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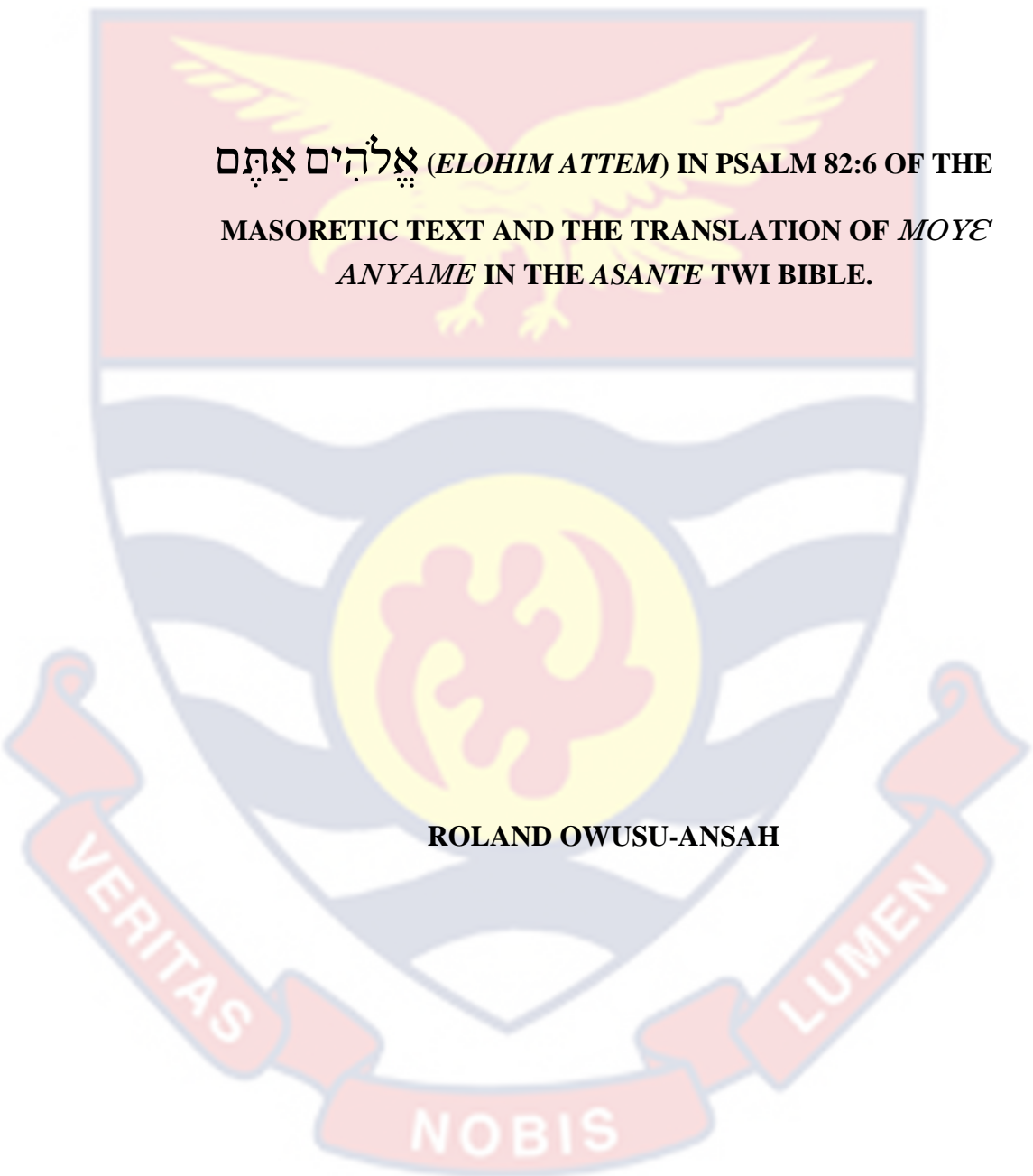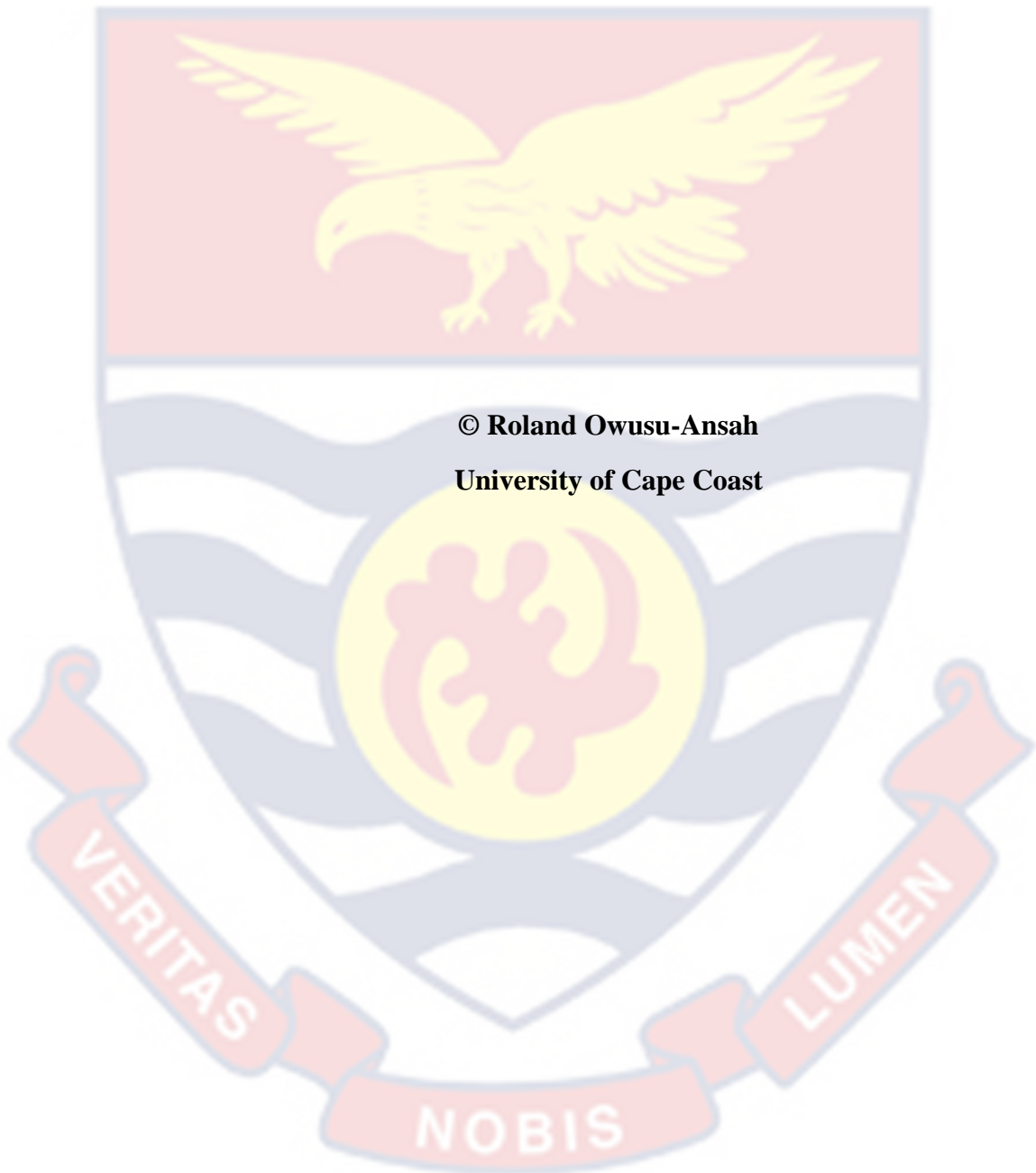
אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם (*ELOHIM ATTEM*) IN PSALM 82:6 OF THE MASORETIC TEXT AND THE TRANSLATION OF *MOYƐ ANYAME* IN THE *ASANTE* TWI BIBLE.
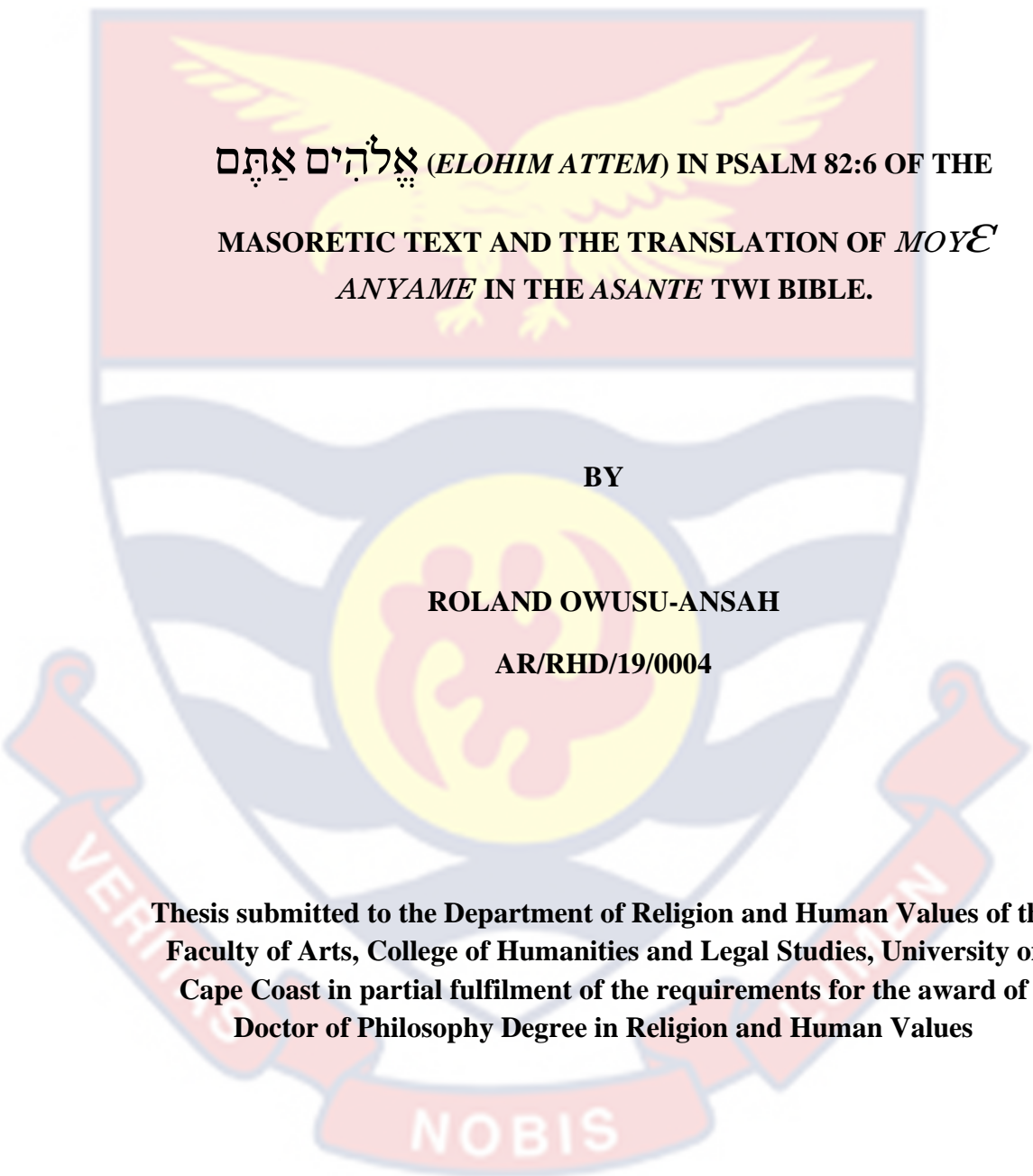
ROLAND OWUSU-ANSAH

2022

UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST

אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם (*ELOHIM ATTEM*) **IN PSALM 82:6 OF THE**

MASORETIC TEXT AND THE TRANSLATION OF *MOYƐ*

ANYAME **IN THE** *ASANTE* **TWI BIBLE.**

BY

ROLAND OWUSU-ANSAH

AR/RHD/19/0004

Thesis submitted to the Department of Religion and Human Values of the Faculty of Arts, College of Humanities and Legal Studies, University of Cape Coast in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy Degree in Religion and Human Values

DECEMBER 2022

DECLARATION

Candidate's Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own original research and that no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or elsewhere.

Candidate's Signature …………………………. Date …………………………

Name: Roland Owusu-Ansah

Supervisors' Declaration

We hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of the thesis were supervised in accordance with the guidelines on supervision of thesis laid down by the University of Cape Coast.

Principal Supervisor's Signature ………………………. Date ………………

Name: Prof. Augustine Mary Mensah

Co-Supervisor's Signature ……………………………… Date ………………

Name: Rev. Sr. Dr. Alice Matilda Nsiah

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם (*ELOHIM ATTEM*) IN PSALM 82:6 OF

THE MASORETIC TEXT AND THE TRANSLATION OF *MOYƐ*

ANYAME IN THE *ASANTE* TWI BIBLE.

Misinterpretation of biblical texts can lead to incorrect applications and misconceptions. This study examines Psalm 82 of the Masoretic text and Asante Twi translations using form-critical methods and decolonization-critical approaches, emphasizing the importance of considering source and receptor languages and language groups' worldviews in Bible translation.

The study highlighted the following findings: Decolonization theory, or the postcolonial critical hermeneutic, as a corrective, dialogic, and liberating hermeneutic to analyse translations and revisions of the Bible that have emerged from a colonial past where bias and misunderstanding of the culture and language have compromised the translation work that was done; the relevance dynamic of translation; theology of that translation; reflection on translation as contextualization, incarnation, and appropriation of the Biblical message in the 'culture' of a specific ethnic group; the term *anyame* coined to define the religion of the Akan people as polytheism, which includes the Asante; and the missiological significance of this rendering and its implications. The thesis recommends that the Asante Twi Bible needs a re-reading of Psalm 82 to provide an appropriate rendering of *Elohim* for Asante Twi readers.

KEY WORDS

Deities

Elohim

Interpretation

Revisions

Translation

Versions

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DEDICATION

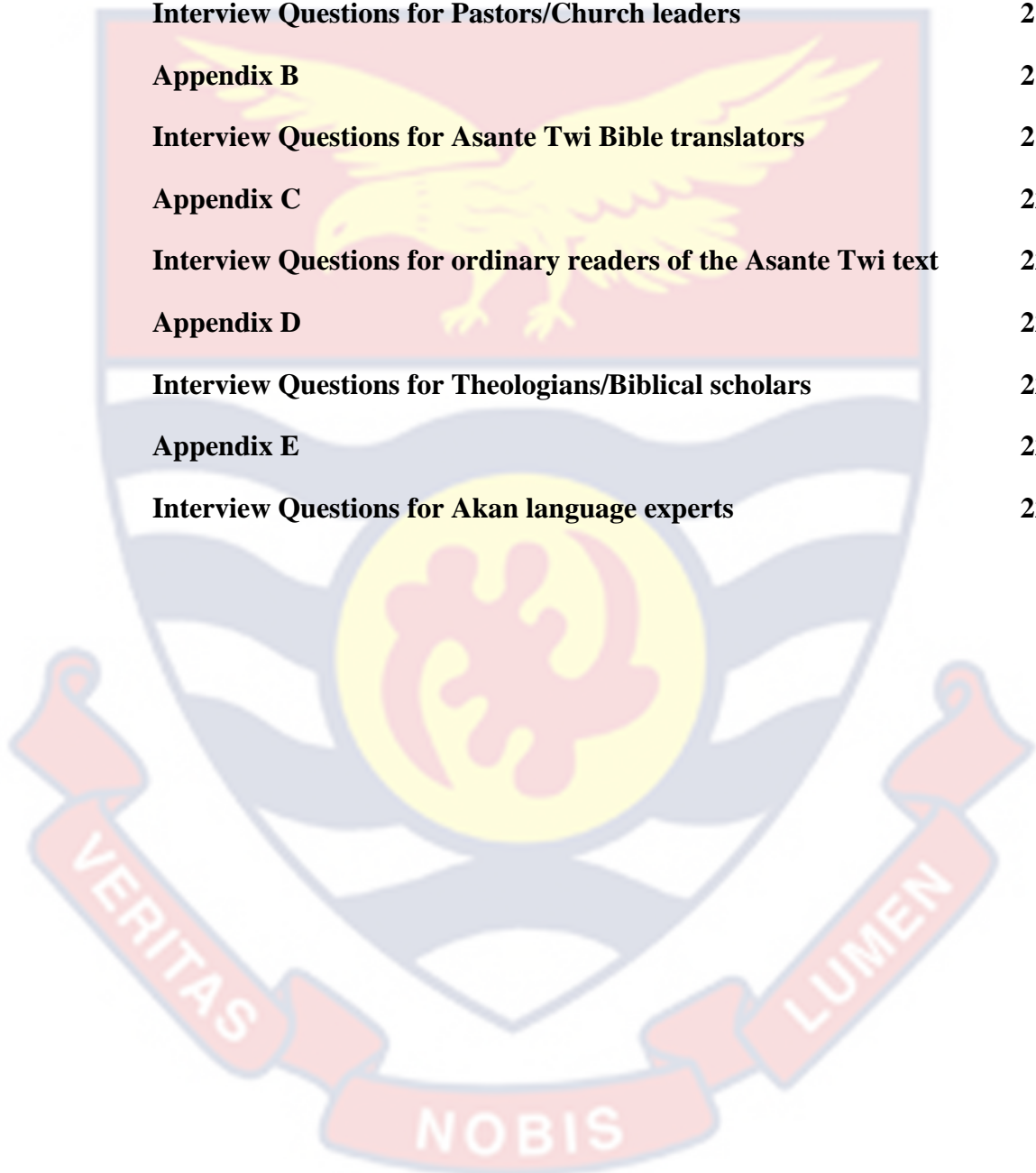To my late father: Mr. M. Osei Tutu Owusu Ansah

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AD   Anno Domini

ASV   American Standard Version

AV   Authorised Version

BCE   Before common era

BDB   Brown Driver Briggs

BHS   Biblia Hebraica Sttutgartensia

CE   Common era

cf   confer (Latin) meaning compare

Chron. Chronicles

Dan.   Daniel

Deut. Deuteronomy

Eccl. Ecclesiastes

et. al et alia (Latin) meaning and others

Ex.   Exodus

Exod. Exodus

Ezek. Ezekiel

ff.   following

Gen.   Genesis

GILLBT   Ghana Institute of Linguistics, Literacy and Bible Translation

Hos.   Hosea

Isa.   Isaiah

JB   The Jerusalem Bible

Jer.   Jeremiah

JNB   The New Jerusalem Bible

Josh.   Joshua

Judg.   Judges

KJV   King James Version

Kgs.   Kings

LXX   Septuagint

Mic.   Micah

MT   Masoretic text

NAB   New American Bible

Neh.   Nehemiah

NIV.   New International Version

NRSV   New Revised Standard Version

Pl.   Plural

Prov.   Proverbs

Ps.   Psalm

Pss.   Psalms

RL   Receptor Language

RSV   Revised Standard Version

Sam.   Samuel

SL   Source Language

v.   verse

vss.   Verses

vv.   verses

Zech.   Zechariah

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

The Hebrew Bible or Masoretic text (MT) is the foundational text for the study of the Bible in both Jewish and academic societies today. With the exception of some few passages (Ezra 4:8-6:18; 7:12-26; Dan. 2:4b-7:28; Jer. 10:11) and two words (*yegar sahadutha*, Gen. 31:47) in Aramaic, a variant Semitic dialect, the whole Bible is written in Hebrew. It is a compendium of historic writings pertinent to the religious development of ancient Israel and Judah. Jews have regarded it as their sacred Scriptures for generations and consider it to be the last authority on how people should live, even in the present era. According to many academics, the Hebrew Bible contains major genres such as storytelling, law, history, prophecy, wisdom, and poetry, and each one is characterized by its own style and perspective reflecting different groups within ancient Israel. Mensah (2018) gives a more comprehensive list intimating that the Hebrew Bible contains such diverse literary forms as annals, apocalypse, biographies, folktales, heroic epics, law, legends, myths, narrative histories, novella, oral traditions, poetry, philosophy, prophecy, proverbs, sagas, wisdom sayings, and more.

The first book of the *Ketuvim* is Psalms, which is likely due to its importance as well as its vastness. The Hebrew Bible has 150 psalms, which is a collection of poetic prayers. The Hebrew name *Tehillim*, which means songs of praise is what English versions of the Bible call Psalms. *Mizmor* is a song played with the accompaniment of stringed instruments. The book of Psalms is

divided into five books. Book 1 is from Psalm 1 to Psalm 41. Most of the Psalms in Book 1 are traditionally designated as the Psalms of David. Book 2 comprises Psalm 42 to Psalm 72, and contains Psalms attributed to Korah and Asaph. Book 3 consists of Psalm 73 through Psalm 89. Book 3 is exclusively Psalms accredited to Korah and Asaph. Book 4 is made up of Psalm 90 to 106. Book 4 contains orphan Psalms because they are untitled Psalms. Book 5 is from Psalm 107 to Psalm 150. Book 5 contains Psalms for festivals and temple visits. This section contains songs of ascents (Ps. 120 – Ps. 134). The division of the Psalms is according to doxologies. A doxology is a short hymnic praise of God. Each of the first four divisions ends with a short doxology.

The first division ends with Psalm 41:14; בָּרוּךְ .... אָמֵן וְאָמֵן. The second division ends with Psalm 72:18, 19; בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה ... לְבַדּוֹ: ... וּבָרוּךְ שֵׁם... אָמֵן וְאָמֵן. The third division ends with Psalm 89:53; בָּרוּךְ יְהוָה לְעוֹלָם אָמֵן וְאָמֵן. The fourth division ends with Psalm 106:48; ... בָּרוּךְ־יְהוָה. The fifth division ends with Psalm 150:1-6. The doxology that closes Book 5 is Psalm 150. It also serves as the conclusion for the book of Psalms. The book of Psalms does not have specific historical references. It is timeless and universal, appropriate for the use of any one in any age.

The title of the book of Psalms *mizmorei tehillim* "songs of praise" stresses a musical character, a song sung to a stringed instrument. *Mizmor* refers to a performative expression involving the use of language, either with or without musical accompaniment, in a rhythmic and consistent manner to beseech, reprimand, contemplate, and, primarily, engage in celebratory activities. The Psalms sticks to a greater reliance on the conventional and the

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familiar (Alter, 2011). Alter (2007) captures the simplicity, and the physicality of the Hebrew, which restores the remarkable eloquence of these ancient poems. Numerous readers have frequently turned to the Psalms for support and consolation during difficult or depressing times. These Hebrew poems have deep roots in the Ancient Near East culture. Alter (2007) adds that the idea of a celestial retinue (sons of God) that serves *YHWH* the God of Israel, or the council of the gods, which is a common element of Canaanite mythology, appears in a number of Psalms. Given the large historical distance from which we read these poems, it is difficult to determine whether or not these polytheistic remnants were actually accepted as tenets of belief or were merely employed as vivid poetic tools. Certain Psalms appear to oscillate between these two alternatives in an unclear manner. Psalms is constantly concerned with the relationship between humans and God, or Israel and God (Alter, 2007).

The most important observation for the Psalms is that some of them belong to poetry used in worship, while others do not presuppose the context of worship. The literary form, a common setting in life, the great number of thoughts and moods they share are the distinguishing characteristics of songs belonging to the same literary type. There are four main types: hymns, community laments and individual laments, individual songs, thank offering songs. In addition to these major literary types, there are some minor ones which are the liturgy of Entrance, Torah songs and Blessings, Royal Psalms, non-liturgical Psalms or spiritual songs, mixed types (Reumann, 1967).

The similarity of outline and mood in the psalms has led scholars to try and arrange the psalms into groups. Gunkel (1967) divides the psalms into five primary literary types. One of the genres is the hymn, which contains

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introductory calls to praise, the main body of the hymn praising Yahweh's attributes and deeds, and a conclusion. Another genre according to Gunkel is the royal psalms. He mentions another genre, individual thanksgiving songs and the fourth genre individual laments. The fifth genre in the view of Gunkel is what he calls the community laments, whose centre is in the appeal or petition for aid and assistance. The final category of Psalms distinguished by Gunkel is what he calls mixed poems, which display a blending or combination of elements from originally different psalm types.

The book of Psalms is important among Christians and has had a significant place in Christian liturgy. Psalms are prayers, which have been and are still used as a manual for prayer and praise among Christians at both the communal and individual levels. Many people turn to the Bible for answers. It is harnessed for moral and theological teachings, and also seen as the ultimate source of divine instruction for both Jews and Christians. Additionally, songs are also written and sung from the book of Psalms. The Psalms are used in preaching and counselling as well. Westermann is quoted as claiming that the Psalms are the source of hope in the Old Testament (Gaebelein, 1991).

Some preachers in recent times have ingeniously interpreted Ps. 82:6 in their sermons and called humans "gods". In verse 6, God says to these *Elohim*, sons of the Most High, "you are gods" translated in the Asante Twi Bible as "*moyɛ anyame*". These sermons have created the impression that humans, erroneously considered gods, can exercise some powers just like the divine. Thus, Psalm 82 appears to be one of the biblical texts that some preachers have, in recent times, misunderstood and misapplied. The choice of Ps. 82 is to find out the meaning of the Hebrew Bible and how it entered into the complexity of

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translation, the concept of the Asante people, and how the meaning of the Hebrew Bible should be understood through translation into the Asante Twi Bible.

The Bible is essentially a library of several literary genres, and translation includes a difficult, multidisciplinary process that aims to portray it in the numerous languages spoken around the world. The goal of translation is to either bring the reader as closely as possible to the author or bring the author closer to the reader. This is a challenging endeavour that lies somewhere between a version that emphasises form and one that emphasises meaning (Wendland & Noss, 2013). Bible translation has always been at the forefront of mission, motivated by relevance and understandability (Mojola, 2002).

Heiser submits that Psalm 82 plays a pivotal role in biblical theology. This Psalm informs us that God has called a council meeting to judge the Elohim for corrupt rule over the nations (Heiser, 2015). *Elohim* is used 4 times in Psalm 82, and scholars try to understand *Elohim* as used in especially Psalm 82:1, 6. Majority of the scholars including Buttrick (1955), Dahood (1968), Tsevat (1969-70), Tate (2002), Berlin and Brettler (2004), Trotter (2012), Heiser (2015), Godawa (2018) understand *Elohim* in the phrase *Elohim attem* meaning you are gods, as referring to gods or deities. However other scholars like Gordon (1935), Morgenstern (1939), Jungling (1969), Exell (1977), construe *Elohim* as used in Psalm 82:1, 6, as referring to human judges. The works of Morgenstern (1939), Jüngling (1969), Ackerman (1966), Tsevat (1969-70), Mullen (1980), and Fleming (1989) established Psalm 82 within the divine council tradition. The literary nature of the Psalm is in the reports of such assemblies, especially

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as recorded in 1 Kgs 22:19–23; Job 1:6–12; 2:1–6; Zech 1:7–17; 3:1–5; Isa 6:1–13; 40:1–8 (Tate, 2002).

The *Asante* hold the belief that God "*Onyame*" created a world with both visible and invisible, basic and complicated phenomena. According to them the mystical world consists of different classes of spirits referred to as "*ahonhom*" who operate in this world. The *Asante* cosmology has a hierarchical order made up of the Supreme Being "*Onyankopɔn*" or "*Onyame*," the creator and the powerful and just judge, gods "*abosom*" sons of *Onyame*, ancestors "*nsamanfoɔ*", dwarfs "*mmoatia*", terrifying forest monster "*sasabonsam*", living, and the unborn. Of those mentioned in the hierarchy, the *abosom* are exceptional because they seem to manage the world and have been given charge over humanity. And their duty is independent of God in the sense that they can use their power either to do good or evil and they do not have recourse to God as to how they use it. *Onyame*, *abosom*, and *nsamanfoɔ* hold prominent places in rites and ceremonies, and have relations with the living and therefore have an influence on the belief system of the Asante (Addae, 1970; Awuah-Nyamekye, 2014). *Onyame* is the ultimate reality, independent of all the other categories of beings. Other entities are real because, they are rooted in *Onyame*, and partake of his reality (Gyekye, 1995).

The term *anyame* was introduced by Christaller under the entry *Onyame* which he did indicate had no plural, in the Twi dictionary he compiled. According to Christaller, *Onyame* means the Supreme Being, the

Deity, God, the creator of all things. He acknowledges that *anyame* is a newly introduced plural to denote the gods of polytheists. Christaller accedes to the fact that the Akan, which includes the Asante, are monotheists (Christaller, 1933). As early as 1881, the great missionary scholar of the Basel Mission in the Gold Coast, Johannes Christaller, noted that the plural *anyame* had been merely introduced presumably by missionaries, to describe the religion of people who were generally believed to be polytheists. It appears that the missionary effort among the Akan did not approach them on the basis of what they did believe, but instead felt compelled to reject the Akan worldview on the grounds of what was fundamentally Christian belief as well as what was in reality a European worldview. The missionary enterprise was attempting to impose its brand of Christianity by replacing a European worldview for the Akan one (Bediako, 1999).

Among the Akan, *Onyankopon* alone is supreme. For this reason, he is always referred to in the singular. However, in seeking to prove that the Akan were polytheistic, Bible translators from the time of Christaller coined the word *anyame* pluralising *Onyame*, one of the names of the Supreme Being, to translate 'gods,' plural *Elohim*. The concept of 'gods', where gods were ends in themselves and did not function for any supreme being, does not exist among the Akan and so there is no Akan word for it. In the case of the Akan concept of *abosom*, the *abosom* are simply a means to an end, serving the Supreme Being, *Onyankopon/Onyame*. The Akan never equate *abosom* with *Onyame*. *Abosom* are benevolent spirit beings derived from *Onyankopon* (Afriyie, 2014).

How can the concept of 'gods', where gods were ends in themselves and did not function for any supreme being, be translated into Asante Twi for Asante readers to understand a concept that does not exist among the Akan? What Asante word or concept would be able to translate such a concept? This work seeks to explore why the translators chose that concept, and to come up with an interpretation from the Hebrew Bible, and a re-reading of the text in the Asante Twi Bible. At the conclusion of the investigation, the work aims at proposing a re-reading of the text that may possibly render the translation acceptable to *Asante* Christians.

Statement of the Problem

The 1871 Bible translation into Twi, coordinated by Christaller, was translated from the original Hebrew and Greek into a union of Twi languages spoken by the Akuapem, Akyem, Asante, Fante, and others, emphasising the translation's intended audience among the Akan of the Gold Coast. On December 11, 1926, Westermann wrote to Mohr that the issue was not the establishment of a united written language, but rather the formation of a unified writing system of vowels and consonants while each mission kept its unique dialect (Ekem, 2011).

The translation had a difficulty since it employed a non-existent union of Akan languages, resulting in a language that was neither totally Asante, Fante, Akyem, Akuapem, or the other Akan languages. It is the belief that terms, such as *anyame*, were picked or manufactured to fit into a non-existent union of Akan languages. The development of a unified written language raised issues of mutual intelligibility and the choice of orthography for the unified translation.

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This research proposes to examine the reading of אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם meaning

"you are gods" in Psalm 82 of the Hebrew Bible. The research is motivated by

the challenges associated with translating the Hebrew Bible and the potential

for misinterpretations to occur. In the Asante Twi Bible, Akuapem Twi Bible,

and Fante Twi Bible, the plural *Elohim* in Psalm 82:1, 6 is transcribed as

anyame. What is the missiological significance of this rendering? Is *Elohim*

rendered *anyame* as a result of the colonising issue? The word *anyame* has

survived several modifications in the Asante Twi Bible. Why did the translators

choose to retain *anyame*? This research seeks to find out how this reading is

understood in an *Asante* religio-cultural setting.

There is the assumption by some Asante Christians that on the basis of

Asante ontology there is no valid meaning as at now with the current translation,

in that there is no such concept as *anyame* in *Asante* ontology. The phrase

Elohim attem which means you are gods, has been interpreted as *moyɛ*

anyame. The crucial question is: how did the translators arrive at that

interpretation? In Akan cosmology which includes Asante, gods are *abosom*.

In the hierarchy of Asante cosmology, *anyame* is not mentioned; however,

abosom is mentioned. Is *anyame* a Christian designation?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to do a critical reading of Psalm 82 by

examining the use of the concept of *Elohim* more carefully, and to consider an

appropriate translation of that concept in Asante Twi. It seeks to conduct a

reading of the Masoretic text to determine what the poet intended his readers to

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comprehend regarding the concept in Psalm 82. The Masoretes were aware of textual corruptions in their received text, signalled by the *ketiv* (written) and *qere* (read) notations. The focus of this study will be the Masoretic text reading of Psalm 82:1-8. In analysing the text, the researcher would seek to demonstrate the internal unity of the text, based upon the accents and literary relationship between the parts of the poem.

Research Questions

A number of questions have been framed which will be addressed in this study to guide the research. These include the following:

1. How has the concept *Elohim* been rendered in Psalm 82?

2. How can the meaning of *Elohim* in Psalm 82 of the Masoretic text be understood in *Asante* Religio-cultural thought?

3. To what extent has the *Asante* Religio-cultural understanding of deity influenced the translation of the concept *Elohim* in Psalm 82 of the Asante Twi Bible?

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to find out the following:

1. The manner in which the concept *Elohim* has been rendered in Psalm 82.

2. To investigate the meaning of *Elohim* in Psalm 82 and within the context of *Asante* Religio-cultural thought.

3. How the *Asante* Religio-cultural understanding of deity has influenced the translation of the concept *Elohim* in Psalm 82.

Methodology

The Asante Twi Bible text of Psalm 82 and the Hebrew text of Psalm 82 is read using Form Criticism to gain an understanding of the Psalm within its

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context and the background out of which it has emerged. Form criticism analyses a text's specific form or structure, as well as its genres, social context, and applicability to the overall reading and interpretation of the text. It evaluates a text's general form and the roles that syntax and semantic meaning play in both its literary and real-world contexts (Sweeney & Zvi, 2003). Form Criticism's focus in recent times is increasingly literary-rhetorical. As a historical-critical tool, the approach is essentially nontheological in its orientation. However, several of its conclusions and entailments have significant implications for the theological interpretation of texts (Schultz, 2005). James (n. d.) argues that for Gunkel and the other early form critics the identification of biblical genres provides important information regarding the early oral form of a text and its original setting and function in ancient Israel. According to Sweeney, form refers to the unique formulation of an individual text or communication. Genre refers to the typical conventions of expression or language that appear within a text (Sweeney, 2009). By taking into account additional literary characteristics beyond those revealed by form criticism, this thesis effectively avoids adopting an overly narrow or limited approach.

The study made use of the qualitative approach to research. According to Berg qualitative research focuses on the definitions, conceptions, meanings, traits, metaphors, symbols and descriptions of objects. Techniques often used for investigation under qualitative approach include case studies, interview guides, and reviews (Berg, 2007). Creswell is of the view that a qualitative approach is one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives or advocacy/participatory perspectives or both (Creswell, 2010). Qualitative research is useful as respondents are free to answer any way, they would

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like without being constrained to a pre-determined set of possible responses (ACET, Inc., 2013).

The processes to gather information involved primary and secondary sources. Information was gathered from the primary sources using the personal face-to-face interview. An interview is a conversation with a purpose to gather information (Berg, 2007). The personal face-to-face interview is one in which the interviewer traces and contacts the respondents and carries out a face-to-face interview in which respondent and interviewer sit together, see each other, observe each other's expressions and reactions to questions and answers (Kumekpor, 2002). Four (4) Akan language experts, two (2) Bible scholars, two (2) Bible translators, an administrator of GILLBT, eight (8) Akan pastors, and fourteen (14) ordinary readers of the Asante Twi Bible were interviewed to solicit their views on the concept of *anyame* as used in the Asante Twi Bible. This enabled the validation of initial information gathered on the study to be made. Kothari maintains that primary data are those which are collected afresh, and for the first time, and thus happen to be original in nature (Kothari, 2007).

Secondary sources of data collection involved consulting journal articles, unpublished works, dissertations, Hebrew Grammar books, Bible Commentaries, Bible Dictionaries, Bible Concordances, Old Testament Word study books, other relevant literature, and electronic sources such as the internet.

Purposive sampling method was adopted to specifically select interviewees. Thirty-one (31) people made up of biblical scholars, Bible translators, linguistic scholars, language experts, some members of the clergy, and some ordinary Asante Twi readers were selected to determine a word or expression in Asante Twi that would acceptably render the plural *Elohim* in the

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text of Psalm 82 into Asante Twi. Through purposive sampling the desired responses from all the people targeted were obtained. According to Schutt purposive sampling is the selection of participants based on the researcher's judgment about what potential participants will be most informative. (Schutt, 2006). Interviewees were intentionally chosen for study because of their characteristics or because they satisfy certain qualities which are not randomly distributed in the universe, or they exhibit most of the characteristics which are of interest to the study (Kumekpor, 2002).

Conceptual Framework of this Thesis

The interest of this study is to decolonize knowledge production. Whereas African exegetes try to delink how to decolonize the way the Bible is read and how it relates to translation, the point of contention over which there is great dispute is the idea of gods and the most appropriate way of interpreting it into Akan. While there is a debate in the Masoretic text, the same debate exists in the translated text. Grammatically correct words may not create a referent. In any case, they may have a perceived referent. Its very convenience places it in a more Western framework than an African framework. Language is a vehicle for knowledge creation. It does not suffice to compare grammatical correctness to language correctness. So, traversing these frameworks to a linguistic-pragmatic framework borders on decolonization theory and the epistemology of knowledge. The decolonizing of knowledge looks at the overall context of knowledge creation, placing it within the circles of theology and biblical studies. Within the knowledge decolonization framework, there is a palpable connection between translation and exegesis. Exegesis is just as good as

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translation when the translation fails to deconstruct the Western framework of the translation.

The postcolonial theoretical framework emerged from the analysis of nineteenth and twentieth-century literature, recognizing that texts can serve as powerful tools for reinforcing or counteracting imperial powers. Imperialism refers to the tendency of metropolitan centres to impose their values and beliefs on foreign lands. The Bible, a colonizing text, has been a prime example of imperial sponsorship. Reading the Bible from a postcolonial literary perspective may analyse the literary texts and how they function to justify imperialism. Postcolonial texts are born in settings of struggle and often justify imperialism through their portrayal of inequality, expansionist aims, fear of difference, and the authority of certain travellers (Dube, 1997).

Tarek (2009) argues that the accomplishment of postcolonial studies has been their exploration of the symbiotic connection between language and culture in the colonial context. They reveal how Western translation practices heralded, aided, and perpetuated colonial expansion. The colonial rule employed an aggressive policy of conversion, aided by an active translation project, whose aim was to indoctrinate the local people into the colonisers worldview. The linguistic aspects of translation do not merely reflect cultural and political realities; they could also change them.

Hemphill (2022) argues that the heart of what minoritized Christians are actually advocating is very much in line with the goals of promoting flourishing in communities, and very much in line with the goal of localising missions' organisations and moving away from foreign modes of thinking and operating.

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Calls to decolonise could be seen as a part of this accepted Evangelical challenge to appropriately contextualise by critically assessing the ways colonial Christianity, colonial languages, and imposed Western educational values and methods have shaped the cognitive environments and social contexts in which the word of God currently must be contextualised. Valuable insights from the recently renewed call to decolonise theological education could inform the way Bible translation organisations go about training local translation workers to exegete Scripture, so that they can produce well-contextualised translations that are not as hindered by arbitrary Western cultural norms and values.

According to Ahiamadu (2011), postcolonial critical hermeneutics is an academic method of biblical interpretation that appropriates texts on both a practical and theoretical level, reinterprets texts objectively and descriptively, and is a hermeneutics of trust. This is a theoretical, literary, and multifaceted viewpoint that is interpreted differently in different disciplines. Generally, and in scholarly circles postcolonial critical hermeneutic is understood as one which interprets texts in a corrective, dialogic, and liberated manner using African lenses. Most scholars underscore the ground-breaking work by Edward Said (1935-2003 CE) in the early nineties as being the catalyst for contemporary scholarly engagement with this approach.

There is an inextricable link between texts and culture, as well as the political climate that shapes both. Interpretations that do not take this into account are damaging. The current trend is to seek shared points of resonance between African culture and the old biblical world. In the re-reading of ancient texts, postcolonial critical hermeneutics, preserves African values and

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worldviews. A demarcation of the bounds of postcolonial critical hermeneutics as a descriptive and exegetical study not only of the texts themselves, but also of the circumstances in which such texts were shaped and matured, has become urgent and critical in the continued quest for meaning-based biblical exegesis (Ahiamadu, 2011).

A postcolonial critical approach aims to decolonize biblical texts and practises by addressing colonial slander and misinformation. It is an inter-systemic debate on imperial epistemology, focusing on holism, inter-contextuality, inter-textuality, and transcendence. Postcolonial critical hermeneutics emphasises the holistic reading of biblical texts. In an inter-contextual expounding of the Scriptures, the resonance of African traditions with those of biblical cultures becomes extremely useful. The notion of inter-textual conversation is equally crucial when applying a postcolonial critical hermeneutics to the biblical text. The notion of intertextuality investigates problems in the text and in disciplines, as appropriate, and addresses such problems in a way that puts the voice of analogous works to the centre of the debate. Transcendentalism explores the divine role in African concepts of God and creation, allowing literary scholars to understand the Bible's universal message. This approach helps fill gaps in indigenous concepts of God and engages in creative speech and activity (Ahiamadu, 2011).

