such as the New American Standard Bible (NASB), New King James Version (NKJV), New International Version (NIV), and JEB³⁵ including the Akan dialects under discussion are among the proponents of the first argument.³⁶ From the text, the first word תִּישָׂאֲרֶךְ *bereshit*, ‘consists of a preposition, *be*, “in,” plus a noun, *re’shit*, “beginning” or “principal,” standing in as “of” (construct or possessive) relationship to what follows.”³⁷ This means that the preposition, *be*- “in,” is being used in a temporal circumstantial sense. Therefore, the clause should be viewed as a hypotactic temporal one.³⁸ This suggests that *bereshit*, in relation to the other part of the first sentence, must be understood to be functioning to express a temporal-dependent relationship within the sentence. In this sense, the first clause should be considered temporal. Moreover, *bereshit*, as used in this phrase (preposition followed by a noun), can be found four other times in the Old Testament (Jer 26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34) indicating the start of a new reign.³⁹ Even though it is only in Genesis 1 that the noun is followed by a verb in finite form thus a perfect form, it must be noted that it is common in some Semitic languages.⁴⁰

Furthermore, the phrase אֱרֶךְ מִיְהוָה *bārā Elohim*, “God created,” is followed by a relative clause that omits the use of a relative pronoun (such as ‘that’ or ‘which’). The phrase either defines or restricts the noun that comes before it.⁴¹ This makes the rendering of the first sentence subordinate or dependent on the preceding sentence. In addition, the term, *bārā* to “create,” was used to describe both God's historical actions and his creative acts during the beginning. This implies that God is not only the originator of creation from the beginning, including the heavens and the earth *hash-shamayim ve'et ha'arets*, but is also actively involved in its progressive development. According to von Rad, the verb, *bārā*, means “create,” implies both effortless creation and the concept of *creatio ex nihilo*, “creation out of nothing,” as it is never accompanied by any mention of materials.⁴² Part of von Rad's assertion rests on the fact that the verb *bārā*, is rendered in *qal* perfect which describes a simple action. Also, “to create,” is to bring something completely new into existence, originate, invent etcetera. This is affirmed by Twumasi-Ankrah et al. that in ancient Jewish tradition, the verb, *bārā*, was reserved to describe YHWH's

³³ Victor P. Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis, Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1990), 103-104.

³⁴ Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis*, 104.

³⁵ Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis*, 105.

³⁶ Westermann, “Genesis 1-11: A Commentary,” 95.

³⁷ Mark S Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Fortress Press, 2010), 44.

³⁸ Cuthbert A. Simpson, “Genesis,” In George Arthur Buttrick (ed.), *The Interpreter's Bible 1* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 466.

³⁹ Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis*, 106.

⁴⁰ Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Genesis*, 106.

⁴¹ Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1*, 44.

⁴² Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, *Creation out of Nothing: A Biblical, Philosophical, and Scientific Exploration* (Baker Academic, 2004), 25 citing Gerhard von Rad.

among others.⁵² The word, וַיֹּאמֶר literally, “And said,” is a *qal* imperfect third person singular form of the root verb אמר *amar*; meaning to say, speak, utter with the conjunction (ו) *va*, “and” which is truly reflected in the translations of the scholars mentioned. The clause brings to the fore the desire of YHWH. He desired light over darkness, orderliness over disorderliness. In the face of darkness, YHWH desired that light would be and as he desired it, he called it into being and it did appear. That is, for God, he, desiring for something and bringing that thing to pass immediately, are one and the same thing.

