Structuralism, Deconstruction and Bible Translation and Interpretation: Philosophical Dimensions for Mother-Tongue Bible Translation

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Abstract

The Bible remains the fundamental research tool in biblical scholarship. However, there exist varying perspectives and interpretations due to diverse translation philosophies and theories. Discussing the philosophies of structuralism and deconstruction in the light of Bible translation and interpretation in relation to mother-tongue Bible translation in Africa and beyond, this study employed a qualitative methodology through secondary literature and empirical morphosyntactic analysis with inter-textual examinations of some biblical texts in the OT and NT, sampling the Asante-Twi religio-cultural context. By inter-textual exegesis, the study comparatively examined the usage and translations of: 'cloud' and 'of the cloud' in Mark 9:7 and 'a cloud of witnesses' in Hebrews 12:1a; 'cloud' and 'the cloud of the incense' in Leviticus 16:13b and 'in the thick cloud' in Exodus 19:9a and 'a cloud' in Genesis 9:14. Findings revealed that deconstruction and dynamic equivalence are more ideal for contextual translation and interpretation. Morphosyntactically, 'a cloud of witnesses' should be retranslated as "adansefoɔ bebree" instead of "adansefoɔ mununkum," whilst "the cloud of the incense" should be retranslated as "wisie a efiri aduhwam no mu" or "aduhwam no wisie" in the Asante-Twi Bible, giving much preference to the former. Moreover, 'in the thick cloud' translated as: "mununkum tumm" should be retranslated as: ɛwɔ munukum kabii no mu" or "ɛwɔ munukum kusuu no mu." This paper theorizes that, "Bible translation involves interpretation," in the religio-cultural contexts of the audience for whom a mother-tongue Bible translation is produced. This paper is relevant for biblical studies, translation theories, Bible translation, the BSG and Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics globally.

Keywords: Bible Translation, Interpretation, Structuralism, Deconstruction, Mother Tongue Bible Translation, Inter Textual Analysis in Asante Twi Religio Cultural Context

1. Introduction

Objectively, the Bible has been and forever remains the focus of Biblical Studies. Being an academic discipline of biblical scholarship, Biblical studies employ hermeneutical tools and methods towards interpreting the texts of Scripture for comprehension [1]. The importance of a particular message in a primary language necessitates that while the homogeneity of its wording and/or idea should be maintained, a heterogeneous medium understood and commonly identified by the new audience should be the means for dissemination.

1.1. Structuralists

hold that while the use of a heterogeneous medium in the form of a language different from the original language is necessary for effective transmission and dissemination of biblical messages, the translation should place highest attention on both the exact wording and structure and

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arrangement of the texts in order to maintain the formality of the content and form of the original texts and its culture [2]. James Barr thinks that structural exegesis is a disappointment in the sense that it fails to allow new insights as one rigidly looks at texts as if nothing else is associated with it [3].

1.2. Deconstructionists

on the other hand, propose that one should rather place highest attention on the original intention and thought pattern of the author, enshrined in the texts, while considering the new audience without disorienting their natural orientation and elements such as culture, symbols and language; so that each new audience could equivalently receive and own God's message as a unique inheritance since they are God's people too [4]. Therefore, to them, author's intention and the new audience should be given the highest bid due to the changing world and the dynamics of unique yet diversified cultures in today's plural world. Therefore, if the wording and structure of a particular text needs a reconstruction in order to objectively derive its central idea for the benefit of the recipients that should not be a challenge if the divine message is still enshrined.

It would be a translational injustice to see God and his messages as having no association with cultures, and thus resulting into disorientation of local cultures, tabula rasa and imposition of words (diction), symbols, elements and structures alien to and unidentifiable with the people. Bible translation should consider the context of people for whom a translation is necessary. Essentially, Bible translation involves interpretation. The following discussions and findings are in resonance with Kuwornu-Adjaottor philosophical theory that Bible translation involves interpretation in his conclusion that.

Bible translation, the science of changing an original biblical text from its primary form to another language for readers to understand its message, is not a straightforward exercise. Bible translation is not a word-for-word rendition exercise; it involves interpretation...Bible translation is...an ongoing exercise. This means that no mother-tongue translation of the Bible is perfect [5].

1.3. Bible Translation Involves Interpretation

Translation and Interpretation: Interpretation gives the translational motivation to the translator as it decodes the source text to derive the exact meaning [6]. It is an obligatory part in all translation. More interestingly, after a translation is done, an interpretation had been the means and one can see the work of an interpreter. Thus, a wrong interpretation produces a wrong translation, and whoever takes such wrong translation carries it on to give further wrong interpretation. Unarguably, the role of Bible translators toward the maturity and development of African Christianity cannot be underrated, since it involves a process of mediating between cultures [7].

While for several decades many African translations of the Bible have been influenced by western versions and thereby producing translations of translations, it is high time the

African Biblical scholars – exegetes and translators, knew very well the languages of the biblical texts and then take the meaning of the texts to repackage it in the colours, symbols and imageries of their new local context, culture and audience. Lamin Sanneh opines that the translation of the original texts of the Hebrew from Hebrew and Aramaic into Greek for the Greek-speaking Jews in the diaspora and the Gentile world affirm the nonnegotiable need for translators and interpreters to consider, assimilate and appropriate cultures and languages of the audience [8].

Therefore, instead of falling on English translations, interpreters should derive the translation from the original text into the mother-tongue directly and ensure equivalent interpretation. Indeed, Bible translation involves interpretation [9]. This is because, before one can correctly translate a text of Scripture, the text must be interpreted. Also, before interpretation can be done, the exegete needs the text first. It therefore becomes the biblical and exegetical responsibility of the textual critic to establish the text through scholarly editing of the texts culturally to make it ready for interpretation and eventually producing a translation [10]. Thus, the work of textual criticism is part of the process of biblical translation and interpretation. This is the relationship between exegesis and textual criticism, and between translation and interpretation. Therefore, every translation is an interpretation. That is, it takes interpretation to make a translation, and if one finally translates then he or she has interpreted. Verily, translation is by interpretation; and in the quest of interpreting, a translation is being produced.