Colonialism flourished in Africa during the 19th and early 20th centuries, building upon the influence of Christian missionaries and providing a basis for interpreting biblical scriptures that actively bolstered the colonial endeavour. Postcolonial hermeneutics places emphasis on the appropriation of biblical texts within the religious context of Africa, while also prioritising the

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preservation of intellectual freedom and addressing the topic of relevance in a more direct manner compared to traditional hermeneutical paradigms. This methodology encompasses the assessment of value judgements, ethical implications, evaluation, and critical analysis, focusing on the semantics and syntax of individual morphemes, words, and phrases within the sentence structure of a given text (Ahiamadu, 2011).

Our goal in attempting to establish what the text of the Bible has to say in its original context using semantics and syntactical structures is to develop an interpretation that communicates to our audience in today's words from an African and authentic perspective. It evaluates texts objectively and descriptively. It traces common features at the cultural, literary, and textual levels in order to critique them critically. Such analysis has the potential to eliminate the bifurcation of humans, faiths, and civilizations, which allows for the imposition of alien values and domination (Ahiamadu, 2011).

According to Mugambi (1995), a framework for rebuilding can be delineated into three distinct levels: Personal, Cultural, and Ecclesial. Mugambi argues that it is imperative for the process of restoration to address the various methods employed in evangelising individuals. The focus of evangelism and missions ought not to be on displacing individuals from their cultural and religious backgrounds but rather on integrating the Gospel into their cultural and religious identities. The religious order in post-colonial Africa serves as a significant indicator of the profound shift of perspective among African populations, particularly those residing in the regions south of the Sahara. Religion serves as a comprehensive framework that integrates the values and

beliefs held dear by individuals in their collective capacity as members of a community.

According to Ansre, the phenomenon of linguistic imperialism is very real in religion and often blinds people psycho-socio-linguistically to the true situation and its needed remedies. Ansre affirms that the quality of the translated Bible and the increase of its users in terms of numbers as well as quality depends directly on the genuine, thorough and reverent theologizing and poeticizing which takes place in the language (Ansre, 2012).

Postcolonial critical approaches offer a theoretical framework for examining the themes of language, translation, and the identity of *Elohim* in the interpretation of Psalm 82 within the context of the Asante Twi Bible. Utilising the critical paradigms offered by different approaches, the thesis aims to establish a conceptual framework that posits translations as catalysts for the generation of multiple meanings within the host cultures. These meanings interact with pre-existing cultural elements, thereby eliciting diverse and heterogeneous responses that can either align with or challenge prevailing norms. The introduction of literary translations by both missionaries and colonial administrations had an impact on indigenous language traditions, resulting in the adoption of new literary practises. These practises were either emulated as a means of subverting or resisting external influences, or utilised to reform and modernise existing literary traditions (Israel, 2004).

The concept of 'linguistic decolonization' originates from the historical processes of colonisation and subsequent decolonization. The concept of linguistic decolonization encompasses the efforts made in postcolonial settings

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to reverse the societal, political, and cultural consequences resulting from the prevalence of colonial languages. Additionally, it represents a philosophical critique of the Western language ideologies that supported the colonial enterprise and continue to influence the postcolonial era (Agyekum, 2018).

Significance of the Study

This study is important because no Akan scholar has read Psalm 82 in relation to Asante cosmology or the concept of *Onyame*. The potential implications of this study may be of value to various stakeholders, including policymakers, academic institutions such as seminaries and religious or theological studies departments within universities, and the Church. These findings could inform and guide decision-making processes, both in terms of practical application and theoretical understanding. The study would assist Bible agencies like Bible Society of Ghana in the revision of the *Asante* Twi Bible. Publications from the study will also contribute to knowledge concerning how to appropriately interpret biblical texts from the Hebrew text into other indigenous languages aside the *Asante* Twi. Seminar and conference presentations will also contribute to academia. Workshops and Bible Seminars organized to reach out to the Church community will communicate the findings of the research to assist the Church in the understanding and interpretation of biblical texts to its members and the indigenous community within its catchment area, to foster Christian discipleship.

Delimitation of the Study

The study did not seek to examine the entire Old Testament record. It focused on Psalm 82 in the Hebrew text, the translation of Psalm 82 in the

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Asante Twi Bible and especially the translation of the deity and the implications and challenges of such a translation. This work considered translation difficulty involving the understanding of *Elohim* in Psalm 82 with respect to the Asante Twi Bible.

Literature Review

A comprehensive analysis of existing literature offers researchers the chance to explore the perspectives of scholars that are relevant to the topics being investigated. Additionally, it is beneficial to provide a clear elucidation of the problem statement and situate the study within its appropriate context. This thesis centres around the translation of Psalm 82 and the translation of the divine entity known as *Elohim*. It examines אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם (*Elohim attem*), rendered as "you are gods," in Psalm 82 of the Hebrew Bible and how the translators have subsequently rendered it as *moyɛ anyame*.

The literature review in this study includes a survey of relevant literature, structured according to subject categories, in order to present a scholarly viewpoint on the topic being examined. A list of the thematic areas in which literature has been reviewed is as follows: *Elohim* and its meanings; *Elohim* in the *Torah*; *Elohim* in the *Nevi'im*; *Elohim* in the *Ketuvim*; *Elohim* and its extrabiblical counterparts; Interpreting biblical poetry and Psalm 82; Translations and the Bible; and The Asante and Asante Twi Bible.

It delves into the existence of *Elohim* within these texts, analyses its perception, and investigates its significance in Israelite religious thought. This examination helps understand how Psalm 82 would be best read in light of the usage of the divine name *Elohim*. In the literature review, the study examined

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how Psalm 82 has been read, how the issues in the psalm have been interpreted, and how it has been understood.

Elohim and its Meanings

According to Burnett (2001), a comprehensive explanation of the meaning and history of the term "*Elohim*" is required because there is a general lack of clarity concerning the treatment of *Elohim*. He addresses the role that *Elohim* plays in the religion of the Israelites. He gives a re-evaluation of Biblical *Elohim* and demonstrates that the label "*Elohim*" played an important part in the religion of Israel. He does this by providing a new perspective on *Elohim*. He explores the meaning of *Elohim* in the Hebrew Bible when it is used as a common noun, and he does this by doing a philological and historical analysis of the equivalents of *Elohim* that are found in sources outside of the Bible. He conducts a historical-critical analysis of biblical texts in order to demonstrate that *Elohim* played a unique part in the state-sanctioned religion of Israelites in ancient times. In addition to this, he discusses the use of *Elohim* in Pentateuchal E, which is the section of the Hebrew Bible in which *Elohim* is utilised as a literary expression to the greatest extent.

Furthermore, Burnett observes that the term *Elohim* is a common noun meaning "god" or "deity" in Biblical Hebrew and is quite flexible in its application. In the Hebrew Bible, *Elohim* is used in reference to a national, territorial, or individual patron deity. Modern biblical criticism has shed light on the etymology, grammatically plural form, theological meaning, and comparative background of *Elohim*. However, many of these gains have become obscured, and the expression's basic meaning and significance in the

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Hebrew Bible remain unsettled. The place of *Elohim* in the history of Israelite religion, as distinct from its character as a literary phenomenon, has received minimal attention in existing scholarship. According to Burnett, *Elohim* has cognates in other Northwest Semitic languages. In Israelite religion, *Elohim* had prominence in Israel's premonarchic worship and later in the national cult of the northern kingdom (Burnett, 2001).

Correspondingly, Mensah, in his literary reading of the uses of *YHWH* and *Elohim* in 1 Samuel, makes an important note of the possible translations for the noun *Elohim*. He explores the use of *Elohim* to determine whether or not it is used as a synonym for Yahweh, as is commonly assumed. He observes that "the *Elohim*," which is used 2570 times in the Hebrew Bible, embodies a certain ambiguity. He gives instances where it may be used as a common plural noun in reference to a plurality of gods or deities (Ex. 12:12b, Exod 18:11a), a single divine entity or god (1 Kgs 11:33a), and living human beings (Ex. 4:16, Ex. 7:1, Ps 45:7a). Mensah observes further that *Elohim* may also be used as an adjectival genitive, in which it is understood as an abstract term (Gen 35:5). In his work, he draws attention to the presence and significance of the divine designations in 1 Samuel. The range of possible translations the standard rules of grammar and syntax allow, determined by the uses of the term within each context, is what is sought to be translated (Mensah, 2009).

Elohim is essentially an abstract noun. Biblical Hebrew *Elohim* is an example of a Canaanite linguistic development (Burnett, 2001). *Elohim* approaches the character of a proper noun while not losing its abstract and conceptual quality (Marshall et al., 1996). *Elohim* is originally only a descriptive term, not a divine name, in the course of history, however, it acquires

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the character of a proper name so that *Elohim* can appear without the article, or can serve in the vocative as an address to God. If one wishes to trace the usage of *Elohim* as God or gods to a unified origin, one may theorise that an originally genuine plural was subsequently or simultaneously understood as an abstract plural. Whether the expression should then be interpreted as a summation of the "divine powers" as a unity must remain at least questionable. In any case the singular sense of the plural form is so uncontested for the Old Testament that it used the word throughout without limitation (suspicion of polytheism) (Jenni and Westermann, 1997). Moses wrote about a plural concept of deity called *Elohim* without losing the idea of a singular *YHWH* (Shlomo, 2015). The most common word for deity in Hebrew, *Elohim*, has a plural ending but is often treated grammatically as a singular. Most biblical scholars are aware that when the noun is treated grammatically as a plural, it often refers to the gods, as in Aaron's words about the golden calf. These are your *Elohim*, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt (Ex. 32:4) (Alter, 2019).

Elohim in the *Torah*

The term *Torah* commonly translated as law, is a Hebrew word from a root which means teach. The *Torah* is composed of *Bere'shit* translated 'in a beginning' *Shemot* 'names' *Vayyiqra* 'and he called' *Bemidbar* 'in the wilderness' and *Devarim* 'words.'

Astruc's criterion, in Soggin's opinion, suggests that Moses probably used pre-existing sources when writing the book of Genesis. Scholars have employed a range of hypotheses, such as fragmentary, complementary, and new documentary hypotheses. Vatke, Graf, and Wellhausen utilised Hegelian

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philosophical principles in their examination of the Torah, producing a chronological framework that may be regarded as definitive. Soggin (1980) commended Wellhausen's system for its simplicity and persuasive elucidation of the issues. The Elohist emphasizes the use of intermediaries between deity and man, rather than direct encounters. Deuteronomy, and the priestly writing form the framework of the material collected in sources J and E. The documentary hypothesis addresses fundamental problems, but there is still no knowledge of the sources' formation, selection scope, and development. Gunkel and his disciples contributed to understanding Old Testament literary genres (Soggin, 1980).

Elohim has been used in Genesis 219 times, Exodus 139 times, Leviticus 53 times, Numbers 27 times, and Deuteronomy 374 times (Jenni and Westermann, 1997). Thus, in recognition of the multiple translations possible for the noun *Elohim* and the range of possible translations, the AV has translated *Elohim* used as a noun masculine plural as God 2,346 times, as god 2,444 times, as judge 5, as GOD 1, as goddess 2, as great 2, mighty 2, as angels 2, as exceeding 2, and as godly 1, respectively. The most common translation of *Elohim* is "God" (Strong, 1996).

Heiser also adds that in Deuteronomy 32:17 the *Elohim* the Israelites perversely worshipped are called *Shedim*. The term *Shedim* comes from the Akkadian *shedu*, which is a neutral term. Biblical writers often refer to different entities with the word *Elohim*. Biblical use of *Elohim* is not hard to understand. Heiser argues that the word *Elohim* is a term that denotes place of residence. He further suggests that looking at the list of beings and entities referred to as *Elohim* one would notice that in the spiritual realm there is a hierarchy (Heiser,

2015). Livni says that the Hebrew Bible contains more than two dozen names for deity which many of us have heard before: *YHWH*, *Elohim*, and others. One of the more obscure names for deity used by Jews is *Ha-Makom*. This literally means "the place." According to an ancient Jewish interpretation of Genesis 28:11 the *makom* which Jacob encountered is God's presence. The rabbis of the Talmud explained, "*Elohim* is the place of the world, and the world is not his place." In other words, *Elohim* cannot be limited to one individual spot. Rather, *Elohim* transcends space and he is accessible to all people in all places (Livni, 2021). *Elohim* in the *Torah* and the concept of divinity include all preternatural beings (Van der Toorn, Becking, Van der Horst, 1996).

The representation of deity, namely the manner in which he disclosed himself to humanity, necessitates the visible manifestation of *YHWH* or the *YHWH* angel in human likeness during the day. Anthropomorphic representations are found in Genesis 2, 3, 7, 8, and 11:5, 7. *Elohim* appears in the dream or night vision in Genesis 15:1; 20:3, 6; 21:12, 14ff; 22:1ff; 28:10ff; 31:11; 24; 46:2. The word *Elohim* as subject or object is used 50 times by P, 33 times in E, and with the suffix several hundred times with *YHWH*. P gives an account of the revelation of *YHWH* to Moses in Exodus 6:3, and from this point on, he uses it freely. According to P, the deity of the patriarchs is *El Shaddai*. The designation *YHWH* is used sparingly by the side of *Elohim* and the *Elohim* by E. *YHWH* is not used by E in Genesis but is given in Exodus 3:12–15 at Horeb.

The Genesis narratives, divided into two large literary units, focus on the beginnings of life, human conditions, the creation of the heavens, earth, and various plants and animals, and patriarchal history. How *Elohim* was probably

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perceived in the early periods may be noted in the narratives. The narratives focus on the creation of the heavens, earth, plants, animals, and humankind by *Elohim* in Genesis 1:1–2:4a. The first man and woman were created and placed in the garden of Eden by *YHWH Elohim* in Genesis 2:4b–25. Genesis 3:1–24 tells the story of the man and woman's eating of the forbidden fruit under the influence of a crafty serpent and their consequent expulsion from the garden. The story of Cain's murder and his banishment by *YHWH* is also mentioned in Genesis 4:1–16. Genesis 4:17–26 provides a list of Cain and his descendants and a poem by Lamech, one of Cain's grandsons. Genesis 5:1-32 lists Adam's descendants, including Enoch who walked with *Elohim*. Genesis 6:1-4 is a story of the union of the sons of God (*Elohim*) with human women and the appearance of the *Nephilim* (Mensah, 2018). The second unit of Genesis is from chapters 12 to 50 and is known as the 'Patriarchal History.' This is a family history traced through four generations: Abraham (Gen. 11:26-25:18), Isaac (Gen. 26:1-35), Jacob (Gen. 25:19-36, 43), and Joseph (Gen. 37:1-50:26) (Mensah, 2018). It is noteworthy to observe that within the narratives of Genesis, the presence of traditions suggests that these narratives serve as repositories of cultural knowledge. Particularly, in the context of primeval traditions, these narratives have endured for numerous millennia (Skinner, 1930).

It is of interest to note that the Hebrew word for deity that appears in the very first sentence of the Bible and is the first subject is *Elohim*. The Bible mentions the name *Elohim* in its very first sentence which says this; Genesis 1:1 (BHS):

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֵת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֵת הָאָרֶץ: 1

In a beginning *Elohim* created the heavens and the earth.

Elohim is the second most frequent noun in the Old Testament. *Elohim* is one who acts and speaks. His reality is seen in his acts. He is not an entity who can be conceived of apart from his works. The name *Elohim* is used in the Torah in primary compositions (Ben-Dov, 2010).

Elohim is roughly synonymous with other words for "deity." It is somewhat more flexible in its usage. The abstract nature of *Elohim* is given expression in its usage as an adjectival genitive, where *Elohim* occurs as the second of two nouns in construct state. That is where *Elohim* occurs as the second word in various construct expressions in its absolute state. An example is *bene* (*ha*) *Elohim* (Burnett, 2001).

The Genesis 6:9–12 account of Noah and his descendants indicates that Noah had the approval of *Elohim*. In Genesis 8, it was *Elohim* who spoke to Noah and his wife, his sons, and their spouses, to come out of the ark. *Elohim* blessed Noah and his sons in Genesis 9. *Elohim* also gave the rainbow as a sign of his promise to Noah and all future generations of living things on earth. In Genesis 20, particularly in verse 13, Abraham states that *Elohim* made him leave his father's home and wander around. When Hagar cried out for her son, *Elohim* heard the voice of the small boy, Ishmael (Gen. 21:17). The angel of *Elohim* called Hagar from heaven. Consequently, *Elohim* opened Hagar's eyes, and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the animal skin bottle with water, giving the young boy water to drink. According to the narrative, *Elohim* was with the young boy, Ishmael. Thus, *Elohim* appears to be a deity that is noticed by all and not a particular group or family only.

Elohim tested Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac in Genesis 22. In Genesis 23:6, *Elohim* is translated as mighty. נְשִׂיא אֱלֹהִים is translated a mighty prince by the King James version, the New King James version, the Revised Standard version, the New Revised Standard version, and the New International version, to mention but a few. It is observed that these translations, whether they used the literal translation method or the dynamic equivalence method, chose to translate the phrase as indicated above. Abraham made his servant swear by אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם וֵאלֹהֵי הָאָרֶץ *Elohim* of the heavens and the earth (Gen. 24:3). Genesis 25:11 records that *Elohim* blessed Abraham's son Isaac after his passing, who had made a home close to Beer Lahai Roi. In Jacob's encounter in Genesis 28:12 (BHS), וְהִנֵּה מַלְאֲכֵי אֱלֹהִים angels of *Elohim* are mentioned. The deity mentioned is *Elohim*, before Exodus 3, where *Hashem* introduces himself to Moses (Brown, Driver, & Briggs, 1906).

There are instances in which *Elohim* is used in contexts where the deity is portrayed in concrete and anthropomorphic terms, such as Genesis 32:31. Here, Jacob, after wrestling with the deity, says, "For I have seen God (*Elohim*) face to face". The use of *Elohim* in preference to *YHWH* continues to be recognised as a distinguishing feature of the texts that share this literary source. The designation for the deity in the E texts of Genesis is *Elohim*, used clearly as a singular. In the comments of the narrator, *Elohim* is used with singular grammatical forms. The only exception is Genesis 20:13 (BHS), where *Elohim* takes a plural verb in Abraham's speech to Abimelech, a foreigner (Burnett, 2001). In Genesis 20:13, God imposed this fate on him despite the fact that here *Elohim* is unambiguously the subject of a plural verb, so that it may be rendered, "when the gods made me a wanderer from my father's house" (Alter, 2019).

Besides, the most common word for God in the Hebrew, *Elohim*, famously has a plural ending but is treated grammatically as a singular, whether because it is a linguistic fossil harking back to a period when everyone spoke of the gods or because it is something like a plural of majesty (if in fact that actually existed in Biblical Hebrew). All biblical scholars are aware that when the noun is treated grammatically as a plural it refers to the gods, as in Aaron's words about the golden calf. *These are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt* (Ex. 32:4). But when Abraham tells Abimelech how he became a wanderer (Gen. 20:13), all the English versions have God impose this fate on him despite the fact that here *Elohim* is unambiguously the subject of a plural verb, so that it must be rendered, *when the gods made me a wanderer from my father's house*. This is a vivid instance of the liveliness of the dialogue in the Bible (Alter, 2019). If this translation is in the colonisers' language versions of the Bible, how was this translated into Asante Twi? Does the translation take place from the coloniser's language?

In Genesis 31, *Elohim* of the Fathers is mentioned. *Elohim* is thus the patron deity. In Genesis 32, Jacob meets the angels of *Elohim* on his way, and when he saw them, he named that place *Mahanaim*, saying this is *Elohim*'s camp. In Genesis 39:9, Joseph called his deity *Elohim*. He interprets dreams with the help of *Elohim*. According to the narrative, *Elohim* made Joseph a lord of Egypt (Gen. 45:9). In the Genesis narratives of the story of Joseph, the deity mentioned predominantly is *Elohim*.

Elohim is used in E in the absolute state. E's preference for simple *Elohim* as the divine title facilitates the depiction of continuity and cohesion within Israel's ancestral religious heritage. The patriarchal narratives that have

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been assigned to E represent an account of Israel's ancestors living in close relationship to a single patron deity who guides them in their migrations, protects them, and causes them to prosper. E's portrayal of the ancestral deity looks ahead both by the indication that Jacob's descendants will return from Egypt and by showing his providence to be part of his grand design to make Abraham and his descendants into a great nation. Two areas of technical usage in which *Elohim* has an important role as a common noun are religious and legal language. To curse *Elohim* is seen as an offence that involves both religious and legal spheres (Burnett, 2001).

The book of Exodus tells us how the *Elohim* of the fathers rescued his people from Egypt through the work of his prophet Moses. In Exodus 1:1–3:1, the deity that is mentioned is *Elohim*. The spirit of the deity revealed in Exodus is Ruach *Elohim*. Going by what *Elohim* said to Moses in Exodus 6:2–3, it implies that *Elohim* did not reveal himself to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob with the name *YHWH*. Thus, it would be anachronistic for the name *YHWH* to appear in the Genesis narratives.

In Exodus 13:17-18, *Elohim* is the deity that led the people out of Egypt. In Exodus 20:23 (BHS): לֹא תַעֲשׂוּן אִתִּי אֱלֹהֵי כֶסֶף וֵאלֹהֵי זָהָב לֹא תַעֲשׂוּ לָכֶם׃

"You shall not make gods (*Elohim*) of silver to be with me, nor shall you make for yourselves gods (*Elohim*) of gold" (Ex. 20:23; RSV). Israel is admonished not to make other *Elohim* of silver or *Elohim* of gold. The probability people had *Elohim* of silver and *Elohim* of gold. In Exodus 32:23, when Aaron was asked by the Israelites to make an *Elohim* for them, he made

the golden calf, thus suggesting that these people associated *Elohim* with idols which they might have seen in Egypt.

Leviticus is a book that includes many instructions for the Levites, or those who served in the tabernacle of witnesses and later in the Temple. The *Elohim* in Leviticus is holy, just, and dangerous. In effect, in Leviticus 25:36b and 43b, the Israelites are instructed to fear their *Elohim*.

Elohim is one of the key names of deity mentioned in the book of Numbers. *Elohim* came to Balaam and said to him that he should not go with the people sent by Balak. *Elohim* told Balaam not to curse Israel because they were blessed. In Deuteronomy, *Elohim* is one of the key deities mentioned. *YHWH*, your *Elohim*, is used most of the time in the narratives of Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy, the Judges are told to be impartial in their decisions.

The living deity is naturally the one true deity, although the attributive adjective is construed with a plural *hayyim, –* life. What was important to Israel about its deity can be well recognised in the adjectives and construct relationships combined with *Elohim*. Moreover, the expressions "your (singular and plural) or our *Elohim*" are significant, for *YHWH* desires to be Israel's deity and they are to be his people (Preuss, 1995). Deuteronomy 5:26 (BHS):

כִּי מִי כָל־בָּשָׂר אֲשֶׁר שָׁמַע קוֹל אֱלֹהִים חַיִּים מְדַבֵּר מִתּוֹךְ־הָאֵשׁ כָּמֹנוּ וַיֶּחִי׃

For who is there of all flesh, who has heard the voice of the living *Elohim* speaking from the midst of the fire as we and lived.

Expressions containing *Elohim* denote the patron deity of the individual (Gen. 9:26) and the *Elohim* of Shem (Ex. 3:16). Therefore, the use of *Elohim*

serves not only the forging of a single "deity of the fathers" but also the identification of the patriarchal deity with the national deity *Yahweh*, the deity of the Exodus. This equation is seen in Exodus 3:15, in the call of Moses by

יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם אֱלֹהֵי אַבְרָהָם אֱלֹהֵי יִצְחָק וֵאלֹהֵי יַעֲקֹב

"the LORD, the God (*Elohim*) of your fathers, the God (*Elohim*) of Abraham, the God (*Elohim*) of Isaac, and the God (*Elohim*) of Jacob, …" (Burnett, 2001).

Though *Elohim* in Hebrew is a plural word, it is used of both the singular being of the one God as well as of a plurality of other beings with no reference to the singular one God. And in Deuteronomy 32:17 *Elohim* is used for demons. *Yahweh* was incomparably the *Elohim* (Deut. 10:17) (Godawa, 2018).

The Jewish fascination with language can be categorised into three distinct streams within their traditions: the linguistic or verbal nature of creation; the *Torah* as a linguistic blueprint or paradigm for the world; and the name of their deity. In the first instance, *Elohim* creates through language. He speaks the world into existence through ten utterances, according to a common Rabbinic edict. In the second instance, the *Torah* is already understood as the blueprint for reality. In the third instance, the name of a deity is the most holy aspect of existence (Miller, 2016). In all three tradition streams, we observe *Elohim* taking centre stage. It is *Elohim* that the *Torah* witnesses to. This *Elohim* of the Jews is *YHWH*. This appears to be the narrative account found in the *Torah*.

God's relationship with the people is more frequently expressed through *Elohim* with a suffix, your God, our God. Finally, suffix forms of *Elohim* are

constitutive for the so-called covenant formula: "I will be their God, and they will be my people." On the whole the generic name *Elohim* aided the Israelites to understand and to proclaim the God of their own history as the God of the world (Jenni and Westermann, 1997).

Elohim in the Nevi'im

Elohim has been used in Joshua 76 times, Judges 73 times, 1 Samuel 100 times, 2 Samuel 54 times, 1 Kings 107 times, 2 Kings 97 times, Isaiah 94 times, Jeremiah 145 times, Ezekiel 36 times, Hosea 26 times, Joel 11 times, Amos 14 times, Jonah 16, Micah 11, Nahum 1 time, Habakkuk 2, Zephaniah 5, Haggai 3, Zechariah 11, Malachi 7. It is not mentioned in Obadiah. The prophets excluding the Jonah narrative avoid unmodified *Elohim* as the subject of the sentence, probably because the divine designation is too unspecific for them (Jenni and Westermann, 1997).

Elohim used as subject or object or indirect is used by Joshua 67 times, Judges 21 times, Samuel 50 times, Kings 21 times to denote God, gods, or a human. Joshua and Judges, two books of the *Nevi'im rishonim* (former prophets), describe events involving the Israelites prior to the establishment of the monarchy. The narratives use *YHWH* in reference to the deity of Israel. Moses is the servant of *Hashem*. Joshua is instructed by the LORD to strengthen himself and take up the leadership mantle and lead the people to the land promised to them. *YHWH*'s angel appears at several times in the narratives. The people of Israel are admonished to let *YHWH* be their *Elohim*. This is because some of the people went lusting after other *Elohim* made of silver and gold,

Elohim of other nations. Rahab of Jericho announces to the two spies sent by Joshua to find out more about Jericho (Josh. 2:11 BHS), that:

וַנִּשְׁמַע וַיִּמַּס לְבָבֵנוּ וְלֹא־קָמָה עוֹד רוּחַ בְּאִישׁ מִפְּנֵיכֶם כִּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הוּא אֱלֹהִים בַּשָּׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְעַל־הָאָרֶץ מִתָּחַת

"We have heard and our hearts melted, spirit remains in no one of us because of you, for *YHWH* your *Elohim* he is *Elohim* in the heavens above and upon the earth below". It appears that almost throughout the narratives of Joshua and Judges that *YHWH* is the *Elohim* of the people of Israel (Owens, 1989).

In Joshua 24:2 (BHS) the text suggests that the *Elohim* these fathers served might not be one and the same as *YHWH* (Preuss, 1996). It is probable that the text might be alluding to these other *Elohim* as divine Beings. Some have suggested that the plural is a plural of majesty. But that is to read into Hebrew speech a modern mode of address. Was it a reference to rulers of Israel? According to the biblical text, all references to the kings of Judah and Israel are singular (Knight, 1998).

When the people took up arms, they were called עַם יְהוָה *the people of Yahweh* (Judg. 5:13) or עַם הָאֱלֹהִים the people of the *Elohim* (Judg. 20:2). The enemies of Israel were כָל־אוֹיְבֶיךָ יְהוָה the enemies of *Yahweh* (Judg. 5:31). Before marching out to battle a sacrifice was offered to *Yahweh* (1 Sam. 7:9). Most importantly, *Yahweh* decided the timing of battle decisions using the ephod and sacred lots (Judg. 20:23, 28). He personally went before them (Judg. 4:14). The visible sign of this presence of *Yahweh* was the Ark. During battle, it was *Yahweh* who fought (Josh. 10:14, 42; Judg. 20:35) (De Vaux, 1965).

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For four and a half centuries, Israel was a monarchy, both united and divided. The tabernacle constructed in the wilderness and later the temple built by the king served as locations for the worship of *YHWH*. *YHWH* is consulted about war (2 Sam. 5:19, 23; 1 Kgs 22:5, 7-8), and the war cry is often כִּי לַיהֹוָה הַמִּלְחָמָה "for the battle is *YHWH's*" (1 Sam. 17:47), and the cry in the middle of the battle is כִּי־נְתָנָם יְהֹוָה בְּיָדֵנוּ "*YHWH* has placed them in our possession" (1 Sam. 14:10) (Freedman, 1992). Israel's battles were God's battles (1 Sam. 18:17; 25:28), and the people of Israel were the troops of *Elohim* (1 Sam. 17:26) (De Vaux, 1965).

The use of *Elohim* as an adjectival genitive in these phrases demonstrates how the character of *Elohim* as an abstract noun result in its generic meaning, "deity or divinity." We are dealing with established technical phrases originally pertaining to matters in no way peculiar to any one deity but to "the divine" as expressed by the abstract term *Elohim*. The common and, in some cases, predominant use of *Elohim* in these phrases indicates that we are dealing with fixed technical expressions for which the generic meaning conveyed by *Elohim* as God or gods is appropriate (Burnett, 2001).

The abstract nature of *Elohim* is given expression in its usage as an adjectival genitive. That is where *Elohim* occurs as the governed noun in various construct expressions. The phrase *ish (ha) Elohim* אִישׁ־אֱלֹהִים (1 Sam. 2:27; 9:6; 1 Kgs 13:1) designates one as a man of the divine. Elijah and Elisha are introduced in the narratives as ish (ha) *Elohim*. The phrases *mar'ot Elohim*, מַרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים 'divine visions' (Ezek. 1:1; 8:3; 40:2) and *ma 'aneh Elohim*, מַעֲנֵה אֱלֹהִים 'divine reply' (Mic. 3:7) identify forms of supernatural communication, and do not themselves denote the revelations of a particular deity. The *herdat*

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Elohim לְחֶרְדַּת אֱלֹהִים 'divine trembling' that overcomes Israel's enemy in 1 Samuel 14:15 is a terror ascribed to supernatural causes. Superhuman wisdom is called *hokmat Elohim* כִּי־חָכְמַת אֱלֹהִים 'divine wisdom' (1 Kgs 3:28). The phrase *debar Elohim* דְּבַר־אֱלֹהִים 'divine message' (Judg. 3:20; 1 Sam. 9:27), is the word of *Elohim*. *Elohim* by virtue of its abstract nature proves more suitable than the alternative common nouns for use in these phrases designating things associated with 'the divine' (Burnett, 2001).

In 1 Kgs 21:10, 13; Naboth is wrongly executed on the false charge of cursing *Elohim* and king. The Torah forbade using the name of God in vain. The God of Israel was *YHWH*. One would have expected the narrative to mention that Naboth cursed *YHWH*. Burnett (2001) asserts that to curse *Elohim* is an unspeakable behaviour, an offence which involves both religious and legal spheres.

The term *Elohim* is also used in references that emphasise a deity's association with a particular place (2 Kgs 1:2, 3, 6, 16; 2 Kgs 5:15), the god who has a special connection to a certain person, group, area, or country when discussing the idea of a patron deity.

1 Kings 19:2 and I Kings 20:10 detail the imprecation invoked by Jezebel and by Ben-Hadad of Damascus, respectively, which reads "so may the *Elohim* (gods) do to me and more also...". According to Burnett (2001), this is a proof of the consistency with which the Hebrew Bible illustrated the oath formula spoken by foreigners. The same oath as spoken by an Israelite has *Elohim* in the singular. In the Hebrew Bible's portrayal of Israel as religiously

monolatrous, the singular *Elohim* serves as a counterpart to the notion of "the gods," which was common among Israel's neighbours.

In the Elijah traditions (1 Kgs 17-19; 21; 2 Kgs 1-2:18) the divine designation *Elohim* has a special significance. 1 Kings 17-19 deals with the conflict between *Yahweh* and Phoenician Baal, and it reveals an acute concern on the part of the pre-Deuteronomistic writers who assembled these narratives to establish *Yahweh's* unique status over against Phoenician Baal who had received official sanction under Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kgs 16:31-32). *Yahweh's* pre-eminence over Baal is settled in the legend of the contest at Carmel (1 Kgs 18:16-40). The central question addressed by the narrative is "Who is *Elohim* of Israel?" (vv. 21, 36-37). Elijah presents the people of Israel with a dilemma. Loyalty to *Yahweh* and loyalty to Baal are presented as two mutually exclusive alternatives for Israel. There can be only one *Elohim*. This notion of exclusivity is used in reference to the patron deity of the individual, group, or nation. As the *Elohim* of Israel, *Yahweh* is active on behalf of his people and is thus entitled to their exclusive loyalty (Burnett, 2001).

All supernatural beings were included in the Israelite understanding of divinity, and lesser deities may be called *Elohim* (Van Der Toorn, Becking, and Horst, 1996). The term *Elohim* had a special significance in Israelite religion (1 Kgs 12:28-29). For instance, the *Elohim* cult-formula cited in 1 Samuel 4:8 and 1 Kings 12:28 is a well-known religious tradition of common-Israelite provenance that is prominent in pre-monarchic Israel's core worship. Its appropriation by Jeroboam I in the establishment of the national cultus of the northern kingdom perpetuated the influence of *Elohim* as an important divine title. The exclusive role of *Elohim* in this important Israelite tradition suggests

that the term already enjoyed a certain status among the northern tribes as a divine designation, a status that would become authoritative in the natural cultus (Burnett, 2001).

The expression "other *Elohim*" occurs especially often in texts shaped by the Deuteronomic movement and in passages dependent on this movement as for example, in the texts in the book of Jeremiah edited by the Deuteronomistic school. The increased use of *Elohim* in the postexilic period can be well recognised in the book of Jonah (Preuss, 1995).

The book of Amos also contains a Judean prophet's indictment of a prosperous and self-assured kingdom of Israel under the reign of Jeroboam II (786-746 BCE). As commentators have noted, Amos never refers to his deity as *Elohim*, but rather as *Yahweh*. *Elohim* appears in only one passage in Amos (Amos 8:14). Amos' rejection of the Northern Israelites' usage of *Elohim* was a manner of denying the legitimacy of the Ephraimite worship. The Northern Israelite usage of the title *Elohim* may have obscured the identity of Israel's God for Amos. Given Amos' avoidance of the name *Elohim*, its use in this verse may shed light on *Elohim's* meaning as a divine appellation in the Northern Kingdom (Burnett, 2001).

Hosea also addresses the Northern Kingdom during the eighth century. At the centre of Hosea's message is the claim that Israel is bound to *Yahweh* in an exclusive covenant relationship, according to which he is their god and they are his people (Hos. 1:9; 2:25; 6:7; 8:1). Hosea frequently uses *Elohim* plus a pronominal suffix (meaning "my/your/his/their God"); but even more frequent

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is its usage of *Yahweh* as a divine name. Hosea allows no room for ambiguity in understanding the identity of Israel's deity (Burnett, 2001).

One other context in which the appellative *Elohim* figures prominently is in depiction of international settings, for example in Jonah 3:5-10. The appropriateness of the use of *Elohim* in an international context is dependent not only on a foreigner's unfamiliarity but also on a sense of commonality conveyed by the term, a sense which accords well with the universalism expressed in Jonah. As the generic word for "deity" in biblical Hebrew, *Elohim* is often used in an international setting to emphasize religious continuity between individuals or groups who do not worship the same deity. In this context the generic sense of *Elohim* makes it useful in place of a specific divine name (Burnett, 2001).

Elohim in the Ketuvim

Elohim as subject or object, direct or indirect is used to denote deities or deity in Chronicles 45 times, in Psalm 42 – 86, 180 times, and in Ecclesiastes 7 times. 'The *Elohim*' is used in Chronicles 38 times, and in Ecclesiastes 31 times. *Elohim* occurs 15 times in Psalms 1-41; 164 times in Psalms 42-72; 42 times in Psalms 73-89; 7 times in Psalms 90-150 (Sharpe, 1894). *Elohim* occurs 17 times in Job, 8 times in Proverbs, and 4 times in Ruth. In Ruth 1:16, Ruth told Naomi, your *Elohim* will be my *Elohim*. The Songs of Solomon do not mention *Elohim*. Lamentations does not use the term *Elohim*, but *YHWH* and *Adonai*. There is no mention of *Elohim* in Esther. Daniel uses *Elohim* 22 times, Ezra 53 times, and Nehemiah 69 times.

In ancient Hebrew thinking, the world is seen through the senses. Concrete thought is the expression of ideas and concepts in ways that may be perceived by sight, sound, touch, smell, or taste. Concepts and ideas are expressed in abstract ways or in ways that cannot be perceived through the five senses of sight, touch, smell, taste, or hearing. Nouns in Hebrew sentences identify the subject of an action. A plural might be either quantitative or qualitative in ancient Hebrew. Example: one very large tree (qualitative), (*Elohim*) "deities" is a quantitative plural, whereas "Deity" is qualitative (Benner, 2005). Thus, the *Ketuvim* provide us with insights into the ancient Hebrew understanding of their world and their concept of divinity.

Ezra expresses appreciation to *YHWH Elohim* in Ezra 7:27-28 (BHS). In the Ezra narrative, it appears *Elohim*'s hand must have been upon Ezra to keep him safe. Two biblical books that claim to come directly from the experience of the exile, Ezekiel from Babylon and Lamentation back in the land of Israel. The books of Ezekiel and Lamentations contain accounts of communities that are struggling with personal and social crises, that include dealing with suddenly mobile identities and transnational culture and theology. In Ezekiel and Lamentations, we have early and important reactions to the trauma of the exile from home and from the exiles. In Lamentations *YHWH* from heaven is the *El* that has punished the exiles, and it is to him they pour their lament. They are admonished to seek his mercies (Smith-Christopher, 2002).

The immediate postexilic prophets draw on the imagery and ideology of the divine warrior (*YHWH Sabbaoth*) to describe the deity's intervention to bring about the ideal eschatological age (Freedman, 1992). In Ezra-Nehemiah,

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the people of Israel who returned from exile referred to their deity as הָאֱלֹהִים

אֲשֶׁר בִּירוּשָׁלָם "the *Elohim* who ...." and sometimes as *YHWH*. The temple was

לְבֵית הָאֱלֹהִים"*le-beyt haelohim*" at Jerusalem. Ezra introduces the deity of Israel

as *YHWH*, and Cyrus is said by the narrator to use both *YHWH* and *Elohim* when

referring to deity. Nehemiah prays to יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם (the LORD *Elohim* of the

heavens) whilst he was serving before the king of Persia. In Zechariah, the

prophet identifies the God of Israel and Judah as *yhwh* or יְהֹוָה צְבָאוֹת *YHWH*

Sabbaoth. In Haggai 'the deity' is יְהֹוָה צְבָאוֹת *Yahweh* of hosts. Both Zechariah

and Haggai who are prophets after the exile refer to the deity of Israel as יְהֹוָה

צְבָאוֹת (*YHWH* of hosts) (Owens, 1989).

When a suppliant from Israel claims that his soul yearns for *Elohim*, he

is alluding to *Yahweh* the deity of Israel (Ps. 42:3). In Psalm 138:1 *Elohim* is

translated as gods of other nations. The investigation of biblical *Elohim* as a

designation for Israel's deity thus requires a consideration of the concept's

usage. *Elohim* is used with the same range of meanings and in the same contexts

as *El* and *Eloah*, with other words having the generic sense "deity." In Daniel

11:36-38, *Elohim*, *El*, and *Eloah*, are used interchangeably.

While the general meaning of *Elohim* makes it synonymous with these

other terms, and its use with other nuances of meaning shows it to have an even

broader semantic range than the alternatives. In few instances, the notion of the

divine applies to superhuman beings, rather than deities as commonly rendered.

A nonspecific sense which is also essential is an utterance "there is no *Elohim*"

(*en Elohim*, Pss. 10:4; 14:1; 53:2), the claim made by one who denies

accountability to the divine for his actions. Though *Elohim* is generic in

meaning, regularly it has a specific referent that is determined by context. In

this way *Elohim* behaves much like a title, a relatively general designation for a specific individual. The appearance of *Elohim* in epithets for patron deities gives insights into its use as a religious title. In general, patron god was any god who, by virtue of a unique association with a particular individual, social group, or place, was understood to act as its divine representative and to advance its welfare (Burnett, 2001).

