
AN APPRAISAL OF *bəḡan*-‘*ēden*, “GARDEN OF EDEN” (GENESIS 2:15) IN AKAN MOTHER-TONGUE BIBLES

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Abstract

*All the existing Akan Mother-tongue Bibles’ renderings of the phrase, *bəḡan*-‘*ēden*, from the source text, seemed partial. This study employed an exegetical method, where Genesis 2:15 was contextually, textually, semantically, and morpho-syntactically analysed and its translations in the Akan Mother-tongue Bibles assessed. Having scrutinized ancient texts such as the Masoretic Text, Septuagint and Targum Pseudo-Jonathan and their parallel with Akan Mother-tongue Bibles regarding the text, it is argued in this paper that the Hebrew phrase, *bəḡan*-‘*ēden* could be suitably translated as **turo fɛɛfɛ**, in the Asante-Twi Bible (AsTB) and Akuapim-Twi Bible (AkTB) and **ture fɛɛfɛw**, “beautiful garden,” in the Mfantse-Twi Bible (MfTB). This is a call to remain faithful to the context of the source text and the target language. The proposed Twi phrase is in keeping with the Septuagint which expresses ‘*ēden*, (*eden*) as *παράδεισος* *paradeisō* (beautiful, delightful and blissful). It is believed that this would advance mother-tongue theologizing regarding Christian environmental discourse among Akan/Twi readers.*

Keywords: Garden of Eden; Genesis 2:15; Akan mother-tongue Bibles; Twi Bible

Introduction

The challenge with the existing Akan/Twi Mother-tongue Bibles concerning Genesis 2:15 is the unanimous refusal to present fully, *bəḡan*-‘*ēden* (garden of Eden), except to render *bəḡan*, as **turo**, (AsTB, AkTB) and **ture** (MfTB), “garden.” Meanwhile, the Hebrew phrase under study is a noun construct that ought to be treated together. In ancient Israel, “Eden,” was simply a term, employed to describe their habitation on the Fertile Crescent. “Every part of the Euphrates delta, from Hit to the Persian Gulf, has at some time or another been called “Eden,” the irrigated and cultivated plain, as distinct from ‘Kura,’ the unirrigated hill or plain” (Willcocks, 1912: 137). The Babylonian plain was called the Land of Eden by its inhabitants. Thus, Eden, signifying a plain in the primitive language of Babylonia. It was in this plain that the theophanic garden was situated. It was not a garden in our sense of the term. The word signified what we should now call a plantation mainly of fruit trees (Willcocks, 1912: 145).

Out of the numerous problems that Bible translators encounter in their work is the non-availability of a word in the receptor languages to carry the exact meaning of a word in the source language. “This and other challenges sometimes lead to obscurity in the translated text and the resulting theology” (Twumasi-Ankrah et al, 2022: 1). The application of biblical knowledge may be one of if not the greatest goal of exegesis. Thus exegesis, translation and interpretation are bedfellows in biblical scholarship. This paper argues that unlike in some instances where Akan mother-tongues do not easily provide suitable terms and phrases for some literary structures and vocabularies of the source texts, the idea of the phrase, *bəḡan-’ēden* can easily be expressed in the target language (Twi). As a result, in this paper, the phrase under study is analyzed contextually, textually and morpho-syntactically to establish its meaning in the context of the creation narrative. The meaning, so established, is then compared to its renderings in three Twi dialects (Asante-Twi, Akuapim-Twi and Mfantse-Twi). A suggestion was then made on the corrections of extant translations of the three Twi dialects addressed.

The Yahwist source of the text (Gen. 2:15)

The creation narratives as related in Genesis 1 and 2 present two complementary accounts. The first (Gen. 1:1-2:4a) belongs to the late Priestly (P) source, while the second (Gen. 2:4b-25) to the Yahwist/Jahwist (J) tradition (Dyrness, 1977: 66). This implies that the creation story is told from two angles –perhaps coming from two older traditions that complement each other (Dyrness, 1977: 66). It is interesting to note that the J source joins together several old stories and myths, and rewrites them to convey its religious message about Yahweh (Dyrness, 1977).