In another way, every Bible translation comes with a structure – a certain frame. For example, John 3:16 "For God so loved the world" is a structured translation of the Greek text. The Greek text is a translation too. However, for today's Ghanaian local audience to appreciate and effectively appropriate the actual message of the text, it is necessarily non-negotiable that the original form and structure with Jewish and Greek contexts should be deconstructed and then reconstructed equivalently for the Ghanaian context, depending on the type of language and cultural elements of the local audience. Culture and the people's language should not be ignored. Bible interpretation should consider in addition to the Christian tradition, the local people's culture, religion and the contemporary contexts [11].

Gerald West emphasizes that as Africans, culture and religion are part of the primary issues confronting African Christianity. Therefore, he explains and proposes for the need to ensure that Bible interpretation from a language into an African language should consider African culture and religion and the contemporary African contexts [12]. This is because, no individual or people can be transformed outside their heritage and identity. Thus, our translation of the Bible as African Christians with unique identities and cultural heritages should envisage a philosophical methodology that appreciates culture and its dynamics. African theology was developed to focus on the indigenization of the Christian faith, message and practices. Kwesi Dickson posited that,

"Religion cannot escape the necessity of being incarnated in a culture" and thus he frowns at the foreignness attached to Christianity in Africa [13].

Also, Waweru emphasizes "Fathers of African Theology, namely; Mbiti, Idowu, Mugambi, among others, prioritized the definition of African Theology by offering an analysis and interpretation of Culture in a dialogue with Christian faith [14]." Therefore, instead of sticking to the rigid structure and arrangement of the text, the Mother-Tongue Bible translator creates a new design that suits the new, local context and then interprets the text in a dynamic but equivalent way that maintains the author's main idea [15]. For instance, given the case of John 3:16, for the contextualization of "the world" into the situation of Akuapems, the interpreter and translator may find it applicably more meaningful to use Akuapem people in place of "the world". Thus, this would enable the translator to render a contextual and dynamically equivalent translation of the Greek text as: "God so loved the world, including Akuapem people" or "God loved and loves Akuapem people too".

Therefore, although the "word-for-word" structure is ignored, the central idea of "God's love for all humanity" including the Akuapem is nonetheless maintained. This interpretation produces a cultural and people-centered translation for the Akuapem people who then can now appreciate and appropriate its essence. Originally, the author did not include the Akuapem people in the Greek text. However, the central idea of referring to all of humanity makes the translator credible enough and legitimate, by the scripture, to include the local (new) audience. Thus, the ultimate task of theologizing and biblical hermeneutics should prioritize translating and interpreting texts with, to and for the local context so that God and His biblical message would marry the context and culture of the new people to whom the Gospel of Jesus is reaching and whose lives, identities, orientation, families, societies and nations God seeks to redeem and transform. The theologian and biblical scholar therefore become God's hired, skilled machinery and medium for the realization of this salvific and life-transforming mission of God. Kennedy Owiredu proposes that African Christians should promote mother-tongue bible translation by theologizing with and in the mother tongues [16].

Therefore, while the Greek text is true for universal interpretation, the aspect of particularity when it comes to context of the new audience requires the Bible translator to critically evaluate the words (terms) if they indeed reflect those of the new context; and if not, then a proper local equivalence is necessarily required [17]. This in fact, is not a re-reading into the text. Rather, it is an exegetical means of making the message both understood by and relevant to the people. For an authentic transformation of African Christianity, E. Asamoah and E. Kpalam have proposed an urgent need for the gospel to critically engage and transform the people's beliefs, idioms, stories and cultural life [18].

Emmanuel Misiame has studied the rendering of γύναι in John 2:4 for Ewe mother-tongue Bible readers. His exegesis revealed that the Greek word indicates that Jesus refers to Mary, his mother, as "Woman" from the word γύναι which could also mean "Wife" from the root word γυνή – a vocative feminine singular noun [19]. Even though, the text is to be revered, the structure and situation in which a mother is referred to as 'Woman' even in a vocative case is not proper for an African-Ghanaian context where motherhood is revered and should in no wise be reduced to mere womanhood [20]. All mothers are women, but not all women are mothers. Motherhood is prime and worthy of commendation and elevation. In the pronatalist Indian society, womanhood is not equal to motherhood. In that, "a woman has less value outside of marriage and motherhood [21]." The findings of Bhambhani and Inbanathan amplifies that in the Indian society, a woman is deemed as "incomplete" when she is not a mother [22].

These literatures clearly indicate India's cultural perspective of who a "woman" is as compared to being a "mother." Similarly, in the African society, the definition "woman" may not be accepted as equal to one who is recognized as "mother." Therefore, in obtaining a proper translation that replaces "Mother" instead of "Woman" which is more appropriate to reveal the author's intention in order to fit with any other cultural context, the entire structure of the text would need to undergo a reconstruction. This process of reconstructing the original text to determine the actual meaning whiles taking into consideration both the historicity and reader's context is the aspect of biblical translation and interpretation and dynamic equivalence as noted in the findings of Misiame [23].

The objective for the reconstruction is to ensure that a correct translation that critiques the non-reverential use of Nyɔnu 'Woman' for Mary in the Ewe Bible (2012) but rather proposes a contextual word as either Dada 'Mother' or Danyɛ 'My Mother,' is produced eventually from the Anlo-Ewe religio-cultural perspective. Misiame's conclusion captures such objective. From his findings and discussion, he concludes: "in the Anlo-Ewe language," addressing one's mother as *Nyɔnu* (Woman) [in the Ewe Bible (2012)] would be considered insulting, and it might even imply that Jesus was renouncing Mary as his mother. The closest equivalent in the Anlo-Ewe language should be *Dada* (Mother) or *Danyɛ* (My Mother) [24]."

Also, Emmanuel Asamoah and Ebenezer Kpalam critiqued that the adjectival phrase νέφος μαρτύρων transliterated as *nephos marturōn* which means "cloud of witnesses" in Hebrews 12:1 in the Greek culture, literally translated as *adansefoɔ munumkum* in the Asante-Twi Bible (1964), cannot be embraced in the Asante-Twi religio-cultural context [25]. This is because what the author seeks to communicate is the overwhelmingly huge and yet countable population of witnesses. Asamoah and Kpalam associate their critique with the fact that the western missionaries who aided such translation employed concepts and elements that were foreign and did not synchronize with the African culture and languages, especially in this case for Asante-Twi people.