The distribution of the divine title *Elohim* within the Hebrew book of Psalms, particularly the use of the title in the Elohistic Psalter (Pss 42–83), has been the subject of study for some time. *Elohim* is not exclusive to certain sections of the Psalms. Divine names and epithets had specific connotations, whether or not they were spelled out. The title *Elohim* in the Psalms connotes the meaning it had in the Pentateuch. The title *Elohim* was associated with creation and the Sinaitic covenant (cf. Gen. 1:1–2:3; Ex. 20–3) before the united monarchy (Watson, 2015).

Next, Ben-Dov (2010) argues that if *Elohim* was added to the Elohistic Psalter in a planned way, then it is hard to explain why *YHWH* is still mentioned 45 times in the Psalter. The Hebrew Bible presents the life of *Elohim* (God) as a narrative of increasing separation from humanity. Later writings of the Bible greatly obscure the identity of the *Elohim* who, in Genesis, descended to the garden and asked, "Where are you?" The patriarchs were the first to have direct conversations with *Elohim* (God), a level of communication that Moses also reached. Different names and titles for God in different parts of the Bible also show that God and the people talking about him have different levels of closeness (Ben-Dov, 2010).

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Most of the scholars who wrote about Psalm 82 before the 1930s saw the *Elohim* as human judges. However, after this period, most scholars now see the *Elohim* as deities. The textual integrity of Psalm 82 is nearly flawless. However, the interpretation of this text has been subject to a wide range of perspectives as a result of several inherent difficulties and issues pertaining to the accurate evaluation of the exact meaning of the Psalm. Morgenstern (1939) contends that the main difficulty pertains to the exact connotation of the term *Elohim*, which is mentioned four times within this particular Psalm. The challenge lies in ascertaining the precise connotation of the term "deity" as used in verses 1b and 6. Morgenstern highlights the fundamental challenges and inconsistencies found throughout the Psalm. In light of the aforementioned setting, it is imperative to analyse the conceptualization and contextual translation of the term "*Elohim*" into Asante Twi.

Ackerman (1966) examines the origins and usage of Psalm 82, proposing that it initially emerged within the context of tribal league rituals and subsequently found application in both monarchical and post-exilic celebratory settings. He argues that the *Elohim* condemned are deities in Yahweh's council, suggesting that the Psalm proposes holding gods accountable for social justice through the patron deity concept. The indictment and summary punishment of the deities reveal that possibility. Ackerman's argument serves to underscore the objective of the study. Thus, the quest for the meaning of such deities in Asante Religio-cultural thought is not out of place.

On the part of Dahood, Psalm 82 is a prophetic liturgy of the Lord's punishment against false gods, divided into three sections: a vision of the heavenly tribunal, a tirade against the heathen gods, and a prayer for universal

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justice under *YHWH's* rule. He contends that the *Elohim* in Psalm 82 are heathen deities whose moral obtuseness is to blame for the cosmic disorders and will result in their loss of morality and their expulsion from heaven into the nether world. The heathen gods, who were significant, are now deficient because they are completely unable to stand up for the weak and rescue the oppressed. He recognises the theme of godly creatures being hurled into the fiery pit in verse 7. To ensure an equitable administration of the universe and stabilise the earth's foundations, the psalmist prays to God to rule the heathen nations once the pagan deities are removed (Dahood, 1968). This argument by Dahood that the search for a mythological motif might just be an exercise in misdirected brilliance sounds convincing. The Asante Twi readers of this text in the Asante Twi Bible can only appreciate it in their religious ontology. Thus, this study examines the significance of translating this text in cross-cultural situations in the Asante Twi Bible to observe how the Asante can understand it.

Tsevat argues that *Elohim* in Psalm 82 can be understood as the God and the Gods in assembly. If this is translated into the Asante Twi Bible, would it mean anything to the Asante Twi readers? Such a translation should take into consideration the Asante ontological view about God. Tsevat views the poem as a turning point in the development of thoughts, revealing the transition of deities from existence to nonexistence, highlighting beliefs, their forms, their extinction across time, and the heavenly decision determining future religious development. The prophetic elements, centred on a divine council, signal the end of paganism (Tsevat, 1969-1970).

Psalm 82 deals directly with the theme that indicates that *YHWH* has delegated the task of maintaining justice to *Elohim*, "gods," who, for the most

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part, have failed to implement His wishes and consequently are destined for judgement. The precise identity of the *Elohim* addressed in Psalm 82 is debated. The Psalms portray God as One who preserves order and justice in the world and defends the cause of the needy and oppressed (Zuck, 1996).

Commenting on Psalm 82 in an intertextual context, Heiser argues that a literal reading of Psalm 82 in the Hebrew Bible does not fit theological patterns, certain creeds, and traditions because it shows a certain understanding of the unseen world that comes only from the text through the lens of the author's ancient, premodern worldview. He contends that Psalm 82 has at its core the unseen realm and its interaction with the human world. The *Elohim* are real and are not idols. They are spiritual beings or divine beings (Heiser, 2015).

In his Literary critical reading of Psalm 82, Tate sees a poem describing the administrative structure in the heavenly realm, similar to Micaiah's story in 1 Kings 22. In Psalm 82:1c and 6 he contends that *Elohim* refers to "gods" or "divine beings" other than *YHWH*. These *Elohim* serve as counsellors and representatives of *YHWH*. He argues that the gods are to blame for their grave misconduct. They are to be stripped of their divine privileges. He argues that the judgement of the gods resembles the widespread mythological imagery of a god's rebellion and punishment. In Psalm 82, the sentence of death and demotion from high rank results from the failure of the gods to maintain the well-being of the lowly and impoverished among humans (Tate, 2002).

Trotter argues succinctly about the *Elohim* in Psalm 82, the location of the incident, *YHWH's* role in the occurrence, and the identity of the *Elohim* stated in verses 1 and 6. He observes that the *Elohim,* identified severally since

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the time of the ancient versions as human judicial offices, are divine kings ruling over the nations. These are human kings who were considered to have divine status (Trotter, 2012). This view is, however, not persuasive.

Keil and Delitzsch argue that God speaks in the style of prophets in Psalm 82, punishing and correcting the congregational heads of his people for corrupting his majesty. *Elohim* is depicted as standing in the divine assembly with the terrifying designfulness of his appearance as a just judge. God granted the subordinate *Elohim* this exercise of power without their resigning it to themselves, and he now sits in judgement over them in their midst. These *Elohim* are to make the administration of justice work in favour of the defenceless, the poor, and the weak, whom God the lawgiver especially keeps an eye out for (Keil & Delitzsch, 1866–91).

Similarly, examining Psalm 82 using Historical Criticism, Briggs and Briggs argue that it is didactic and theatrical, with God appearing in a group of rulers who exemplify divine law and order. They argue that the *Elohim* are human rulers and judges; the wicked sovereigns of heathen nations who have Israel under their thumb and among whom Israel was dispersed as a helpless, weak, and troubled people; and the judicial session where *Elohim* takes his stand against the summoned *Elohim*, sons of *Elyon*. These *Elohim* are called to account for their favouritism, ordered to treat the weak and destitute fairly, and forewarned that despite their position as divine, they are still only humans. Briggs and Briggs contend that one gloss elaborates on the negative effects of their injustice, while another urgently implores God to render judgement (Briggs & Briggs, 1907). If the *Elohim* are humans, as suggested by Briggs and Briggs, how should they be translated in the Asante Twi Bible?

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***Elohim* and its Extrabiblical Counterparts**

The earliest attested parallels for *Elohim* occur in late Bronze Age cuneiform. *Ilanu,* a singular western peripheral Akkadian, is an exact parallel to Hebrew *Elohim*. *Ilanu* literally means "the gods," and it represents the pre-Israelite antecedent of *Elohim*. The term *ilanu* is used in reference to the Pharaoh, always in a string of flattering expressions. In other instances, singular *ilanu* is used in reference to proper deities, and the morphologically plural substantive functions grammatically as a singular (Burnett, 2001).

Besides, biblical concept *Elohim* is an example of a Canaanite linguistic development, namely the concretised. It states that the nominal plural form expresses an abstraction in regard to a person or thing that has the status designated by the relevant abstract category. The late Bronze Age forerunner of *Elohim* is attested in the Amarna vassal correspondence and in other cuneiform texts from Syria-Palestine. The Iron Age reflex of this Canaanite usage, having passed into certain dialects of Aramaic, appears in the latter. Recognise that these other languages convey a general sense of "god" or "deity" without any specific nuance in meaning. This consideration is foundational to an understanding of the significance of Biblical Hebrew *Elohim* (Burnett, 2001).

The Ugaritic tablets mention Canaanite deities such as Baal, Asherah, Anath, Dagon, and Resheph. These are deities whose names are mentioned also in the Old Testament. The equivalent to *Elohim*, though theology and understanding of *El's* character were vastly different in Israel. The closest relationship between the Canaanites of Ugarit and the Israelites lies in similarities of grammar, syntax, and poetic parallelism (Livingston, 1992).

Interpreting Biblical Poetry and Psalm 82

What constitutes biblical poetry? Since the eighteenth century, and among some Jewish scholars even earlier, it has been generally understood that biblical poetry is predicated on a parallelism of meaning between the two halves of the line (Alter, 2007). Poetry is a complex formal system that frequently requires minute linguistic manoeuvres. Poetry is a human example of intricately rich communication that is solemn, ponderous, and forceful, densely woven with intricate internal connections, meanings, and implications. Biblical poetry frequently presents unique linguistic and textual challenges. The lines of biblical poetry are imbued with a fierce assertiveness that sweeps from one section of a line to its parallel member and, frequently, from the line to an entire sequence within the poem. Poetry is essentially the mode of expression in which the surface is the depth, so that through careful scrutiny of the configurations of the surface—the articulation of the line, the movement from line to poem, the imagery, the arabesques of syntax and grammar, and the design of the poem as a whole—we come to understand the poem's meaning more fully (Alter, 2011).

In addition, Alter argues that many of the Psalms derive their poetic force from the literary antecedents on which they draw. But the Hebrew poems were manifestly framed for Israelite purposes that were in many respects distinctive and, at best, no more than loosely parallel to the polytheistic texts that served as poetic precedents. Alter discusses the historical contexts of the book of Psalms, the poetry of Psalms, and the challenge of translating Psalms (Alter, 2007).

Also, the power of biblical poetry lies essentially in its terrific compactness. You cannot determine the meanings of biblical words without

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taking into consideration their narrative or poetic contexts, translating an ancient text appropriately, and also representing what actually goes on in the Hebrew literary context faithfully and accurately. Poetry thrives on the tracing of formal patterns—symmetrical, antithetical, and repetitive—and these are often inscribed in the rearrangements of syntax. Single words are important in any original literary work because it is through words that the reality of the fictional or poetic world is shaped. Translating the poems often entails thorny issues of understanding what the words mean because the poets frequently use rare terms, and in keeping with the difficulty of the language, the ancient scribes often scrambled the transmission of words they themselves found unfamiliar. The Hebrew language gathers together a wide variety of literary texts that are quite often vivid, finely nuanced, and sometimes startling in their stylistic articulations. A translation has the capacity to convey much of this liveliness and complexity if only the resources are summoned to do it. Sometimes, the translation errors occur not because the translators have misunderstood the Hebrew but because they are unwilling to convey what it actually means. For example, the most common word for "God" in the Hebrew, *Elohim*, famously has a plural ending but is treated grammatically as a singular. It is important to reproduce in translation some approximate equivalent of the Hebrew prose rhythms, to the extent that it is feasible within the limits of English or any language such as the Asante Twi (Alter, 2019).

According to Dean, the destination of every method of Biblical investigation is a clearer and more profitable understanding of the meaning of the Biblical text. He advocates eight methods or paths of inquiry: the literary study of genre, the grammatical study of words, phrases, and clauses that result

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in various translations of the Bible, the structural analysis of the relationship between clauses and sentences in a paragraph until the arrangement of a passage becomes clearly visible, an analysis of context both preceding and following a particular pericope so that the flow of an author's thought is perceived, an investigation of the cultural context within which it resides, and the modern critical period, theological exegesis which concentrates on the theological themes and content in a passage as well as analysing the reader's presuppositions in interpreting the text (Dean, 2011).

In these eight exegetical methods, the following ten principles of interpretation are assumed: Exegesis must concern itself not only with the content but also with the form of the text, both with what is said and how it is said. Exegesis involves both semantics, the study of the language of a text, and pragmatics, the study of the circumstances surrounding the text. Exegesis must always analyse a text within various descriptions of context: historical, ideological, and literary. Context does not merely help us understand meaning; it virtually creates meaning. The most likely meaning is that which causes the least interruption to the context. Meaning is determined on the basis of the congruence of the semantic field (the number of possible meanings at the time of writing) and the context (revealing which of the possible meanings takes priority in the particular passage). The locus of meaning is discovered in the interplay of the three worlds of author, text, and reader. Hermeneutics must study the text both diachronically and synchronically. All readers of texts have their own theological, cultural, philosophical, and psychological presuppositions, which must be recognised and acknowledged if faulty exegetical conclusions are going to be eliminated. The exegete must not only

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interpret the text but must allow the text to interpret him or her as well (Dean, 2011).

Bratcher and Reyburn argue that in order to discover how to restructure a particular psalm so that it evokes the same attitude or emotion in modern readers as it did in the original audience, the translator must determine the psalmist's intention in writing the particular psalm being translated. The translator must convey to the reader all of the text's information. And discover the appropriate forms in the receptor language that will elicit in the language's readers the same response as the original language's hearers and readers (Bratcher & Reyburn, 1991).

Considering a structuralist approach to hermeneutics, Dan Via argues that understanding the literary genre is a vital step in deciphering the work. Genre, as defined by Dan Via, is "the hidden or unconscious structure of the whole that is beyond the text from which the latter receives its meaning." The reader must employ a variety of techniques, each of which is best suited to the genre in question. The more we understand literary genres, the clearer the Bible becomes (Via Jr., 1985).

In order to read and interpret the Psalm, Prinsloo makes use of the text-immanent methodology, focusing on structural, syntactical, literary, and semantic variables in particular (Prinsloo, 1995). His careful and compelling examination of the Psalm provides remarkable insights that are valuable to our research, and we are grateful for his work.

As compared with Prinsloo (1995), Brown addresses key syntactic and grammatical issues in Psalm 82 and the text's broader literary and historical

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contexts to consider those doctrinal implications. He proposes paralleling Psalm 82 with the Ancient Near Eastern worldview of Israel and other ancient Near Eastern literature to provide support for the passage's relevance in biblical theology as they highlight the supernatural worldview of the biblical authors (Brown, 2020). Brown's insightful examination of the text sheds light on the interpretation of the text and is helpful for the study.

Translations and the Bible

The process of translating the Bible may be broken down into four primary time periods throughout history. During the early period, efforts were made to translate the scriptures, including the original Hebrew and Greek texts, into a number of the languages that were prevalent across the ancient world. The second period of Bible translation coincided with the Protestant Reformation. During this time, renderings were not made from the Latin Vulgate, a translation from Hebrew and Greek manuscripts, but rather from the original Hebrew and Greek text into the vernaculars of Europe. This was the beginning of what is known as the King James Version of the Bible. During the third time period, pioneer translators were hard at work preparing translations of the Bible into hundreds of different languages and dialects for use in the massive missionary effort. The fourth phase is distinguished principally by the production of translations into mother tongues in developing countries. In these countries, native speakers frequently take major responsibility for translation projects, with missionaries occasionally acting in the capacity of advisers (Metzger, 2001).

The ongoing task of Bible translation in Africa is specifically discussed by Yorke and Renju (2004) with reference to the difficulty of accurately

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conveying the Bible's message in the many African languages. They regret the lack of engagement between African theologians and translators and propose a real and sustained dialogue between the two fields. They note that it is common to find Bible translations into African languages that were finished wholly without the direct and sustained involvement of African theologians and biblical academics. They assert that it appears that African biblical scholars and theologians rarely rely on African translations of the Bible in their articulation and transmission of a theology that is apparently meant to be relevant to both the African soul and soil. Yorke and Renju make the case that African translations of the Bible should be theologically appropriated and rigorously analysed for clarity and veracity. What they claim is intriguing and pertinent to this investigation.

Given the dynamics of Bible translation, Noorda (2002) argues that in a cultural setting where consistency and verifiability are accepted as important criteria for valid interpretation, careful consideration of all contextual indicators is crucial for successful interpretation. As a result, the work must be understood within its proper linguistic and historical context, taking into account its practical goals. Therefore, one must read the text in the right context, taking into mind the text's pragmatic aims in terms of both the language it uses and the history it references. Noorda believes that within the parameters imposed by the dynamics of convention and innovation in text and with readers, readers structure texts, ascribe meaning to textual indications, and create a pragmatic effect.

Mojola (2003) argues that the Bible generates ambiguous perspectives and is a vital tool for church life. He examines the educational and theological

impact of translated Bibles in African languages and cultures, focusing on early African, Coptic, Ethiopian, and Nubian translations. He also analyses translations in the remainder of Africa, focusing on the early European period in Africa, West Africa, Southern Africa, the Indian Ocean Islands, and Eastern Africa. Mojola examines translation's missiological, pedagogical, and incarnational aspects, educational and ecumenical benefits, and current issues in Africa.

Walker-Jones (2003) contends that meaningful communication promotes language learning. He ties grammar instruction into the important communication context of interpretation. He talks about how biblical academics apply critical methods of interpretation. According to Walker-Jones, biblical scholars have long talked about language's greater meaning in connection to exegesis. For instance, whereas form and rhetorical criticism examine how broader discourses link units together to create meaning, historical, genre, and tradition criticism examine the social and historical context of language. The exegetical chapters concentrate on the historical and literary techniques that biblical scholars frequently employ.

In *Culture, Communication, and Context,* Wendland (1987) argues that translation that is not based on the original text but on a translation may affect the receptor language text due to the interposed version's linguistic and sociocultural qualities. Bible translation is one of the most challenging forms of communication. Thus, a translator must be prepared to meet obstacles while he or she works. This is because at least two message-transmission events are involved: the primary event, which created the text in the source language (SL), and the secondary event, in which the message is replicated in the receptor

language (RL) much later and in a new socio-cultural milieu. A team will rely on other translations for their "text," usually in one or more of the area's major languages. West African translators use English, French, or Hausa. Translators can consult original-referencing commentaries and exegetical advisers who are not RL native speakers (Wendland, 1987). The assertion that translation that is not based on the original text but on a translation may affect the receptor language text is vital for our research on the translation of deity into Asante Twi.

Mojola posits that the source text, the source language, and the source culture are just a handful of the many "worlds" that lay beneath each given translation. The "worlds" of the receptor or target—their culture and language— may be distant in both time and location. The translator must bridge the gap between the two worlds of the source text, language, and culture. African Christians will be able to interpret the Bible passages in their own languages for themselves, based on their command of their own native idioms and native thought processes, thanks to the translation of the Bible into African languages. Trained biblical scholars will look to the text, culture, and language of the original for clues to the text's meaning and interpretation (Yorke & Renju, 2004).

With special attention to the New International Edition, Barker (2003) explores translation ideologies. Barker identifies two main categories of translations. He contends that one of the first considerations for translators as they begin the task of translating the Bible is the type of translation they hope to make and the philosophy, theory, or methodology that must be used in order

to generate the intended results. The translation philosophies mentioned by Barker are pertinent to our investigation.

As with Barker (2003), Rhodes discusses formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence as translation methods scholars have utilised. The formal equivalence advocates for the most literal translation feasible. The translator makes every effort to replicate the exact words from Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek into the receptor language. The translation is word-for-word. This method's purpose is to correctly reproduce the grammar and syntax of the original Hebrew or Greek. The dynamic equivalence method proposes a more accessible translation that does not provide a perfect word-for-word rendition of the text but rather focuses on communicating the text's meaning. It is a meaning-driven translation that aims to have the same dynamic impact on modern readers as the original did on its audience. It is a modern-language re-statement of a translation, frequently enlarged for clarity. Some Bible publishers propose combining the word-for-word and concept-for-thought translation approaches. Word-for-word translation is employed for passages of Scripture where such an approach gives a clear interpretation, and thought-for-thought translation is used where the word-for-word translation may appear more difficult to understand (Rhodes, 2009).

Furthermore, Alter contends that dynamic equivalence transposes Bible verbal formulations and idioms onto current ones. Dynamic equivalency is sometimes a sermonic explanation of a clear Hebrew phrase. Bible poetry is more syntactically flexible than prose. Poetry thrives on tracing formal patterns—symmetrical, oppositional, and repetitive—in syntactic rearrangements. Words shape the poetic world in any creative literary work. It

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is vital to translate Hebrew prose rhythms as closely as possible into English or Asante Twi (Alter, 2019).

Moreover, Alter observes that any translation of a great work of literature is bound to be imperfect sometimes. Central aspects of literary style in the Hebrew Bible have to be addressed in the English translation (by extension in the *Asante* Twi), within the limits imposed by the disparities between the two languages, and to attempt to make clear what is lost in the failure to address the enlivening and determinative role of style in the Bible. Alter argues that lines of verse exhibit persuasive force in the Psalm. Alter indicates that there are issues with translating efficiently and appropriately an ancient text that is structurally and semantically different from our linguistic world while also representing what actually goes on in the Hebrew literary text faithfully and accurately (Alter, 2019).

Assessing a Bible is one of the topics that Greenstein (2020) covers. He also comments on biblical methodology and translation. He contends that the act of translating from one language to another may constitute a skill and be reflective of an art, and that translators must strive to render the entire worldview of the culture from which the source text originates. His argument is based on the fact that translators must take into account the cultural context of the text they are translating. For the sake of our investigation, the things that he writes regarding biblical techniques and translation are both interesting and helpful.

The Asante and the Asante Twi Bible

The Asante are one of the Akan-speaking peoples. The Akan, comprising a number of divisions that include the Asante, Adanse, Bono, Asen, Twifo, Fante, Akuapem, Akyem, Akwamu, Kwawu, Sehwi, Aowin, Nzima, and Ahanta, occupy 9 out of the 16 administrative regions of the country. As kinsmen, they have in common many political, social, religious, and cultural institutions, though there are local varieties (Buah, 1998).

According to tradition there were a number of states which were tributary to the *Denkyira*. These states came together to form a union in order to present a united front to fight against the *Denkyira* for their independence. The name Asante is derived from this process of forming a union so as to destroy the political hegemony of *Denkyira*. *Sa* means war or battle and *nti* means because of or the reason why. When the King of *Denkyira* heard that the various States were planning to form a union, he thought that it was because of war against his State that they were forming the union. The King of *Denkyira* called the States *Santifoɔ* meaning people who formed a union because of war. Until that time the name Asante was not known but the various States were in existence. The traditional histories of Kumasi, Mampong, Asumegya, Juaben, and Aduaben indicates a segmentary society with autonomous groups bound by ties of clanship. A traditional State then had a permanent population which was composed of the members of the various *mmusua* (lineages) and the clans in the towns and villages within a traditional area (Effa Ababio, 2015).

Danquah (1968) makes an attempt to look into the Akan understanding of God. He investigates the Akan God and Akan thought. Danquah describes

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the Akan Supreme Being, also known as *Onyame*, *Onyankopɔn*, and *Odomankoma*. He elaborates on virtue, evil, moral development, and human progress at length. Danquah claims that Akan religious belief recognises just one God and that the Akan have, through their own intelligence, been able to view God in a way that provides the West no grounds for a feeling of superiority. Danquah links the ancient Akan to the North African Cush peoples. The Akan believes that the supernatural and the invisible are just as real as the visible and measurable world. The Akan and, for that matter, the Asante have what it takes to translate the supernatural and invisible realities in the Bible with what pertains to their culture, and this study investigates that. So much as the Akan system may be regarded as having grown in line with other theological beliefs, *Onyame* is the foundation of Akan deism. By highlighting the significance of the Supreme Being in Akan religious philosophy, Danquah's work contributes to this investigation.

Similarly, Addae (1970) discusses some aspects of the religious beliefs held by the Asante. He contends that the religious beliefs of the Asante are founded on three primary tenets: the belief in a Supreme Being; the belief in a multitude of lesser gods; and the belief in ancestral spirits. Addae's description of the origin of the Asante, as well as how they conceived of human beings, lesser gods, and other classes of divinities, adds a level of interest and utility to this research. This is because the Asante have what it takes to respond to translating *Elohim* as lesser deities, and this needs to be examined.

Likewise, Dodoo Jr. (1971) explores the cultural resource features of the Asante people and how those factors relate to the way resources are seen and

used. He talks about the political and social organisation of the Asante, the Supreme Being and the pantheon of gods, the lesser spirits, the ancestors, and the living members of the tribe. According to Dodoo Jr.'s interpretation of Asante cosmology, the Supreme Being ruled over all other gods and was the source of their vitality. The things that he has to say about the Asante are both interesting and helpful to this investigation.

In addition, Asare Opoku (1978), who writes about traditional religion in West Africa, argues that the divinities were created by God to fulfil specific functions and that they did not come into existence of their own volition. He states that the traditional religion in West Africa is monotheistic. The divine beings are subject to the same constraints as all other living things. Their strength is restricted to the fulfilment of particular functions, and none of them enjoy the limitless abilities that are attributed to God. What Asare Opoku asserts about traditional religion in West Africa is also true of the Asante. This is very significant because this truth is relevant when engaging with any translation of the biblical text into Asante. Asare Opoku explores the divinities and spirits that feature in the traditional religion of West Africa. This study is going to benefit from his really perceptive exploration of the Akan notion of person.

According to Ryan (1980), both outside observers and some African Christians who are insiders have perpetuated a propensity to categorise African notions of the transcendent under still-basically foreign Semitic or Indo-European theological categories. Ryan claims further that West African Bible translators are hesitant to translate the plural connotation of *Elohim* with the terminology for lower transcendent entities recognised in West Africa. Ryan contends that the Yoruba and Akan languages are more linguistically suited to

convey God's total uniqueness. As a result, additional and precise terminological care is required when describing how these two great West African communities have approached the transcendent. He suggests that, in the process of deconstructing the category of God and the gods in West Africa, the *abosom* deserves a separate and distinct place on a list of technical terms. What Ryan affirms is intriguing and pertinent to this investigation.

Besides, Sarpong (1998) presents issues in the guise of a letter to a fictional ancestor. He describes the transformations that have taken place in the society that our ancestors left behind, evaluating which of these transformations are positive, which are neutral, and which are regrettable. After that, he makes a contrast between the current circumstances and those that, in his mind, existed in the past. In a roundabout manner, Sarpong addresses all of the significant issues that are of interest to the State, the Church, and individual people. This study could benefit from his conversational epistles that deal with African religion and Christianity, inculturation, and Asante Christology.

Similarly, Sarpong (2006) discusses many subjects in the form of letters to an imaginary ancestor, pointing out to the present world what happened in the past and what is happening now. Much of what he offers from a cultural standpoint, based on his personal experiences, is really interesting. His ideas on cultural discourse, cultural features, and having a plural for *Onyame* are all relevant to this study.

Ekem (2011) attempts to provide us with the history of the early translations of the Bible into the languages of Ga, Ewe, Akuapem Twi, and Asante Twi, respectively. Mfantse is also mentioned in this work. Ekem gives

an account of activities that are still going on today and demonstrates to us how efforts are still being made to enhance the quality of the Bible when it is translated into various languages. Ekem attributes the process of translating the Bible into Ghana's mother tongue to Jacobus Capitein, a Ghanaian who started doing so in the 15th century. He recounts the efforts of a number of other Ghanaians and foreign missionaries who worked on the translation of the Bible during the 15th and 20th centuries. Ekem writes on the Akuapem-Twi Bible as well as the Asante-Twi Bible, and he provides a wealth of information regarding the development of the Asante-Twi Bible (Ekem, 2011). His work is insightful and will be of use for this study.

According to Dickson (1984), African theologians repeat the same tired cliches that have been popularised in Europe and the United States. As a result, most African theologians who have received their training in the West are more comfortable with Western theological ideas. Additionally, Dickson posits that it is not always recognised that using another person's language is, to a large extent, having one's train of thought set in a particular direction, and that language plays an important role in determining what parameters are to be taken into account in particular areas of study. Dickson suggests that a people's language is just one of many factors (including their history, traditional religion, social circumstances, and the location within which they can be viewed in their contextual reality) that define that people. The question then arises of how the translation of the scriptures in Asante Twi can be viewed in relation to the contextual reality of Asante religio-cultural life and thought. He contends that African Christians must have access to a cultural medium that allows for creative expression in order to adequately communicate what Christ means to

them. Culture, according to Dickson, is crucially formative because people are at their most effective when using the language and mental patterns with which they have been raised. He claims that the African way of life can be summed up as the union of the divine and the human within the bounds of a sacred tradition. He makes the observation that in African culture, language, morals, art, and typically material creations, including tools, are all part of a larger whole that cannot be easily separated from religion. That is to say, the economics, politics, legal systems, and all the other societal institutions and arrangements put in place to maintain the welfare of a community are all included in a people's culture. Dickson examines the religious and cultural landscape of Africa, touching on topics including deities, human nature, social organisation, and the relationship between faith and the natural world. His contributions are crucial to our research.

Further, Gyekye (1987) looks into how the Akan view wisdom. He contends that the Akan notion that thinking is a function of the spirit and that *nyansa* is made possible by the spirit (*sunsum*) of a person is the foundation for the idea that *nyansa* is inborn. According to the Akan notion of the individual, *sunsum* is a natural ability that a person possesses from birth. According to Gyekye, religious thinking and practise frequently serve as the initial place where the drive for philosophical contemplation manifests itself. According to him, the Akan's religious vocabulary, outlook, and practises offer a wealth of information on how they view the world. Therefore, if the Akan and, for that matter, the Asante have religious vocabulary that offers a wealth of information on how they view the world, can this be of any use in Bible

translation into Asante Twi? In addition to examining God and the other categories of being in Akan cosmology, he talks about the ideas of being and causation in Akan ontology. Gyekye offers some critical observations about the Akan ontology that will be useful in this inquiry. This is because any translation of the Bible dealing with belief in God and deities should take into account the people's underlying understanding of God.

According to Afriyie (2014), Christians in Ghana have made severe attacks on the Akan idea of *abosom*. This claim is supported by the observation that the Twi translation of the Bible occasionally uses the word *abosom* to translate gods. The view of Afriyie seems to suggest that the Christian attacks on the Akan idea of *abosom* may have stemmed from the fact that the missionary translators of the Asante Twi Bible chose not to use it in translating *Elohim* (gods). She examines the entire idea of the *abosom* in Akan religion, including its nature, its link to *Onyankopɔn* and humans, as well as its function in the interaction between humans and *Onyankopɔn*, and how this relates to Christian faith. Afriyie provides a brief overview of the Akan of Ghana, their worldview, their idea of *abosom*, their function as mediators, the function of Jesus Christ as the mediator between *Onyankopɔn* and humans, and a comparison of the *abosom*'s and Jesus Christ's mediatory responsibilities. The discussion by Afriyie is highly interesting and beneficial for this research.

Agyekum (1996) studies Akan linguistic taboos. His perceptive analysis of taboos as a system that has categories, subcategories, and interrelationships provides a thorough knowledge of the Akan worldview, language, and culture,

as well as the behaviour of the Akan people, which includes the Asante. His work addresses a variety of important topics, including the subjects' religious views and communicative behaviours, amongst a great many others. Agyekum's assertions about the Akan language and people, God and the other deities, the concept of *Saman* (the ghost), ancestors, and the sacredness of death is useful for this study.

In his book Theology and Identity, Bediako (1999) argues that Christians should seek clarification on how the Gospel of Jesus Christ relates to the inevitable issues and questions that arise from the Christian's cultural existence in the world, and how this relationship is achieved without injuring the integrity of the Gospel. Bediako addresses the issue of the Gospel's relationship to culture, arguing that we must go to the Bible and a credible historical perspective for the answer. If Bediako maintains that theology must constantly address issues with their roots in a particular culture, then it presupposes that theology must address the issue of the translation of *Elohim* (gods) as *anyame*. He elaborates on the intellectual and spiritual currents that drove the modern West's missionary expansion into Africa. He argues that the ethnocentrism of much of the missionary endeavour led to a theological misunderstanding of the nature of the Christian Gospel and hence to an inadequate grasp of African religious tradition. He discusses how African theologians have responded to missionaries' disregard for African pre-Christian religious history and to more in-depth, long-standing questions about how the Gospel relates to African culture.

Moreover, Sarpong (2020) addresses the topic of inculturation in the context of evangelism. He points out that in order to proclaim Jesus Christ to people, it is very important to the Church's reason for being to take into consideration the cultural idiosyncrasies of the people being evangelised. Did the translators make an attempt to recognise and utilise all the rich elements of Asante culture in the translation of the Asante Twi Bible? In his article, Sarpong contends that the term "inculturation" is the most accurate way to describe the process of internalising one's religious beliefs. According to him, the concept of inculturation can be traced back to the incarnation of Christ and is concerned with the entirety of the Christian life. His discussion of the African conception of the human person, particularly that of the Akan people of Ghana, as well as the outline of African traditional religion dealing with spirits, the Supreme Being, Tutelary spirits, and ancestors, are helpful to this study.

In concluding this review, it should be emphasised that an effort has been made to review the chosen literature by subject matter. From the views of the authors, it can be noted that *Elohim* is used in the BHS to mean several things and also to depict how Israel perceived *Elohim*. For the translation of Psalm 82 in the Asante Twi Bible to be meaningful, the Asante must be looked at in their traditional lives and thoughts. Poetry and its interpretation are also considered to help appreciate the interpretation of Psalm 82.

Organization of Work

This work is organised into six chapters, with subdivisions where appropriate. The first chapter is an introduction to the research. It provides a background to the study, a synopsis of the book Psalms, and how important Psalms is to Christians in general as well as Christians in Ghana. The Chapter

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also spells out clearly the problem to be tackled and the significance of the study, discusses the methodology and conceptual framework used in the research, and reviews some literature bearing some significance to the research.

The second chapter discusses biblical translation theory. The history and need for Bible translations, the process of translating the Bible, and the emergence of English translations and versions are all investigated. The third Chapter discusses the exegesis of Psalm 82. A reading of the Hebrew text Ps. 82 using tools such as the Form Critical Method is done. The structure and metric patterns of Ps. 82 are studied to determine how to interpret them. Textual criticism, literary analysis, and interpretation of the text are carried out.

In the fourth Chapter, the discussion considers the origins and essence of the Asante Twi Bible as well as the impetus behind its translation, the analysis of the Asante Twi translation of *Nnwom* (Psalm) 82 in the Asante Twi Bible. It carries out a textual and literary analysis of the translation. It examines the focus of Psalm 82, selected views of scholars, views of Akan language experts, and views of selected Asante pastors and Asante readers on the concept of *Elohim* in Ps. 82.

The fifth Chapter examines the Religio-cultural thought of the Asante of Ghana because they are the people for whom the Asante Twi Bible was translated. The chapter also discusses Asante morphology. The fifth Chapter also examines the implications of the rendering of the concept of *Elohim* in Ps. 82: *Elohim* as deities and *Elohim* as humans. The chapter analyses the understanding of *Elohim* in Asante Religio-cultural thought and the influence

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of Asante Religio-cultural thought on the translation of *Elohim* in Ps. 82 in the
Asante Twi Bible. The sixth chapter presents conclusions.

CHAPTER TWO

THE THEORY OF BIBLICAL TRANSLATION

Introduction

As indicated in Chapter One, the background and overview of this study were discussed. Next, this chapter examines the theory of Biblical translation and the history of and the need for Bible translations.

The Bible

The English word Bible is derived from the Greek *biblion* meaning a scroll. This word and its plural, *biblia*, were both used to denote any kind of written document. However, Christianity, from the beginning adopted the plural form *biblia* to denote the Hebrew Bible and the Christian writings that make up what is today the New Testament (Mensah, 2018). Greek *biblia* (books), *ta biblia* (the books) acknowledged as canonical by the Christian Church is attested in 2 Clement (in about 150CE) (Marshall et al, 1996). The Scriptures used by most readers, whether Jewish, Protestant, Roman Catholics, or Eastern Orthodox are based on much older manuscripts that have been translated into English, like the Masoretic Text, the Septuagint, the Vulgate, and the Peshitta. The Leningrad codex is our earliest complete Masoretic Hebrew of the Ben Asher tradition and used by most biblical scholars in its published edition *Biblia Hebraica Sttutgartensia* (BHS) or the earlier Biblia Hebraica. It is from this that almost all modern English translations of the Christian Old Testament are based. The *Septuagint* is the most important of all the ancient versions or translations of the Hebrew Bible. The translations that were made of the other Hebrew books into Greek were generally literal and reflected the Hebrew text closely, although

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in many cases they differed markedly from the Masoretic text. *Septuagint* has books which differs from the arrangement found in the Hebrew Bible which reflects different stages of canonisation: *Torah*, *Nevi'im*, *Ketuvim*. The names of some books in the *Septuagint* or the Greek text are also different from the names such books bear in the Masoretic text. Example, Genesis in *Septuagint*, is *bereshit*. Most modern Bibles derive the titles of books from the *Septuagint* and have also adopted their fourfold arrangement of the Old Testament. The number of English translations and revisions have increased as a result of new manuscript discoveries that further clarified the original text of the Bible, gains of scholarship over the previous fifty years, continuing changes in the English language between the 1950s and the 1990s, and an increased desire for inclusive language (Mensah, 2018). As at the 2020s many languages have been reduced to writing in order to translate the Bible into those languages in full or in part (Marshall et al, 1996).

The Nature of Bible Translation

The art of translation involves adapting ideas from one language and culture to the syntax, style and vocabulary of another language and culture. There are a lot more factors at play than just switching one Hebrew word for an English term. To comprehend the author's form, nuance, and context, one must interpret the original text (Owens, 1989). A translation, according to Frank, is a text that has been created from a source text that was originally written in a different language and exhibits features that are equivalent to those of the source text (Frank, 2008). When translators set out to translate the Bible, among the first questions they must face includes, what type of translation do we want to

produce, and what translation philosophy, theory, method, or approach must we follow in order to achieve the desired results (Barker, 2003).

According to Alter, translation should be driven by a strong sense that the literary style of the Bible, whether prose or poetry, is the essential medium through which the biblical picture of God, human nature, history, politics, society, and moral value is communicated. Alter gives an example using the prophet Isaiah who communicated his visions to the audiences of his time in poetry often, using wordplay to express what he saw as the perversion of values in his society. Alter argues that Isaiah frequently juxtaposed in his poems two words that sounded almost alike but were opposite in meaning, with the intention of showing linguistically how they had turned moral values upside down, substituting evil for good, and vice for virtue. Without wordplay one misses the point of the prophecies. A translator must, therefore, seek as much as it is feasible to create equivalents in the receptor language one is translating into (Alter, 2019).

Additionally, translational action cannot take place until the worldview of a linguistic group is comprehended. Translational decisions are based on a fundamental rule which determines whether something is transferred, what is transferred, and how it is transferred (Reib and Vermeer, 2014). Translations carefully consider the people who will utilise them or gain from them. The requirements of these readers of the Bible, their histories, including their social, cultural, economic, and religious backgrounds, as well as their age, gender, and ideologies, are all important considerations. These factors in turn affect the translation process, strategies, methods, and decisions, as well as the kind and quality of the translated text that is produced. The project's financiers provide

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the translators with instructions or the translation brief (skopos). The sort of audience for whom the translation is intended, the function or use for which the translation is intended, the type of translation necessary, and level of language recommended for use are all typically specified in advance by the sponsors. It is expected of translators that they are proficient in their mother tongue or frequent users of the receptor language, as well as well-versed in the complexities and nuances of the source language content. The practise of employing different translations as the source texts for third-language target materials is common (Mojola, 2003).

Newman Anane Aboagye, a GILLBT administrator, noted that translating the Bible involves eight steps: survey, language acquisition, alphabet development, translation, literacy, checking, printing, and dedication. Initial surveys count and locate language speakers. How closely that language is related to other regional tongues and whether speakers use it regularly. After choosing a language, the researcher explores its grammar and sound system. If the language has not been written down, an alphabet that precisely and sufficiently expresses its sounds is created. After investigating the language and agreeing on an alphabet with the community, mother-tongue translators are located and trained. A translation committee includes local Christian denominations. Facilitators help mother-tongue translators understand Bible text and translation issues. Translators encourage target-language readers throughout translation efforts. A translation consultant will sit with the translators while they draught portions of the Scriptures and have them cross-checked by local reviewers to ensure that the translation is correct, clear, and natural, expressing the meaning of the original text in the natural patterns of the

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mother tongue. Typesetting and printing the Scriptures in another language are the final processes.

In addition, Bible translation may work within a well-designed method or operate intuitively. People often use the word "translation" to describe a text that is supposed to be a translation of a text written in another language. The translator must seek to render the entire worldview of the culture in which the source-text originates. Translators have since ancient times distinguished between what constitutes the source which they seek to translate and what they are resigned to dismiss. Each translation sets goals, which are in turn determined by the function(s) that the translation is meant to serve. In assessing the degree of a translation's success, one ought to measure the translation's achievement against its avowed goals and functions. The different translation modes seek to accomplish different goals (Greenstein, 2020).