The Old Testament (OT) concept of creation was not cast in any philosophical insight, which was totally upheld based on some tangible evidence adduced by some world-class thinkers; it was rather a theological position and an expression of faith by a people of faith (Ancient Israel) (von Rad, 1965: 339). The story reflects Israel’s thought in the 10th Century BC when it had become a nation that could contend with other nations and their beliefs (Dyrness, 1977). Theologically, Israel sought to identify herself within the Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) wider context of the prevailing ideas about the origin of the universe; which included the then nations of the world (Walton, 2009). In contrast to Israel’s view was the idea of the origin of nature and or the world, thought to have been an emanation of the deity (von Rad, 1965: 339). The OT creation narratives could be an attempt by Ancient Israel to re-orient her people as well as contend with the neighbouring and hostile nations about the fact that Israel, was sovereign a nation like all other nations and was not meant to be a permanent vassal of any nation (Brueggemann, 1997; Hays, 2014). Perhaps, they wanted to assert that Israel was not a foreign nation to the Fertile Crescent and no part of the world they fought for, or tilled and occupied, must be denied them. Hence, in the J source, creation begins with humanity; other creatures, including the earth and all that it contains are made for human benefit. In contrast to J, the P source deals with only a few crucial events, chiefly among them is the creation of the world. It works out a wider theology around the goodness of God’s creation and focuses more on moments of blessing (Dyrness, 1965: 66) of which Israel was a key beneficiary.

All of this is to say that the authors (Waltke, 2001: 21-22)¹ of the Book of Genesis, took various ancient stories which were in oral tradition and used them to relate how God gave “dominion” and responsibility for the world to humanity, the freedom to act on one’s own and the gifts to achieve happiness. Here, only what is essential is recorded: nothing is accidental or included merely because it stood in the received tradition (Babawale & Shogunle, 2020: 197). It was more or less a theologically captivating speech, meant to inspire contingents to come to terms with who they are, so that they would take up their religious, social, economic and political roles of defending and protecting their territories.

Structure of Genesis 2:4-7, 15

This section of the creation narrative presents a discrete and independent account of human origin; which appears distinct from the former (Candlish, 1979: 34). In this pericope, the plot starts from verse 7 with *vayyişer*, “and he formed,” which is a *wayyiqtol* verb. The presence of verbs describing what had “not yet” happened in verse 5, and then verbs with process aspect in verse 6, describing what was happening when the action of verse 7 took place has been identified (Collins, 1999: 273). The plot describes the state of things on earth when it was first created, where the economy of the inanimate kingdom or of the botanical world was fitted instantly to maintain the sovereignty of the LORD God and to provide for the welfare of human (Candlish, 1979: 36). The first element that appears is the earth itself, endowed with potential to grow all kinds of seeds (Gen. 2:5) to support human life (Juma, 2025). The next to appear is the effect of precipitation (Gen. 2:6). Finally, as an essential factor to effectively achieve the divine intent, is the formation and tending hands of human to work on that aspect of creation (Gen. 2:7) (Hiebert, 2022:82).

In the former account (Gen. 1:26-28), human is portrayed as a high spiritual being, with heavenly nature, capable of having a strong nexus with God; whereas human, in the second section (Gen. 2:4-7), is depicted as earthly, originating from the earth and having earthly interconnectedness (Simkins, 2022: 270-71; Candlish, 1979: 34). It is instructive to state that when the two accounts (P and J) are scrutinized fairly, as affirmed further by Candlish (1979: 34), one would notice that they are consistent with and supplementary to each other. What one observes in the second pericope (2:4-7) presents an outline that can best be described as a linear structure, describing the storyline. Below is a proposed structure:

- i. An Introduction (v. 4)
- ii. Background/Setting (vv. 5-6)
- iii. Main Event (Formation of human from the ground) (v. 7)
- iv. The planting of a beautiful garden by the LORD God for the human (vv. 8 -14)
- v. The LORD God made human responsible for the upkeep of the garden (v. 15)

¹ Authorship of Genesis has been in dispute among scholars. To Waltke, Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2001), 21-22, although a good case can be made that Moses authored the essential shape of Genesis and of the Pentateuch, he clearly did not author the extant text in our hands. However, traditionally, Jews and Christians alike have held that Moses was the author/compiler of the first five books of the Old Testament.