This therefore posed serious readability and comprehension challenges since it required some amount of knowledge in biblical languages which many Africans did not have [26]. Furthermore, translations such as *talente* for "talent" (Mt. 25: 24ff) and *Alfa ne Omega no* for "the Alpha and Omega" (Rev. 1:8) for Asante-Twi readers posed some interpretative barriers. Therefore, as Africans who seek proper comprehension and appropriation of biblical messages for authentic transformation, it is necessary to embrace Kwame Bediako's perspective on biblical interpretation in the expression: "Scripture as hermeneutic of culture and tradition [27]."

According to him, Jesus and culture are inseparable [28]. This is due to his incarnation. Meanwhile, Bediako reminds that inasmuch as his Jewish culture is first, there is more to Christ than his Jewishness, and his universality with all humanity and all cultures matters most than his particularity with Jewish culture [29]. From Bediako's position, one could understand his argument in the perspective that, Africans should engage the culture and traditions with the Bible so that neither should the scripture fight culture and tradition nor disorient Africans but rather scriptures should validate the essence of culture and tradition so that both the Bible and tradition achieve a united mission of reaching God's children from diverse cultures with God's homogeneous message despite the heterogeneous mediums. Therefore, a word-for-word translation will be improper, considering the dynamics of African cultures and traditions in the face of contemporary emerging issues.

Thus, through contextual exegesis, Asamoah has proposed an Asante-Twi parallel reading *Ahyeaseɛ ne Awieeɛ no* for appropriation in place of *Alfa ne Omega no* [30]. Also, in response to "cloud of witnesses" in the Asante culture, Grace Adomako has proposed a closer equivalence: *adansefoɔ kɛseɛ*, making reference to the "hugeness of the number of witness," in place of *adansefoɔ munumkum* [31]. Therefore, the text should necessarily be rid of its alien form and structure, and reframed to consider the context of the new culture and audience if translation and interpretation must be effective. Adomako's findings revealed that "translation of the Bible into the local languages must be done with the translators having knowledge of the culture and the background of the receptor community."

She thus recommends that in the process of reviewing the Asante-Twi Bible in the future, African exegetes and translators should consider both the background and culture of the Asante people in order to produce effective translation that is indigenous to the people [32]. Meanwhile, a further morphosyntactic analysis with consideration of other equivalent wordings could reveal a much closer replacement that fits better among the Asante people, if they are to relate better with the author's intention for the phrase: νέφος μαρτύρων.

1.4. Validation and Biblical/Theological Basis
Indeed, the assertion "Bible translation involves interpretation," is validated under or through the discipline of Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics, academically championed by African-Ghanaian scholars, Professor John D. Ekem, Rev. Prof. Jonathan E. T. Kuwornu-Adjaottor and others in African Biblical scholarship [33,34].

Biblically, the introduction of this religious and biblical scholarship has its foundation in the Judeo-Christian Scriptures. In the book of Deuteronomy, the writer narrates: When the Most High apportioned the nations, when he divided humankind, he fixed the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the gods [35].

The above-quoted text is the biblical basis for Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics. While the Masoretic Text (Hebrew Bible) and Targum (Aramaic translation) renders 'the gods' in reference to the Israelites, Kuwornu-Adjaottor critically expands 'the gods' to mean the people, cultures and boundaries of the earth. Moreover, he argues objectively that the above text is not particular to the sons of Israel, but a universal reference to all inhabitants of the earth, since "The Earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it: the world and those who live in it", says the Psalmist [36,37].

In other words, nobody owns the world. Only God owns the world. Since God owns the world and delights in all humanity irrespective of national differences and socio-cultural diversities, he would not be partial to care only for Israel. Instead, in terms of demarcation of the earth, he will consider all people, their culture, names, race, and symbols, hence gods. He neutrally loves all of his creation, because everything and every human being created by Him, he testifies: "Behold, it was very good [38].

Moreover, another instance of its justification is recorded in Acts 2:5-11 in which we see the wonderful works of God depicted in the outpour of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples. Unique to the scene, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit was witnessed by the audience outside, who heard the empowered disciples speak various kinds of native languages [39]. The native languages are so important to God that he wants his empowered ambassadors to communicate the inspired message in a native/local medium. God loves culture. He has divided all people uniquely to certain boundaries that distinctively identify them. This is the necessity and position of Mother-Tongue.

Bediako emphasizes that the challenge of mother tongue indicates a continuation and re-enactment of Pentecost since the Holy Spirit boosted communication among different individuals who speak diverse languages [40]. John Mbiti challenges the need for the African Church to proclaim the name and message of Jesus in such a way that others too may hear, in African tongues, God's wonderful works [41]. Moreover, even at Pentecost, there were Africans from Egypt and Libya, hence, indicating God's personal delight in how Africans should proclaim both his name and good works in the languages and cultures of Africa. For Aloysius Pieris, a people's reality is by their language, and religion is the vehicle to express such language [42]. Therefore, understanding Pieris, it is objective that the practice of African Christianity

needs a conscious oral expression of the African mother tongues.

In that sense, a mere translation of faith, religion and the biblical text in the Greek or Hebrew Bibles does not define the African context unless such translations involve interpretations that reconstruct the Greek and/or Hebrew texts into the people's context. This is why Kuwornu-Adjaottor and his team has gone to a remarkable extent to produce a Greek Textbook suitable to the African context, first of its kind, namely; A Greek Handbook for the African Context [43]. The primary aim of producing this book was to provide a basic foundation in the learning of the New Testament Greek in the religio-cultural context of Africa towards active scholarly interest in mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics and mother-tongue Bible translation.

Therefore, in view of the explanation above, Kuwornu-Adjaottor posits unwaveringly that God has divided the people accordingly and has given unique languages (cultures) as their distinct boundaries. So, to him, God is interested in every language and would require that every people or group will understand, serve and communicate with him in their language, but not in any foreign one. Therefore, any translation that is foreign or has elements, symbols and expressions unknown to the new (local) audience must necessarily undergo an interpretation to produce a new contextual and culture-oriented translation. When that translation has been produced, it becomes a contextual interpretation for the local audience. Although his objective position has faced several critiques, especially from most conservatives and fundamentalists who reject critical assessment of the scriptures, his position is commendable. One would agree with him.