Moreover, Bible linguists and translators typically discuss two main categories of translations. The first is referred to in a variety of ways, including formal, complete, literal, and gloss equivalency. This strategy aims for a word-for-word reproduction as closely as feasible (Barker, 2003). The literal translation is a word-for-word rendering of the Hebrew and Greek texts using equivalent terminology in the translation language. It is also known as text-oriented translation since the meaning is contained within the text, which is translated into another language as accurately as possible. Literal translations include the Septuagint, Jerome's Vulgate, King James Version, American Standard Version, Revised Standard Version, and the New Jewish Publication Society Version (Walker-Jones, 2003). Formal equivalence advocates as literal a rendering as possible. The translator attempts to render the exact words from

Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek into the receptor language. The rendering is accurately reproducing grammar and syntax of the original Hebrew or Greek (Rhodes, 2009). For example, in Psalm 29:1 (BHS), a literal rendering of בְּנֵי אֵלִים are sons of gods; however, the NRSV, which is a literal translation, translates בְּנֵי אֵלִים as heavenly beings, which is more of an interpretive rendering. It is obvious that the source was the Hebrew Bible.

Many of the first missionary translators throughout the two-thirds (non-Western) globe were influenced by this tradition of translation, particularly the King James Version. However, literal translation can result in odd, unsettling, or even inaccurate translations. Thus, most literal translations recognise the need to be idiomatic to avoid misunderstanding (Walker-Jones, 2003).

It is understandable that all translation involves interpretation. At every point, the translator is required to interpret, evaluate, judge, and choose the source text and render a faithful translation into the target language (Barker, 2003). Simonetti argues that there were two fundamental directions which interpretation could take for Judaism. The first was of a legislative nature aimed at responding to questions arising from the practical application of the sacred text to everyday life. The second of a more varied scope concerned edification of the people. The interpretation of any given text was made according to different procedures: by linking it to one or more related passages of Scripture, or on the basis of a more comprehensive examination of the context (Simonetti, 1994).

Longenecker contends that in the first century Jewish interpreters believed in the divine inspiration of the Scriptures, were convinced that the Torah contained the entire truth of God for the guidance of man, dealt with both

the plain or obvious meanings and the implied or deduced meanings, made the words of God meaningful and relevant to the people in their present situations. Jewish interpreters utilised both literalist approaches to Scripture and more sophisticated and intricate methods of interpretation. Longenecker (1975), posits that the Jewish interpretation during the first century encompassed various approaches, including literalist, Midrashic, pesheric, and allegorical methods. According to medieval Jewish interpretation, there are four ways to understand the meanings behind the biblical texts namely *peshat*, *remez*, *derash*, and *sod*. *Peshat* means plain or simple, and it refers to the most literal or surface meaning of the text. *Remez* means hints. This approach reads a text in an allegoric way to find hidden or symbolic elements beyond the literal sense. *Derash* means to inquire or seek, and it provides the Hebrew root of Midrash, the rabbinic way of reading Scripture that elucidates its meaning by comparing words and phrases that appear throughout the Bible. *Sod* means mystery or secret. It is a way of looking for the esoteric and mystical meaning of the biblical text, and it is a favourite form of interpretation in *Kabbalah* (Israel Bible Center, 2022).

Moving on from here we now consider the second major type of translation defined as dynamic, functional, and idiomatic equivalence. All Bible translators use dynamic equivalence to some extent as a translation basis (Barker, 2003). The goal of dynamic equivalence is to convey the meaning of an idiom in the target language using the idioms that are unique to that language. There is a willingness to alter the wording in this instance in order to maintain the audience's effect. Idiomatic translations strive to have the same impact on

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the translations audience as it had on the original audience (Walker-Jones, 2003).

The dynamic equivalence method advocates a more readable translation that does not provide an exact rendering of the text, word for word, but rather focuses on communicating the meaning of the text. It is a thought for thought, meaning driven translation that seeks to produce the same dynamic effect on contemporary readers as the original did on its audience (Rhodes, 2009). An aim of functional equivalence translation is to produce the same semantic effect for the readers or hearers, that the text had in its original language, time and place. Moving from one language to another is by definition a change in language form, no matter how literal the translation (Cosgrove, 2003). Using the dynamic equivalence method, the NIV translates Psalm 29:1 as: Ascribe to the LORD, O mighty ones, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength. The translators using the sense for sense method translates בְּנֵי אֵלִים as 'mighty ones' to avoid a rendering that may suggest sons of gods. The Septuagint having a similar difficulty translates בְּנֵי אֵלִים as υἱοὶ θεοῦ. אֵלִים a plural word meaning gods is translated into θεοῦ a singular word meaning God.

Alter argues that the dynamic equivalence method inevitably entails a palpable degree of misrepresentation of the Bible's literary vehicle (Alter, 2019). The appeal that Bible translators make to various language advances is eclectic in nature, acknowledging the complexity of the task and appreciating the variety of contributions made (Carson, 2003). Some Bible publishers advocate a translation that combines both the formal and dynamic equivalence.

Word for word is used for portions of Scripture where such an approach yields a clear rendering, and thought for thought where the word for word translation might seem harder to understand. Paraphrase is a re-statement of a translation in modern terms and vocabulary, often expanded for clarity (Rhodes, 2009).

Bible translation uses structuralism as a linguistic philosophy and approach to analyse the language of the biblical text based on the structure or formal characteristics of the language itself. Structuralism is a descriptive approach to a synchronic or diachronic analysis of language. The historical basis for our knowledge of a history is the focus of a diachronic study. Its structure, as shown by irreducible units of phonological, morphological, and semantic traits, provides the basis for the analysis. The value of each part relies on the other parts being there at the same time in the language system that Bible translators see as having all the parts fit together. Therefore, structuralism analyses how a person thinks from the concept until the appearance of signs and makes the form a language system. De Saussure suggests that a word's meaning is based less on the object it refers to and more in its structure. He further intimates that when a person chooses a word, he does so in the context of having had the chance to choose other words (Zaman Al Umma, 2015).

Frank sees translation as a two-step process starting from a source text, and determining the meaning, and then expressing that meaning in the most natural way in the receptor dialect. Frank also mentions functional approach which focuses on meaning, function, integration, unity in translation. Frank makes the assumption that a source text serves as the basis for a translation and that the main consideration is the message the original author meant to convey. He mentions that the structural-functional model recognises four primary

groups of players, the original author, the translation team, the target audience, and third-party stakeholders, each having a distinct viewpoint on and motivation for translation. The translator or translation team is the second most important participant after the original author. Translation is done with both a goal and an audience in mind. The audience of a translation have a reason for listening to the speech act. A translation involves an original author with a communication goal, a translator or translation team, an audience with their own goals, and additional interested parties with their own goals who can and frequently do influence the translation. These interested parties may be the sponsors and the critics in the translation process (Frank, 2008).

The philosophy of deconstructionism is another one that Bible translators use in their work. Deconstructionists argue that the translator's work is to analyse the text in a manner wherein the meaning for the receptor group may be established (Marshall et al., 1996).

In the foreword to Bible Translation & African Languages by Yorke & Renju, Mojola affirms that behind every translation there is a complex set of "worlds," among others. These worlds may be removed in time and space from the "worlds" of the receptor or target – culture and language. It is the task and challenge of the translator to translate the text and culture. Translations into African languages empowers readers to interpret texts in their own languages, for themselves, on the basis of mastery of their own native idioms and native thought forms. The trained biblical scholar would want to explore the structures and symbolisms embedded in the underlying source – text, culture and language as a guide to meaning and interpretation (Yorke & Renju, 2004).

Readers organise texts, assign meaning to textual cues, and elicit pragmatic effect, according to Noorda, within bounds established by the dynamics of convention and innovation in text and with readers. Meaning is determined by reader attitudes. They give a text meaning through their interaction with it (Noorda, 2002). When translations are made, what appears in a translation is the translator's understanding of the original (Hayes & Holladay, 1987).

History of Bible Translations and the Need for Bible Translations

The translation of the Bible has always been central to God's mission. Around 170 CE, the first translation of the Scriptures in the Christian era was into Syriac. In the centuries that followed, Bible translation spread from Syria to Armenia, Georgia, Samarkand, and beyond. The Septuagint, a translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek around 130 BCE for Greek-speaking Jews, served as the Old Testament's source text almost always. In approximately 328 CE, the Pope instructed his secretary, Jerome, to create a new Latin translation. Jerome had access to Scripture texts in both Hebrew and Greek because of Origen's work (Morgan, 2022).

The spread of Christianity into other language domains other than Hebrew orchestrated a need for the translation of the Bible. As Christianity spread among the people who spoke Latin, and Latin began to emerge as a church language, the need arose for Bible translations and it began from 200 CE. The translations were known as 'Old Latin' or *Vetus Latina* and were only at first independent efforts to supply the needs of local congregation. By the fourth century, the number of copies, revisions and recensions of these texts had

grown to such an extent that the need was felt for the establishment of one authoritative Latin Bible-text out of the many text-forms that were in circulation. Jerome dedicated fifteen years to this new translation and when he had finished, named it the Vulgate meaning the common version. It became the standard Bible in Europe throughout the Middle Ages (Mensah, 2018).

Cyril and Methodius translated the Bible for the Slavs during the Middle Ages. Biblical passages were rendered in Arabic in Seville, Baghdad, and Damascus. Bede rendered the gospel of John into Old English. John Wycliffe translated the Scriptures from the Vulgate into Middle English for the common people in 14th-century England. Jan Hus and others in Prague translated the Bible into Hungarian and Czech. In the 15th century, Bible translation took a different path. Due to the collapse of Constantinople in 1453, scholars fled westward with their Greek and Hebrew texts, bringing with them knowledge and access to texts that had been lost in the Western Church. Erasmus of Rotterdam published a Greek New Testament edition in 1516 (Morgan, 2022).

In the 1520s Tyndale completed a substantial section of the Old Testament and the New Testament in English from the original languages. Tyndale Bible provided basis and became the model of other English Bibles that came later (Alter, 2019). The English translation of the Bible by Tyndale stands out for English speakers. He devised numerous expressions that conveyed profound meaning, including "missing the mark," "at-one-ment," "land of the living," and "apple of my eye," among others. The 1611 King James Version retained the majority of Tyndale's ground-breaking work (Morgan, 2022).

In 1546, in reaction to biblical orientation of the Protestant Reformation, the Vulgate was officially elevated to the position of the authoritative text (*textus auctoritate plenus*), asserting its sole sufficiency and demanding that all other translations of the Bible be based on it. It was not until 1943 that an encyclical on Scripture Studies – *Divino afflante Spiritu* – from Pope Pius XII permitted Roman Catholics Scholars to work from the original languages (Mensah, 2018).

In the subsequent two hundred years, the rate of Bible translation diminished, but in the early nineteenth century, in response to the expansion of missions along the coasts of Africa and India, it picked up again. In the 1880s, when colonial and discriminatory attitudes were on the rise, the Yoruba-speaking Anglican bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther translated the Bible into Yoruba. Crowther formulated terms for Christianity as an African religion through the use of African languages in the Bible, prayer, worship, and study. When colonial attitudes prevailed, translation into African mother tongues nearly ceased because colonial European languages were regarded as adequate (Morgan, 2022).

Tyndale's work is what led to the emergence of English translations and versions. The following shall consider some examples of Bible translations and possibly how it was translated.

The Emergence of English Translations and Versions

Bible versions and translations in English are discussed because it appears that more Bibles are distributed in English than in any other of the over two thousand languages spoken in the world (see Marshall et al, 1996). Also,

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the Asante Twi Bible was translated from the English Authorised Version. According to Adomako and Amoah, who cite Agyekum *et al*., the Bible was first translated into the Asante Twi dialect in the 1960s by translators including J.H. Nketia, R.A. Tabi, Crakye Denteh. Additionally, they emphasise that the 1964 edition of the Asante Twi Bible is an exact translation of the Holy Bible in English (Adomako & Amoah, 2014).

The first complete English Bible was translated from the Vulgate by followers of John Wycliffe, around 1382 to 1396. The enterprise was at first opposed by leaders of the Catholic Church, who felt that allowing common language without the interpretation of a priest would lead to heresy. But as knowledge grew concerning the original, desire for an English translation from the original languages also grew. William Tyndale produced the first English version to be based on the original languages, between 1522 and 1525. Tyndale's attempts to translate the Old Testament from the Hebrew started in Wittenberg. He, however, never completed it, partly because he had to undertake several revisions of the New Testament, and partly because his knowledge of Hebrew was limited. However, he translated the Pentateuch and the Historical Books, using the Hebrew text, the LXX, the Vulgate and Luther's German versions. Tyndale was found guilty of heresy in August 1536 and was strangled and burnt at the stake by Catholic authorities in Belgium on 6 October 1536. After Tyndale, several English translations appeared. Among them were the Roman Catholic Church's sanctioned first official English translation, the Douai-Rheims Bible (1582) (Mensah, 2018). The Douai-Rheims Bible served to broaden the word-base on which the Authorised Version was constructed. It

did give attention to the Greek, as is evidenced by their treatment of the definite article (Marshall et al, 1996).

Tyndale's New Testament, the first printed English New Testament, the first made from the Greek, opened a new period in the history of the English Bible and made an ineradicable contribution to the English Bibles yet to come (Marshall et al, 1996). In 1611, the King of England appointed fifty-four Bible translators to work for uniformity in the English translations. The scholars worked in six panels – three for the Old Testament, two for the New Testament and one for the Apocrypha. The translation was called the Authorised version even though it was never formally authorised. In America, it was called the King James version (KJV). It was marked by elegance and felicity of style and remained for several years as the only version in common use among English-speaking Protestants (Mensah, 2018).

When the nineteenth century came to an end, it became clear that the King James version needed to be updated, partly because the English language had changed - the Shakespearean language of the version was no longer completely intelligible to many people - and partly due to the fact that many early manuscripts of the Bible had been discovered that were older and more accurate than those that were available to the translators. Advances had been made in the study of Biblical Hebrew and Greek, and a translation that would be closer to the original meaning of the texts was deemed necessary. A committee was therefore set up to produce and publish the Revised version in 1885, with an American English Version published in 1901 and given the name the American Standard Version (ASV) (Mensah, 2018). Among the general principles adopted, it was agreed that as few changes as possible were to be

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made. That such changes introduced should be expressed in the language of the Authorised version and its predecessors. The Revised Version did not succeed in displacing the Authorised Version in the affections of the majority of Bible-readers, and was unable to satisfy all of those who were persuaded of the need for a revision. They did, however, open a remarkably prolific period of Bible translation (Marshall et al, 1996).

The 20th century witnessed a rise in encouraging indicators. In 1934, SIL (Summer Institute of Linguistics), established by Cameron Townsend, and the Wycliffe organisations that followed were at the centre of an increasing emphasis on unreached people groups. Bible translation efforts have been profoundly impacted by new technologies. Computers, mobile phones, and the internet have revolutionised the tempo, quality, and method of translation and distribution. The entire Bible has been translated into nearly 700 languages, and over 2500 translation initiatives are currently underway. The translation agenda tends to reflect the desires of those with financial power as opposed to those with local knowledge (Morgan, 2022).

Some Issues at Stake

Noss (2007) categorises Bible translation into three distinct types: Primary translations, Secondary translations, and Tertiary translations. The primary process of translation involves rendering texts from their original languages, namely Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic, into a different target language. Secondary translations are derived from a primary translation, while tertiary translations are derived from a secondary translation.

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Translation of Bible often raises certain special concerns. This would be true of any document having a long history and involving the deep personal attachment of many people and the vast, vested interests of numerous institutions. The conflicts that have arisen over principles and procedures in Bible translating can be viewed from a number of different perspectives (Nida, 1964). The end result of translator's work and their theological bias may intentionally or unintentionally seep into the work if measures are not taken to prevent or minimise it (Walker-Jones, 2003). Mojola argues that the ability of the translator to assume that the content being translated should be of relevance and should be simple for the target audience to understand in the receptor language qualifies him or her as a pioneer (Mojola, 2002).

Modern translators have been somewhat more inclined to trust the text as it is, rather than to re-enforce its meaning. In other words, the Biblical writers are permitted to speak more for themselves, rather than to do special service to some theological cause which the translator himself may represent. Complete objectivity in translation is impossible, for the translator is part of the very cultural context in which and for which he or she is translating (Nida, 1964). A growing corpus of biblical interpretation is emerging. Biblical interpretation is done in context of mission, culture, and the people's experiences of suffering, and faith. African interpretation is done within the context of African culture, and has brought out the view that there are similarities between the biblical world and the African world. African scholars especially those with speciality in the Old Testament have highlighted the continuity as well as the discontinuity between the two worlds (LeMarquand, 2005). Thus, it is important to take into account Bible and African experience.

According to Adjei Arthur, an interviewee, hearing in one's own language gives a better understanding. An example is when in the days of Nehemiah, the text was read and the sense of it was made clear to the people and their response which was evoked by the clarity of the understanding they had gained. Adjei Arthur said, "when people received the word on Pentecost in their native language, their response was receptive". When people do not understand they may approximate the meaning which might be right or totally wrong.

Adjei Arthur continued to say that, whenever people are listening to a word in another language, whereby, they try to approximate the meaning and they get it wrong, their understanding may also be disastrous. For example, with respect to the phrase God bless you, one might approximate bless as *blessez* to a French speaking community. Though *blessez* may sound close to the English word bless, it means to hurt or harm to the French. Words may mean different things in different languages.

It brings issues and elements that might not be present in the original texts when the works are translated from a third language and culture such as English. These problems and elements that are introduced into the receptor text goes a long way to inform and/or influence the theology of the readers (Mojola, 2002).

Yorke & Renju claim that most African biblical scholars and theologians, whether they were trained in the North Atlantic or in Africa, still use foreign translations exclusively for their theology and teaching. Yorke and Renju believe that most African biblical scholars have not paid much attention

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to Bible translations in African languages or considered their full implications and effects in articulating and transmitting a theology supposedly relevant to Africans. African Bibles should be theologically appropriated and thoroughly reviewed for accuracy and clarity. These theologically appropriated and critically researched African Bible translations should be utilised to make thorough recommendations to the National Bible Society as publisher on how to improve the translation when it is next revised. (Yorke, 2004).

Writing on Culture, Communication, and Contextualization, Wendland posits that translation based upon a translation carries with it the possibility that the receptor language text might become distorted as a result of influence from certain linguistic and socio-cultural features of the interposed version. It is, therefore, necessary for a translator to be prepared to face the problems that inevitably arise as he carries out his task. It is important for him to fully recognize the fact that Bible translation is one of the most complex types of communication possible. This is because at least two distinct message-transmission events are involved: the primary event which produced the text, the secondary event which message at least certain aspects of it, are reproduced in the receptor language (RL), at a much later date, and in a new socio-cultural setting. A translation should ideally be grounded on original text, for purposes of our study, the Hebrew Bible. Nevertheless, in many cases, it is not always possible to obtain the services of qualified translators who are competent in the original biblical languages. Thus, a team will be dependent upon other translations for their "text," normally a version in one or more of the major languages of wider communication in the particular area. In the case of West Africa, translators may depend on English, French, or Hausa translations. The

translators can always consult commentaries which refer to the original, and they may have the benefit of comments from exegetical advisers who are not mother tongue speakers of the RL (Wendland, 1987). According to Bediako, translations in Africa must be cognizant of primal religion and world-view of the people (Bediako, 2008).

Bible translation has made it possible for indigenous people to engage in biblical interpretation and also to question existing doctrines in the church and felt needs. Christian faith appears to get rooted into the indigenous cultures wherever Christianity operates in the mother tongue (Atta-Akosah, 2005). Research by biblical scholars on African mother-tongue Bibles are slowly gaining grounds (Mojola, 2013).

As a result of mother tongue translations, theological models for mission in Africa include Inculturation theology, Liberation theology, and Reconstruction theology, and theology that addresses colonial oppression, inequalities among humans, abuse among others. Bible translation is relevant for theological education (Loba-Mkole, 2013). The Asante Twi translation now enables its readers to engage in the above-mentioned theologies in their interactions with the text.

From the foregoing discussion on Bible translations and versions, one issue that clearly stands out is the fact that the biblical text is principally though not exclusively a product of human industry. This is not to say that the Bible is not reliable. The Bible is, indeed, a reliable and trustworthy document. The Dead Sea Scrolls attest to the fact that there is much degree of continuity in the way the text has been hand-copied over thousands of years. There is no perfect

copy of the original manuscripts of the Bible and it is for such reason that scholars and readers of the Bible employ more and more scientific methods to study the Bible (Mensah, 2018).

Conclusion

Text translations and versions help us appreciate the considerable difficulties in translating the Hebrew Bible. The original text translated may work well within a well-designed method or operate intuitively. The translator must seek to render the entire worldview of the culture from which the source text originates. Translators have emphasised accuracy, naturalness, and clarity.

A brief look is taken at some twentieth-century versions. The study looked at the origins, nature, and rationale behind translating the Asante Twi Bible. It has been noticed that translation and interpretation are fundamentally related to one another.

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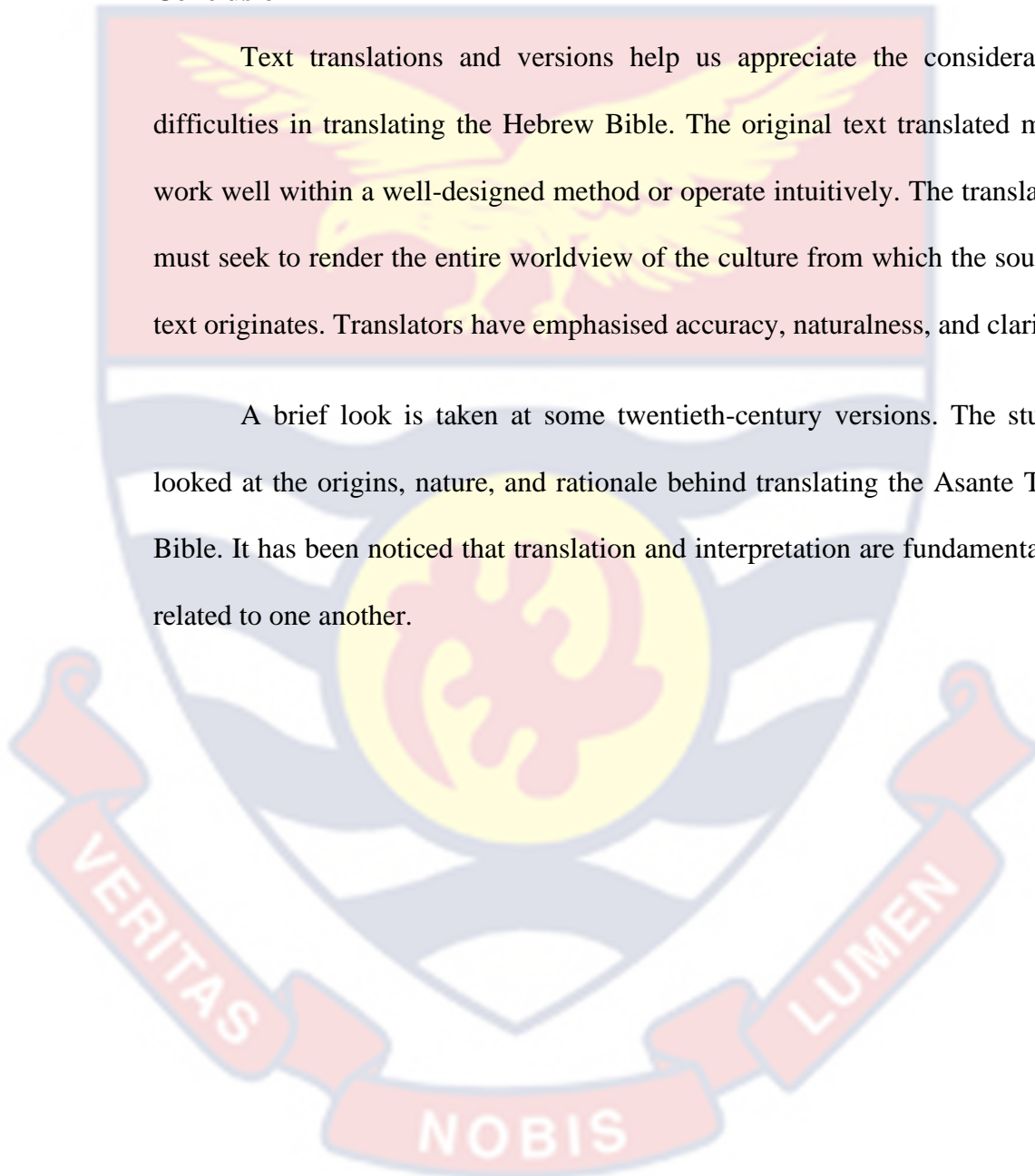
CHAPTER THREE

EXEGESIS OF PSALM 82

Introduction

Having considered the theory of Biblical translation and the history of Bible translation in our previous chapter, we proceed to use the form-critical method discussed in Chapter one under methodology on pages 11–12 of this thesis to carry out an exegesis of Psalm 82 in this chapter. The translation of the *Elohim* in Psalm 82:1b, 6-7 has attracted scholarly attention to seek the identity of the *Elohim*.

Given the focus of this study, this chapter looks at the text of Psalm 82 of the Masoretic text to help us understand what *Elohim* could mean. This chapter reads the text in its original context to see how the first readers for whom it was made understood it. Further, the chapter presents a translation and considers the textual problems that one could encounter in dealing with the text, a literary analysis and interpretation, identifying the various poetic devices used and the part they play in the translation of the psalm, structure and metric patterns, and the views of selected scholars.

Psalm 82 – Hebrew Text

82¹ מִזְמוֹר לְאָסָף אֱלֹהִים נִצָּב בַּעֲדַת־אֵל בְּקֶרֶב אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט׃

² עַד־מָתַי תִּשְׁפְּטוּ־עָוֶל וּפְנֵי רְשָׁעִים תִּשְׂאוּ־סֶלָה׃

³ שִׁפְטוּ־דַל וְיָתוֹם עָנִי וָרָשׁ הַצְדִּיקוּ׃

⁴ פַּלְּטוּ־דַל וְאֶבְיוֹן מִיַּד רְשָׁעִים הַצִּילוּ׃

⁵ לֹא יָדְעוּ וְלֹא יָבִינוּ בַּחֲשֵׁכָה יִתְהַלָּכוּ יִמּוֹטוּ כָּל־מוֹסְדֵי אָרֶץ׃

⁶ אֲנִי־אָמַרְתִּי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם וּבְנֵי עֶלְיוֹן כֻּלְּכֶם׃

⁷ אָכֵן כְּאָדָם תְּמוּתוּן וּכְאַחַד הַשָּׂרִים תִּפֹּלוּ׃

⁸ קוּמָה אֱלֹהִים שָׁפְטָה הָאָרֶץ כִּי־אַתָּה תִנְחַל בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם:

Translation

It should be noted that the translation is mine and is as close as possible to the literal meaning as possible.

1 A psalm of Asaph.

Elohim takes his stand in the assembly of El;

in the midst of *Elohim* he judges.

2 How long will you judge wrong (unjustly),

and (you) show partiality to the wicked? Selah.

3 Give justice to the poor and the fatherless (orphan),

maintain the right of the afflicted and the destitute.

4 Deliver the poor and the needy;

 deliver (them) from the hand of the wicked.

5 They do not know nor do they have understanding, they walk about in darkness (toward darkness);

all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

6 I said, "you are *Elohim*,

 you are sons of *Elyon* (the Most High), all of you.

7 Nevertheless, you shall die like men (humans),

and you shall fall like one of the princes".

8 Arise, *Elohim*, judge the earth; for you possess all the nations!

Structure and Metric Patterns

Grammatical syntax and poetical structure are frequently in sync in poetry. As a result, accents are frequently required to reflect both syntactic links and poetical structure. The interpretation of Hebrew Scripture based on the exegesis of the syntax of the Masoretic accents has ancient roots and should not be dismissed lightly. Accents frequently match the poetry (Price, 2010). The accents supplement Hebrew grammar and syntax, presenting the conventional interpretation of the text, an understanding with origins in antiquity. Accents should be regarded as an early and dependable witness to a correct reading of the text (Wonneberger, 1990). The Hebrew joints or seams of a text must determine the units of thought in the translation. Translation and interpretation reflect the textual divides indicated by accents (Barrick, 2004). The metre frames the poem and separates it from a 'ground' of less ordered speech and sound (Alter, 2011). The aim of this section is to show the relevance of metric patterns for delimitation and interpretation. Ps. 82 is set in a courtroom with a judgement scenario. The prophetic oracles of judgement by prophets such as Micaiah and Isaiah constitute the *sitz im Leben*.

Ps. 82 has 8 verses and 51 words. V. 1 has 8 words, vv. 2, 3, 4 have 5 words each; v. 5 which is the longest verse has 9 words; vv. 6, 7, have 6 words each; and v. 8 has 7 words. From the analysis, the psalm can be divided into three strophes on the basis of thought, content, and shared similarities in a bid to find a structure for it. This three-fold division of the psalm is underwritten by

the majority of scholars. The whole psalm therefore consists of three strophes: v. 1 and 8, 2-4 and 6-7, and v. 5. Verse 1b serves as an introduction to the psalm and v. 8 is the conclusion. Together they form a framework around the psalm. Psalm 82:1; identifies the setting as the divine assembly. Psalm 82:1, *Elohim* rises to judge. In Psalm 82:8; *Elohim* (*YHWH*) is called upon to rise up and take over rule of all the nations.

Psalm 82:2-4 depicts a scene in which the *Elohim* appear to be judged for their negligence in their stewardships over the nations. The mention of the poor and afflicted ties the negligence of the *Elohim* to the maintenance of order in the earthly realms. And in Psalm 82:6-7; the *Elohim* are condemned to death. In Psalm 82:5, the address moves to third person, with the *Elohim* as the object. They are asserted as lacking understanding and walking in darkness, shaking the foundations of the earth. Briggs & Briggs (1907) observe that v. 1 focus on *Elohim* who has taken his stand to judge, vv. 3-4 on a command in four imperatives, and vv. 6-7 on the sentence of the *Elohim*.

When looking at the structure of Ps. 82, one of the most striking features is the multiple incidences of the second person plural in vv. 2-4, and vv. 6-7. In v. 5 there is a transition to the third person singular with *Elohim* speaking. The subject is *Elohim*, the *Elohim* of Israel, who stands up to judge in the divine assembly (v. 1b), who addresses the *Elohim* in vv. 2-4 and 6-7, and who is given the charge to take possession of all nations of the earth (v. 8).

The striking repetition of words create cohesion in the psalm. By noting the word repetitions, the chief themes of the psalm stand out. The verb שָׁפַט appears in v. 1b, 2,3,8 and could be described as a stitchwort. אֱלֹהִים occurs in v. 1b, 6, 8. The term *Elohim* seem to describe its semantic content. The word

רְשָׁעִים appears in v. 2 and 4. The word דָל occurs in v. 3 and 4. Verse 2-4 form

a close well-rounded unit based on the words רְשָׁעִים and דָל which are joined in

a chiastic sequence. רְשָׁעִים at the beginning and the end creates an inclusio.

Verse 3-4 are built up in a parallel manner, both are introduced by an imperative.

In vv. 3 and 4 one observes an alliteration between וָרָשׁ (destitute) and

רְשָׁעִים (the wicked). There is an alliteration and assonance found in תִּשְׂאוּ (v. 2)

הַצְדִּיקוּ (v. 3) and הַצִּילוּ (v. 4). The three imperatives that occur cause *ʋ* sounds.

In v. 1b the just *Elohim* takes his stand to judge the *Elohim*, and in v. 8 the just

Elohim is petitioned to arise and take possession of the nations which are

rightfully his. In verses 2-4 the emphasis is rather on the complaint against the

Elohim, while in v. 6-7, we have all the attention focused on the judgment of

the *Elohim* by *Elohim*.

In terms of segmentation into lines or cola, Ps. 82 could be grouped as

couplets with a metrical system 3+3, 2+3, 4+2+3, and 4+3, with a

preponderance of the 3+3 system, and the 2+3 system. A tricola may be found

especially with regards to verses 1, 6, and 7. There is probably a tricola in v. 5

which may be said to have a stress pattern of 4+2+3. Verses 1, 6, and 7 are of

the 3+3 pattern. Verses 2, 3, and 4 are of the 2+3 pattern, verse 5 of the 4+2+3

pattern, and verse 8 of the 4+3 pattern. Psalm 82 is divided by the thought

content into three (3) strophes/stanzas (vv. 1, 8, vv. 2-4, 6-7, v. 5). Strophe 1 is

made up of two synonymous pairs of successive rhyming lines, strophe II has

synonymous group of four lines of verse, and strophe III is made up of

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antithetical pair of lines. The Psalm expresses the qualitative essence of *Elohim* as judge, and the portrait of *Elohim* manifest in this poem is that of a judge.

The line is the basic component of Hebrew verse above the level of the individual units or terms. Each unit has one major stress, which normally falls on a verb, noun, or adjective or some other major word in the thought structure to be emphasized. Units combine to form a verse-member. Two units are the minimum number for constituting a line, and generally no more than three. Thought content can divide the poem into stanzas/strophes (Wolf, 1979).

The Masoretic accents furnish important information for syntax and also supply the traditional Jewish interpretation of the text. The accents group words of a sentence into smaller units, thereby clarifying the syntax of the sentence (Fuller and Choi, 2006). Other scholars including Greenberg also see the accentual system as very intricate. It may be said to operate on the halving principle: the verse is divided in two, then each part is subdivided until a unit too small for further subdivision is reached (Greenberg, 1965). Walker-Jones (2003) also argues that the accents divide the verse into sense units.

According to Barrick and Busenitz (2004) *silluq* marks the principal stop in the verse. *Silluq* is followed by *soph pasuq* (end of verse). *Athnach* denotes the principal division of the verse. It marks the logical division. Fuller and Choi (2006) adds that *Athnach* divides the sentence according to syntactical and exegetical considerations. Often the half of the verse before the *Athnach* gives the main idea of the verse. This is especially true in poetry. The second half explains, specifies, enumerates, or qualifies the first half of the verse. Moreover, the *Athnach* may be exegetically important marking the emphasis of the verse.

Walker-Jones (2003) says that *Revia* divides the first half of a verse with *Athnach*.

Athnach is used to divide an entire verse of poetry into half a verse of poetry to evoke pausal forms of the following words under which they occur in the verses, divide the verse into two main parts, and indicate the first principal segments of the verses in Psalm 82. The *Athnach* occurs under words in Psalm 82 identifying logical sense unts and emphasis of the verse. Thus, the half of the verse that comes before the *Athnach* gives the main idea of the verse, and the half of the verse that follows the *Athnach* explains or qualifies the first half of the verse. As such the words marked by the *Athnach* are crucial in assisting us interpret the verse.

Depending on the thought which it is to express, the ideas which they carry, the lines may form one single group of lines of a symmetrical system (Kosmala, 1964).

Symmetrical structure of Psalm 82:

v. 1b	A
v. 2-4	B
v. 5	C
v. 6-7	B¹
V. 8	A¹

Silluq marks יִשְׁפֹּט as the last tone-syllable of v. 1. *Rebia* marks מִזְמוֹר and *ole-weyored* marks לְאָסָף to set it off as a short title to Psalm 82. *Atnah* marks בַּעֲדַת־אֵל to divide v. 1b into two halves. Thus, v. 1b has been divided into units showing how the sentence structure was perceived. *Elohim* is

identified as key word and topic in v. 1b by the mark *Rebia gadol*. This is to help the reader focus on this *Elohim* for the key role played in the verse. The disjunctives *rebia gadol* marking *Elohim* and *atnah* marking בַּעֲדַת־אֵל are joined by the conjunctive accent *merkha* marking the verb נִצָּב.

In v. 2 *silluq* marks תִּשְׂאוּ־סֶלָה as the last tone syllable. *Atnah* marks תִּשְׁפְּטוּ־עָוֶל as the major disjunctive in the verse. In v. 2 *rebia gadol* identifies רְשָׁעִים as a key word in verse 2. The conjunctive accent *merkha* joins the two halves by marking וּפְנֵי. In v. 3 the last tone-syllable is marked on הַצְדִּיקוּ by *silluq*, thus governing the entire verse. *Atnah* marks וְיָתוֹם to divide v. 3 into two. *Tarcha* marking עָנִי and *munach* marking וָרָשׁ are two conjunctives used to join these two halves into one verse. In v. 4 *silluq* marks הַצִּילוּ as the last tone-syllable of the verse. *Atnah* marks וְאֶבְיוֹן to divide v. 4 into two. *Tarcha* marks מִיַּד and *munach* marks רְשָׁעִים to join the two halves divided by *atnah*.

In v. 5 *atnah* marks יִתְהַלָּכוּ to divide the verse into two. *Rebia mugrash* marks יִמּוֹטוּ as the next major disjunction. *Silluq* marks אָרֶץ as the last tone-syllable and is joined to יִמּוֹטוּ by the conjunctive accent merkha marking כָּל־מוֹסְדֵי. *Rebia gadol* marks יָבִינוּ as a key word in v. 5. The disjunctives in v. 5 are joined by the following conjunctives *merkha* marking וְלֹא in 5a and בַּחֲשֵׁכָה in 5b and *azla* marking יָדְעוּ in 5a. In v. 6 *silluq* marks כֻּלְּכֶם as the last tone-syllable

in the verse. *Atnah* marks אַתֶּם as the major disjunctive. The conjunctives *tarcha* and *munach* joins the word units in the verse into sentence structure. In v. 7 *silluq* marks תִּפֹּלוּ as the last tone-syllable of the verse. *Atnah* marks תְּמוּתוּן to divide the verse into two. In v. 8 silluq marks הַגּוֹיִם as the last tone-syllable of the verse. *Atnah* divide the verse into two by marking הָאָרֶץ. *Rebia mugrash* marks תִנְחַל as the next major disjunctive. Thus verse 8 is divided into three by the accents. And these three units contain component parts of the sentence in v. 8. The end of the verses is indicated by *silluq* which appears under: יִשְׁפֹּט (v. 1), בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם (v. 8) and תִּפֹּלוּ, כֻּלְּכֶם, אָרֶץ, הַצִּילוּ (v. 3), הַצְדִּיקוּ (v. 2), תִּשְׂאוּ־סֶלָה to evoke the pausal form of these words.

Psalm 82:1-8 is seen as one poem as the strongest conjunctive accent *merkha* marks עַד־מָתַי (v. 2) to join v.1; שִׁפְטוּ־דָל (v. 3) to join v. 2; פַּלְּטוּ־דָל (v. 4) to join v. 3; *merkha* plus *tarcha* to mark אֲנִי־אָמַרְתִּי (v. 6) to join v. 5; the second strongest conjunctive accent *Mehuppak* to mark לֹא (v. 5) to join v.4; *tarcha* the fourth strongest conjunctive accent to mark אָכֵן (v. 7) to join v. 6; and *munach* the second strongest conjunctive accent to mark קוּמָה (v. 8) to join v. 7. The Masoretic accents show that Psalm 82 should be seen as a complete poem.

Textual Criticism

Psalm 82 is a short psalm of only eight verses in the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* text. One might think that due to its brevity it may not pose much

problem. However, as it is to be expected with any ancient literature, there are forms that pose some difficulty for reading. Under textual criticism, therefore, these would be looked at. Some of these problems commentators have noted over the years and the emendations they have proposed. One such problem is the reading of שִׁפְטוּ־דַל (v. 3a).

שִׁפְטוּ־דַל (v. 3a)

The first problem we encounter is in verse 3a and it is a dispute over whether we should read with the Masoretes שִׁפְטוּ־דַל or with the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*'s proposed emendation שִׁפְטוּ־דָךְ. This suggested reading of the BHS does not improve the parallelism in the verse nor the construction of the sentence. Thus, Harris, Archer, and Waltke for example understand דַל to mean a shortage or lack and deprived condition that, at its worst, results in a cry to God. It can also refer to discomfort of the body. In דַל the idea of physical (material) deprivation predominates. In most cases the usage of דַל parallel אֶבְיוֹן (see Harris, Archer, & Waltke, 1980).

דַל is an adjective with the meaning of poor or weak. Frequently, it is used as a noun to refer to those who are poor and oppressed and for whom the Lord has a special concern (Ex. 23:3). They are socially inferior to the rich (Ex. 30:15; 1 Sam. 2:8; Prov. 10:15; 22:16) and their circumstances frequently set them apart from even their friends (Prov. 19:4). The powerless, helpless, and weak are the impoverished (Job 34:28; Ps. 82:3; Prov. 22:22). It is used to characterise a variety of items or people who are poor, weak, thin, and

insignificant, including cattle (Gen. 41:19), humans (Lev. 14:21; 2 Sam. 13:4), a clan or familial line or other things (Judg. 6:15; 2 Sam. 3:1). In contrast to great, powerful, or influential people it shows poor, lowly, noninfluential people (Jer. 5:4) (Baker and Carpenter, 2003).

Therefore, Mensah notes that, in Ex. 22:21-24, for example, we learn that *YHWH* hears the cry of the widow, the orphan and the stranger and warns the Israelite against mistreating them due to their relative helplessness in society (Mensah, 2019). In this context, the poor, orphan, afflicted, and destitute are relatively helpless in society and would need the entrenched network of neighbours, families, and clans to show love to them, take care of them and provide for their needs.

Additionally, Dahood (1968) claims that the Masada Psalms scroll, which, like MT, reads דַל does not support the emendation of דַל to דַּךְ. In fact, the fact that the elements of דַל וְיָתוֹם appear in Ugaritic text in sequence effectively negates such a textual modification. Dahood also sees in the phrase שִׁפְטוּ־דַל וְיָתוֹם the obvious sentiment which aims to clarify the ambiguous interpretation and translation of Psalm 44:4 as revealed in Psalms I.