Comparative Analysis of the Selected Akan Translations with the Hebrew Text

From the exegesis done, one could observe that the translations of Genesis 1:1-3 from Hebrew into the Akan dialects – Asante-Twi Bible (AsTB), Bono-Twi Bible (BnTB), and Akuapim-Twi Bible (AkTB) - present some noticeable translational inconsistencies in comparison to the Masoretic Text (MT). For instance, the AsTB, BnTB, and AkTB, all translated the first Hebrew sentence after the traditional Bible translation as “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.” This could be as a result of the translation philosophy employed or a translation after a translation. However, as widely as it has been accepted, critical analysis of the source text proves otherwise. For instance, translating *bereshit*, as “In the beginning,” thus *Mfitiasee no* (AsTB), *Mfitiasee he* (BnTB), and *Mfiase no* (AkTB) without any circumstantial sense will limit the meaning of the sentence and may not be faithful to the source text. The phrase must be a circumstantial one that has a dependent continuous ending. In this case, for the first verse of the AsTB, BnTB, and AkTB to be consistent with the source text, the first phrase must express a circumstantial dependent sense by the introduction of the Twi adverbial, *a*, at the end of the phrase and a transition word “when,” thus *no*, in the AsTB or *he*, in the BnTB at the end of the first verse to correspond to “In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth,...” as *Mfitiasee no (a) Onyankopɔn bɔɔ ɔsoro ne asase (no)* (AsTB), *Mfitiasee he (a) Nyankopɔn bɔɔ soro ne asase (he),...* (BoTB) and *Mfiase no (a) Onyankopɔn bɔɔ ɔsoro ne asase (no) ...* (AkTB) since they all translated the first verse in the same manner.

In the case of the second verse, the translations of the selected Akan dialects should all have the conjunction “and” *na*, (AsTB, AkTB, and BoTB) at the beginning of v 2 as a linking word and a continuation of v 1 and not as the beginning of a new sentence. In this case, the second verse will begin as “...and the earth...” thus *...na asase...* (AsTB, AkTB, and BoTB) since they all have the same wording for the phrase. In the case of the translation of the phrase, *tohu vavohu*, the BnTB seems to have made a precise translation of the Hebrew text as *ya ho kwa a hwee nni so*, literally, “void and empty.” However, this is not so with the AsTB and AkTB translations. The former translated the phrase *tohu vavohu*, as *hunu a enni bceba biara* “waste and without form,” expressing the idea of formlessness and the latter as *basaa a na eda mpan* literally disorderly (chaos) and empty. However, in order to be faithful to the source text, since there are words that can be found in the receptor languages (AsTB and AkTB) to communicate the sense of the text, it would be more appropriate to adopt a word-for-word approach. The phrase should then be translated *da mpann a hwee nni mu* “nothing and emptiness” in both dialects.

More so, as seen from the analysis, the Hebrew word, *merachephet*, in this context means to brood or hover which was precisely translated by AsTB and AkTB as *butu*, meaning “brood” or “hover.” However, the BnTB translated the word as, *dii akɔneaba*, “moved to and fro.” In order to be faithful to the source text, the BnTB should translate the word as *butu*. Again, the plural word for water, *nsuo*, (AsTB and BnTB) and *nsu* (AkTB) is *asuo* (AsTB and BoTB), and *asu* (AkTB) literally “waters.” However, all three Akan dialects translated *hammayim*, in a singular sense as *nsuo*, literally “water” (AsTB and BnTB) and *nsu* thus “water” (AkTB) instead of *asuo* literally “waters” (AsTB and BoTB) and *asu* (AkTB) to reflect the Hebrew text. Meanwhile from the exegesis, the word *hammayim*, is a plural noun denoting “waters.” Therefore, the translations of the Akan dialects must render the word in the plural sense.

In the case of the third verse, it could be seen that the AsTB and the BnTB’s translations of the first phrase וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים (And God Said) *Na Nyankopɔn kaa se*, express the meaning of the source text as compared to the AkTB *Onyankopɔn hyee se*, literally “God commanded.” Meanwhile, the word used in Genesis 1:3 was not *tsavah*, (צַוָּה) literally “to command or to charge” but *vayomer*, literally “And he said.” Again, it could be observed that there is an omission of the conjunction “and” *va*, thus *na*, in the

⁵² Westermann and Scullion, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*, 110-112.

(AkTB) translation. Therefore, the translation of verse three for AkTB should read *Na Onyankopɔn kaa se...* thus “And God said...” just as the translation of the others.