2. Methodology
Since this research is in the field of Social Sciences, it employed a qualitative approach through secondary literature and morpho-syntactical analysis of biblical texts from an inter-textual examination. A qualitative research approach is designed to collect non-numerical or descriptive data to produce insights that can result in testable hypotheses [44]. This approach is friendly with biblical narratives and exegesis. Derived from "morphology" and "syntax" in linguistics, a morphosyntactic analysis is the art and science of analyzing nature, structure and formation of words and how their individual units are related to produce a complete thought and meaningful sentences [45]. Intertextuality in biblical exegesis deals with comparative textual analysis between two texts in the same testament or between an NT text and an OT text [46].

The secondary literature explored the discussions on the dimensions of the philosophies of structuralism, deconstruction and bible translation and interpretation in relation to mother-tongue bible translation. Additionally, inter-textual examinations were done on OT texts: Exodus 19:9a and Leviticus 16:13b, and NT texts: Hebrews 12:1a and Mark 9:7. Morphosyntactic analysis was done on the wording, structures and meanings of key words and

expressions in relation to the usage of "cloud" in those texts. This resulted in the production of contextual translations for the Asante-Twi mother-tongue translation of the Bible, relating the Hebrew and Greek words to the Asante-Twi religio-cultural contexts.

2.1. Findings and Discussion
Bible Translation Philosophies and Theories: In doing Bible translation, there are two philosophical schools of thoughts, namely; structuralism and deconstruction [47]. With structuralism, the Bible translator employs the translational theory of formal equivalence, whereas the deconstructionist employs the translational theory of dynamic equivalence [48]. However, instead of adopting structuralism, the mother-tongue biblical exegetes apply deconstruction with emphasis on dynamic equivalence. While structuralists focus solely on translation of the text according to its original structure (world within the text), deconstructionists do both translation and interpretation of the text by further considering both the historical context (world behind the text) and the application context (world in front of the text) in order to arrive at the central meaning being intended and communicated by the author [49].

While structuralism keeps the original owner and interpreter of the text, deconstruction takes the text from both its original author and original context and puts it into the hand of the new interpreter and his or her new context. This is because, the moment the text leaves the hands of the author, it is subject to interpretation [50]. According to Jasper Gulddal, self-evidence of semantic transparency for easy understanding is rare in literature. He comments this way: Whether due to the historical or cultural distance that separates authors from readers or to the difficulty of literary language itself, the literary text tends to meet us with a degree of foreignness that sometimes makes us give up in frustration, but more often stimulates our curiosity and encourages further investigation. It is ultimately this encounter with incomprehensibility, which is central to the reading of literary texts that forces us to reflect on the questions of interpretation and understanding [51].

Therefore, correct and contextual translation must necessarily involve interpretation if the text finds a new audience. Broadly, there are two predominant translational theories – formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. However, in between these two boundaries exist literal translation (LT) and free translation (FT) [52].

Formal Equivalence and Structuralism Coined by Eugene Nida, a formal equivalence translation maintains formal elements, form and content of the original message such as grammatical units, consistency in usage of words, and textual arrangement [53]. Some linguists and theorists of translation like Catford, David Crystal and J. R. Firth among others consent to six (6) levels of applying formal equivalence. These include; phonetic equivalence, phonological equivalence, morphological equivalence, lexical equivalence, syntactical equivalence and semantic equivalence [54]. In application, formal equivalence follows a word-for-word strategy.

Regarding the usage of formal equivalence in structuralism, the interpreter keeps themselves within the limits of the text, without any external or past associations. In structuralism, the interpreter cannot interpret outside the structure within which a text is designed, and the author's meaning is not the most precedent. Known as an earlier user of structuralism in biblical interpretation, Edmund Leach holds firmly that the texts of Scriptures are mysterious and sacred. Notwithstanding, the meanings are inherent within the texts. Therefore, according to Leach, the whole task of the exegete is to study the entire structure within which the texts are framed in order to arrive at the meanings [55]. According to Levi-Strauss, a French anthropologist, there is a binary opposition between the structure of things and human behavior. He posits that just as a linguist follows a set of grammatical rules and structure to derive meanings of sentences, the same way human existence has certain structure and pattern. Therefore, he concludes that in order to understand things and how humans behave, one should carefully identify and study the pattern and structure of such things and behaviors [56].

Meanwhile, there are new developments in our world today as far as globalization and cultural plurality and particularity with such cultures are concerned. Although biblical structuralists such as Levi-Strauss, Polzin, Leach, among others have used binary oppositions extensively, they are not without some challenges. In biblical interpretation and translation, two relationships exist, namely; synchronic and diachronic. While structuralists concentrate on synchronic relationships in the interpretation of a text, they are faced with some difficulties in fully understanding a text outside its historical developments and associations and the new changes and worlds that are in front of the text [57].

Synchronic relationship does not consider the changing nature of time. It sees a text as eternally applicable, and time is fixed and frozen. Instead of expecting new development over time, interpreters of synchronic relationships tend to envisage a total and perpetual structure along which all meanings should flow. Such structuralists would not inquire behind and beyond a text or an object for its meaning and make-up. Instead, they would focus on the object to study its entire make-up. For instance, Robert Polzin, structuralist, illustrates this from the analogy of a building. He emphasizes that, in order to know the make-up of a house, one does not need to seek for its historical construction (how it was built) but more necessarily learning its current structure as it is to know what it is made up of. In other words, looking at the text itself, one should know what it is about; and thus, should not worry about its historicity [58].

By this position, most Biblical structuralists confine meaning of scripture to internal evidence that make-up a text. However, they face critical inconsistencies. Rather, a text is never independent of its context, content and implicative audience. A text is only one of the several parts of the author's intention and design. And this is what biblical structuralists fail to acknowledge. Neither structuralism, binary opposition nor synchronic relationship has biblical absoluteness to

interpretation and translation. The translation theory of formal equivalence is defined as a translational equivalence which emphasizes fidelity to the lexical details and grammatical structure of the original language.

2.2. A Case for Deconstruction and Dynamic Equivalence in Biblical Hermeneutics

Indeed, if a text is really independent of its history, then history has no informative value and source reference is nonessential since knowledge will be inherent only in the text itself without any external associations that form part of its construction. However, one should not overlook the fact that the text has relations to what gave rise to it and its origin. It is a necessary reminder for one to understand that a text is not solely independent as though its background, pretext and its application to the new audience are irrelevant. If the author, the historic development and associations to the text are non-relevant, then a text is self-existing, and it has no beginning. Such concessions are extremely expensive since that will seem to negate history and rationalism [59]. That will be unrealistic. If interpretation is like building a full house, and structuralism is to represent such a house, it is worth-noting that structuralism indeed is a half-built house [60].