Wilson (1990) claims that דַּךְ is an adjective that denotes affliction, suffering, or being crushed or oppressed (Prov. 26:28; Ps. 9:9). According to Baker and Carpenter (2003) דַּךְ denotes people who are oppressed, pressed down, or crushed down (Ps. 9:9, 10; 10:18; 74:21), and they are loved and cared for by the Lord. Baker and Carpenter however add that these people may be the

targets of verbal abuse (Prov. 26:28). It is not clear from the text of Psalm 82 that the characters being referred to suffered from verbal abuse.

After more investigation, it is clear that the premise of scholars that דַל is probably דַּךְ meaning the afflicted or oppressed is not convincing. In my opinion, the reading דַל is preferred because it completely depicts the state of the poor, whose state of lack, physical distress, and material deprivation has been caused by the influence of the *Elohim* on the wicked. The activities of the wicked make the poor to cry out due to the extremity of their deprivation.

The next problem is the reading of יָדְעוּ (v. 5a):

In verse 5a, יָדְעוּ is a much-discussed word for which proposals for emendation have been suggested. Its usual meaning, in the Masoretic Text, is they have not known. יָדְעוּ is a stative verb in the *Qal* perfect third person plural. According to Walker-Jones (2003), a stative verb defines a situation or circumstance that is either outward and physical or internal and psychological. The poet thus utilises this to illustrate the state or condition of the *Elohim*. According to Kelley (1992) perfect verb forms convey complete action or state and can be translated into the present tense when they refer to perception, attitude, disposition, or a state of mind or body. Because יָדְעוּ is a verb of perception, attitude, disposition and state of being, the verb used here in the perfect tense can also be interpreted as present. The Hebrew Bible יֵדְעוּ meaning they do not know or will not know, is a *Qal* imperfect third masculine plural proposed by Stuttgartensia. Is it better to read as *Qal* perfect or *Qal* imperfect?

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Psalm 82:5 is a parenthesis reflecting the *Elohim*'s thoughts as he takes his place in the divine assembly. should be interpreted as *Qal* flawless.

יֵדְעוּ meaning, they do not know or they will not know, is a *Qal* imperfect third masculine plural proposed by Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia. Is it better to read as Qal perfect or Qal imperfect? Psalm 82:5 is a parenthesis reflecting the thoughts of the *Elohim* who has taken his stand in the divine assembly; therefore, it should be read as Qal perfect.

Modern scholars are not left out in the debate over which interpretation could be the more appropriate. Tsevat (1969-1970) argues that the failure of the *Elohim* is depicted in v. 5 as a result of the fact that they walk about in darkness. The *Elohim* are unwilling to walk in the light, and as a consequence have neither knowledge nor understanding. This suggests that they are incapable to grasp the issue and are unwilling to do what they are bidden. In contrast, the just *Elohim* walks in the light, has knowledge and understanding and therefore is capable of grasping the issue at stake and is willing to do what is right and just (See Tsevat, 1969-1970). This is the state of the *Elohim*. This is how they are. In the face of the differences in translation the emendation may result in, it will probably be better if the Masoretic Text is allowed to retain its sense. In this Psalm, the appropriateness of such a meaning cannot be in doubt. And if we should allow then it may even help us avoid the danger of imposing our own meaning than the one that the Psalmist does intend here.

This thesis chooses to go with the suggestion in the text and not the apparatus, because the question is: who is the psalmist referring to? Is he referring to the Jewish God or to other deities? Does God know everything?

Yes, the Jewish God does. The *Elohim* here does not refer to the Jewish God but other deities. In Genesis 3:5, 22 "For *Elohim* (God) knows that on the day you both eat from it, then your eyes will be opened and you both shall be like *Elohim* (gods) knowing good and evil." "And *YHWH Elohim* (the LORD God) said, look the man has become as one of us, to know good and evil." The *Elohim* are depicted as beings who have knowledge. They knew good and evil. Though they have knowledge, they have refused to act justly. They have become unjust in their ways and are walking in darkness.

(v. 8b) תִּנְחַל

תִּנְחַל is a *Qal* imperfect second masculine singular verb. The imperfect aspect, according to Greenberg (1965), expresses an action or situation as ongoing, customary, or unfinished. And the context determines whether it might mean either the future or the present. According to Kelley (1992), the imperfect is frequently used to describe acts that are dependent upon other context-specific elements. Sometimes they represent the speaker's will, desire, opinion, foresight, or consent. Sometimes they are reliant on an earlier event that required a response or reaction. Their meaning is frequently established by the preceding use of particles that communicate purpose, like כִּי־. Thus, תִּנְחַל is used to express the desire of the speaker to see *Elohim* arise and possess because of the earlier actions of the *Elohim* seen in vv. 2-5. When Psalm 82 is interpreted in the context of Deuteronomy 32:8–9 (BHS), it becomes clear that the boundaries of the people were divided in accordance with the sons of God, as the Most High gave the nations to the sons of Adam (humans) as a heritage.

Jacob was Yahweh's portion or inheritance. Thus, the speaker is expressing the desire that the *Elohim* who divided the boundaries of nations/people in accordance with the sons of God will take back and inherit what he had assigned to the sons of God.

Since not all *hif'il* verbs are rendered with "cause," the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia suggest תַּנְחִיל a *hif'il* imperfect verb meaning you (emphatic) will (cause) to possess or you will possess. The usage of the *hif'il* imperfect could imply that there would only be one instance of possessing or inheriting all the nations. The Masoretes also suggest תִנְחַל which means you (emphatic) possess or you will possess. It seems that the Masoretes' position is more persuasive based on the discussion that has already taken place under the *Qal* imperfect in the preceding paragraph. What does having this specific emendation to the Stuttgartensia Biblia Hebraica mean? Even if the emendation seems plausible, it is insufficient. Will the *Elohim* be caused to possess (in) all the nations? It should be read תִנְחַל because it means that the *Elohim* will possess (in) all nations what the *Elohim* had been given charge over.

Literary Analysis and interpretation of the Text

Poetry is quintessentially a mode of expression that includes the use of metaphor, an imagery, the articulation of a line, the arabesques of syntax and grammar. Hebrew poetry as found in the Bible is replete with much of these features through which the psalmist creates an effect or calls attention to a thought or motif (Mensah, 1998). Barrick (2004) contends that for correctness and text faithfulness, the translator and interpreter may need to pay particular attention to the accents used in the Masoretic text as the accents signal the text's

divisions. Additionally, the translation's thought units must be based on the joints of a sentence as disclosed in the Hebrew. How some of these elements occur in Psalm 82 are identified verse by verse in order to know how they inform on the structure, translation and interpretation of the text. In this section the issues exegesis has raised in this psalm are discussed.

מִזְמוֹר לְאָסָף
A Psalm of Asaph

אֱלֹהִים נִצָּב בַּעֲדַת־אֵל
Elohim (is) standing in the council/assembly of *El*;

בְּקֶרֶב אֱלֹהִים יִשְׁפֹּט
in the midst of *Elohim,* he judges (v. 1)

The disjunctive accent *Ole-WeYored* separates and sets off the title or the superscription, 'A psalm of Asaph' from the rest of verse one. One could assent to Asaph as the author. This is a song to, of, or for Asaph. This would possibly relate back to the same Asaph mentioned by the Chronicler as being one of the temple song leaders appointed by King David. Like Archdekin (2018) rightly explains, it could mean that it was simply written in a style that Asaph developed.

Verse 1b focuses attention on *Elohim*, whose stand or action to judge will have a reflexive effect on the *Elohim* in the divine assembly explained by the use of the *Niphal* perfect verb. The key word around which the text in v. 1b hinges is the word *Elohim* at the beginning, marked by *Revia*. It is singular due to the fact that the verb נִצָּב that follows and agrees with the noun is a *Niphal* perfect masculine singular. *Elohim* is also used in conjunction with the prepositional phrase בַּעֲדַת־אֵל (v. 1), to reveal the importance to be attached to

the place where the *Elohim* takes a stand. It is critical to take a stand for what is right. It is also very important to take a stand at a place where it matters most. The divine council/assembly is a place where the *Elohim* take binding and lasting decisions. That is where *Elohim* has chosen to take his stand. Which *Elohim* might he possibly be referencing? The God of judgement is *Yahweh* the *Elohim* of Israel since all of his ways are just. The God of truth and without injustice, one who is just and right, is *Yahweh* the *Elohim* of Israel (cf. Deut. 32:4). This can also be observed in Deuteronomy 10:17–18, where God executes the judgement of the fatherless and widow without regard to recompense or other considerations of people. Could it be that the psalmist uses the prepositional phrase בַּעֲדַת־אֵל because of the Ugaritic pantheon? The Ugaritic pantheon had an *adat-el* where the sons of the gods will meet *el*. At such divine council scenes *el* will stand and give his judgment. The more we study the neighbours of Israel, the more we learn about what may have existed. Another prepositional phrase בְּקֶרֶב followed by a plural *Elohim* and a singular verb form יִשְׁפֹּט show the reason for this crucial stand as depicted in v. 1. The use of sound techniques like alliteration, enhances their beauty and impact. For example, the sound יְ נְ are similar and the pattern אֱלֹהִים אֵל אֱלֹהִים creates an emphasis by the repetition of these words in v. 1b. The frequency in the use of the word *Elohim* in v. 1 appears to focus attention on that word and creates an emphasis for the reader to note. The psalmist uses words masterfully to draw attention to an important thing that might have happened.

Harris, Archer, and Waltke (1999) posits that the traditional translation of נִצָּב preserved in many English versions as takes or has taken his stand, in the

broadest senses occur in the *Niphal*, to imply "take one's stand". According to Keil and Delitzsch (1866-91) the *Niphal* perfect is used by the psalmist to denote not so much the suddenness and unpreparedness, as, rather, the terrifying 'designfulness' of the appearance of *Elohim*, represented anthropomorphically as judge in the midst of the divine council. The *Elohim* who judges other *Elohim* in the divine assembly is a virtual imagery the psalmist uses to show that something critical may have happened that has warranted such a move. What is it that these *Elohim* have done to warrant this stand?

The wicked of vv. 2, 4, are able to wreak their havoc only because of these *Elohim*, who are sitting there in the divine assembly. It is they who have conspired to bring about Israel's ruin, and who have put the wicked up to all this iniquity, and *Elohim* will now stand in the divine assembly and deliver his judgment upon them (Goulder, 1996).

In the Septuagint the first *Elohim* in v. 1 is translated as singular, Ὁ θεὸς. The second *Elohim* in v. 1 is seen as plural and therefore translated as θεοὺς. In the Targum, the first *Elohim* of v. 1 of Psalm 82 in the BHS is translated as God, and the second *Elohim* appears as righteous judges (דינין דקשוט). According to Keil and Delitzsch (1866-91), Hupfeld, understands "angels" by *Elohim* deities of the divine assembly. Goulder (1996) surmises that Mowinckel recognised that the עֲדַת־אֵל consisted of *Elohim* (deities/ divine beings) and not Israelite judges or angels. Goulder further suggests that other critics follow the Greek and Latin translators in supposing a Hebrew Vorlage אֲדַת־אֵל. The *Elohim* are deities of other peoples, and their unjust rule is at Israel's expense through their proteges' wicked incursions.

The poet uses contrast to set the actions of the just *Elohim* against the unjust *Elohim* in a bid to compare them so as to aid the reader to arrive at the point of appraisal and decision. Just *Elohim* is worried for orphans, afflicted, destitute, and poor. Unjust *Elohim* influence wicked and their actions against the poor, orphans, afflicted and destitute.

From what Barrick (2004) indicates about *Revia* marks it appears that the *Revia* in Psalm 82 is used to identify key words for sections within the poem. *Revia* appears on the first *Elohim* in v. 1, and also on יָבִינוּ and רְשָׁעִים v.2, רְשָׁעִים v.5, and תִּנְחַל v. 8. The poet, Asaph, is telling the reader to focus on these key words as they are detailing the intent and direction of the poem. The first *Elohim* is in focus because he has a complaint against the other *Elohim*. The assembly has related examples of divine assembly/council scenes in the Old Testament. Septuagint (LXX) treats the first *Elohim* as Ὁ θεὸς and the second *Elohim* θεοὺς. Keil and Delitzsch (1866-91) argue that the Septuagint translation is one of the oldest keys to the understanding of the language of the Old Testament writings and text, and should not be excepted from modest critical investigation (see Keil and Delitzsch, 1866-91 for further details).

Tate (2002) argues that Aquila has ἐν συναγωγῇ ἰσχυρων, in "the assembly of the mighty," but Symmachus has ἐν συνόδῳ, "in the assembly of God." Tate considers the probability that the Greek versions represent a variant Hebrew textual tradition of בעדת אלים, "in the assembly of the gods." It is unlikely that the Septuagint translators would have gone to the plural θεῶν, "gods," without finding it in Hebrew texts.

Heiser (2015) argues that even though some scholars maintain that the plural *Elohim* (gods) in Psalm 82:1 were just men or Jewish elders, it is puzzling that Jewish elders would be charged for corrupt administration of nations. According to Heiser, the Old Testament never teaches that Jews or Jewish leaders were given sovereignty over other nations.

The poem depicts events in heaven that has influence on earth, and the fact that whatever evil goes on in the scene of the earth is open to the just *Elohim* who sees all. The psalmist takes us from the scene in heaven in v. 1, to earth in v. 2-4.

עַד־מָתַי תִּשְׁפְּטוּ־עָוֶל

How long will you judge wrong (unjustly)

וּפְנֵי רְשָׁעִים תִּשְׂאוּ־סֶלָה

and (you) show partiality to the wicked?

Selah (v. 2)

In this verse the psalmist places emphasis on the word תִּשְׁפְּטוּ־עָוֶל (v. 2) in pause making it suggestive that the judgment of the *Elohim* is elicited by the fact that the *Elohim* judge unjustly. The psalmist places emphasis on the phrase you judge unjustly, a reason why *Elohim* will take a stand. The indication is that the *Elohim* have specifically been showing partiality to the wicked. Looking in the faces of people whilst given judgment may inherently lead or influence one into giving wrong judgment. It is required of an *Elohim* to do right (Gen. 18:25). The use of this phrase is an evidence of the psalmist distraught feeling about the *Elohim*. Marshall et al (1996) argue that the judgment of *YHWH Elohim* of the other *Elohim* is due to the fact that they have been evil for a long time. This is evidence that the character of these *Elohim* had become corrupt. The psalmist

constructs the line as if to prove why the prosecuting *Elohim* would ask the question, how long?

עַד־מָתַי is doing double duty in the text. It is pointing to the work of the *Elohim*. The work of the *Elohim* involves making just judgements and acting impartially. But they do not know their work, and they do not understand their duty. The question עַד־מָתַי in the text exposes the ignorance and lack of a sense of responsibility of the *Elohim*. In this context, *Elohim* reads the charges of the *Elohim*(plural) and asks the question:

(v. 2) How long will you judge wrong עַד־מָתַי תִּשְׁפְּטוּ־עָוֶל וּפְנֵי רְשָׁעִים תִּשְׂאוּ־סֶלָה (unjustly), and (you) show partiality to the wicked? Selah. How long?" (עד־מתי) is an expression found in some laments (Ps. 90:13. b), however, the question has the character of a charge against the gods (Ps 94:3–5; Ex. 10:7; 1 Sam 1:14; Jer 4:14, 21; Ps 74:10; Prov 1:22) (see Tate, 2002). The unmentioned contrast is the fact that the just *Elohim* has always judged right unlike the unjust *Elohim* being indicted for judging wrong or unjustly.

In verse 2 the question how long (עַד־מָתַי) is a rhetorical device. The rhetorical question "how long" serves as an opening statement in the case presented by the just *Elohim* against the other *Elohim*, who are indicted with injustice. These *Elohim* are accused of being unjust and evil. The guilt of the *Elohim* is patent in that they have betrayed the primary trust the Most High has reposed in them: that they should judge righteously, and that they should not favour the wicked. Ackerman (1966) argues that the עַד־מָתַי ("how long?") question in v 2 does not seek an answer, however, but introduces a complaint

and a demand that the offending activities be halted, having the force of imperative "stop/cease!" (citing Jer. 23:26). The wicked (v. 2) are under the focal lens because of the way and manner in which they treat the destitute and orphans. The *Elohim* are being judged in the assembly of deities in heaven. However, their unjust rule has influenced the wicked to abuse and oppress the poor, orphan, afflicted and destitute on earth.

שִׁפְטוּ־דַל וְיָתוֹם

Give justice to the poor and the orphan,

עָנִי וָרָשׁ הַצְדִּיקוּ

maintain the right of the afflicted

and the destitute (v. 3).

In this verse the psalmist refers to the orphan וְיָתוֹם (v. 3) simply because the activities of the *Elohim* have worsened the plight of the orphans. They have been denied any support system to enable them survive or rise above the challenges of their day. They have been exposed and left at the mercy of the wicked, who show them no mercy. A further proof that these *Elohim* influencing the wicked do not have mercy. The wicked have afflicted them, their right have not been maintained, and alas their situation is one of deprivation and destitution. And all of this is as a result of the evil activities of the *Elohim*. Thus, *Elohim* accuses the other *Elohim* of irresponsibility to his just rule. They are charged because they have not shown concern for justice (v. 3) hence these *Elohim* have failed.

פַּלְּטוּ־דַל וְאֶבְיוֹן

Rescue the poor and the needy;

מִיַּד רְשָׁעִים הַצִּילוּ

deliver (them) from the hand of the wicked (v. 4).

Verse 4 continues the thought of the previous verse (3). The psalmist uses synonymous parallelism to repeat and reinforce the idea of the previous verse. The psalmist's use of the word וְאֶבְיוֹן (v. 4) places emphasis on the needy.

These are needy due to the chain of reaction the influence of the *Elohim* on the wicked has had in the earth. This influence has berefted the people of their sustenance to the extent that they have now become needy. Their state of need is so precarious that they have to be rescued like a people out of danger. The clear and imminent danger of the unjust and partial attitude of the *Elohim*. The wicked through the influence of the *Elohim* have the needy within their grip, a death-like choke hold which demands their immediate rescue and an immediate response from the just *Elohim*. The *Elohim* are expected, with their assigns, to save the destitute from evil that has denied them the requisite help within society.

The poet carefully replicates the degrees of poverty experienced by the poor at the hands of the wicked through the use of parallelism of meaning. Thus, one notices a change in meaning marked by intensification indicating what type of poverty are described in Psalm 82:3–4 by the phrases אֶבְיוֹן דַל יָתוֹם עָנִי וָרָשׁ.

In דַל the idea of physical (material) deprivation predominates (Harris, Archer, & Waltke, 1980). דַל connotes someone who is worn out, depleted, spent, and lacking in substance or inherent strength, according to Wilson (1990). It implies a wretched, helpless, and hated individual. Wilson (1990) claims that the term יָתוֹם also denotes an orphan who has lost their father. This is a person who has become poor because of the demise of the father. Wilson (1990) claims that

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the term עָנִי denotes someone who is depressed or otherwise afflicted, both physically and mentally. Next, according to Wilson (1990), וָרָשׁ is a person who has lost everything and has thus fallen into poverty. This is a poor person in the sense of everything they have lost. According to Wilson (1990), the term אֶבְיוֹן is also used to describe someone who is suffering from extreme poverty and is compelled to declare their need for protection. This is a person in need of material goods. Such a person is poor because they lack material goods. In vv. 3-4 the poet uses these words to show the intensity of poverty, beginning from one who is poor due to material deprivation, to a person who is poor due to the loss of the father. This then leads the person to suffer affliction both physically and mentally. The poverty intensifies as the person becomes poorer due to the loss of everything. The impoverished person has now become severely poor after losing everything.

There are some striking similarities that can be found in vv.2, 3, 4 which happens to have the same number of words. When עַד־מָתַי is removed from the beginning of v. 2 one would observe that all the three verses 2, 3, 4 have two imperatives each, with one beginning and one ending the verse. V. 2 has two *qal* imperatives second masculine plural, v. 3 has a *qal* imperative second masculine plural at the beginning and a *hiphil* imperative second masculine plural at the end, and v. 4 has a *piel* imperative second masculine plural at the beginning and a *hiphil* imperative second masculine plural at the end.

²תִּשְׁפְּטוּ־עָוֶל ... תִּשְׂאוּ־:

³שִׁפְטוּ־דַל ... הַצְדִּיקוּ:

⁴פַּלְּטוּ־דַל ... הַצִּילוּ:

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In verse 3-4, four imperatives: defend literally judge or give justice (שִׁפְטוּ־) (*qal* imperative, second masculine plural), maintain the rights (הַצְדִּיקוּ)

(*hiphil* imperative second masculine plural), rescue (פַּלְּטוּ־) (*piel* imperative

second masculine plural), deliver (הַצִּילוּ) (*hiphil* imperative second masculine

plural) summarize what the just *Elohim* expects of the *Elohim*. Each of the

imperatives is in the plural form, therefore the *Elohim* is also plural. The

imperatives are commands that were issued by the just *Elohim*, and it was

anticipated of the *Elohim* that they would follow or adhere to these commands.

The plural *Elohim* will be referred to as sons of the most high later on in the

text, specifically in verse 6. The *hiphil* imperative form (הַצְדִּיקוּ) (from צדק)

literally means "to cause to be righteous," but the meaning in contexts like this

is "do justice/justify/vindicate" or "to pronounce a person guiltless". The idea

is that of helping persons get their rights, or to maintain the rights of, for

example, Isa 53:11. Traditionally פַּלְּטוּ־   (*piel* imperative) is translated as

"rescue," but the verb can mean "to bring into security," or "keep safe" (see

BDB, 812): Mic 6:14; Pss 22:5, 9; 31:2; 37:40; 71:2; 91:14. The psalmist's

seems to be saying in v 4 that: "See that the lowly and the poor are free from

oppression." The verb הַצִּילוּ taken from נצל (in *hiphil* imperative) a causative

active command is normally rendered "deliver."

There is an alliteration in vv. 2, 3, 4 and assonance where similar vowel

sounds have been employed in accented positions. The emotional tone of these

verses is intensified by the repetition of these vowel sounds. There is

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intensification of meaning when a term introduced in either v. 2 is focused upon in verse 3 and verse 4, and beauty in how sounds and verb forms resemble. Wolf (1979) has described alliteration as the use of the same or similar sounds at the beginning of words or syllables and in stressed positions. Wolf adds that sound techniques are used to enhance the beauty and the impact of the words used. The psalmist is using these sound techniques not only to enhance the beauty of the words used but also the impact thereof.

Verses 2, 3, 4 appears to be built up in a parallel manner:

תִּשְׁפְּטוּ־עָוֶל וּפְנֵי רְשָׁעִים תִּשְׂאוּ

שִׁפְטוּ־דַל וְיָתוֹם עָנִי וָרָשׁ הַצְדִּיקוּ

פַּלְּטוּ־דַל וְאֶבְיוֹן מִיַּד רְשָׁעִים הַצִּילוּ

One would notice that the stichs above are introduced by an imperative (v. 2 תִּשְׁפְּטוּ v.3 שִׁפְטוּ v.4 ־פַּלְּטוּ). The imperatives are followed by words that end with the letter ל showing a sort of alliteration. Again, the imperatives beginning vv. 3, 4, is followed by the word דַל which shows an alliteration between these imperatives. שִׁפְטוּ־דַל is followed by וְיָתוֹם and פַּלְּטוּ־דַל is followed by וְאֶבְיוֹן . This is a parallel construction showing alliteration and internal rhyme, as seen in the occurrence of וְיָתוֹם and וְאֶבְיוֹן. The observed parallelism is an instance of semantic parallelism, characterized by a movement of meaning that involves both concentration and intensification.

In vv. 3 and 4 there is alliteration between וָרָשׁ (destitute) and רְשָׁעִים (the wicked). The destitute is helpless and at the mercy of the wicked. There is an

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alliteration and assonance found in תִּשְׂאוּ (v. 2) הַצְדִּיקוּ (v. 3) and הַצִּילוּ (v. 4).

Wolf (1979) further suggests that assonance, employs the same or similar vowel sounds in accented positions. The emotional tone of the verse is intensified by the repetition of vowel sounds. The psalmist masterfully uses assonance to depict to the reader the intensity of the emotional tone of *Elohim*.

The three imperatives that occur cause $\hat{u}$ sounds to mark the ends of stichs 2, 3, 4 of the Psalm. The second person is used predominantly in vv. 2-4. The three stichs (vv. 2,3,4) form a close, well-rounded unit based on the words רְשָׁעִים and דָּל which are joined in a chiastic sequence.

רְשָׁעִים	**V.** 2	A
דָּל	v. 3	B
דָּל	**V.** 4a	B
רְשָׁעִים	v. 4b	A

רְשָׁעִים at the beginning and the end creates an inclusio. הַ is conspicuously absent from the nouns. The definite article is employed in order to indicate, delimit, or specify a particular entity. Nevertheless, the poet opts to forgo the use of the definite article as a means to attain conciseness. The economy of language in poetry is demonstrated by the utilisation of a limited number of words to convey thoughts. Verses 3-4 have a chiastic structure:

שִׁפְטוּ־דַל וְיָתוֹם עָנִי וָרָשׁ הַצְדִּיקוּ

פַּלְּטוּ־דַל וְאֶבְיוֹן מִיַּד רְשָׁעִים הַצִּילוּ

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The terseness of this psalm is obvious. Like Longmann III (1997) rightly puts it, terseness is a most obvious trait of Hebrew poetry. The psalmist has succeeded in triggering a train of thinking about *Elohim* the judge. The psalmist believes that this would elicit an emotional response from the readers. The parallel line in Hebrew poetry is a more subtle literary device.

<div dir="rtl">לֹא יָדְעוּ וְלֹא יָבִינוּ בַּחֲשֵׁכָה יִתְהַלָּכוּ</div>

They have neither knowledge nor have understanding,
they walk about in darkness;

<div dir="rtl">יִמּוֹטוּ כָּל־מוֹסְדֵי אָרֶץ</div>

All the foundations of the earth are shaken (v. 5).

Complaint at this point turns into an explanation. The unjust and wrong judgment of the *Elohim* did not just happen. The explanation is effectively done through the psalmist use of the verbal phrase יִתְהַלָּכוּ (v. 5) they walk about. The

הָ of direction toward is used in בַּחֲשֵׁכָה in v. 5 to indicate that the *Elohim* are literally walking about in the direction of darkness or toward the darkness. This implies that they are moving towards deeper darkness. They ought to know better, yet walk about in darkness (a metaphor associated with evil and sin) to execute their unjust agenda and partial measures that would rob many of their livelihood, and place them in a vice-like grip of the wicked. Due to their disobedience the foundations of the earth are shaken or tottering. Their refusal to walk in light is befuddling. These *Elohim* are divine beings with knowledge however they have expressly refused to walk in the light of the knowledge of good. They have rather chosen to walk in the knowledge of evil. Thus, bringing doom and gloom on the earth, making orphans out of many, reducing the masses to a state of poverty, affliction, destitution and excessive need. Apart from the use of metaphor, the psalmist has recourse to the use of plural forms of nouns

in the line, which in a way express the intensity of the despairing situation the actions of the *Elohim* have brought about. There is alliteration, assonance (in all third person plurals יְמֹוטוּ, יִתְהַלָּכוּ, יָבִינוּ, יָדְעוּ. All the third person plurals end in *shureq* (ּו) with rhyming *ṻ* sounds), and parallel repetition לֹא יָדְעוּ and וְלֹא יָבִינוּ seems to bind together the components of the line. The literary forms used in this verse are indications of the powerlessness and ignorance of the *Elohim*.

לֹא יָדְעוּ וְלֹא יָבִינוּ בַּחֲשֵׁכָה יִתְהַלָּכוּ יִמֹּוטוּ כָּל־מֹוסְדֵי אָרֶץ

The psalmist depicts that the *Elohim*, sons of *Elyon*, stand condemned by their folly, moral darkness, and destruction of the order of *Elohim*. These sons of *Elyon* have rejected *Elohim* and his just rule. Their rule is darkness, because they wallow in evil. Their evil is destroying the divinely established order. The psalmist reveals that the *Elohim* lack understanding, using the word *binah* which also suggests that they are unable to see the full picture. Thus, their actions cause the shaking. The *Elohim* determine to a far extent what happens to the foundations of the earth. The psalmist is by this, entreating his readers to be mindful of which *Elohim* they submit to and devote their lives to. As much as these *Elohim* influence the wicked, the just *Elohim* also influences good people to rescue the afflicted and destitute and maintain the rights of the poor and orphans.

In this verse, the psalmist uses יָדְעוּ (they have not known) to depict the state of the *Elohim*. This is how they are. They have become unjust in their ways and are walking in darkness. It is this, that elicits their judgment which also

would result in their death. Tsevat (1969-1970) argues that the failure of these *Elohim* depicted in the fact that they walk about in darkness, and are unwilling to walk in the light, is a consequence of they having neither knowledge nor understanding. This suggests that the *Elohim* are incapable to grasp the issue and are unwilling to do what they are bidden. In contrast, the just *Elohim* walks in the light, has knowledge and understanding and, therefore, is capable of grasping the issue at stake and is willing to do what is right and just.

The negative particle לֹא occurs twice in v. 5 in conjunction with two verbs to depict that the *Elohim* have no insight as a consequence of which they cannot be judges. Their mis-rule and show of partiality has plunged the whole earth into chaos. יִמּוֹטוּ (they shall be shaken) in v. 5 alliterates with תְּמוּתוּן (you shall die) in v. 7.

אֲנִי־אָמַרְתִּי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם

I say, you are *Elohim*,

וּבְנֵי עֶלְיוֹן כֻּלְּכֶם

you are sons of *Elyon* (the Most High), all of you (v. 6).

The psalmist switches back and places an emphasis on the word אַתֶּם (v. 6) 'you' referring to the *Elohim*, who are sons of *Elyon*. Are these *Elohim* the same as the sons of God mentioned in Deuteronomy 32:8–9 (BHS), for whom the boundaries of the people were divided in accordance with? The psalmist leads our imagination to tinker with the idea of what would have followed if they were not *Elohim*. But the reality is this; they are. The emphatic you are *Elohim* seems to suggest that these *Elohim* should have known better and acted rightly and justly in accordance with their status as *Elohim*.

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אֲנִי־אָמַרְתִּי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם וּבְנֵי עֶלְיוֹן כֻּלְּכֶם I say, you are *Elohim*, you are sons of *Elyon* (the Most High), all of you. The Septuagint translators recognised the *Elohim* in v. 6 as plural and as such translate it with Θεοί. It follows then, that, these *Elohim* are the ones being accused. In verse 6-7, *Elohim* pronounces sentence with an emphatic I, which could be rendered as it is I who says. The sons of *Elyon* do not reflect the concerns of *Elohim* with justice, morality, and order. The Targum translates the *Elohim* of v. 6 as angels (כמלאכיא).

According to Baker (1994), some people attempt to interpret the words "ye are gods" to suggest that people can be gods and be on par with God in essence. However, the meaning of the Hebrew word for "god" provides the answer to this misunderstanding of these words. God is referred to as *Elohim*, which refers to his role as a judge and arbiter of justice.

The word (pronoun plus verb) אֲנִי־אָמַרְתִּי in v. 6 is in the first-person singular with the *Elohim* who is speaking. The stich shows a parallel:

אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם

וּבְנֵי עֶלְיוֹן כֻּלְּכֶם

There is end rhyme between אַתֶּם and כֻּלְּכֶם. The pronoun second masculine plural אַתֶּם refers to the plural *Elohim* in v. 1.

אָכֵן כְּאָדָם תְּמוּתוּן
Nevertheless, you shall die like men (humans),
וּכְאַחַד הַשָּׂרִים תִּפֹּלוּ
and you shall fall like any prince (v. 7).

The psalmist places emphasis on the word תְּמוּתוּן (v. 7), because the

Elohim who are divine beings have incurred the wrath and judgment of the just

Elohim. Their sentence is death. This reduces the life existence of these divine

beings and demotes them from a state of immortality to a state of mortality.

These *Elohim* shall now share in the limitations of death and mortality placed

upon humanity, the very humanity they have so wrongly and unjustly afflicted.

The pain they have caused humanity through their activities has now reduced

them to the state of mortal beings. These *Elohim* shall now die like men. Which

suggests that they have lost their place of immortality among the *Elohim*. In the

context of Deuteronomy 32:8–9 (BHS), when the Most High established

boundaries for the sons of Adam, he did so in accordance with the number of

the sons of God. The sons of God shall now die like the sons of Adam (humans).

The comparative particle כְ occurs in v. 7 and appears to hint at this.

In vss. 6-7 *Elohim* pronounces judgment. The psalmist shifts the scene

back to heaven in v. 6-7. The status of the *Elohim* is not immutable (See Tsevat,

1969-1970). Court scene ends with v. 7. Whereas the just *Elohim* stands/takes

his stand and is called upon by the nations to take up his rightful possessions,

the unjust *Elohim* are demoted, to mere humans of the earth. אָכֵן is an adverb

that has strong asseverative force and is used in v. 7 to emphasize a contrast,

after אָמַרְתִּי in v. 6, and also to show the antithetical relationship between v. 6

and v. 7. A parallel exist in v. 7:

כְּאָדָם תְּמוּתוּן

וּכְאַחַד הַשָּׂרִים תִּפֹּלוּ

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vv. 6, 7 form a syntactic unit. אֲנִי־אָמַרְתִּי in v. 6 makes the two stichs to form a

statement in direct speech. Those who are addressed are referred to in both

stichs as you (plural). In vv. 6-7 the *Elohim* will die like human beings and fall

like princes/rulers.

קוּמָה אֱלֹהִים שָׁפְטָה הָאָרֶץ
Arise, *Elohim*, judge the earth;
כִּי־אַתָּה תִנְחַל בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם
for you possess (in) all the nations! (v. 8)

The word הָאָרֶץ (v. 8) the earth, as emphasised by the psalmist, has been

at the receiving end of the unjust and wrong judgment of the *Elohim*. The just

Elohim is called upon now to judge the earth so as to put an end to the evil

effects in the earth. All the nations in the earth shall experience his just rule that

shall bring a breath of fresh air and liberty in the earth. The *Elohim* in v. 8 is

seen as singular and thus translated with singular θεός in the Septuagint. The

Targum considers the *Elohim* of v. 8 as Lord (יהוה). It can be seen that the

Targum avoids the use of anthropomorphic terms and expressions concerning

God.

קוּמָה אֱלֹהִים שָׁפְטָה הָאָרֶץ כִּי־אַתָּה תִנְחַל בְּכָל־הַגּוֹיִם In v. 8 the psalmist shifts

the scene back to the earth. The psalm concludes with a prayer for the justice of

Elohim to appear on earth. And the just *Elohim* possess or shall possess the

nations. *Elohim* is called upon to arise and judge the earth, thus depicting him

as judge. Verse 8b indicates that all the nations are the possession of *Elohim*.

This passage is reminiscent of Deuteronomy 32:8f. (see also Tsevat, 1969-

1970).

So devastating is the activities of the unjust *Elohim* and the wicked that the affected nations cry out to the just *Elohim* to take possession of all the nations. The psalmist uses contrast to exalt the just *Elohim* and degrade the unjust *Elohim*. The role of the just *Elohim* as judge in the poem offers insight and example of the closeness and care of God for all of humanity. God will be quick to judge the unjust *Elohim* whose activities in darkness empowers the wicked to oppress and hold to ransom the poor, orphans, afflicted and the destitute. The quick action of the just *Elohim* in judging and demoting the unjust *Elohim* in heaven triggers an action on earth where the nations cry and long for the rule and positive influence of the just *Elohim*.

According to Segal (1955), the name *Elohim* cannot be less sacred. The name of the deity, *Elohim*, clearly depicts or expresses the deity's sanctity. *Elohim* appears 164 times in book II of Psalms and 36 times in Book III (also see Segal, 1955). Verse 8 is characterized by the occurrence of many 'a' sound as seen in the endings of the following words: כִּי־אַתָּה שָׁפְטָה קוּמָה. Verse 8 forms an inclusio with v. 1 by repeating key concepts such as *Elohim*, the verb שׁפט, and the preposition בְּ from v. 1b. Therefore, v. 8 forms the conclusion and climax of the entire Psalm.

There is an appeal to the *Elohim* in v. 8 to rise up and possess all nations. This *Elohim* will take charge and rule the whole earth. The poet wishes to convince his readers of the greatness of the *Elohim* of Israel, who he depicts as the *Elohim* who will take charge and rule the nations justly. In contrast the other *Elohim* are displayed as nonentities and impotent beings (see Prinsloo, 1995).

Some important words have been repeated in several successive lines like the verb שָׁפַט which appears in vv. 1b, 2, 3, and 8, the word אֱלֹהִים which occurs two times in v. 1b, and once each in vv. 6, and 8, the word רְשָׁעִים occurring in vv. 2 and 4, the word דַל occurring in two successive stichs in vv. 3 and 4, and the word אֶרֶץ found in vv. 5 and 8 to create beauty and cohesion in the poem. These words show that there is a close relationship in vv. 1-8. Verse 1b, and v. 8 the conclusion, together form a framework around the Psalm.

Selected Views

The interpretation of this psalm is quite varied; for while some scholars find it difficult to pinpoint from the psalm the precise identification of the *Elohim*, others especially among recent scholarship have easily identified the *Elohim* as deities or divine beings.

In order to find out how the text meant for its first readers for whom it was written, Gruber (2020) cites several different genres assigned to the Psalms by Gunkel, that can help us to understand what the original historical context of a particular Psalm might have been. Scholars used the term *sitz im leben* to describe this context. These possible life settings show us that the Psalms were written for specific purposes by authors who expressed specific emotions and moods, and sometimes were recited for specific events and rituals in the lives of the ancient Israelites. Gruber argues that one often thinks of the Psalms as isolated prayers that originated independently of the broader biblical narrative but the Psalms tell a story about the people of Israel that supplements the information one gets in the rest of the Bible (Gruber, 2020).

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Psalm 82 depicts *El* as the deity of the highest rank, who has an assembly or council. In this council of *El*, *Elohim* is standing. Thus v. 1 depicts *Elohim* as judge in the council of *El*. In v. 2 the speaker is *Elohim* who lays out charges of accusation against the other *Elohim*. The accusation: This is practice of injustice that the plaintiff *Elohim* is aggrieved about (Tsevat, 1969-1970).

Psalm 82 begins without the benefit of any introduction. *Elohim* is standing in the divine assembly. The narrator may be identified as in the case of Micaiah and Isaiah. This Psalm seems to share much with the unidentified voices in Isaiah 40:1-8. Seitz argues that the voices in Isaiah 40:1-8 belongs to anonymous members of the divine assembly. The narrator overhears what is said in the divine assembly and puts it in the written form of a narrative, in such a way that *Elohim* speaks directly from the divine assembly without the need of prophetic agency (Tate, 2002).

The בַּעֲדַת־אֵל has the name of the deity, *El*. It is an interesting example of a psalm depicting the name of the West Semitic deity as *El*. This is an interesting example because it presents the possibility of a scene where the superior deity in council is *El* another West Semitic deity and all the other *Elohim* in this scene play a subordinate role to him (see also Trotter, 2012). Segal (1955) argues that, beside the deity *Elohim*, *El* is used chiefly in the elevated diction of poetry, as in the oracles of Balaam, in the Prophets, Psalms and Job. In its character as an appellative, *El* is sometimes used in the sense of "divine," as in the frequent declaration of the uniqueness of the deity and His supremacy over all divine beings. This is depicted in Ex. 15:11; Deut. 3:24; Micah 7:18.

In Deuteronomy 4:19, and Deuteronomy 29:25, it is observed that other *Elohim* have been given roles by *YHWH*, the deity of Israel. The meaning of אל עדת is well known. *Elohim* are the Sons of the Most High (see also Tsevat, 1969-1970).

What is the role of the *Elohim* in the event of this Psalm? Psalm 82 depicts an event in the council of *El*, the presiding deity, in which a particular deity, *Elohim*, prosecutes other *Elohim*, sons of *Elyon*. An *Elohim* is standing to prosecute or judge other *Elohim* who are depicted as the sons of *Elyon*. From the text of Psalm 82 the *Elohim* are given the role to judge or rule/reign in all the nations. These *Elohim* are expected to perform this role with diligence, but have failed to perform as suggested by the text.

Who, are these *Elohim* mentioned in Psalm 82? Are they human judges or divine beings? A very old stream of interpretation interprets the *Elohim* as human judges or officials. Tate argues that, this is based primarily on references in Exodus 21:6; 22:6–7, 8, 27; 1 Sam 2:25, in which the parties in legal procedures are directed to come before *Elohim*. In Exodus 21:6, Hebrew slaves who wished to remain in service to their masters after six years of service are to be brought to *Elohim* at the doorpost and have an ear pierced with an awl. The *Targum Onqelos* translates אלהים as דיניא, "judges." In the view of Tate, this forms the basis for the conclusion that *Elohim* can be equated to judges. If the unity of Psalm 82 is maintained, the simile, "like humankind" and "like the princes" in v 7 makes it hard to conclude that the *Elohim* could be humans (Tate, 2002).