Existing Rendering of the Text in some Twi Dialects

AsTB	AkTB	BnTB
<i>¹Mfitiasee no Onyankopɔn bɔɔ ɔsoro ne asase. ²Na asase da hɔ hunu a enni bɔbea biara, na esum wɔ ebunu ani. Na Nyankopɔn honhom butu nsuo no ani. ³Na Nyankopɔn kaase, enye hann, na eyee hann.</i>	<i>¹Mfiase no Onyankopɔn bɔɔ ɔsoro ne asaase. ²Na asaase ye basaa a na eda mpan, na sum kata bun no ani, na Onyankopɔn Honhon butu nsuo no ani. ³Onyankopɔn hyee se, ‘enye hann,’ na eyee hann.</i>	<i>¹Mfitiasee he Nyankopɔn bɔɔ soro ne asaase. ²Na asaase he ya hɔ kwa a hwee nni so, na na sum kata subunu he ani, na Nyankopɔn Honhom dii akɔneaba nsuo he ani. ³Na Nyankopɔn kaa se: “Hann mmra.” Na hann baee.</i>

English Translation	English Translation	English Translation
¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was waste without any form, and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God hovered over the surface of the water. ³ And God said, let there be light, and there was light.	¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was disorderly (chaos) and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep, and the Spirit of God hovered over the water. ³ God commanded that, ‘Let there be light’ and there was light.	¹ In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was waste without anything on it, and darkness covered the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God hovered over the face of the water. ³ And God said: ‘Let light come’ and light came.

One can observe from the three selected translations of Genesis 1:1-3 in Twi dialects that translators employed the formal equivalence philosophy of translation. Also, as observed by Hamilton in his four arguments on the rendering of the text that many scholars prefer relying on the first, the translators in all three Twi Bibles considered the first clause as an independent absolute one which could form a complete sentence. However, through the analysis undertaken so far, the authors of this paper have proven that they hold an opposite view to the popular view as expressed in the selected Twi translations. This paper has identified that both the first and the second are to form one sentence but are not independent of each other. Since there seems to be a clear circumstantial phenomenon, the authors of this paper thus advocate the need to observe a process of time and a continuous ending in vv.1 and 2.

Proposed Renderings of Genesis 1:1-3 in Twi Dialects

From the above comparative analysis, the paper proposes the rendering of Genesis 1:1-3 as:

English: “¹In the beginning *when* God created the heaven and the earth, ²the earth was void (nothingness) and empty, and darkness was upon the surface of the deeps, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. And God said: “Let there be light! And there was light.”

Alternative Twi Translation:

AsTB	AkTB	BnTB
<i>¹Mfitiasee no a Onyankopɔn bɔɔ ɔsoro ne asase no, ²na asase da mpan a hwee nni mu, na esum butu ebunu no ani, na Onyankopɔn honhom butu asuo no so. ³Na Onyankopɔn kaa se: enye hann! Na eyee hann.</i>	<i>¹Mfiase no a Onyankopɔn bɔɔ ɔsoro ne asaase no, ²Na asaase nni bɔbea, na sum butu bun no ani, na Onyankopɔn Honhon butuw asu no ani. ³Na Onyankopɔn kaa se, enye hann, na eyee hann.</i>	<i>¹Mfitiasee he a Nyankopɔn bɔɔ soro ne asaase he, ²na asaase he ya hɔ kwa a hwee nni so, na sum butu subunu he ani, na Nyankopɔn Honhom butu asuo he so. ³Na Nyankopɔn kaa se: enye hann! Na eyee hann.</i>

CONCLUSION

This paper has looked at some translational inconsistencies of Genesis 1:1-3 as found among some selected Akan dialects when compared with the Masoretic text. From the analysis, it was observed that based on the translation philosophy employed in all three Akan dialects thus AsTB, AkTB, and BnTB, there were some noticeable translation challenges. A syntactic grammatical analysis of the Masoretic text revealed that the translations of some words, clauses, and sentences in the Akan dialects were not faithful to the source text. The paper then proposed alternative renditions of the text (Gen 1:1-3) into AsTB, AkTB, and BnTB after a comparative analysis of these Akan dialects with the Masoretic text.

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