Agreeably, structural exegesis, according to James Barr, sometimes creates disappointment since it does not seek to produce new insights, but mainly sticking to the text themselves. Meanwhile, life indeed is a network of relations, where meaning of things are not in themselves but within the network in which they stand [61]. Therefore, there is a need for a methodology that considers the dynamics of time, the importance of history and the cultural relevance to the effective hermeneutical application of interpretation to the current world in front of the text. Having undertaken a comparative study on both formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence in considering a translation between Chinese and English, Dayan Liu concludes objectively that, though the translation theory of dynamic equivalence is not without defects, it presides over formal equivalence in Chinese-English or English-Chinese translations [62].

This, according to his findings, is because the difference between socio-cultures and linguistic structures makes it somehow impossible to apply formal equivalence and typical structuralism. In citing Meiyun Lee, he explains further that, in most cases some formal elements of the formal language cannot be equally reproduced or obtained by the receptor audience, and thus it is highly impossible to achieve absolute formal equivalence [63]. For example, in the Masoretic Text (Hebrew Bible) where Isaiah 7:14 originally states that "'a young woman' shall give birth." However, in the Septuagint, it is rather rendered as a 'virgin'. This is used in the Septuagint because the phrase 'young woman' in the Hebrew context connotes a dynamic meaning of 'chastity' in reference to a chaste young woman. Some scholars critique this rendition and argue that the Septuagint's use of 'virgin' is possibly a mistranslation since the [ancient] Greeks did not have virgins in their culture [64,65]. All young girls gave their virginity to the goddess of fertility to practice orgy at the Temple of Diana

[66]. Therefore, to the Greeks, the closest equivalent should have been a 'young woman' which might not be accepted by strict structuralists of formal equivalence. Meanwhile, it is crucial for one to appreciate the dynamic intention of the translators in their enterprise to emphasize the uniqueness of this birth and how that unusual to the Greeks, God intends to have a young woman who is separated from sexual relations to become the bearer of this divine child, hence the 'virgin birth.'

Meanwhile the Greeks have a different culture which is willing to accept the message of Scripture but would need the message to consider the dynamics of culture and the mobility of time to accept 'young woman' to be an equivalent word to carry the intention of the author to communicate the birth of a unique child. Again, reading John 15:1ff to a non-vine producing receptor culture like Ghana, precisely Asantes who have the Oil palm as the closest equivalent to Vine due to its numeral nutritional benefits, such formal element cannot be maintained strictly if the translator and interpreter wants to communicate effectively to the receptor audience. In such a dynamic situation in which Vine needs to put on the symbol of Oil palm in order to communicate effectively to the Asantes, it becomes a translational necessity to reconstruct the structure while maintaining the idea of the message which the author wants to communicate. Moreover, since Jesus Christ is the theme of such message, the translator should not be too strict to follow the textual structure, instead, should allow dynamism in the elements while maintaining the idea.

2.3. Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics, Dynamic Equivalence and Deconstruction

In his classic Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics: Current Trend in Biblical Studies in Ghana, Kuwornu-Adjaottor indicates a need for the Ghanaian mother-tongue Bibles to undergo critical study with respect to the various local translations. According to him, there is huge translation incorrectness due to observed facts that some translated words are foreign to and outside the local context and thus do not really fit the situation of the readers, hence necessitating extra scholarly engagement. Although there had been existing methodologies for doing Biblical Studies, the author made a significant contribution by objectively proposing a new approach – the way of mother-tongue biblical hermeneutics. This, he pursued in order to ensure that Bible translations, especially the mother-tongue Bibles, are properly interpreted to produce correct and context-fitting translations [67]. This new academic discipline in biblical scholarship has come to stay. It mainly employs

philosophical method of deconstruction – a dynamic equivalence.

Coined also by Eugene Nida, Dynamic equivalence as a Bible translation theory of "thought-for-thought," investigates the entire idea the author is communicating throughout the text, and then guides today's translator to interpret that same idea to the context of his or her new audience whom the author did not originally consider [68]. By definition, dynamic equivalence is to reproduce "in the receptor language the closest natural equivalence of the source language message [69]."

It involves the quality of a translation in which the message of the original text has been so transported into the receptor language that the response of the receptor is essentially like that of the original receptors. Its desire is for the reader of both languages to understand the meanings of the text in a similar fashion. This equivalence takes into consideration the culture of the receptor language, and hence its function. Even though the text of Scripture has a particular immediate audience the author was reaching and addressing, the exegetical deconstructionist regards that audience and equivalently turns to their current (local) audience while maintaining the idea of the author and repackages his thoughts into the context of the local audience in symbols and elements meaningful to the local context. This constitutes the mother-tongue audience. Therefore, all that the exegetical deconstructionist does is to begin the interpretation by:
• Taking the structured 'word-for-word' text.
• Disassembling the structure.
• Dynamically redesigning the separated text to still project the idea (thought) of the author.
• Repackaging and reconstructing the newly-designed text which though has changed in structure, yet has the same equivalence in meaning.
• Using the symbols meaningful to the local audience to communicate the idea of the author and the message of the text.
• Assuring the local audience that: God is closer to them, God loves their culture, and God is interested in them and their language, God is for them too, their history and land are in the word of God, and that they are not a secondary people but a primary people to God.

2.4. Relevance of Bible Translation and Interpretation: An Illustration

The following table explains briefly how the various translation theories will translate the textual arrangement. "Clever-woman-difficult-do-without-rice-'s-cook"

Translation Theory/Strategy	Representation of meaning (in English)
Formal equivalence (maintains word-for-word)	Clever-woman-difficult-do-without-rice-'s-cook
Literal translation	Even the cleverest woman cannot cook a meal without rice
Free translation	Nobody can make something out of nothing
Dynamic equivalence (the idea)	One cannot make bricks without straw
Source: This is a modified version of Dayan Liu's Table 2 [70].	