In this text *Elohim* in the first half of the verse was translated as "judges" by some early translators. Such a reading creates an interpretive problem in

Psalm 82:6. If *Elohim* is interpreted as judges in Psalm 82:1, and the word refers to the same group in v. 6, then what is the significance of the condemnation expressed in v. 6? If the word refers to the same group in both verses, "what is so special about being condemned to die like men if you are already human and expecting it anyway?" (Trotter, 2012)

With the discovery of Mesopotamian and Ugaritic texts depicting a divine council, it has become increasingly common to identify the *Elohim* of Psalm 82:1, 6 as deities participating in an assembly of deities. Similar scenario deities meeting in a council of deities both from the Hebrew Bible and from other cultures of the Ancient Near East occur. The interpretation of this scene as an example of a divine assembly of a pantheon of deities has become almost irresistible. Certainly, the parallels between Psalm 82 and numerous other texts depicting divine council scenes are persuasive. The most common conclusion about the *Elohim* of vv. 1b, 6 is to identify them as all deities (Trotter, 2012). The judgment on the *Elohim* has some similarity to the rather widespread mythical imagery of the revolt and punishment of a deity. A deity could be killed if he became rebellious and failed to carry out his functions; as, for example, *Kingu* in *Enuūma eliš* (4.119–28); *We-ila* in *Atra-hasis* (1.4.123–24); however, the claim that one deity renders a whole group of deities to be mortal seems to be without parallel elsewhere (Tate, 2002). This is an indication that deities could die at the hands of other deities (Trotter, 2012).

Frankel argues that the plaintiff *Elohim* in v. 1 is *YHWH*. In his view *El* is the deity who presides over the council. He suggests that the purpose of the text is to promulgate *YHWH*'s political charter for ruling the world. The narrative voice of verse 1 is the same voice of verse 5. Verse 2-4, address the

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Elohim directly in the second person. Verse 5 speaks about the *Elohim* to an unidentified subject in third person. The speaker definitively asserts that the *Elohim* are obstinate and will never understand (Frankel, 2011).

In the theological world of biblical literature, it is however true throughout the biblical stories that God typically operates in the background and only makes direct interventions through the prophets or through dreams. The quest for an unrepresentable deity is reflected in stories where God has a supporting role and attempts are made to avoid giving God any human characteristics. God's role in these stories is influenced by the two competing perspectives of God's authority over the world: as among us or above us, acting or just supervising. (Amit, 2001). In Psalm 82, we see this play out.

The choice of depicting God as more or less intervening is not a matter of earlier or later stories. We can deduce therefore in Psalm 82, that, because the character of the plaintiff *Elohim* is seen as reproving and punishing the other *Elohim* are flat characters who are sinful and rebellious. According to Amit, the narrator is an unnamed, abstract figure who mediates between us and the story. The narrator tells us what happened and informs us what characters are speaking, from God to the least character. The narrator is traditionally considered to be the ultimate authority in the story-world. Whatever accords with the narrator's statements or God's must be beyond doubt (Amit, 2001).

Elohim in the Hebrew text of Ps. 82:6 could be interpreted as plural because of אַתֶּם and כֻּלְּכֶם which are plural. In this verse, the term *Elohim* alludes to gods. Now that it is known that the *Elohim* in verse 6 are gods, how is verse 6 to be read in Asante Twi? The significance of *Elohim* for comprehending

moye anyame is supported by the Hebrew text. What relevance does this reading have for *moye anyame* if *Elohim* are gods?

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have seen that the judgement of the *Elohim* in Psalm 82 has attracted scholarly attention to seek the identity of these *Elohim*. The identities of the *Elohim* in Psalm 82:1 and 6 are central to the interpretive difficulties and debates raised. We have looked at the translation and textual difficulties in the text by way of textual criticism, literary analysis, selected views, and structure in the reading of Psalm 82.
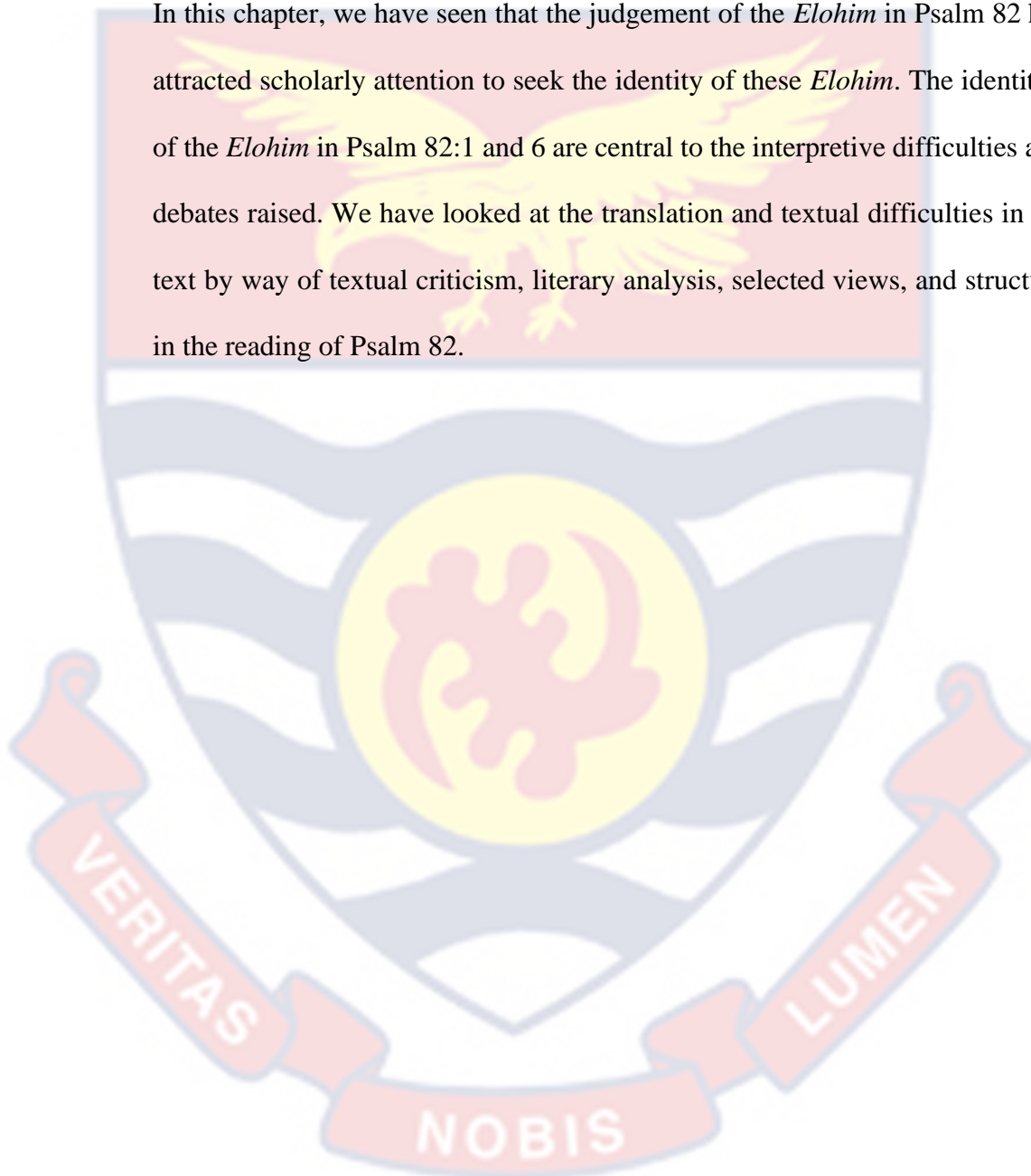
CHAPTER FOUR

THE HISTORY OF THE ASANTE TWI BIBLE AND ANALYSIS OF

THE ASANTE TWI TRANSLATION OF PSALM 82

Introduction

Having considered an exegesis of Psalm 82 in the previous chapter, this chapter carries out an analysis of the Asante Twi translation of Psalm 82 to seek whether the phrase whether the phrase אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם meaning "you are gods" presents a difficulty for the Asante Bible, where it is translated as *moyɛ anyame*, and the difficulties reading Psalm 82 of the Asante Twi Bible presents, as well as the consequences that follow.

The Origins and Nature of the Asante Twi Bible

Translation into the Asante Twi dialect was initiated by the Basel missionaries with the active involvement of indigenous personnel who worked tirelessly to produce a legacy in their bid to communicate the gospel effectively in local languages. The Basel missionaries 1845-1846 primer, contained the first recorded publishing of Scripture passages in Twi. A revised New Testament prepared under the coordination of Christaller, a Basel missionary and linguist, was published in 1870 before the first full Akuapem-Twi Bible came out in 1871. According to the verso page, it was translated into the Twi language, which is spoken by the Akuapem, Akyem, Asante, Fante, and other peoples, from Hebrew and Greek. This underscores the fact that the translation was intended for a wider readership among the Akan of the Gold Coast, because it was deemed that these Akan dialects are mutually intelligible (Ekem, 2011).

Christaller translated the Psalms and Proverbs from the Hebrew text into Twi which was published in 1866. Christaller appends the following to the page after the Twi translation of Psalm 150:

The Psalms in tyi were translated, Ps 1 – 75 with the help of the native catechist Is. Ostertag and partly of the native Missionary D. Asante, … 1864; the rest was translated and the whole revised with Jonathan Palmer of Akropong, … July – Nov. 1865 by G. Christaller, ….

Christaller, because of his linguistic abilities, was specially commissioned by the Basel Evangelical Society to study the Akan language and translate the Bible and other religious books into the principal Gold Coast language. He did his official work well, and his Twi Bible is a classic (Danquah, 1968).

In 1926, the subject of a common orthography with the same spellings for the same sounds, which would assist all Gold Coast languages being translated, became contentious. This was true of Basel and Wesleyan missionaries. Based on the Lepsius Standard Alphabet, Basel missionaries spelt. Although this writing system served a vital purpose, it was loaded with elaborate diacritical marks to communicate tone, tense, and aspect, making it difficult to write, read, and typeset with modern technology. Following the 1948 publication of the Mfantse (Fante) Bible, it was decided to establish a standard Twi Bible with spelling that could be used by both Akuapem-Twi and Asante-Twi speakers. To communicate the languages' somewhat distinct sounds and compromise on grammatical and syntactical inconsistencies, a common spelling was created. European missions' uneasy coexistence on the Gold Coast, especially since they worked among various language groups for which no acceptable unified vocalic and consonantal writing system had been adopted, contributed to the failure to create a unified writing system for the Akan dialects.

In 1957 *Asempa no sedeɛ Marko Twerɛ maeɛ* "The Gospel according to Mark" Asante Twi, and *Asempa no sedeɛ Yohane Twerɛ maeɛ* "The Gospel according to John" Asante Twi were published. It was precisely because the orthography difficulty had still not been resolved, that the Twi Bible also eventually came out in two slightly different orthographies. The newly revised full Bible in Akuapem Twi and Asante Twi bearing the titles *Anyamesɛm anaa kyerɛw Kronkron Akan kasa mu* and *Anyamesɛm anaa Twerɛ Kronkron Akan kasa mu* "The Divine Word or Holy Scriptures in the Akan language" prepared by a translation committee that included Rapp, Keteku, and Birikorang, in 1964. Akrofi a renowned linguist from Akropong-Akuapem was responsible for the Akuapem Twi orthography and Denteh, a renowned indigenous Asante linguist, prepared the Asante Twi orthography (Ekem, 2011).

Ekem (2021) explained that the original version of the Akan Bible from which all the other Akan translations were done is the 1871 version translated by Christaller from the original Hebrew and Greek. The 1964 translation is a revision of the 1871 version; however, it is the first solely Asante Twi translation. Rapp and co revised the 1871 version and Denteh using the Asante orthography stylised the text to make it suitable for an Asante reader/audience. The Asante Twi Bible translation is now accessible in the 1964 edition, with changes in the 2011 version, the 2019 version, and Diglot Bible. According to Ekem, the 1964 version of the Asante Twi Bible is a translation whereas all the others are revisions. According to Adjei Arthur an interviewee, the main text that is used in the translation process is the Hebrew and Greek text and the English translation. Translation is done from English to Mother-tongue before

the consultant matches it with the original to get a structure as close to the original as possible.

One significant issue worth noting is that a unified Akan translation was seen as not being able to distinctly represent the various Akan dialects. This might be the reason why the various Akan groups who were the intended audiences could not identify with this project. Probably for this same reason, the churches withdrew their support. There was unanimous and popular decision to revise the older translations and give them a new lease of life. The churches in collaboration with the Bible Society of Ghana embarked on a careful revision of the missionary version (Mojola, 2013).

Motivation for the Translation of the Asante Twi Bible

In a letter to Christaller dated September 24, 1855, Assistant Foreign Secretary Henry Knolleke, expressed the hope that his Twi translation of the Scriptures would be able to promote the spiritual benefit of the Natives among whom he was labouring, and then conduce to the furtherance of the Redeemer's kingdom (Ekem, 2011).

Bible translation is aimed basically at interpreting the meaning of the original message, using appropriate indigenous cultural categories and idioms. When translated using the language of a people, it enables them to hear God's word in a comprehensible language (tongue). Language is therefore a social means that exposes a people's sense of values and expresses their character. Language makes translation feasible (Atta-Akosah, 2005). According to Sanneh, missionaries learnt the local languages while translating the Bible for the communities in which they worked with the support of local language

experts. By imposing a written form on oral communities, vernacular Bible translation interrupted internal morphological processes (Sanneh, 2002).

Missionaries generally controlled overall translation process. Today, translation projects are normally carried out by highly trained mother-tongue speakers and are accompanied by literacy and new reader programmes. The first decade of the twenty-first century has been characterised by a more eclectic and flexible translation approach that made use of a greater number of supplementary aids such as explanatory notes and glossaries, newer publishing formats, and multimedia text delivery systems. Frequently, such projects were guided by extensive preliminary research into specific needs and desires of the local language communities concerned (Wendland and Noss, 2013). The interaction of a reader with a given text generates meaning. Bible translation efforts are initiated by institutions. Institutional decision-making is essential due to specific group interests. Bible translation occurs in a specific cultural context (Noorda, 2002).

The aim of a translation is to convey the total informational, emotional, connotational content of the original message to the reader or hearer where the translation is read publicly in the secondary language (Carson, 2003). Thus, it appears that the motivation for the translation of the Asante Twi Bible was to enable the reader grasp the whole factual, emotional, and connotative content of the source text.

The early Basel Mission missionaries on the Gold Coast believed that the way to moral and spiritual enlightenment was through the proclamation, teaching, and documentation of God's word in a language that the target audience could understand. In order to communicate meaningfully with their

target audiences, European missionaries and their African co-workers were faced with the challenge of repackaging theological concepts in appropriate local African thought categories. Sacred texts cannot speak to the hearts of a people unless they are communicated in a writing system that the people can read and understand (Ekem, 2011). For such an impact to be realised among the Asante the missionaries embarked on the quest.

Psalm 82, Asante Twi Bible 1964 Translation

Israel atamfo Asaf dwom

1 *Onyankopɔn gyina Nyankopɔn asafo mu,*

ɔbu atɛn anyame ntam.

2 *Da bɛn na mobɛbu ntɛnkyea,*

na moahwɛ abɔnefoɔ anim akɔsie?

(sela)

3 *Monni ɔbrɛfoɔ ne awisiaa asɛm,*

monni asɛntenenee mma ɔmane-

hunufoɔ ne mmɔborɔni.

4 *Monnye ɔbrefoɔ ne ohiani,*

monhwim wɔn mfiri abɔnefoɔ nsam.

5 *Wɔnnim de, na wɔnte aseɛ,*

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esum mu na wɔnante korɔ,

asase nnyinassoɔ nyinaa rewoso.

6 *Me deɛ, maka sɛ: moyɛ anyame,*

na mo nyinaa yɛ ɔsorosoroni no

mma,

7 *nanso mobɛwuwu sɛ nnipa pɛ,*

na moatotɔ sɛ ahemfo mu biara.

8 *Onyankopɔn, sɔre, bu asase atɛn,*

na wo na wobɛdi adeɛ, amanaman

nyinaa mu.

Textual Analysis

The 1964 version is nearly identical to the 2012 translation and the 2017 Asante Twi translation. The only difference is that the heading *Israel atamfo Asaf dwom* in the 1964 translation becomes *Israel atamfoɔ Asaf dwom* in the 2012 and 2017 Asante Twi translations respectively.

In the 1964 Asante Twi translation v. 8 reads as: *Onyankopɔn, sɔre, bu asase atɛn, na wo na wobɛdi adeɛ, amanaman nyinaa mu.* Whereas in the 2012 and 2017 Asante Twi translation v. 8 reads as: *Ao! Onyankopɔn, sɔre ɛ, bu asase atɛn, na wo na wobɛdi adeɛ, amanaman nyinaa mu.*

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The 1964 Asante Twi Bible makes use of cross-references, which is evident also in Psalm 82. Cross-references are considered as an embodiment of the hermeneutical concept in the Protestant tradition, where Scripture explains itself by comparing it to other sections within the canon. According to this concept, every biblical chapter should be understood in the context of other biblical passages. Connections between passages in biblical texts have long been used in cross-references, and these connections can have cognitive, cultural, historical, and larger cultural importance. These linkages have been discovered in mediaeval manuscripts and are becoming more common in printed Bible editions. Following earlier Bible editions' practises, the Authorised Version of the Bible, published in 1611, contains around 9,000 cross-references between chapters. The connections between biblical passages are referred to as intertextuality, a word taken from literary criticism. Parts of the biblical canon may be linked into a modular network structure that has been constructed and recognised by attentive readers over the course of a complex textual history and reception Czachesz, 2022). Cross-references, according to the Thomas Nelson Reference Bible, help to establish context for the passage. Cross-references can refer to specific words, phrases, comparable passages, statements, similar thoughts, parallels, events, predictions, and other information. According to Pritz (1990), a cross-reference is a note written beside the biblical text that guides the reader to another location in the Bible where he or she might discover the same or similar subject. It could be listed in the margin, at the bottom of the page, or after the verse in the body of the text. The use of cross-references allows the Bible to speak for itself.

The translators have proposed reading v. 1 *Onyankopɔn gyina Nyankopɔn asafo mu, ɔbu atɛn anyame ntam* in the light of v. 6 which they have indicated in the footnotes. It is as if to suggest that the strength of the understanding of the text in v. 1 is dependent on the text in v. 6.

The translators sought to facilitate the readers understanding of the text in v. 2 by referencing Deut. 1:17 in the footnotes to v. 2. In Deut. 1:8 – 18, *atemmufoɔ* (judges) are installed and given instructions concerning how they should go about their duties. And in v. 17 they are instructed not to be partial in giving judgment by looking in the faces of people in order to give judgment. By referencing Deut. 1:17 the translators may be thinking that the people being addressed in Psalm 82:2, probably are human judges.

The translators have footnoted v.3 with Isaiah 1:17 which is seen as their way of assisting the reader to understand the text. Isaiah 1:17 is an indictment of the Lord against Israel, where the Israelites are urged to practise righteousness, pursue justice, correct wrongdoers, speak up for the fatherless, fight to deliver the widows. Such cross-reference reading is suggestive of the understanding the translators are seeking to bring to bear on their readers. Which is that the people being addressed in Psalm 82 are humans.

The translators have referenced in the footnotes to v. 6, Psalm 82:1, Ex. 21:6, and John 10:34. The translators appear to be trying to illuminate the text with these references. By throwing light on v. 6 they seek to achieve a certain goal of assisting the reader to see the text in a way they have perceived the text to mean. Again, linking v. 6 to v. 1 the translators are drawing out a meaning they assume ties these two verses together. Ex. 21:6 talks about laws concerning

slaves and particularly mentions how the master of a slave should bring his slave before the Lord and have his ear pierced to signify that the slave wishes to stay with him for life. This represents humanity before the *Elohim*, implying that v. 6 of Psalm 82 may also depict humans before the Lord. Further, the reference to John 10:34 is to help the reader see that v. 6 is possibly talking about humans. Jesus stated in John 10 that people to whom the word of the Lord came were called gods, then it must probably be humans Psalm 82:6 is referring to.

Why are footnotes to John 10:34 used? According to the New Testament Greek text, εργω ειπα Θεοι εστε "I say you are gods" is referenced from Psalm 82:6. The text in Psalm 82 is not about humans, but about deities. The Jews recognise that humans should not appoint themselves as God. So, what was Jesus trying to say with this allusion? Jesus said I am God's son, I have been sent to do the work of the *Elohim,* the work for which they are indicted in Ps. 82. In effect, Jesus is quoting Ps. 82 to support the claim that he is God. The Greek word εστε does not change it, and it is in this context that Jesus cited this passage. When the New Testament Greek cites Ps. 82:6 as what Jesus is saying, it is implied that Jesus is God, just as the *Elohim* are deities. Are the translators of the Asante Twi Bible referring to John 10:34 in this way? Why would the translators use a New Testament text to explain Ps. 82:6?

Literary Analysis of *Nnwom* (Psalm) 82 in the Asante Twi Bible

The thesis offers a verse-by-verse analysis of the text in this section. Asante Twi translators have chosen a heading: *Israel atamfo Asaf dwom* to depict their understanding of this particular Psalm. In their estimation the psalm is about the enemies of Israel, a song of Asaph. Who are these enemies of Israel?

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Are they humans or deities? The key to this interpretation is based on *Nnwom* 82:6.

Onyankopɔn gyina Nyankopɔn asafo mu,

ɔbu atɛn anyame ntam (v. 1)

God is standing in the midst of God's war hosts,

He judges in the midst of gods.

In this verse, the Psalmist says that, *Onyankopɔn* (*Elohim*) stands in his war council. Instead of the use of *Nyankopɔn nhyiamu* (Divine assembly) the use of *Nyankopɔn asafo* (God's war host) depicts the translators understanding of the '*adat el* as a war host wherein the ongoing meeting of *Onyankopɔn* (God) and the *anyame* (*Elohim*) is concerned with warfare. The translators see the use of *Elohim* in v. 1b as a metaphor and similar to the use of *Elohim* in v. 6, as indicated in the footnotes of the Asante Twi Bible, and which they have translated as *anyame*. *Nyankopɔn* judges in the midst of the gods. Why could the local term *abosom* not be used to translate the plural *Elohim* translated as *anyame*?

The translators use of *Onyankopɔn gyina Nyankopɔn asafo mu* suggests that the assembly is made up of the war hosts of the Lord of hosts. The choice of *asafo* (a host) is revealing as it may suggest that the translators identify the poem as dealing with the war of *Onyankopɔn* against the wicked and the *Elohim* behind their actions.

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Da bɛn na mobɛbu ntɛnkyea,

na moahwɛ abɔnefoɔ anim akɔsie?

(*sela*) (v. 2)

How long will you judge unjustly,

and show partiality to the wicked? (Selah)

In this verse, *Nyankopɔn* (God) questions the *anyame* (gods). He wonders how long these *anyame* (gods) would favour evil. Selah is a pause sign that is suggesting a pause by *Nyankopɔn* (God), for the *anyame* (gods) to respond to the charges he has levelled against them. Are the translators using Deut. 1:17 to establish context or as a hermeneutic concept to illuminate the text? It appears that by doing so, they are suggesting that the *anyame* are human judges. Thus, the accusation of *Nyankopɔn* is against these human judges for their unjust ways in meting out judgment. The interpretation assumes the *Elohim* as judges. It does not follow that *Elohim* in Ps. 82 refers to judges or other leaders.

Monni ɔbrɛfoɔ ne awisiaa asɛm,

monni asɛntenenee mma ɔmane-

hunufoɔ ne mmɔborɔni. (v. 3)

Give justice to the weak and fatherless,

Give righteous justice to the afflicted and poor.

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This verse continues the complaint of *Nyankopɔn* in v. 2. The failure of the *anyame* is that they have refused to give justice to the weak and fatherless and have also ignored the right judgment of the afflicted and poor. The allusion to Isaiah 1:17 in the footnotes seems to strengthen the position of the translators that the *anyame* (*Elohim*) are human. By alluding to Isaiah 1:17, the translators have assumed that the enemies of Israel are human, probably judges, who are engaged in the task of judging. These human judges are expected to do right in giving judgment. They have, however, failed in doing so.

Monnye ɔbrefoɔ ne ohiani,

monhwim wɔn mfiri abɔnefoɔ nsam. (v. 4)

Rescue the weak and poor,

deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

This verse continues with the complaint of the previous verse. *Nyankopɔn* charges the *anyame* to save the poor from the oppressors. It is a development of the notion that the predicament of the weak, poor, afflicted, and fatherless have so degenerated to the extent that they are now oppressed by the wicked, and at the mercy of the very wicked who have so relentlessly harshly oppressed them. Their state and situation are dire. They need to be rescued and delivered.

Wɔnnim de, na wɔnte aseɛ,

esum mu na wɔnante korɔ,

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asase nnyinassɔɔ nyinaa rewoso. (v. 5)

They do not know, and they do not understand,

in darkness they walk about,

all the foundations of the earth are shaken.

Who are those referred to as persons who do not know, neither do they understand? Are they deities or humans? In this verse, the *anyame* are depicted by *Nyankopɔn* as groping about in darkness, a metaphor that describes the results of their actions. Are humans ignorant of the effects of their actions? Well, it should be mentioned that humans are claimed to know since their fall in Genesis 3. Therefore, they cannot be excused for their evil treatment of others. The deities are expected even to do better. Human judges are expected to stand in the counsel of God and do what is right. Humans however are not all-knowing as God, and that is the reason why the psalmist in v. 5 depicts them as: "they do not know, neither do they understand." The *anyame* have brazenly chosen to walk in this path of iniquity, the path of the knowledge of evil.

Me deɛ, maka sɛ: moyɛ anyame,

na mo nyinaa yɛ ɔsorosoroni no

mma,

As for me, I have said: "you are gods,

And all of you are sons of the Most High,

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This verse recalls v. 1 in which *Elohim* is translated as *anyame*. *Onyankopɔn* is the speaker in this verse. He addresses the *anyame*. To buttress the fact that the translators see the use of *Elohim* which they have translated as *anyame* as a metaphor, they allude v. 6 to John 10:34 in the footnotes. Thus, in their opinion, they are using the statement made by Jesus Christ to interpret the Psalm. The translators are suggesting that the *anyame* (*Elohim*), being referred to are human beings.

The *anyame* (*Elohim*) are not only the enemies of Israel, but they are also the enemies of all humanity who they have wronged. These human judges have done wrong by giving unjust judgment. Thus, *Onyankopɔn* is on the warpath to make right what they have done wrong. *Onyankopɔn* (*Elohim*) is not emphatic in his speech in betraying a softness for the *anyame* (*Elohim*) who the translators are depicting as humans. Whether the word *anyame* is used metaphorically or not, how would it be interpreted in the religious and cultural world of the Asante? Why not the use of the word *abosom* (deities) or *Nyame nketewa* (gods) to translate *Elohim* in v. 1b and v. 6?

nanso mobɛwuwu sɛ nnipa pɛ,

na moatotɔ sɛ ahemfo mu biara. (v. 7)

but you will die like men,

and fall like any ruler".

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In this verse, the speech by *Onyankopɔn* in v. 6 is continued. They are *anyame*, but they will die like *nnipa* (humans) and fall like any ruler. Are Israel *atamfo* (Israel's enemies) necessarily *nnipa* (humans)? If they are, then why would they die like *nnipa* (humans) in v. 7. This is a difficulty that the suggested reading by the translators poses.

Onyankopɔn, sɔre, bu asase atɛn,

na wo na wobɛdi adeɛ, amanaman

nyinaa mu. (v. 8)

God, arise, judge the earth,

for you shall inherit in all the nations

In this verse, there is a call upon *Onyankopɔn*, to arise and judge and inherit. Are the translators suggesting that the *anyame* (*Elohim*) are the foreign nations who are the enemies of Israel? It appears so. *Onyankopɔn* (God) is called upon to reign in all the nations. Probably, the translators are assuming the *anyame* (*Elohim*) to be wicked foreign nations and their rulers who have taken Israel captive and are treating them unjustly.

The Focus of *Nnwom* (Psalm) 82 and Selected views

What is the Asante Twi Bible saying? How have they interpreted it? What is evident in the Asante Twi Bible especially in Ps. 82 is that in v. 1, the first *Elohim* is translated as *Onyankopɔn*, and the second *Elohim* as *anyame*. In v. 6 *Elohim* is translated as *anyame*. And the *Elohim* in v. 8 translated as

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Onyankopɔn. Which of the various meanings of *Elohim* fit the context? *Elohim* translated as *Onyankopɔn* may be understood as *Yahweh*, the God of Israel, while *Elohim* translated as *anyame* seem as human judges, according to the context of Psalm 82. If this is the meaning of *Elohim*, then how should it have been translated?

Ekem argues that the meanings of biblical concepts and biblical vocabulary are not established by word equivalents (Ekem, 2004). What could the translators of the Asante Twi Bible have done to ensure that in translating Psalm 82, the term *Elohim* and its Asante Twi equivalent would convey the sense of it in the Hebrew text.

A rough outline of the psalm based on content divisions may run as follows: In the opening verse *Onyankopɔn* stands in the war council of *Nyankopɔn* and judges the *anyame*. This is followed in v. 6 and v. 7 by the statement by *Onyankopɔn* that all these *ɔsorosoroni mma* (sons of the Highest) are *anyame*. But they will pass away just like *nnipa* (humans). The next block of material is found in verses 2-5, and in a sense serves to describe the complaint that *Onyankopɔn* has against the *anyame*. It is framed in a question, how long and followed by imperatives in v. 3-4, and the reason and result of the failure of these *anyame* explained in v. 5. The last of the content block of material is found in v. 8 which is a cry to *Onyankopɔn* to arise and inherit in all the nations of the earth. It has come to this because of the oppression of the wicked.

Anthropologists advocate a cultural perspective, which requires a greater grasp of culture, an appreciation of its scope as it shapes life's pursuits and defines societal interrelationships in such a way that, one should know the biblical story as it is, and come to the Bible armed with questions relevant to his/her circumstances. The message of God in the Scripture must be heard and appropriated in the context of every people's circumstance; the Scriptures must be heard (Dickson, 1984).

There is an unconscious tendency perhaps to describe the transcendent in an imposed religious experience of conceptual categories that are European. It is observed that it is difficult to describe the transcendent in Semitic categories into African conceptions of the transcendent. How should the Hebrew *Elohim* conceived of as a divine assembly be translated into Asante Twi? In the Semitic world *Elohim* were originally conceived of as a divine assembly, although at various times in different areas, or other deities might ascend over the others. Once such a deity achieved supremacy in the divine assembly, he might retain his proper name or become more formally known as the *Elohim*. Psalm 82 reflects something of this mythic pattern, entailing not only the rise of the *Elohim* to presidency over the divine assembly but also the demotion of the other *Elohim* into insignificance. The foibles of the Greek and Roman deities were such that the translators of the Hebrew Scriptures into the Septuagint never seemed to have considered the possibility of using the proper name of Zeus or Jupiter to render the name of the God of Israel. *Elohim* and *ha-elohim* were both rendered in the Septuagint as *ho theos*, even when *Elohim* is addressed in the vocative, as in the Septuagint translation of the last verse of the Hebrew text Psalm 82. The translators of the Asante Twi Bible had a difficulty in rendering

the plural sense of *Elohim* with words for lesser transcendent beings in Asante ontology. The translators created an ersatz word in order to render plural reference to *Elohim* in Asante Twi. Another set of transcendent beings, the *abosom* (singular, *obosom*/*bosom*) usually referred to in English as the "gods" serve as specialists deputised by *Onyame* to exercise power more-than-human but less-than-supreme power. The *abosom* pass from generation to generation by transmission along the submerged patrilineal descent group (*ntorɔ*). It must be emphasised that, while one generally is disposed to potential possession by one's father's *abosom*, individual problems can sometimes result in possession by completely unrelated *abosom* or even by one revered in the matrilineal clan. Nevertheless, the general rule still holds (Ryan, 1980).

The issue is, should *abosom* have been used in translating the plural *Elohim* instead of *anyame*? A good translation ought to communicate the message faithfully from the original language to those for whom the translation is being done. It must be natural and intelligible to the people (Sule-Saa, 2020). *Anyame* is the word meaning *abosom* among many Akan. To many Christians, *abosom* are 'other gods' and therefore detested by God. But properly speaking *abosom* belong to the category of *ahonhom papa*. The *abosom* are *tete abosom* (the tutelary *abosom*). Their source is in *Onyankopon* also known as *Onyame*, the Supreme Being. This means that for the Akan, there is a positive relationship between *Onyankopon* and the *tete abosom*. The *tete abosom* bring people's sacrifices before *Onyankopon*, thus acting as couriers carrying the requests of human beings to

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Onyankopon and bringing messages from *Onyankopon* to the people. *Onyankopon* has authorised the *abosom* to deal with human beings. For the Akan there is a sense of wholeness about the world which they conceptualise as having two parts: the physical world and the world of *ahonhom* (spirits). The world of *ahonhom* is an invisible world to the human eye and includes *Onyankopon* (the Supreme Being), *Nananon Nsamanfo* (ancestors), *abosom* (gods), *asuman* (amulets), *bayie* (witchcraft) and *mmoatia* (dwarfs). Some *ahonhom* are good and work with the Supreme Being to make the quest of human beings for *nkwa* (life) possible. The other *ahonhom*, known as *ahonhom bone* (evil spirits), are against human beings and always seek to keep them from enjoying *nkwa* (life) (Afriyie, 2014).

In an interview with Ernestina Afriyie (2021) (Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon Accra) she said that the effect of Bible translation on the language and worldview of people who read the Bible as translated into their mother tongues has to be looked at. In her opinion there is the need for translators while creating words for concepts that do not exist in a people's worldview to translate them so that they do not lead to conflicts in the people's religious thoughts. She says that for the appropriation of the Christian faith to be authentic among any people, they should read Scripture in their dialect. The concept of 'gods', where gods were ends in themselves and did not function for any supreme being, does not exist among the Akan and so there is no Akan word for it. While translation is important, it may cause concepts and words to change and have new meanings respectively. *Anyame* (gods) are beings that do not

exist in the Akan worldview; there is therefore no name or word for them. *Onyame*, to the Asante Christian is the Supreme Being.

According to Afriyie (2021), every supernatural being is considered a *nyame* in the Asante Twi Bible. However, in Akan religious culture, it is not so, only the Supreme Being is *Onyame*/*Nyame*. *Anyame* is a morphological construct plural for *Onyame*/*Nyame*. By using *anyame*/*nyame* to translate gods the translators have changed the word from being a proper noun to a common noun, so that they can address a concept which is not African. According to Afriyie (2021) the Bible translators ought to have chosen a neutral word to translate "gods" as was done in the translation of "demons" where the word '*adaimone*' was used. *Adaimone* is a new word for a new concept which does not affect what is already there in the Akan worldview. As such, translators ought to create words that do not affect the already existing words and concepts.

The hierarchical structure of Akan ontology which is essentially spiritual is clear: the Supreme Being at the apex, then the deities, ancestors, humans. In this hierarchy an entity can destroy or affect any other below it. The characteristics of the physical world are different from those of the spiritual world. *Onyame* is not held to be spatial. He is not bound or limited to any particular region of space. He is omnipresent and all pervading. As the ultimate source of being, *Onyame* created the whole universe, including the deities or lesser spirits, out of nothing. Every deity is a *sunsum*. All created natural objects contain *sunsum*. *Onyame*, the deities and the ancestors are said to be spirits with intelligence and will (Gyekye, 1987).

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According to Ekem (2021), translations break grounds, as they afford the opportunity to be innovative and creative. Translations take longer time to complete than revisions. Translations start afresh, looking at the fundamentals from the original text and translating them into the mother-tongue. He stated that, the translators are aware of the fact that translations involve interpretation. That, there is no neutral text. Every text translated or revised has long layers of text behind it and a history of texts underlying the text. Every text has a history. As such for every text translated, they have to deal with whether the text should be translated literally or not. They check other text sources like the Septuagint, Targum, Symmachus, Theodotion, to see if human interactions have influenced the way the text is shaped. It is possible that, the way the text is viewed and interpreted may have been impacted by Christian traditions and upbringing. Nevertheless, the translators are very objective and state things as they are.

Ekem (2021) posits that the translators use a blend of literal and dynamic equivalence methods in their translation work. Translators delve into the background to understand history. Chances are behaviour may show that human interactions with the text have influenced the way it has been shaped. As such the source Critical Method is used to check. With regards to particular texts that are not very clear or might be ambiguous the translators look at what kind of text it could be. For instance, is אֲנִי־אָמַרְתִּי אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם in Psalm 82 a rhetorical text that might be suggesting "you are so called Gods". The translators consider the mood of the text to see if the text is in the positive mood or negative mood. Was it referring to humans? Translators read the context to ascertain how best to translate the text. There are various uses of *Elohim* in the Hebrew Bible. Before translating *Elohim* in Psalm 82, the translators look at how the

Septuagint look at *Elohim*, how the Samaritan Pentateuch look at it, how the Targum used it, and how Theodotion and Symmachus translated it. The translators did not use the word *abosom* to render the plural *Elohim* in Psalm 82 because it does not appear to them to be convincing.

The Asante Twi Bible contains several passages, including 1 Corinthians 8:4, 7; 1 Corinthians 10:19–20; Leviticus 19:4; Isaiah 42:17; Psalm 97:7; Jeremiah 10:11; and Acts 17:18, where the term "*abosom*" has been employed as a translation for the word's "gods" and "idols". Consequently, they have been subjected to the perception of being demons or evil entities. According to Afriyie (2020), a comprehensive understanding of the *abosom* notion might have potentially facilitated the dissemination of the gospel among the Akan, as it would have enhanced awareness of the significance of Jesus Christ's role.

According to Ekem (2021), revisions strive to improve translations by enhancing them, correcting errors that have been discovered, and then making them contain material regarded to be more accurate or closer to the source original. When a statement is clear and already in use in the mother tongue language, it is kept. If the translated text is satisfactory, no changes are made in revising.

Views of Akan Language Experts

In a September 2021 interview with Dr. Appah of the University of Ghana, he stated that *anyame* is a word that is properly motivated in Akan. However, he remarked that *anyame* is rarely used in context because the Akan

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associate *Nyame* with the Supreme Being. According to Appah, morphologists examine word structure and believe that there is a construction type that allows the term *anyame* to exist. He further stated that in principle every Akan word can be pluralised. There is a constructional pattern in Akan used to identify the *primus inter pares* (the unique one among the lot). This constructional pattern he calls the *N mu N* construction in Akan:

Plural		Singular
[ ]	*mu*	[ ]
ahene	*mu*	*hene*
awura	*mu*	*wura*
anyame	*mu*	*nyame*

So, if one wants to say God of gods you use this construction:

anyame	*mu*	*nyame*

Pronouns help in text cohesion. Pronouns are used in context and they link actual text, ensuring text cohesion. They help in text interpretation. Antecedents refer to who the referents are. The referent of the pronoun was respected in the translation אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם in the Asante Twi Bible which puts it as *mo ye anyame*. The use of אַתֶּם which is a pronoun, second person, masculine plural correctly translated into Asante Twi as *mo* refers back to the plural *Elohim* used in v. 1. The antecedents are the *Elohim*. Thus, the referent of this pronoun in v. 6 is the plural *Elohim* in v. 1. If the pronoun is not referring to a

human being, then the *anyame* there refers to deities and the Supreme among them is the Supreme Being, then the word *anyame* holds. From the perspective of grammar and the place of animacy, the word *anyame* is animated.

Animacy is a semantic feature multifariously expressed in languages, with asymmetries based on animacy affecting various grammatical levels (Igartua and Santazilla, 2018). According to Osam, Akan has a nominal prefix system long recognised. Animate nouns are marked by the prefix *a* or *m*, in the plural. o-/o- are predominantly animate prefixes (Osam, 1993). Pronoun for second person plural *mo* is the same (*mo*) whether used in the Nominative case or Accusative case, and *mo* is used in emphatic contexts (Agyepong, 2017).

According to Opanin Agyekum of the University of Ghana, Legon, in a September 2021 interview, the usage of the small letter in *anyame* signifies that these entities cannot be compared to the Supreme Being *Onyame*, which is spelt with a capital O. Deities in Akan are *nyame nketewa* literally translated as minor gods/deities. If the *anyame* (deities) are *osorosoroni mma* (children of the Most High) then it could mean it is referring to *osoro mma* (heavenly beings who are children of *Onyame*). *Osoro mma ye nnɔɔma ɛka Nyame ho wɔ soro* (heavenly beings who are children of *Onyame* are part of the beings and things that are with *Nyame* in heaven). *Abofoɔ* (angels), *nsoromma* (stars), *ɔsramo* (moon), *owia* (sun), and all those creations who abide in the heavens with God.

According to Opanin Agyekum (2021), there are specific classes of terms in Akan where one form can be used to refer to both singular and plural, such as the Hebrew word *Elohim*. Languages, on the other hand, differ, and the words generated in those languages are dependent on the socio-cultural ideas and experiences people have had. He claimed that because the Bible is a different sphere of speech, a word should be coined to represent the plural *Elohim*.

An interviewee, Okofo Asenso of the University of Cape Coast's Ghanaian languages and linguistics department argued that while language is dynamic, music immortalises notions and ideas. Thus, one approach to learn about the existence and use of the phrase *anyame* is through Asante traditional music and folklore. The thoughts he shared appear to be in agreement with those of Appah and Opanin Agyekum, but he added that *abosom* are not *ahoni* (images). These are spirits that were valuable to the ancestors and were thus revered. In his opinion, the term *Elohim*, translated as *anyame* in Psalm 82, is used metaphorically to allude to humans but literally to deities.

Matthiessen and Halliday (1997) claim that language is employed to create and preserve interpersonal relationship and the social order that supports them, and in doing so, we interpret and represent the world for one another and for ourselves. As such it can be seen that the translators used *anyame* to try and interpret and represent the *Elohim* in the world of the Hebrew people to the Asante.

Views of Selected Asante Pastors and Asante readers on the concept of

Elohim (*anyame*) **in Psalm 82**

Most of the selected pastors (trained or ordinary) and Asante readers (trained or ordinary) interviewed after their reading of Psalm 82 in the Asante Twi Bible said the concept *anyame* generally referred to *abosom*. In the view of Awuah (2021), an ordinary pastor and Agyekum (2021), a trained pastor, the plural *Elohim* translated as gods in the English Bibles and as *anyame* in the Asante Twi Bible is used as a metaphor. Thus, the statement *mo ye anyame* is metaphorical and does not necessarily imply that gods were being addressed. But the humans who were being addressed are said to be *anyame*. Amo-Asiedu (2021), trained pastor, Akuoko-Takyi (2021), trained pastor, Amoah-Mensah (2021), trained pastor, Afriyie (2021), trained pastor, Nyarko (2021), ordinary reader, and Twumasi (2021), ordinary pastor, said that the word *anyame* is a reference to *abosom*. To them the text is not referring to humans but spirit beings who have disobeyed the Supreme Being and thus have been called to judgment. Nyarko (2021) said that the *abosom* have not allowed the needy, afflicted, orphans to experience the blessings of life. Thus, *Onyankopɔn* (God) will judge them for their role in making the lives of these people in the nations miserable. According to Nyarko, a foreigner coined the term *anyame* when he converted the spoken language to writing. And this error has persisted over the years, uncorrected by the Akan, whose language it is, despite the fact that there is nothing like it in the Asante religion and culture. What is there, according to Nyarko, is *abosom*. She went on to say that Bible translators should replace the word *anyame* with *abosom* since that is what it is. Nyarko said further that out

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of respect for Christaller, his mistaken identification of gods as *anyame* has been made to remain and the time has come for this to be corrected. In her opinion what in the English translations is said to be gods, has been deemed to be *anyame* in the Asante Twi translation. When asked what *anyame* is, she answered by saying that the *anyame* are *abosom*, and it is only right that we use our language correctly to depict what it is.

According to Twumasi (2021) if the *Elohim* are considered as sons of God (Most High) then they are deities. He said that *ɔkɔtɔ ɛnwo anomaa* (a bird cannot be born from a crab), and consequently the *Elohim* accused in Psalm 82 are lesser deities created by *Elohim* the creator and that is the reason why he has the power to put them to death. Twumasi further reiterated that the *abosom* are spirit beings, deities whose existence is real. He suggested that, perhaps these *abosom* are similar to the *Elohim* who are accused in Psalm 82. If there is a similarity, then the *Elohim* accused in the text could be referred to as *Nyame nketewa* (lesser deities) to accentuate the fact that they are divine beings and not human beings.

The following people were interviewed in October 2022. According to interviewee Maame Nancy Awuah, an ordinary reader, *anyame* alludes to *abosom*. She continued by saying that anything that attempts to replace God becomes a *bosom*. In her opinion, in addition to the conventional *abosom*, anyone can become a *bosom*. The *abosom* should act in a way that pleases the Most High because they are his children. An interviewee named Owura Asiedu, an ordinary reader, added that the *anyame* in Psalm 82 are supernatural powers

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that had impact on Israel's judges and kings. Pomaa Awuah, a trained reader, stated that *Nyankopɔn asafo* refers to the assembly of believers. That only God has the power to judge. She observes God judging the congregation of believers as a result. She believes that the people being condemned are not God. They seem to be.

Anyame is a term that refers to people said Agya Nsiah, an ordinary reader, in an interview. Humans were made in *Onyankopɔn*'s image. He said that *Nyankopɔn asafo* is also a reference to the children of God on earth. *Onyame* is invisible, in his opinion. According to Owura Dapaah Mensah, a trained reader, the *Nyankopɔn asafo* in Psalm 82 refers to an assembly of judges, *anyame* are the judges of Israel, and by extension, it applies to Christians today, or anybody with assigned authority. A trained reader named *Wɔfa* Asamoah, claimed that God desires truth and fairness from people. God is sitting in judgment in his church. The *anyame* addressed in the text are pastors and leaders of the Churches. He asserts, however, that depending on how you look at it, anything or everyone can turn into a *nyame*. Papa Francis Acquah, a trained reader, claimed that *anyame* are *Onyankopɔn*'s representatives on earth. These are humans and they include elders, leaders, and monarchs. They favour the bad people on purpose. The wicked are also aware that they could evade prosecution in the worst-case scenario. For this reason, *Onyankopɔn* would pass judgement.

In addition, the following individuals were interviewed in November of 2022. An ordinary reader by the name of Kwame Baafi stated that *Nyankopɔn*

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asafo in Psalm 82:1 relates to Israel. He also stated that it might indicate the battle council of God, but if one were to take it further, it could refer to the Church in the modern day. He asserted that the *anyame* are *abosom*, and other gods who falsely pretend to be God but are not indeed God. According to him, the word "*anyame*" can also be interpreted symbolically to refer to those who have been influenced or possessed by other deities apart from the deity of Israel. On the other hand, he contends that if one were to take *anyame* in its literal sense, it would represent gods who rule over territory.

An ordinary reader named Nana Boakye stated that *anyame* are lesser gods that pose as God and that *Nyankopɔn asafo* refers to the congregation of God. According to Maame Abena Asamoah, an ordinary reader, *anyame* are minor deities, and *Nyankopɔn asafo* is the assembly of God, which consists of his troops and war council. A trained reader named Ante Pokua claimed that *anyame* are lesser deities or *nyame nketewa* and that *Nyankopon asafo* constitute a community of believers. An ordinary reader, Obaa Amoako, claims that the word *anyame* in Psalm 82:6 pertains to the idea that humans are comparable to gods. She explained that, being a deity entails having some power and possibly immortality in some ways, but wickedness and disobedience rob one of that power, leaving one defenceless and doomed to die as a mortal entity, just as it did at the time of the fall. *Anyame* used in verse 1 should be interpreted as *nyame nketewa*, according to her.

Akora Okrah, an ordinary pastor, claimed that *anyame* are deities who are *ahonhom* (spirits). He claimed that the *anyame* in Psalm 82 refers to

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heavenly beings, angels, spirits, all of who have authority over specific regions. These are creatures that live in the spiritual realm. However, it can also metaphorically allude to people. According to him, *Nyankopɔn asafo* are spiritual creatures that God has selected and are present in heaven with him. An ordinary reader named Yaw Yeboah asserts that *anyame* in Psalm 82 are *amanamanmufoɔ nyame*, which literally translates to "deities of other nations." He suggested that there was a figurative meaning to be gleaned from Psalm 82's usage of *anyame*. The *abosom* descriptor could also be applied to these *anyame*.

Conclusion

How *Elohim* has been translated in Psalm 82 of the Asante Twi Bible is analysed, along with the views of the translators and Akan language experts. Finally, the views of selected Asante pastors and ordinary Asante readers on the translation of *Elohim* in the Asante Twi Bible are briefly examined.

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CHAPTER FIVE

THE INTERPRETATION OF PSALM 82 IN THE ASANTE TWI

BIBLE AND COSMOLOGY OF THE ASANTE OF GHANA

Introduction

In our previous chapter, an analysis of the Asante Twi Translation was carried out. This chapter examines Asante organisation, religious life, and thought, including their beliefs in the Supreme Being and divinities, as well as their concept of *nnipa* (human being), Asante morphology, and the implications of the findings of this research.

Asante Social Structure and Political Organisation

Asante social organization reflects dual heritage, with rights and duties derived from the mother and father. The matrilineal bond is significant politically, determining succession to offices, property inheritance, and jural rights. The mother-child bond also determines lineage, a localized group and political unit, and the basis of communal life. The Asante social structure consists of eight clans, with each lineage being matrilineal descendants of a single remote ancestress. A hierarchical system creates leadership, with authority centred on the leading clan. At the centre of the Asante social structure are *nsamanfoɔ* (ancestors). The traditional elite includes the King, his elders, and the *abusuapanin*, the head of families. The majority of the people are simple folk (Dodoo Jr., 1971).

The Asante are distinguished by elaborate political and military organisations, as well as highly developed legal systems centred on a hierarchy

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of local and regional councils that serve both administrative and judicial functions, culminating in the Asantehene's court (Johnson, 1970). The Asante political institutions are interconnected with religious, land-tenure, and economic activities. The chief has a council of advisors and is a person whose decisions are determined by the council. Chiefs from various clans often hold political discussions, and lineage heads represent the lineage. The head of the state is elected from a recognized clan, and the chief is chosen based on personal qualities like intelligence, humility, generosity, and physical fitness. The Asantehene, descendant from the *Oyoko* clan, leads the political unit (Dodoo Jr., 1971).

Religious Life and Thought of the Asante

Culture is a crucial formative factor for a people group, influencing their language and thought forms. A person's way of life is the way he or she apprehends reality. Asante culture has unique traditions, and religion influences African life, including the Asante, even those who accept Christianity. The Supreme Being (God) acts through intermediaries, with deities like *Tano*, *Bea*, *Bosomtwe*, and *Bosompo* and the relationship between the Supreme Being and these deities being well-rooted in Asante traditions (Dickson, 1984).

Furthermore, the Asante religious beliefs are based on three main elements: a Supreme Being, lesser gods created by God, and ancestral spirits. The Supreme Being is above everybody and everything, lesser gods are regarded as the intermediaries between humans and the Supreme Being, and ancestral spirits are those who have departed this world, but are still present and take interest in the welfare of living descendants. These beliefs are often found

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in wise sayings, proverbs, myths, and tales. Asante songs and verses praise God's attributes, and art-design and patterns in cloths and carvings honour God. The *Onyame dua*, a triple-forked tree, serves as an altar for the Supreme Being, and ancient gold dust weights contain references to God and this proves the antiquity of the belief in the Supreme Being among the Asante. The lore about God is derived from sayings and proverbs (Addae, 1970).

In addition, the Asante worldview is influenced by their cultural beliefs, practices, and values, reflecting their understanding of the world, social institutions, nature, people, objects, and spirituality (Asante, 1987). This religious worldview is expressed through proverbs, myths, legends, and symbols, claiming the universe has a beginning, owes its origin to the Supreme Being (God), and is inhabited by invisible spirit beings. Thus, Akan people perceive the universe as infinite and religious, and creation as ongoing (Boadi, 2001). The Asante have evolved a plethora of music, dancing, folktales, proverbs, riddles, and a kind of artistic expression as a result of their experiences. Much can be gained from the folklore and mythology of the people, which the Asante utilise in ritually acting out their past history, glories, and tragedies through song and dance. *Odomankoma* (the creator), *mmoatia* (dwarfs), *Sasabonsam* (forest monster), *Saman bofoɔ* (ghost hunter), and *abayifoɔ* (witches) are all mentioned in Akan legend (Johnson, 1970).

The Akan worldview is fundamentally based on the idea of *Nyame*'s universal fatherhood (Ekem, 2011). The Supreme Being is daily worshipped or acknowledged as King and Elder. *Nyame* is the name reserved for spirit gods, or the God who is supreme. The Akan conception of Supreme Being is

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monotheistic. The most used name of God in Asante is *Onyame*. *Onyame* corresponds to the basic idea of deity as commonly understood in Christian theology. *Onyame*, is the God of Heaven or the celestial Godhead. The Akan conception of the Supreme Being is that of a living God. The Akan conceived the idea that if there is to be a God, then He must have qualities and powers which are illustrious, glorious, luminous, shining and bright (Danquah, 1968).

Among the Asante, like all Africans, the Supreme Being stands at the centre of religion, making it a monotheistic religion. In Asante thought none of the deities or divinities or gods is regarded as God or equal to God, as is the case in classical polytheism or biblical polytheism. What in English, or non-African languages have been considered as gods or deities, minor or whatever, are all supposed to be creatures of the Supreme Being, his children, his superintendents, his representatives. The Asante never speak of a lesser or minor *Onyankopɔn* (Sarpong, 2006). In line with this Agyekum (1996) argues that it is a taboo to mention the name of the Almighty God and the other deities in an inappropriate context, among the Akan, of which the Asante are a part. Thus, there is much respect for *Onyankopɔn* (God).

The spirits are creatures of the Supreme Being, whether they are divinities or tutelary spirits. Some are still in their natural habitats while some have been domesticated. Spirits from both categories may be worshipped. The Asante call them *abosom* (singular, *ɔbosom*). Each tutelary spirit has its specific name such as *ɔboɔ*, *dopo*, *hunuhata*. These tutelary spirits have their priests and days of worship. Sarpong argues that the description of the tutelary spirits as divinities, gods or deities is misleading, because if you translate the

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Asante *Onyankopɔn* as God, then you cannot describe the tutelary spirits as gods. He asserts that the tutelary spirits have their own generic and specific names (Sarpong, 2020). According to Christaller (1933), *'tete abosom no a mpanyinfo som wɔn'* are the guardian spirits that are revered or sought after by the local inhabitants of a certain town or family. These *abosom* are subordinate to the divine being. Christaller's statement suggests that there is evidence supporting the notion that the elders engaged in the worship of these deities during ancient periods. He posits, nonetheless, that these entities are imaginary spirits. What is the intended meaning behind his statement? Did that suggest the *abosom* are ethereal entities? Does Christaller's use of the term "imaginary" to characterise the *abosom* suggest his belief that they resided solely in the realm of imagination or were completely non-existent?

The Asante view states that the universe is full of spirits, with the Supreme Being as the eternal creator of all the other gods, and of men, of all things, the animate and inanimate resources of the universe. The Supreme Being is outside the pantheon of *abosom* (gods) but manifested his power over the living group through them. Divinities, like gods and humans, have limitations and their power is limited to the performance of specific functions. None of the divinities enjoy the unlimited powers attributed to the Supreme Being. They can be male or female, good or evil, and have abode in the environment. There are the ancient tutelar divinities (*tete abosom*), there is *suman* which is animated lesser spirits (Asare Opoku, 1978). *Tete abosom* are gentle, kind and cause no harm to the people. They inhabit rivers and are the only *abosom* known as

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Onyankopɔn mma. They are derived from *Onyankopɔn*. They have their source in *Onyankopɔn*. For the Akan, which includes Asante, there is a positive relationship between *Onyankopɔn* and the *tete abosom*. The *tete abosom* are considered to be intermediaries between *Onyankopɔn* and human beings (Afriyie, 2014).

Asase Yaa, the spirit of the earth, is a deity who upholds truth and abhors human blood spilling. There is also an evil spirit, a forest monster of frightening appearance often referred to as *Sasabonsam*. *Mmoatia* live in the forest, and inflict punishment (Asare Opoku, 1978). There are the ever-present spirits of the ancestors (*nsamanfoɔ*), who are associated with living members. The Supreme Being animates all deities, but is too distant to be approached directly and therefore could be reached or approached through intermediary deities (Dodoo Jr., 1971, Asare Opoku, 1978). ancestors assist the living during libation and arbitration, and the dead assume supernatural powers. According to Agyekum (1996) the ancestors are called to assist the living during libation and arbitration and at other important functions. The dead assumes some supernatural powers and like the deities, their names must not be mentioned for any trivial reasons.

The names given to the other divinities include *abosom* (gods). The singular form of *abosom* (gods) is *ɔbosom* (god). The *abosom* (gods) are a category of non-human spirits which can and must appropriately be called lesser gods or simply gods. The other class of divinities is the *asuman* (charms). These are among the lowest grades of super human powers who derive their

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powers and efficacy from the *abosom* (gods). The *abosom* are all sons or grandsons of God. The Asante religion knows only one God (Addae, 1970).

Among the Akan, *abɔpɔn* (wild and ferocious animals) and *nnupɔn* (wild and huge trees and plants) are believed to have *sasa* (spirits) just like men. It is also believed that even when they are dead, their spirits continue to roam and may harm the living. Most wild animals and plants are also believed to be incarnations of deities (Agyekum, 1996).

Concept of *Nnipa* (Human Being)

The Akan are well aware of *nnipa* (human being). *Nnipa* is made up of variety of elements, some of which are palpable and some of which are immaterial and spiritual (Sarpong, 1998). According to the Akan, a human being must consist of these three components otherwise he is incomplete or not a human being. *Mogya* (literally blood) described as the principle of being, *sunsum* (spirit) described as the individualising principle, *ɔkra* (soul) the humanising principle or the principle that makes one a human being and distinct from the brute animal, the tree, the river, the rope, etc., all of which have their *mogya* (blood) and their *sunsum*. *Honhom* (breath of life), comes from God. It is that element in the human person which vivifies him or her, rendering him or her a living person. The *sasa*, can be described as the protective principle in the human being and in another sense the revengeful principle. The *saman* is the state of the *sunsum* when the *honhom* leaves one and the said person is pronounced dead. *ɔkra* either goes to place of the dead or hovers around the world until it has fulfilled all the conditions for entry into the other world. The

ntorɔ is the patrilineal principle which gives characters like nobility, respectability, courage and so on to the individual. The Akan people's conception of the human person is that everybody has these components in him or her (Dickson, 1984, Sarpong, 1998, Sarpong, 2020).

The traditional Akan thought on man is that he is made up of *ɔkra*, *sunsum*, *ntorɔ*, and *mogya*. Of these components, the *ɔkra* is of fundamental importance. It is born into the world and is also the part of God in every man which makes him a living human being. Its departure from the body signifies death. The Akan believe that the *ɔkra* obtains leave from *Onyame* to come into this world, taking with it an errand or *nkrabea* which is fixed beforehand and which is unalterable. The *ɔkra* is the bearer of destiny, and the realisation of this destiny on earth is called *abrabɔ* (Asare Opoku, 1978).

The second component of man is the *sunsum*, an intangible element which accounts for the *suban* or character, disposition and intelligence of a person. The *sunsum* is subject to change, as it is capable of being trained from the state of being "light" to the state of being "heavy". Next component in man is the *ntorɔ*. The *ntorɔ* is transmitted from a father to his children and helps to account for their inherited characteristics. The fourth component of man is the *mogya* or blood which is given by a mother to her child. The *mogya* establishes a physiological bond between the mother and child and forms the basis of the *abusua* or clan also referred to as *ntɔn* (Asare Opoku, 1978).

According to Gyekye, the Asante hold a tripartite conception of a person, considering a human being to be constituted by three elements: *ɔkra* (soul), *sunsum* (spirit), and *honam* or *nipadua* (body). The *ɔkra* (soul) is considered to be that which constitutes the very inner self of the individual, the principle of life of that individual, and the embodiment and transmitter of his *nkrabea*, destiny or fate. The *ɔkra* is thought to be a spark of *Onyame* (God) in man. It is thus divine and has an ante-mundane existence with God. *Sunsum* is another of the constituent elements of a person. In Akan conception the *sunsum* is the basis of a human's personality, his or her distinctive character, his ego. The soul is held to be a mental or spiritual entity (Gyekye, 1995).

From the early beginnings of the cultural revolution of the Akan in Ghana, human beings were conceived as existing within a world also inhabited by spirits and gods. To these spirits and gods' human beings owed specific duties, dischargeable through appropriate rites, and with them human beings were in constant communion on the grounds of kinship. Kinship among the Akan groups was essentially spiritual, and a human being for the group, therefore was an encapsulated spirit, not an animated body (Addae, 1970).

The human being in the view of Dodoo Jr. to the Asante is compounded of two elements. The human is a biological and spiritual being. Biologically, a human being was formed from the blood he inherited from his mother. In addition to one's *ɔkra* or soul, which went back to *Nyankopon* (God), one was survived at death by his *mogya* or blood, which became his *saman* or ghost, bearing a physical resemblance to him (Dodoo Jr., 1971).

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The concept *ntorɔ* covering one or another of which every Asante belongs is best translated as spirit. The *ntorɔ* is the male totemic spirit which every child, male or female, inherits from its father. Each man and woman have in them two distinct elements – *mogya* (blood) and *ntorɔ* (spirit). *Mogya* (blood) is inherited from the mother and transmitted by her to her offspring. This is the physiological aspect of conception as understood by the Asante. To discover which *ntorɔ* a person belongs to, he or she is asked, *wo dware ntorɔ bɛn*? Literally, which *ntorɔ* do you bath? (Herskovits, 1937).

A child's status and membership within the *abusua* (family) and *ntɔn* (clan) are determined by the *mogya* that he or she receives from his or her mother. Additionally, it outlines the responsibilities that come with being a citizen in a matrilineal society like that of the Akan. It is consequently unlawful for them to marry one another, notwithstanding the closeness of their familial ties or the physical distance that separates them from one another. There are eight principal *ntɔn* groups that make up the Asante people, which are as follows:

GROUP	TOTEM	RESPONSE TO GREETING
1. *Oyoko* (*Dako*)	Hawk	Obiri Nana (Obiri-Na)
2. *Bretuo* (*Tena*)	Leopard	Etwie Nana (Etwie-Na)
3. *Aduana* (*Abrade*)	Dog	Adu Nana (Adu-Na)
4. *Asakyiri* (*Amoakaade*)	Vulture	Ofori Nana (Ofori-Na)
5. *Aseneɛ* (*Adonten*)	Bat	Ase Nana (Ase-Na)

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6. *Agona* (*Toa*)   Parrot   Ago Nana (Ago-Na)

7. *Asona* (*Dwumina, Dwum*) Crow   Aso Nana (Aso-Na)

8. Ekoɔna (*Asokore*)   Buffalo   Doku Nana (Doku-Na)

It is believed that before a child attains puberty age his father's *ntorɔ* acts for him, but after puberty the child's own *ntorɔ* takes over and assumes greater control. However, the father's *ntorɔ* does not altogether cease to exert its influence on the child. The Akan divide themselves into twelve patrilineal groups based on their *ntorɔ*: *Bosommuru, Bosompra, Bosomtwe*, *Bosom-Dwerebe*, *Bosomakom*, *Bosomafi*, *Bosomafram*, *Bosom-konsi*, *Bosomsika, Bosompo, Bosomayesu, Bosomkrete*.

Each *ntorɔ* has a specific day of the week set aside for it and each has a set of totems and taboos associated with it. The members of each *ntorɔ* use the same response to greetings. The *ntorɔ* is often associated with waters – rivers, lakes, and even the ocean. There are names peculiar to the various *ntorɔ* groups (Asare Opoku, 1978, Nkansa Kyeremateng, 2008).

The Akan conception of the human being places every Akan person into a *ntorɔ* category. Every Akan is believed to have a *ntorɔ* and every *ntorɔ* is under the aegis of an *ɔbosom*. The name of every *ntorɔ* begins with *bosom*. Six of these *ntorɔ* categories are rivers, one a lake and one the sea, thus filling out the association of *abosom* with water and with *Onyankopɔn*, the source of water and life (Afriyie, 2014).

Asante Morphology

The importance of Akan morphology is that it can aid in the analysis of the formation and use of the word *anyame* in the Asante Twi Bible, Akwapem Twi Bible, and Fante Twi Bible. Abu Mensah (2021) in an interview said that usually Akan plurals begin with *a*, *n*, *m*. Most words beginning with *b*, *f*, *p*, in the singular have *m* in the plural. Some nouns beginning with *ɔb* in the singular changes to *mm* in the plural. For example: *ɔbarima* (male) singular becomes *mmarima* (males) plural. Some nouns formed with an initial *ɔ* in the singular has the initial letter changing to *a* in the plural. An example is *ɔbrafoɔ* (executioner) which becomes *abrafoɔ* (executioners). Words formed with *o* as their initial letter in the singular changes to *a* in the plural. An example is *ohene* (a king) singular, *ahemfo* (kings) plural.

According to Osam (1993), Akan has a nominal prefix system long recognised. Animate nouns are marked by the prefix *a* or *m*, in the plural. Also, *o-*/*ɔ-* are predominantly animate prefixes (Osam, 1993). However, there are some Akan nouns which have only one form for the singular and plural. For example, *nnae* (sleeping place), collective multitudes such as *ntetea* (ants), *aniwa* (eye), *ano* (mouth), *afono* (cheek), and *aburo* (grain, maize) (Christaller, 1964).

The Implication of the rendering of the concept of *Elohim* in Psalm 82

Every translation of the Bible or of any work dealing with one or more deities, is bound to contain theologically motivated exegesis. Almost any translation option is potentially a carrier of theologically motivated exegesis,

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because of the central place of the Hebrew Bible in the religions based on it (Tov, 1999). The challenge Psalm 82 poses would probably be how to translate the text as it appears in the Masoretic text, without it being a carrier of theologically motivated exegesis. However, using John 10:34 as an interpretive assumption in the Asante Twi Bible the translators read into the text of Psalm 82 in an attempt to Christianise it. *Elohim* in v. 1b and v. 6 are translated as *anyame* to imply *anyame* of interpretive assumption of John 10:34 reading to show broader context of Psalm 82 and does not provide satisfying rhetorical interpretive context. Translators use John 10:34 presupposition which follows the model of the redemptive-historical interpreter: Jesus Christ (See Beale, 2012).

Girdlestone (1998) argues that it is a fact that the translation of the biblical text into other languages is a difficult task. The translator translates matters as they appear in the source text into the receptor language. It can be observed from what Girdlestone suggests that this difficulty is probably what the translators had in deciding what word in Asante Twi they should use to best translate the idea of *Elohim* as representing deities or divine beings, where the original text uses *Elohim*. This difficulty is what might have led Christaller to create the word *anyame* to represent *Elohim* used in reference to the deities of other nations.

In Genesis 14:22 and Psalm 87:5 *YHWH* is identified with *El Elyon*, assuming his role as head of the divine council. He is now superior to any other *Elohim* (Ps. 97:9). As attested to in Psalm 48:2, Mount Zion is like the utmost heights of Zaphon, which in Ugarit was the seat of the *Elohim*. The pre-eminent

role of *YHWH* certainly does not lead to the denial of the divinity of the other members of the council. In Deut. 5:7-10, *YHWH* forbids the worship of other *Elohim* (*Elohim acherim*) on the grounds that he is a jealous *Elohim*. This would make no sense if the existence of rivals were not admitted. The analysis of the Hebrew text of Psalm 89:6-8; Psalm 29:1; Psalm 97:7; and Psalm 138:1 shows that some of the most common phrases that are used to deny that there are *Elohim* other than *YHWH* appear in the very same chapters where their existence is plainly admitted. Therefore, more than the uniqueness of *YHWH*, his incomparability with the other *Elohim*, his overt superiority, is proclaimed. While Moses rhetorically asks in Exodus 15:11; "Who among the *Elohim* is like you, O *YHWH*?" other deities are acknowledged *ad abundantiam*. Over time the lesser *Elohim* of the divine council were downgraded to angels. Psalm 82:1, 6: *Elohim* rises up in the divine assembly, judges in the midst of the *Elohim*, is remodelled, as *theos* he rises up, judges angels in the Greek *LXX* version and later in the Syrian version. As patrons of the various peoples' angels are indicated. The patron of Israel is no longer, as in Deut 32:9, *YHWH*, but the archangel Michael (Dan 10:21; 12:1) (Belmonte, 2020).

In general, names and meaning in the Ancient Near East were closely associated with existence. The deity had only to speak a name, and a new being came into existence. A name could have more than a mere denotative significance. It was deemed to be associated in the closest possible way with its bearer. And so, from this analogy it appears that the use of the name of the plural *Elohim* who were accused at the divine council in Psalm 82 suggests their existence (Kempf, 2021).

The rendering of the concept *Elohim* in Psalm 82 implies that regardless the way *Elohim* is translated and/or interpreted, certain theological ideas may be read out of the text. Consequently, whether the *Elohim* are translated as deities, angels, human judges, or monarchs, the text will inform the reader of such theological truths.

Elohim as Deities

The theological implications of *Elohim* as deities are rich and varied. The existence of such deities raises issues that may appear to be a difficulty to apprehend. What would that make of the doctrine of God. Although this may seem intriguing, it is equally beneficial however, to look at its implications. According to the doctrine of God and creation, one deity created both the visible and invisible worlds out of nothing. Which means that there is nothing in existence that was not created. In recent times, some Asante Christians and preachers have considered the *Elohim*, who are gods of other nations, to be demons or false gods. The *shedim* are seen as demons, disembodied human dead are ghosts, and the *Elohim* who are referred to as angels are angels. In view of Israel's monotheism, the existence of the *Elohim* (plural) must be explained in terms of how, as sons of the Most High God, they issued out of his creative genius, when *Elohim* (God) created the heavens and everything in it.

Elohim as Humans (Human Judges or Jewish Elders)

The Creator *Elohim* created humans. Humans the representative of *Elohim* on earth, were given the mandate and responsibility to take care of the earth, by multiplying and replenishing it with the kind of 'garden of Eden order' that *Elohim* had planted for humanity to keep. Humanity is seen as owing their

existence to *Elohim* and as such are expected to serve, worship and obey him. Genesis 3's account of humanity's fall seems to skew the relationship between *Elohim* and his creation, particularly humanity. Humans from the beginning were not created immortal, all-knowing, invisible, eternal being. Humans were instructed not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and of evil, which suggests that they were not all-knowing. Humans were not invisible. We read of divine encounters where divine beings appear as men in the scriptures but it has not been recorded of a man growing or developing through time to become an *Elohim* (See also Heiser, 2015, and VanGemeren, 1997).

In Gen 1:26-28 humans are seen as divine because in them is realised the presence or manifestation of *Elohim*. In Judaism, an extension of the concept of divinity is attested to. In the *Tanakh* there was talk of an angel of *YHWH* who was none other than *Elohim* himself in his visible manifestation, performing a divine function, Moses was held to be a sharer in divinity: (Ex. 7:1) (Belmonte, 2020). If humans are said to be created in the image and likeness of God, it is to make them be 'like' God in the way God acts, that is, in loving-kindness, and caring for themselves (Mensah, 2014).

In Psalm 8:4-5, Human nature is contrasted with the angelic realm. The Psalmist inquires: "What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings (*Elohim*) and crowned him with glory and honour" (Ps. 8:4-5). The implied answer is that humanity in the image of *Elohim* surpasses the ranks of the angelic world (Cole, 2005).

An Understanding of *Elohim* in Asante Religio-Cultural Thought

According to Sarpong (1998) the incarnation principle is the basis and the model of inculturation, whereby the Christian message and the Christian life are thus, implanted, incarnated in different cultures in such a way that there is a new creation. He adds that the culture from which the Scriptures come is not superior to ours. Because there is no super culture anywhere. Sarpong (2020) builds on this thought by stating further that inculturation is the incarnation of Christian life and of the Christian message in a particular cultural context, in such a way that this experience not only finds expression through elements proper to the culture in question, but become a principle that animates, directs and purifies the culture, transforming and re-making it so as to bring about a new creation. There are certain elements in the culture that are good and that are lasting and which must be kept.

For points of encounter, Traditional Religion gives a very vivid and concrete point of meeting between Christianity and the followers of traditional religion. What, in English or non-African languages have been called gods or deities, minor or whatever, are all supposed to be the creatures of the Supreme Being, his children, his superintendents, his representatives. The Supreme Being, in all African countries, has a name that cannot be qualified as big, small, minor or great. All those other spirits have their generic names and their specific names. Just as in Judaism it is impossible to have a small or lesser *YHWH*, it is simply impossible to have a lesser or minor $Onyankopon$ (Sarpong, 2006).

Translators of the Bible into Asante Twi have translated *Elohim* and used it to represent the deity of the people of Israel as $Onyankopon$, the ghost

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of Samuel as *Onyame bi*. Sarpong (2020) argues that Akan hold the belief that from *Asamando*, the ancestor can come back. *Asamando* is supposed to be where good spirits go to live after death (Sarpong, 1971). Samuel was dead and buried. King Saul entreated a witch at Endor to call up the spirit of Samuel. Now, Samuel whilst he was alive was a good person. When he died his ghost (*saman*) went to live in *Asamando*. Thus, the ghost of Samuel indicated in the Hebrew text as an *Elohim* could be safely translated as *saman*.

My own reasoned position of the use of *Elohim* in Ps. 82 is that the *Elohim* referred to divine beings. These divine beings in the assembly were possibly made up of angels, disembodied human spirits, spirits/spiritual entities, and the God of Israel. However, the word *Onyame* was part of a class of words, that has one form used to refer to both plural and singular. The name *Onyame* had been used by the Akan based on the socio-cultural beliefs and experiences they had gone through, and which to them meant that there is only one Supreme Being who has sons that include *abosom* and other *ahonhom*. The revision committee that worked on Christallers 1871 translation to produce the Asante Twi Bible, should have considered using a different word to replace *anyame* coined for a non-existent union of Akan languages, where it was confusing to the Asante people. In places where *anyame* was used to translate *Elohim* as deities, it could be safely replaced by *abosom*.

Agyekum (2021) in an interview however posits that in Asante Twi we have *Nyame nketewa*, therefore in places where the *Elohim* was used to refer to deities other than the deity of Israel, the Asante Twi should use *Nyame*

nketewa. Agyekum states further that, there are certain class of words, whereby one form can be used to refer to both singular and plural based on the socio-cultural beliefs and experiences they have gone through. He stated that he agrees with the Akan morphologist that every Akan noun can be pluralised. Certain nouns, however, serve as both singular and plural and should be left that way. For example, the English word sheep is both singular and plural. In the same manner, the word *Onyame* is also both singular and plural. To indicate that it is plural instead of *anyame*, *Nyame dodoɔ* should be used. This in Asante religio-cultural thought would be meaningful as it would be suggesting beings who are like *Onyame* that exist as well. This would be able to communicate to the Asante that the divine beings demoted and punished by death in Ps. 82 were beings that were operating like *Onyame* the *Nyankopɔn* but were not *Onyame* himself. The *Elohim* (plural) of Ps. 82:1b and 6 should be translated as *Nyame dodoɔ.*

The Asante Twi translators of the 1964 version appear to have stuck to the text they were translating from, both the English translation and Christaller's 1871 Union Akan version. The translators had to meticulously go through the Union Akan version for Asante features before revising Christaller's work with Asante orthography and the English translation to create the 1964 Asante Twi Bible. The translation reveals that the text from which they translated led the translators down that path.

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The Influence of Asante Religio-Cultural Thought on the Translation of
Elohim **in Psalm 82 in the Asante Twi Bible**

Bediako (1999) argues that the missionary effort tried to instil Christianity by replacing the Akan worldview with a European one. Beyond the Akan worldview and tradition, this implicit theology of mission alone enabled redemption in Christ. This most likely had an impact on missionary translation. It is not unexpected that some of the issues that African theology is grappling with in the post-missionary Church are a legacy of the theology of the Western missionary effort, as what they did not do remains to be done. The content of God's word in the process of translation must be aware that the word so translated should be relevant when read in another culture. As a result, the word should be meaningful to the Asante in terms of the people's religio-cultural beliefs.

Points of encounter for the missionary enterprise with the African was traditional religion. Traditional religion gives a very vivid and concrete point of meeting between Christianity and the followers of traditional religion. The missionaries, however, dismissed African traditional religion with contempt, describing it inappropriately in such terms as fetishism, heathenism, paganism, idolatry, ancestor worship, polytheism, animism, tribalism, and primitive. They did not carry out research in order to discover those elements in them that are compatible with the gospel, that is, the Scriptures (Sarpong, 2006).

According to Parrat (1997), translators should have a sympathetic respect for everything that is good in African culture that can shed light on portions of the Scriptures and the Christian faith and can be constructively contrasted with them.

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A reading of Psalm 82 in the Asante Twi Bible reveals the fact that there is considerable influence of Asante Religio-Cultural thought on the translation of *Elohim* in the text. The just *Elohim* in v. 1 and v. 8 is translated as *Onyankopɔn*, the Supreme Being in Asante ontology. According to Danquah (1968), the Asante conception of the Supreme Being is that of a living God. The Asante conceived the idea that if there is to be a God, then He must have qualities and powers that are illustrious, glorious, luminous, shining, and bright.

Citing Pobee, Quarshie (2000) contends that vernacular translations have been or are being carried out by foreigners, whose knowledge of the vernacular may not be as good as that of an indigene. Furthermore, even where there is a partnership with local linguists in Bible translation, the translation into vernacular is made from other versions, such as English. Christaller, a foreigner who learned the Akan language cannot know the language more than the indigene whose language it is. There are several places where the choice of word used in translation carries with it the interpretive slant of the translator. This goes a long way to obscure what the original text said or what is written in the original text.

Citing Dickson, Edusa-Eyison (2007) maintains that a good translation is contingent upon a good knowledge of the original text; drawing merely from other translations would produce an inadequate translation. Alter (2019) argues that sometimes translation errors occur not because the translators have misunderstood the Hebrew but because they are unwilling to convey what it actually means. A reticence about recognising the boldness of the original led them astray. As such, the words of the Bible should be conveyed, not explained.

Alter, however, notes that many choices in translation end up being only partially satisfactory solutions.

It is important to resolve the question of whose perspective of the African heritage is to be taken as authoritative whenever expatriate and local perspectives are at variance. Verbal language is one of the basic endowments of the human species and makes culture possible. We assert our humanity to the extent that we are free to name ourselves and interpret the world in which we live, move, and have our being (Mugambi, 2001). In this regard, the creation of the word *anyame* as the plural for Elohim (plural) by Christaller has to be resolved.

It is important to note that, in translation work, the culture of the people within the text is also necessary. It would communicate meaning to people within the receptor languages. How the translators appropriate this in their work of translation is key to helping gain understanding within the receptor languages and cultures (Senavoe 2002). And how the translators are able to faithfully translate this has implications for Christian theology. Any reading of the text would reveal theological implications that are significant to Christians who believe that the Bible is authoritative in addition to being inspired by God (Mensah, 2014).

Elohim in the Asante Twi Bible

Asante Bible 1964 edition appears to be a revised translation of Christaller's translation. It can be observed that the Asante Twi Bible translators attempted as much as possible to use the literal word-for-word translation where possible. For example, in certain places within the text where the Hebrew used

the term *Elohim*, the Asante Twi Bible translates it as either *Onyankopɔn*, *Nyankopɔn* or *anyame*.

In Gen. 23:6, נְשִׂיא אֱלֹהִים translated as mighty prince in the NRSV, KJV, and NIV is translated as *Nyankopɔn panin bi ne wo wɔ yen mu* (an elder God is with you among us). In the Hebrew text, Abraham is referred to as נְשִׂיא אֱלֹהִים. *Elohim* is used as an adjectival genitive in which *Elohim* is understood as an abstract term. 'A divine prince lives among us.' The omniscient narrator tells us that the children of Heth considered Abraham to be נְשִׂיא אֱלֹהִים. It is possible that in their culture they had levels of *Elohim* (to wit higher *Elohim* and lower *Elohim*). Literally from Hebrew, it would have been the sons of Heth say Abraham is an נְשִׂיא אֱלֹהִים. This in no way does not suggest that Abraham or his descendants believed that or presented him as such. Probably to avoid such a reading, the translators translate this text from the Septuagint. The translators however translate *Elohim* literally in the Asante Twi Bible as *Nyankopɔn*. *Nyankopɔn* implies one Supreme Being. Thus, one would be at a loss in trying to imagine Abraham as a *Nyankopɔn panin* (elder God). The translators possibly went to the Septuagint to try and go around this difficulty. In doing so, they however missed what the Hebrew text said. This is because it appears that this Asante Twi translation of Gen. 23:6 is close to the Septuagint translation of the text. It should be noted that the Septuagint is an ancient Jewish Torah translation into Greek, and that Jews in the pre-Christian period saw the Septuagint as problematic. Comparing the MT to other texts is a standard

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academic practice. According to Tov (1999), the Septuagint rendered the verb *Shavat* (to keep Sabbath, which is related to the noun *Shabbat*) as *sabbatizo*. This could be a reason to think about how particular words could be characterised in translations.

The translators find it a difficulty for Abraham to be addressed as a God prince who is among them. They rather suggest that an elder God is with Abraham among them. Who in Asante religio-cultural thought is $Nyankop\jmath n$ *panin* (elder God)? If indeed there is, then would there be any Nyankopɔn *kumaa* (younger God)? Thus, it is puzzling whether the vorlage of the Asante Twi Bible was the Hebrew Bible or the Septuagint or English Bible. Abraham is referred to in a metaphorical sense as a prince who is mighty like *Elohim*. *Elohim* in Gen. 23:6 is being used metaphorically and as such the translators should have used an appropriate metaphor in Asante Twi that could best capture a sense-for-sense meaning of this. The disparity between this text in the MT and the Akan translation, points to the fact that the Asante Twi Bible need updating.