Table 1: Illustrating the Translation Theories

From the table above, it is obvious that while the structuralists posit to keep the structure and wording of the text, there seems to be a serious challenge. The understanding is seemingly not clear and therefore has a higher possibility of making its interpretation difficult. Even though by translation, the text is in English, one however may find it very challenging to understand its meaning and true message. Meanwhile, considering its interpretation in the closest equivalent perspective dynamically, the translation will further allow and include the cultural and linguistic interpretation perspectives which deduces the general understanding that: it is impossible for one to make blocks without straw or cement.

It is challenging, considering how a literal perspective interprets the text as if rice is a mandatory inclusion for every meal cooked by women, and even the cleverest amongst them cannot exclude rice. This interpretation poses a huge problem to infer that every woman cooks rice and has rice in each meal. This is unrealistic and fails to reflect the actual situation of the world since it is obvious that not every woman cooks and/or eats rice. Closer to dynamic equivalence, a free translation perspective concludes that whatever one produces, whether cooking or eating, comes from something.

Greek Text	Verse	Transliteration
Τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἡμεῖς, τοσοῦτον ἔχοντες περικείμενον ἡμῖν νέφος μαρτύρων,	1a	Toigaroun kai hēmeis, tosouton echontes perikeimenon hēmin nephos marturōn

Table 2: Morphosyntactic Analysis Towards a Retranslation of Cloud of Witnesses

The above-tabulated text is from Hebrews 12:1a in the SBLGNT [71]. Exegetically, the word νέφος "cloud" in Hebrew 12:1 as is an accusative neuter singular noun that is used as an adjective to qualify the manner and appearance of the genitive masculine plural noun μαρτύρων "of witnesses." Being a neuter means that, it is not referring to the actual object of "cloud," but rather referring to the figurative unity of diverse genders of persons – masculine and feminine. If the author was referring to the actual object of cloud, then νέφος (nephos) would have rather been νεφέλη (nephelē) in its accusative feminine gender state. Also, the word in a neuter sense also indicates that the author is not certain about a particular gender dominance for the people: whether they are all masculine, all feminine or both. Therefore, to see νέφος as literal than its figurative expression may play an unfair linguistic skill to any new audience and their religio-cultural understanding. This is because it is used figuratively as a cultural symbol in the Jewish context which should allow the dynamics of culture to embrace its equivalent translation in new cultures without its direct absorption.

2.5. Inter-Textual Analysis of "Cloud" in the New Testament
Comparing the textual case in Hebrews 12:1 and Mark 9:7, one could easily identify variations in the words used in reference to "cloud" and how they do not have the same meaning according to their parts of speech in the Greek and English grammar. Mark 9:7 is rendered in Greek as [72].

καὶ ἐγένετο νεφέλη ἐπισκιάζουσα αὐτοῖς, καὶ ἐγένετο φωνὴ ἐκ τῆς νεφέλης· Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ὁ ἀγαπητός, ἀκούετε αὐτοῦ.

While Hebrew 12:1a has νέφος as an adjective being used figuratively or symbolically, Mark 9:7 has two usages: νεφέλη and τῆς νεφέλης. In the first usage, νεφέλη is a used as a nominative feminine singular noun which means "a cloud." Being in the nominative case, it serves as the subject of the verb ἐπισκιάζουσα which is a present active participle from the root word ἐπισκιάζω which means "to

overshadow. Therefore, ἐπισκιάζουσα means "overshadows and overshadowing." This experience is being received by αὐτοῖς which is the genitive masculine third person plural "themselves" or "them" from the masculine/neuter singular αὐτός "himself" or "itself." The experience is pivoted on a timeline as though they were expecting it. The author captures readers attention to the fact that this experience just happened as if one of the witnesses was aware, possibly either Moses, Elijah or Jesus (Mark 9:4-5).

The word: ἐγένετο, was used. It is an aorist middle indicative third person singular verb from the root verb γίνομαι "to become," "to come to pass," "to be" or "to happen" (cf. Mt. 1:22; 4:3; Mk. 4:32; Lk. 2:15; Jn. 1:10) [73]. Joined with the conjunction: καὶ "and," the wording καὶ ἐγένετο means "And it came to pass" or "And it happened." In the second usage in v. 7b, τῆς νεφέλης is used in a definite sense in reference to the first mention: νεφέλης, in v. 7a. Apart from the change in case from nominative in νεφέλης "a cloud" to genitive in τῆς νεφέλης "of the cloud," both nouns are still feminine singular because the refer to one and the same thing. Obviously, this comparative inter-textual analysis reveals that "cloud" used in Hebrews 12:1a is different in gender from the ones used in Mark 9:7.

The neuter gender of νέφος accurately portrays a figurative context of the word "cloud" as one that is being used as though it were an adjective, qualifying some figurative unity of gender of persons or things. Therefore, νέφος in this religio-cultural context cannot be literally translated in its definite state but its symbolic sense. Unlike νέφος in Hebrew 12:1a, the expressions: νεφέλης and τῆς νεφέλης in Mark 9:7 are definitely used to refer to the feminine singular noun creature – "cloud" with no symbolic interpretation. Thus, in the Asante-Twi religio-cultural context, it can be maintained as "mununkum" – a cloud, or "mununkum no" – the cloud.

2.6. Proposed Retranslation of νέφος μαρτύρων in the Asante-Twi Religio-Cultural Context
Augmenting Adomako's proposal of kɛseɛ in place of

mununkum to explain the figurative expression of "cloud" in Hebrew 12:1a, the Asante-Twi word bebree could be the closest equivalence within the religio-cultural context of the Asante people, and with this wording, they possibly would understand the author's thought pattern much better. Juxtaposing the translations: *mununkum* and *bebree*, in the most-fitting religio-cultural context of Asante-Twi people and readers of the Bible, whiles recognition is given to Adomako's proposition for kɛseɛ, bebree is to be preferred instead [74]. Using kɛseɛ could create ambiguity among the readers in the sense that the word could also mean "huge" or "big" in size which could refer to the size of things instead of according number to multitude of people.