So, what is Psalm 82 saying? The Hebrew text reads that *Elohim* (God) is standing in the assembly of the *Elohim* (divine beings) (v. 1b). These *Elohim* (divine beings) translated *anyame*, are in the heavens with the unique *Elohim* of all *Elohim*. The linguists who translated the 1964 Asante Twi Bible excelled in producing the orthography for the Asante Twi Bible and also delineating what is Asante from the union of Akan languages Bible produced by Christaller. The Akan linguists worked with the mediatory text, the Union of Akan languages Bible, and the English Bible. Any disparity between the MT and the Asante Twi Bible may have resulted from the mediatory text, or possibly from the

unfamiliarity of the Akan linguists with the Hebrew language and context of the Hebrew Bible.

The fact that Christaller updated some of his Asante Twi translations suggests that he recognised that some of the words used in the translation needed to be revised. This is probably because he realised that there were better words that could represent the ideas, he wanted translated. As a foreigner, there are certain things Christaller would not have known about the culture and language of the people, and a short period of study would not apprise him of their nuances. How did the original author of Ps. 82 intend the Elohim to be understood? How would ancient Israel have used them in their own lives? The missionary motives of the original translator, Christaller, probably led him to translate the text with the intention of Christianizing the Akan and not just making the text available to them in their mother tongue.

What are the implications of translating *Elohim* as *anyame* and not *abosom*? Is the *Elohim* of Israel *Elohim* of all his creation including every nation? In Genesis 1 and 2, *Elohim* created everything. *Elohim* has not left himself without a witness in the nations of the earth. *Onyankopɔn* or *Onyame* the Supreme Being is the same *Elohim* who created all. Therefore, the other *Elohim* who are identified as gods by most English translations can be said to be lesser deities. If they are lesser deities, then, they can easily be referred to as *abosom*. The *abosom* (lesser deities) were intermediaries between the creator and the people.

If the God (*Elohim*) who is spoken of in the Bible as the creator is different from the *Onyame* (Supreme Being/God) of the Akan, then we may

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have a problem with having so many different creator *Elohim* (creator gods) who created the world of their subjects and worshippers. Which will in turn suggest that there are many creations and not only one creation by one creator? However, if there is only one creator of all creation, then it stands to reason that this one creator of the whole of creation is seen differently and called by different names by different people based on their revelation of him. If it is so, therefore, then it should not be difficult for us to translate the *Elohim* (gods) into a term within our culture and context that best represents them to us and our people. We should not be trapped into thinking that the *Elohim* creator of the whole earth and world is not the *Onyame* or *Nyankopɔn* of our forefathers.

  Elohim is seen and understood through the things he has made. If indeed the LORD God is one, then there should not be a difficulty in translating the name of God with the local names indigenous people use to call God whom they worship. In the same vein, it should be possible to find names within the culture of the people that can translate the unjust *Elohim*. The translators have translated Psalm 82:1 as *Onyankopɔn gyina Nyankopɔn asafo mu*. The use of the word *asafo* by the translators is suggestive of a war council or a meeting of the war hosts of God. This has a subtle resemblance to the divine assembly of the vision of Michaiah, son of Imlah, where God sought for one to lead Ahab to war so that he could be killed. By using the phrase *Nyankopon asafo*, the translators are adducing the fact that this is an assembly in the heavens.

Conclusion

  We have considered Asante's religious and cultural thought and understanding of deity. We saw that culture is a very important formative factor

that has ramifications for a 'people group'. People function most efficiently by employing the language and thought forms in which they have been nurtured. We have shown that the way the Asante understand their world, their relationship with the social institutions in their society, nature, people, objects, and spirituality constitute their worldview. The Asante conception of the Supreme Being is monotheistic. Since none of the deities or divinities is regarded as God or equal to God. What have been referred to as gods in English or deities in non-African languages, minor or whatever, are all to be considered the creatures of the Supreme Being, his children, his superintendents, and his representatives.

Also addressed in the chapter are the implications of the rendering of the concept of *Elohim* as deities and as humans, *Elohim* in the Asante Twi Bible, and some issues arising are briefly examined.
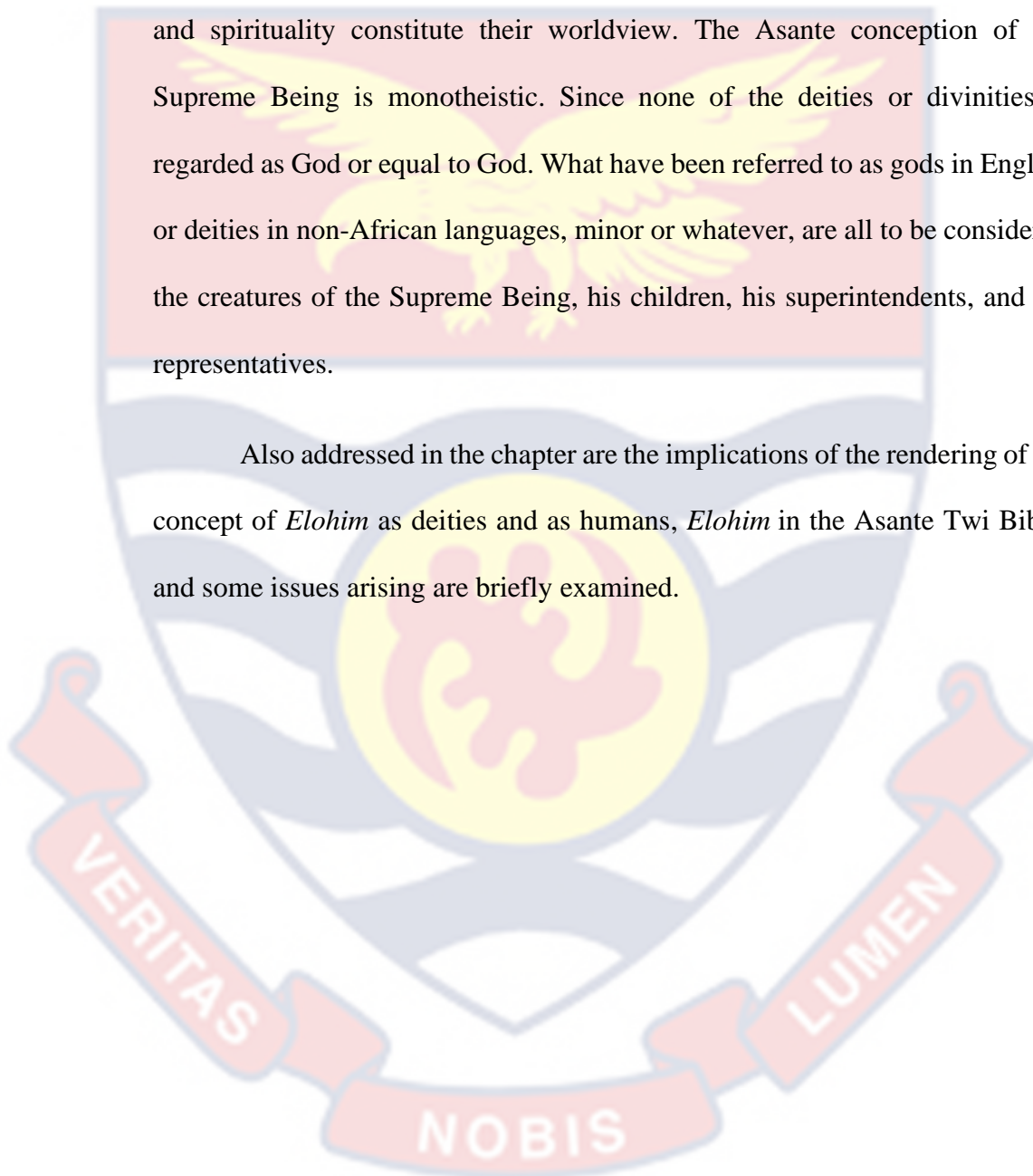
CHAPTER SIX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Introduction

Our work has dwelt on *Elohim* in Ps. 82 of the Masoretic text and the reading of *Moyɛ Anyame* in the Asante Twi Bible. However, in this chapter, we will evaluate the thesis's key conclusions, the effects of the translation on the theology of the target group of the receptor language at the present, and make suggestions for the future.

A Summary of the Study

To begin with, the study set out to examine the reading of אֱלֹהִים אַתֶּם meaning "you are gods," in Psalm 82 of the Hebrew Bible and the implications this reading has for the rendering of *moyɛ anyame* in the *Asante* Twi Bible. The research sought to find out how this reading is understood in an *Asante* socio-cultural setting.

The reading of Psalm 82 appears to have been investigated so thoroughly that one could be tempted to conclude that there is nothing else to investigate in the Psalm. However, people appear to be interested in the Psalm. This is because there are still unresolved issues in the Psalm. On the surface, most people think that Psalm 82 is about Israel's God and how he brings justice to Israel. This poem shows a prophetic divine council scene in which the God of Israel addresses the *Elohim* to solve a problem that keeps coming up.

However, the question of who the *Elohim* mentioned four times in Psalm 82 are seems to make the passage difficult to read. As a result, the purpose of

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this research has been to look into whether these *Elohim* are deities or humans and how that premise has been interpreted in the Asante Twi Bible. Further analysis reveals that the portrayal of *Elohim* as *Onyankopɔn* and *anyame* causes some misunderstanding among Asante readers.

When the poem begins, *Elohim* has taken a stand in the divine council, and he is judging the *Elohim* himself. The poet contrasts *Elohim* and the other *Elohim* right away, using parallel structuring as well as other literary devices. These other *Elohim* are portrayed as being unfair; they show prejudice to the evil; they do not uphold the rights of the poor and the needy; and they do not render justice to the poor and orphans. They have been failing for so long because they walk about in darkness.

To set the pattern in action, the poet opens with the terrifying 'designfulness' and intensity of the emotional tone of *Elohim* in the divine assembly, ready to judge wrongdoing by use of the *Niphal* participle verb נִצָּב.

The focus of this *Elohim* is saving the weak, orphaned, dependent, and suffering people from the evil. Emphatic verbs used in vv. 2-4 demonstrate this attention. This *Elohim* is the God of Israel because he shows compassion for the underprivileged and orphaned, as described in Exodus 22:21-24. The other *Elohim*, on the other hand, do not know, they wander in darkness, and the extent of their action shakes the earth's foundation. They do not care about the underprivileged, helpless, and orphans. The use of עַד־מָתַי in verse two demonstrates this. It is significant that the behaviour and attitude of these other *Elohim* is what leads to their demotion by death in vv. 6-7. The poem concludes with the cry for the *Elohim* to arise and claim what is rightfully his.

The identification of the *Elohim* in Psalm 82:1, 6 as deities participating in an assembly of deities has grown more widespread after the discovery of Mesopotamian and Ugaritic texts depicting a celestial council. This reading is significant for the rendering of the term *Elohim* in Asante Twi. Is there a connection between the Asante's conception of God and the Israelites' conception of God? If the *Elohim* is/are God, then it should be interpreted *Onyame*/*Onyankopɔn*. If the *Elohim* are gods, then it should be interpreted as *abosom*, *nyame nketewa*, or *nyame dodoɔ*.

As we near the conclusion of this study, we shall now draw our attention to the salient points of our research. Chapter 1 looks at the general framework of the Hebrew Bible (*Tanakh*). We suggest that the three main divisions of the Tanakh represent various religious significances. This chapter shows that the Hebrew Bible contains such diverse literary forms as myths, legends, and folktales; sagas; heroic epics; oral traditions; biographies; annals; narratives; histories; novellas; proverbs and wisdom sayings; poetry; prophecy; law; philosophy; apocalypse; and much more.

Chapter 1 further shows that Psalms, a collection of poetic prayers, the first book of the *Ketuvim* has attracted much scholarly attention. The division of the psalms, is according to doxologies – short hymnic praises of God. We also assert that the issue of the establishment of a united written language from a non-existent union of Akan languages as a result of the colonising agenda and to project the Akan people as polytheists led to the translation of *Elohim* in Ps 82:1b and 6 as *anyame*, which is not in consonance with Asante religio-cultural thought and the understanding of the Hebrew Bible.

In chapter 2, the study considered the theory of Biblical translation and the history of the Asante Twi Bible. The methods of translation discussed in Chapter 2 focus on the literal (word-by-word) translation and the dynamic equivalence (sense-by-sense) translation. The work has discussed translation methods used by translators and translation philosophies and theories within the proposals made by Greenstein (2020), Walker-Jones (2003), Metzger (2001), Weren (2002), Rhodes (2009), Cosgrove (2009), Yorke & Renju (2004), Togaresei (2013), Barker (2009), and Carson (2009). The chapter deals with how the Asante Twi Bible was translated. We also noted that translation into the Asante Twi dialect was initiated by the Basel missionaries with the full participation of indigenous personnel. The significance of Bible translation for societal progress and the advancement of knowledge, as well as the transformation of cultures for good or ill, is indisputable.

As indicated, the study covered topics such as the nature of Bible translation, the need for Bible translations, the emergence of English translations and versions, the origins and nature of the Asante Twi Bible, and motivation for the translation of the Asante Twi Bible. It was observed that translating always involves some sort of interpretation.

The focus of the discussion in Chapter 3 was a reading of Ps. 82 in the BHS using the form-critical method. We noted that the identity of the *Elohim* in Ps. 82:1 and 6 is central to the interpretive difficulties and debates raised. The chapter suggests that the presence of *Elohim* (God) in this poem is seen, as the judgement of the *Elohim* is evident in Ps. 82.

Chapter 4 deals with an analysis of the Asante Twi translation of Psalm 82 in the Asante Twi Bible. An analysis of the Hebrew text of Psalm 82 reveals that the Asante Twi Bible kept the Masoretic accent system in mind in producing a translation that faithfully abides by the sense units the Masoretic accents have divided the text into.

Chapter 5 discusses the religio-cultural thought of the Asante, the people for whom the Asante Twi Bible was translated. The chapter also discussed the implications of the findings of the research. The study also reveals that the religious beliefs of the Asante are based on three main elements, some of which are belief in a Supreme Being, belief in a multitude of lesser gods, and belief in *Nsamanfoɔ*, who take an interest in the welfare of living descendants. We discuss the implications of the concept of *Elohim* in Ps. 82 for Asante Twi Bible readers. In chapter 6, a summary of the study and conclusion is given.

Conclusion

How did the original author of Ps. 82 intend the *Elohim* to be understood? It is clear from the Masoretic text that the *Elohim* in Psalm 82 refers to deities and that is what the author intended. Looking at the uses of *Elohim* elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, my own reasoned position of the use of *Elohim* in Ps. 82 is that the plural *Elohim* referred to divine beings. These divine beings in the assembly were possibly made up of angels, disembodied human spirits, spirits/spiritual entities, and the God of Israel.

We also set out to find out how the meaning of *Elohim* in Psalm 82 can be understood in *Asante* Religio-cultural thought? We observed that *Elohim* used with the singular verb can be understood as *Onyame* or *Onyankopɔn*,

and the plural *Elohim* who are sons of the Most High God can also be understood as *Nyame nketewa* (lesser gods) or *abosom* (gods). Based on the progression of linguistic development, it is possible that the term "*anyame*" has been incorporated into the translated biblical text. However, it should be noted that this inclusion is retrospective in nature. In the pre-Christian era preceding the emergence of the name "*anyame*" in Asante society, the concept of *anyame* was non-existent. The term "*anyame*" appears to lack a pragmatic referent. Within the framework of decolonizing knowledge, the phrase *anyame* is inadequate. If provided with choices, it is plausible that the name "*Nyame nketewa* (lesser gods) or *abosom* (gods)" would be considered a better decolonized designation compared to the translated and grammatically accurate phrase "*anyame*." To the Asante the universe is always full of spirits, and the Supreme Being, the eternal creator of all the other gods, and of men, of all things, including the animate and inanimate resources of the universe, is outside the pantheon of *abosom* (gods). He manifests his power over the living group through the *abosom* (gods), and they derive their power from him.

We again set out to find how *Asante* Religio-cultural thought has influenced Psalm 82 idea of *Elohim*? We observed that there is considerable influence of Asante Religio-Cultural thought on the translation of *Elohim* in the text, because the just *Elohim* in v. 1 and v. 8 is translated as *Onyankopɔn*, the Supreme Being in Asante ontology. The translators by choosing this word goes to show that they are comfortable with what the term denotes, and are also certain of it as a representation of the *Elohim* of Israel.

We have demonstrated that translating a text from one language to another is difficult unless the perceptions of persons within a language group are understood. Bible translation into mother tongue aided in the development of Asante Twi orthography and continues to aid in the development of orthography for unscripted languages.

This study poses the question of whether we need a new Asante Twi translation of the Bible. From the discussion we have seen that some passages and possibly others are from a text that we may not know or may not be available to us. Probably, the translation was not made from one *vorlage*. It follows from the discussion that there is a legitimate need to establish the text that should be translated into Asante Twi. Depending on the fact that there are different *vorlage*, it is clear that we shall be faced with different translations, if one is not adopted as the text to translate from. Because the Asante Twi Bible 1964 version was a revision of Christaller's Union Akan Languages Bible, it has nuances from all Akan dialects.

We have argued that the translation of *Elohim* as $anyame$ impose upon Asante religious experience certain conceptual categories that are foreign and does not allow the Asante to fully appreciate the text of Scripture in Psalm 82. The Asante Twi Bible translators are apparently reluctant to render the plural sense of *Elohim* with the words for lesser transcendent beings known in Asante religious and cultural thought. There is evident an unconscious tendency to describe the Asante conception of the transcendent in basically foreign theological categories. We argue further that a new Asante Twi word be used to

render the plural *Elohim*. In Psalm 82, God is depicted within the assembly of the gods, putting his junior colleagues in their place.

The translators of the Asante Twi Bible make claims that the *Elohim* are not *abosom* but *anyame*. They translated every *Elohim* as either *Onyankopɔn*, *Nyankopɔn* or *anyame*. It can be seen that the Asante Twi Bible translators tried as much as possible to use the literal word-for-word translation where possible. The unjust deities depicted in the psalm may not actually be different from the *abosom*. They are all sons of the Most High God.

The relevance dynamic of the translation theology of *Elohim* as described in Psalm 82 of the Asante Twi Bible. *Elohim* as *anyame* in Psalm 82 of the Asante Twi Bible is a carrier of theologically motivated exegesis that employs John 10:34 as an interpretative presupposition. This is modelled after the redemptive-historical interpreter, Jesus Christ.

The modern Western missionary enterprise approached the Akan people in an unsympathetic and unapologetic manner, dismissing their traditional religion with contempt. As a mission agenda, the term *anyame* was coined to define the religion of the Akan people, which includes the Asante, as polytheism. The missionaries brought a Christianity that replaced the Akan worldview with a European one, which had an impact on missionary translation. The challenge for European missionaries and their African colleagues was to repackage theological principles in appropriate local Akan thought categories.

The translations of the Bible into the local languages need to be reviewed, especially when the translated texts and revisions emerge from a

colonial past where bias and misunderstanding of the Akan culture and language compromised the work that was done. It is in this regard that the postcolonial critical hermeneutic used a corrective, dialogic, and liberating hermeneutic to re-read Psalm 82 in the Asante Twi Bible. This was done to find points of resonance between Akan culture and the ancient biblical world, while keeping African values and worldviews in mind. The linguistic aspects of translation do not merely reflect cultural and political realities; they could also change them. The phenomenon of linguistic imperialism is very real in religion and often blinds people psycho-socio-linguistically to the true situation and its needed remedies. To promote flourishing in communities, which is very much in line with the goal of localising missions' organisations and moving away from foreign modes of thinking and operating. Calls to decolonize could be seen as a part of this accepted Evangelical challenge to appropriately contextualise by critically assessing the ways colonial Christianity, colonial languages, and imposed Western educational values and methods have shaped the cognitive environments and social contexts in which the word of God currently must be contextualised.

Inculturation embodies Christian life and message in a specific cultural context, transforming and purifying them through elements appropriate to the culture. It involves maintaining good, lasting elements in the culture of a new creation. In attempting this, the translators employ inculturation and contextualization of elements of Christian mission through encounters with the traditional religion of the Akan people. This study has highlighted the reflection on translation as contextualization, incarnation, and appropriation of the

Biblical message in the 'culture' of a specific ethnic group, and the missiological relevance of this enterprise of Bible translation.

Based on these findings, one can say that there is therefore the need to review the Asante Twi translation. Given this, it is necessary to examine the mother tongue Bibles that are now available.

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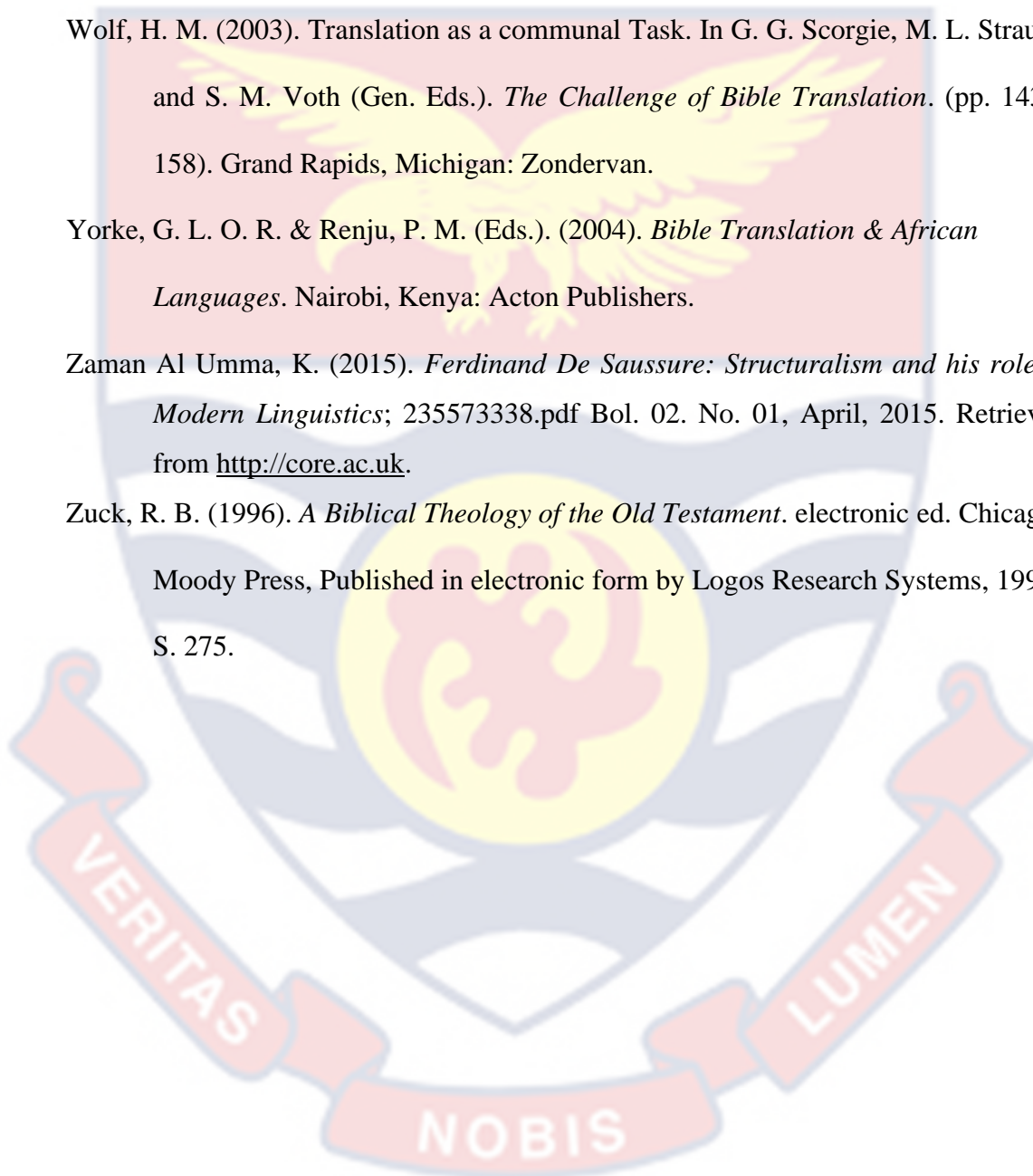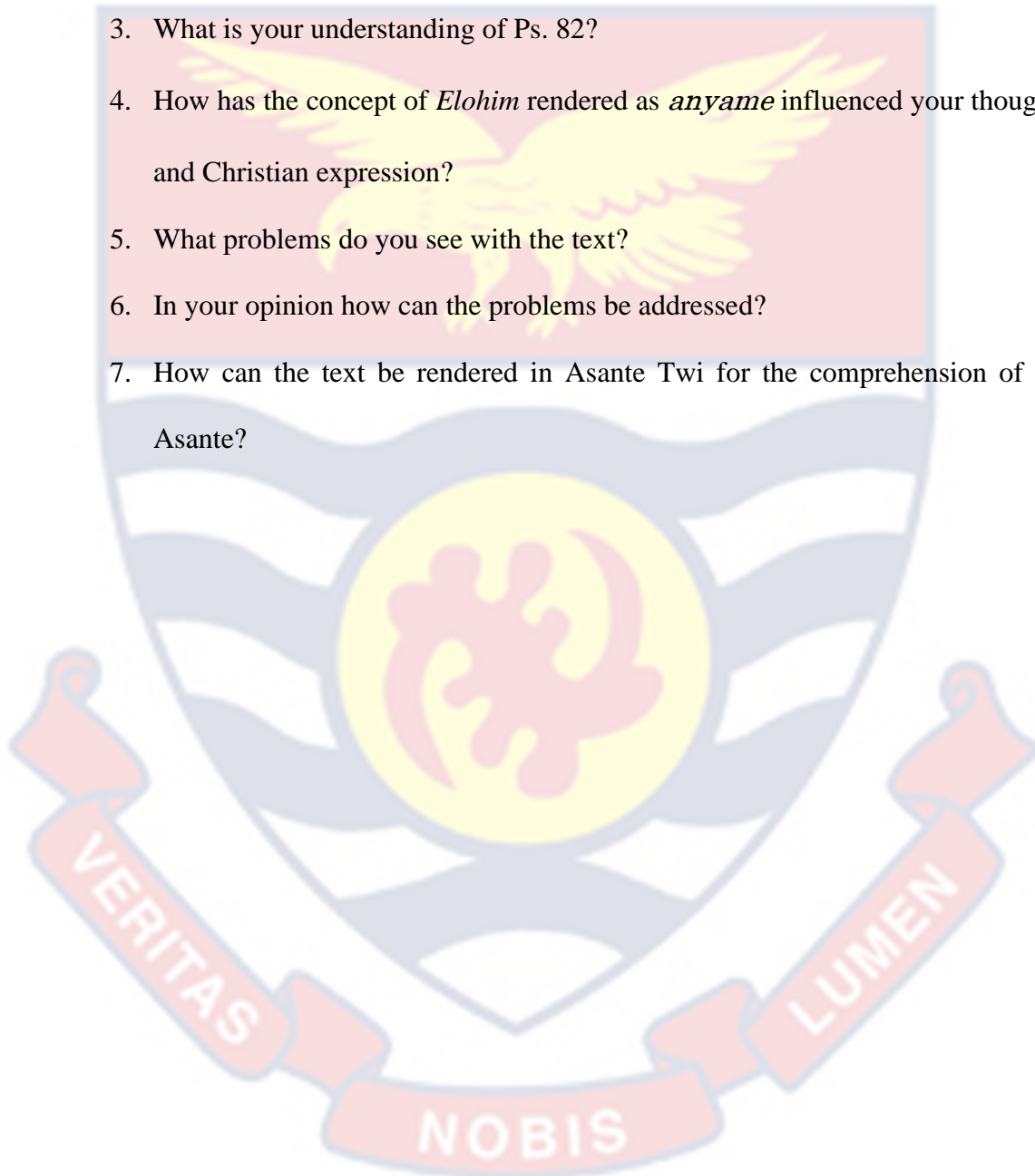
Appendix A

**Interview Questions for Pastors/Church leaders**

1. How important is the Asante Twi Bible for you and your church?

2. To what extent does it contribute to Christian theology and spirituality?

3. What is your understanding of Ps. 82?

4. How has the concept of *Elohim* rendered as *anyame* influenced your thoughts and Christian expression?

5. What problems do you see with the text?

6. In your opinion how can the problems be addressed?

7. How can the text be rendered in Asante Twi for the comprehension of the Asante?

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Appendix B

**Interview Questions for Asante Twi Bible translators**

1. What was the motivation for the translation of the Bible into Asante Twi?

2. Who were the translation teams involved in the translation?

3. What were the dates of commencement and completion?

4. What versions of the Asante Twi Bible are available?

5. What translation method did the translators use?

6. What was their main text used for the translation?

7. What has been the impact of the Asante Twi translations?

8. How easily available are the Asante Twi translations?
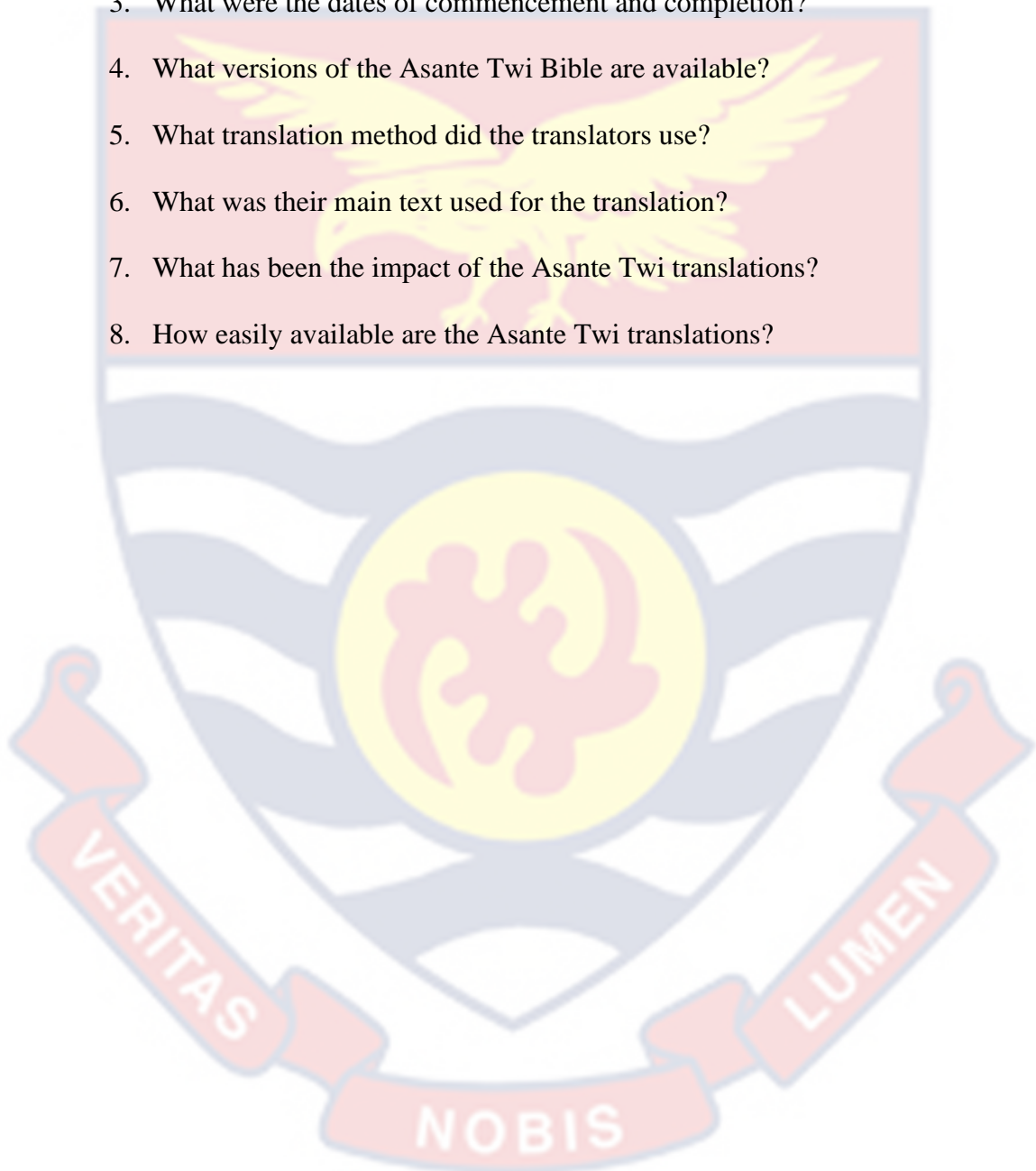
Appendix C

**Interview Questions for ordinary readers of the Asante Twi text**

1. Who is/are the *Elohim* in Psalm 82?

2. How should the meaning of *Elohim* in Psalm 82 be understood in Asante Religio-Cultural thought?

3. To what extent has the Asante Religio-Cultural understanding of the concept of *Elohim* in Psalm 82 influenced the translation of the text in the Asante Twi Bible?

4. Has the translation had any influence on the word *Onyame*?

5. What comes to your mind when you hear the word *anyame*?
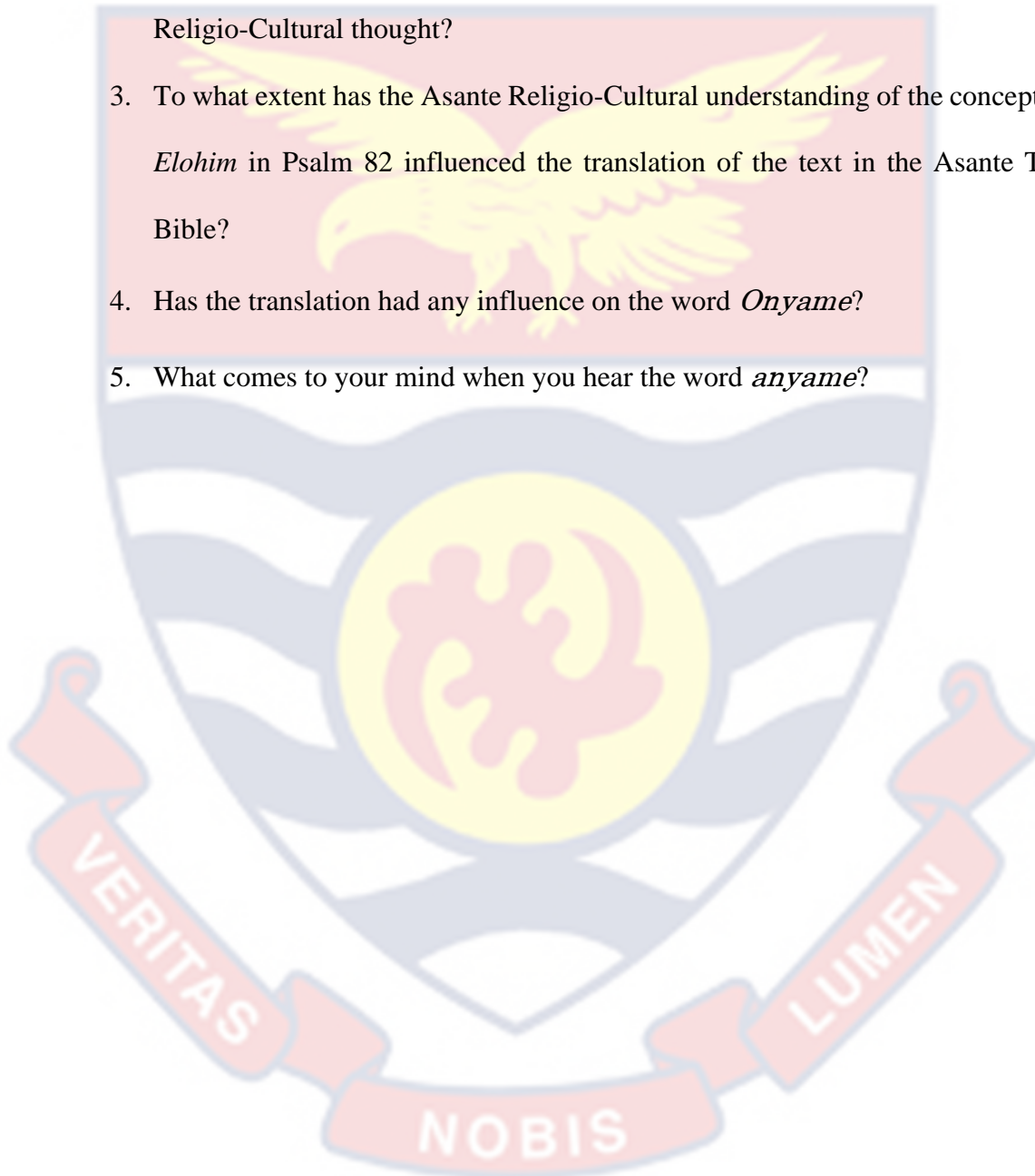
Appendix D

Interview Questions for Theologians/Biblical scholars

1. Who is/are the *Elohim* in Psalm 82?

2. How should the meaning of *Elohim* in Psalm 82 be understood in Asante Religio-Cultural thought?

3. To what extent has the Asante Religio-Cultural understanding of the concept of *Elohim* in Psalm 82 influenced the translation of the text in the Asante Twi Bible?

4. Has the translation had any influence on the word *Onyame*?

5. What comes to your mind when you hear the word *anyame*?

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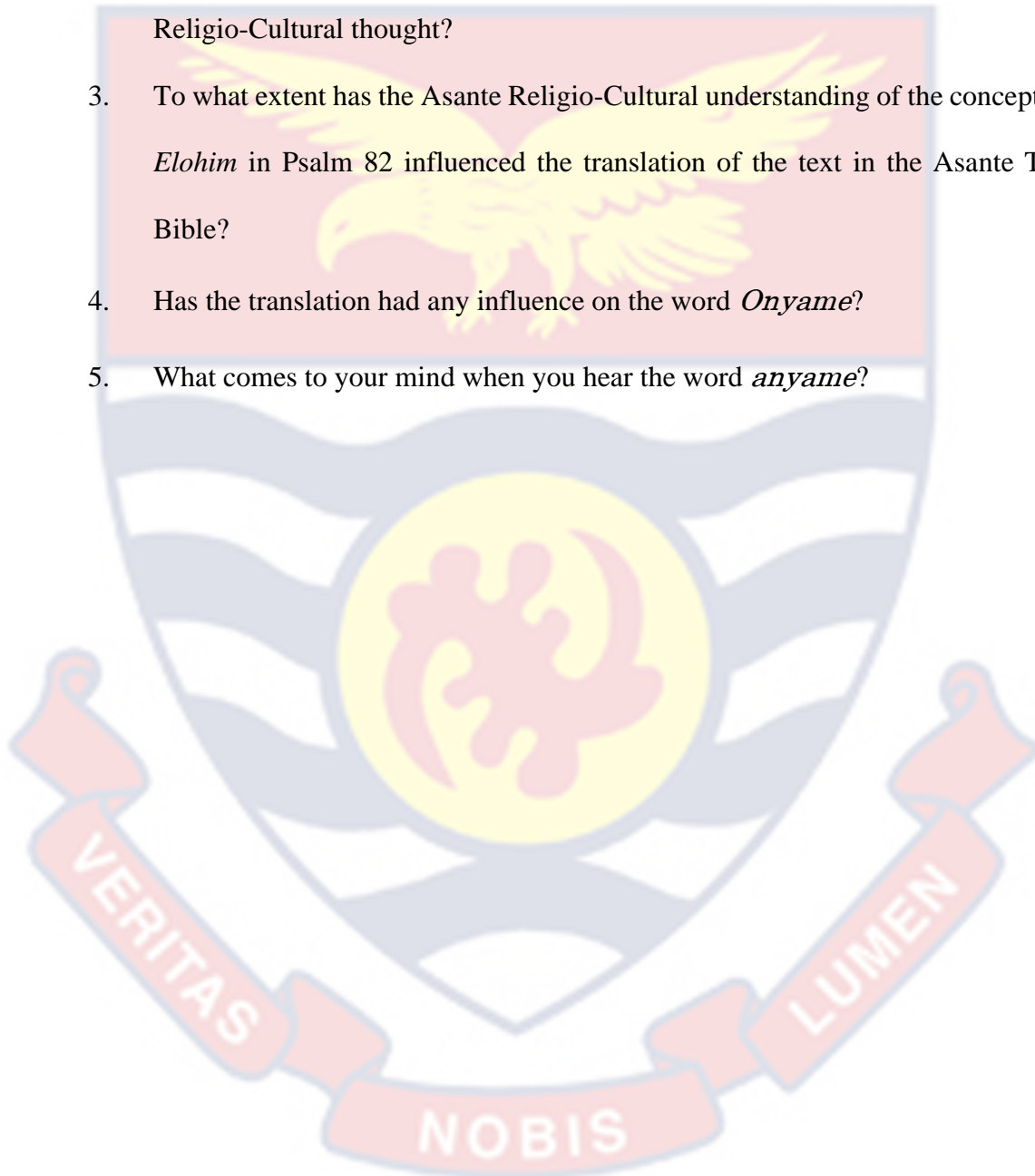
Appendix E

Interview Questions for Akan language experts

1. In Asante Twi, how are deities referred to?

2. What is the plural of *Onyame* in Asante Religio-Cultural thought?

3. Is *anyame* a word in Asante Twi?

4. Who are the *Elohim* in Psalm 82 translated as *anyame*?

5. Has the translation had any influence on the word *Onyame*?

6. What comes to your mind when you hear the word *anyame*?