The author's intention is to unravel the symbolism of the surrounding presence of "many witnesses." The latter, *bebree*, connotes that the witnesses are "numerously huge yet countable, as though beyond count" or "countable yet seemingly innumerable as though without number," hence

referring to many witnesses. This properly fits the contextual translation through its dynamic interpretation, taking into consideration the receptor culture and its elements. The witnesses are not undividedly united; they are divisibly united, yet huge in number, as if to say they are "beyond count," hence *bebree*. Therefore, morphosyntactically, νέφος μαρτύρων should be retranslated in the Asante-Twi New Testament Bible as "adansefoɔ bebree" instead of *adansefoɔ mununkum*. Obviously, this proves that, "accuracy in word-for-word translation is impossible without interpretation [75]." This therefore attests that indeed; Bible translation should consider contextual interpretation.

2.7. Inter-Textual Analysis of "Cloud" in the Old Testament

Two cases in the Old Testament (OT) for comparative analysis in relation to "cloud" are Exodus 19:9a and Leviticus 16:13b. From Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia, Exodus 19:9a is rendered in the Masoretic Text as [76].

Hebrew/Masoretic Text	Verse	Transliteration
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־מֹשֶׁה הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי בָּא אֵלֶיךָ בְּעַב הֶעָנָן	9a	Vayyo'mer Yĕhwāh 'el-Moshê hinnēh 'ānokhî bā' 'ēlêkhā bĕ'av he'ānān

Table 3: Analysis of Exodus 19:9a

From the above-tabulated text, the key expression for concentration in exegetical aspect is the prepositional phrase: בְּעַב הֶעָנָן /bĕ'av he'ānān/. The word בְּעַב has the morphology preposition /bĕ/ "in" and adjective בַע "thick" which is from the lexicon בָע /'āv/. Extensively, בַע is a common singular genitival pronoun. In such a genitival state, it is used as a possessor of an adjectival quality, hence describing or modifying the definite masculine singular noun הֶעָנָן /he'ānān/. Therefore, בְּעַב means "in thick." The word הֶעָנָן has the morphology: article הַ /ha/ "the" and the lexicon עָנָן /'ānān/ "cloud." Therefore, הֶעָנָן means "the cloud." By structuralism or formal equivalence, בְּעַב הֶעָנָן should be: "in thick the cloud." Morphosyntactically, בְּעַב הֶעָנָן should rather be dynamically translated as "in the thick cloud" in order to make a complete thought and likewise accurately reflect the author's intention.

By interpretation, this "thick cloud" is the definite object created by God which is seen in Genesis 9:14 in the masculine singular noun: עָנָן /'ānān/ (cf. Gen. 9:13-16) [77]. In this typical interpretation and understanding, בְּעַב הֶעָנָן "in the thick cloud" could be translated in the Asante-Twi religio-cultural context as "ɛwɔ munukum kabii no mu" or "ɛwɔ munukum kusuu no mu" to resonate the Asante-Twi people's understanding and appropriation of the text to mean that God told Moses he would come in "the thickness or heaviness of the cloud" or "in the dark cloud" to express his dreadfulness yet majestic awe. The rendering of the phrase as "mununkum tumm" in the Asante-Twi Bible seems to connote "blackness" of the cloud instead of its "weight or heaviness [78]." Probably, the translators took the thickness to mean "black" to reflect the complete shadowing of darkness. However, the text does not emphasize "colour" as the interpretative key but rather "weight" of the cloud. Therefore, a future revision exercise by the Bible Society of Ghana (BSG) could consider

the proposition: "munukum kabii" or "munukum kusuu."

Comparing the cases in Exodus 19:9a and Genesis 9:14 with the case in Leviticus 16:13b, a morphological variation is noticed. In Leviticus 16:13b, even though, the same Hebrew/Masoretic עָנָן / 'ānān/ is used in the expression: וְכִסָּה עֲנַן הַקְּטֹרֶת אֶת־הַכַּפֹּרֶת /vekhissāh 'ănan haqqĕtret 'et-hakaporet/, it has a different representation in the text [79]. The word וְכִסָּה /vekhissāh/ has the morphology: conjunction וְ "and" plus a Piel verb in the third person masculine singular conjunctive perfect state from the Qal verb כָּסָה /kāsāh/ "to cover" or "to fill up." Therefore, וְכִסָּה means "and may/shall cover" or "and may/shall fill up."

The focus or target of the conjunctive verb הַקְּטֹרֶת is definite feminine singular noun אֶת־הַכַּפֹּרֶת "the mercy seat." Meanwhile, the author draws attention to the subject of the sentence, which is עֲנַן הַקְּטֹרֶת /'ănan haqqĕtret/. The word עֲנַן /'ănan/ is a masculine singular noun, but a genitival pronoun. It is in a construct state. Similar to the morphology of בַע in Exodus 19:9a in which בַע is a singular genitival pronoun, acting as possessor of an adjectival quality, עֲנַן is also genitival pronoun. This reveals the one and similar intention of the author in these two cases to mean that both בַע and עֲנַן are used figuratively to describe a definite noun. In the case of Leviticus 16:13b, עֲנַן is used to modify the definite feminine singular noun הַקְּטֹרֶת /haqqĕtret/ "the incense."

Since ănan is used as a construct of the noun עָנָן "a cloud," it has the translation "the cloud of." This correctly explains it as genitival pronoun qualifying haqqĕtret "the incense." Interestingly, if the cloud was a direct product of the incense, then it should have had a feminine gender just as the incense, but it differs by a masculine gender. This clearly could connote a general reference to the odour, dark smoke or

fragrance that would emanate from the incense as though it were metaphorical to the thickness of the naturally created עָנָן "cloud" in Genesis 9:14 (cf. Exod. 19:9a). By structuralism or formal equivalence, vekhissāh 'ănan haqqĕtret 'et-hakaporet in Leviticus 16:13b would follow as: "and may cover the cloud of the incense the mercy seat." This however does not make a clear or complete thought, hence needing a repackaging.

2.8. Proposed Translation of ănan haqqĕtret in the Asante-Twi Religio-Cultural Context

Morphosyntactically, the exegeted expression. vekhissāh 'ănan haqqĕtret 'et-hakaporet should be dynamically deconstructed to be read as. "And the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat" or "And the cloud of the incense may fill up the mercy seat." By interpretation, "the cloud" in this text should not be literally translated as "mununkum" in the Asante-Twi religio-cultural context of Leviticus 16:13b. Rather, it should be translated as "wisie." Therefore, the phrase "the cloud of the incense" should be translated as "wisie a efiri aduhwam no mu" or "aduhwam no wisie" in the Old Testament of the Asante-Twi Bible for understanding that, this is not the cloud of heaven or the sky that God created but a metaphorical description of the smoke or fragrance from the incense [80,81].

2.9. Exegetical Conclusion

The exegesis and inter-textual analysis of the above-studied biblical cases attest to the philosophical standpoint that in any translation or exegetical exercise, the scholar and translator should recognize that Bible translation involves interpretation. Also, the exercise should be decoded from a formal equivalence to a deconstructed dynamic equivalence so that everyone clearly understands and appropriates the homogeneous message and intention of the author to their new, heterogeneous and unique religio-cultural contexts. In that reality, there shall exist a cordial and like-minded understanding among the author, exegete, translator and reader/receipient, and the text would have achieved its purpose.

3. Conclusion

Certainly, Bible translation involves interpretation. The relevance of interpretation in Bible translation is evident. Indeed, biblical interpretations would not be meaningful to Africans who feel that God does not value, acknowledge and/or speak their native languages since they do not have the Scriptures translated for them in their mother tongues. Moreover, one cannot justify that the source translations of the Scriptures are being effective for a people (the receptor audience) if interpretations are not meaningful to them. The Hebrew and Greek source texts (translations) are not relevant to our African context if our interpretations do not translate them into the equivalent elements of our context – language and people. A proper interpretative tool and translational theory is needed for an effectively-equivalent translation of the source texts and made applicable to our African culture/context.

In search for a better theory of translation by which appropriate interpretation could be done, any approach that

follows strictly word-for-word will limit the goal of achieving the closest equivalence since some formal elements in the text might be alien to one's context including African context. Meanwhile, the central idea of the text could be upheld. Therefore, it becomes biblical and culturally religious for African Bible translators and biblical interpreters to choose dynamic equivalence theory. This theory will maintain the idea of the author in the text while deconstructing, substituting equivalent elements and reconstructing the text to portray the receptor culture so that the world behind the text, the world of the text and the world in front of the text (receptor culture) agree on the same and equivalent meaning even if changes to metaphors and symbols are made on the text.

Therefore, if the translation of the text from the source culture (Hebrew or Greek) into the mother tongue of the receptor culture (Ghanaian: Akan, Ewe, Ga or Farefare; Swahili, Yoruba, Zulu, Hausa, Amharic, Setswana, Wolof, Kongo, Tsonga, Afrikaans, Oromo, Berber, Fulani, Fulfulde, Lingala, Creole, Swati, etc.) is not effectively equivalent, it shall produce a failing interpretation which cannot be realistic and meaningful to the local audience. Similarly, if the translation theory and interpretative (hermeneutical) approach being employed does not take into consideration the new world in front of the text and its elements of culture given by nature, such translation shall not be entirely appreciated by the local audience, and they will consider such translation alien to their context. In whichever way, interpretation and translation are interrelated.

Thus, in addition to the primary philosophical dimensions of structuralism and deconstruction for Biblical studies, a third dimension is "Bible translation and interpretation." Resultantly, the assertion that "Bible translation involves interpretation" is evaluated and justifiably upheld through the findings and discussions indicated above and thus, it emphasizes the need for collective interest in Mother-Tongue Biblical Hermeneutics. Exegetically, findings from the morphosyntactic analysis from inter-textual examinations of some studied textual cases in both the OT and NT have revealed that despite the usage of "cloud" in both Hebrew 12:1a and Mark 9:7, Mark's usage of νεφέλη and τῆς νεφέλης reveals a definite reference to the created object "cloud" which should be translated as "mununkum" in the Asante-Twi religio-cultural context.

However, the translation of νέφος μαρτύρων as "adansefoɔ mununkum" in Hebrews 12:1a in the Asante-Twi Bible, resonated an examination for retranslation. Hebrews' usage of νέφος in its accusative neuter case revealed its figurative unity of diverse genders of persons, hence serves more as a neutral adjective than a direct noun. Therefore, to see νέφος as literal than its figurative expression may play an unfair linguistic skill to any new audience and their religio-cultural understanding of the Asante-Twi people if "mununkum" is retained. Rather, a proposition for "bebree" should be considered for retranslation in future revision by the BSG, hence retranslating νέφος μαρτύρων as "adansefoɔ bebree." Similarly, the use of עָנָן /'ănan/ in Leviticus 16:13b reveals

an adjectival construct, in that, נֵעַ is a genitival pronoun, describing the smoke or fragrance from the incense but it is not same as the real created object נֵעַ /'ānān/ "cloud" in Exodus 19:9a and Genesis 9:14.

Therefore, while "mununkum" is retained in the Exodus and Genesis accounts, the Leviticus translation of תִּרְטֹקֶה נֵעַ /'ănan haqqĕtret/ "cloud of the incense" should have the translation: "wisie an efiri aduhwam no mu" or "aduhwam no wisie" in the Asante-Twi Bible. Meanwhile, the former is more appropriate. Further, the analysis revealed that the translation of נֵנְעֶה בַעְב /bĕ'av he'ānān/ as: "mununkum tumm" in Exodus 19:9a in the Asante-Twi Bible is deficient of the textual emphasis on בַעְב /bĕ'av/ "in the thick." Probably, the translators took the thickness to mean "black" to reflect the complete shadowing of darkness. However, the text does not emphasize "colour" as the interpretative key but rather "weight" or "heaviness" of the cloud.

Therefore, a future revision exercise by the BSG could consider the proposition "munukum kabii" or "munukum kusuu." For effective understanding and appropriation of every text of Scripture, translation exercise should involve interpretation in line with the religio-cultural contexts of the readers or local audience for whom a mother-tongue translation is produced. Interpretation should be linked to the local context of the reader's world. In that way, the local (new) reader/audience could identify with such interpretation and appropriate it, and therefore one can conclude that an effective translation is produced. This paper is relevant for Biblical studies, translation theories, Bible translation and Mother-tongue Biblical Hermeneutics in Africa and beyond.

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21. In Asante-Twi, γύναι as 'Woman' or 'Wife' would be translated word-for-word as 'Ɔbaa' or 'Ɔyere'. However, interpreting the context in light of the author's thought (idea), the relation between Jesus and Mary is that of a son-and-mother relationship. Therefore, considering such contextual historicity of their relationship, the appropriate Asante Twi word should be '*Maame*'.
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