Genesis 2:15 in ancient texts

Text	Masoretic Text (MT)	Targum Pseudo-Jonathan (TPsJ) ²	Septuagint (LXX)
Transliteration	<i>vayyiqqah 'ādōnāi 'ēlōhim 'et-hā'ādām vayyanniḥēhū ḥāḡan-'ēden, lə'āḥāḍāh šāmārāh.</i>	<i>ūḏbar yəyā 'ēlōhim yat 'ādām min thāvār pūlhānā 'atar daitbarəyā mitamān və'ašəreh bəgiynūniytā' də'edēn ləmēhēvey pəlah bə'orayətā' ūlaminəthar piqūrāhā'</i>	<i>kai elaben kyrios ho theos ton anthropon, hon eplasen, kai etheto auton en to paradeisō ergazesthai auton kai phylassein.</i>
Translation	And the LORD God took the human and put him in the <i>beautiful garden</i> to cultivate and keep it well. ³	And the LORD God took the man from the mountain of worship, where he had been created, and made him dwell in the Garden of Eden, to do service in the law, and to keep its commandments." ⁴	And the Lord God took the man whom he had formed, and placed him in the <i>garden of delight</i> , to cultivate and keep it. ⁵

Textual variants of Genesis 2:15

The MT presents Genesis 2:15 as: *vayyiqqah 'ādōnāi 'ēlōhim 'et-hā'ādām vayyanniḥēhū ḥāḡan-'ēden, lə'āḥāḍāh šāmārāh*. This MT (Gen. 2:15) can be translated as: “And the LORD God took the human and put him in the beautiful (Garden of Eden) garden to cultivate and keep it well.” The English rendering of the TPsJ on the other hand, has been presented as: “And the LORD God took the man from the mountain of worship, where he had been created, and made him dwell in the Garden of Eden, to do service in

² Targum Pseudo-Jonathan is a western Targum (translation) of the Torah (Pentateuch) traditionally believed to have come from the land of Israel (as opposed to the eastern Babylonian Targum Onkelos). It is an Aramaic translation and interpretation of the Law, done for liturgical purposes. This Aramaic translation occurred at a time when Hebrew had ceased. Its correct title was originally Targum Yerushalmi (Jerusalem Targum), which is how it was known in medieval times.

³ Author's translation.

⁴ Tov Rose, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, (London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1862-1865), 9.

⁵ Author's translation.

the law, and to keep its commandments” (Rose, 1862-1865: 9). It can be observed that though both the MT and TPsJ of Genesis 2:15 were written in Hebrew, there are significant differences at the literary level. This could not be as a result of a mistake but possibly, as it were, the translators of the TPsJ attempted to include an explanation or expansion of the text. This is not strange since the Targum is not just a translation but also a commentary (Rose, 1862-1865: 4). A close look at the text (Gen. 2:15) in the TPsJ, brings out strange phrases such as “the mountain of worship,” “service in the law” and “to keep its commandment.” All these phrases are unknown to the MT and the LXX. They could have been added by a later editor to draw Israel’s attention to her primary duty towards Yahweh –the keeping of the Mosaic Law and the commandments. This (TPsJ) translator refers to the ground from which human was formed as a “mountain of worship” –a sanctuary, denoting, sacredness. Also, the exhortation to “do service in the law” and “keep the commandments,” is an expression of what the Israelite community of faith thought to be their main preoccupation, and would seize every opportunity to highlight it. However, in the MT, human is exhorted rather, to “till” or “cultivate” the ground and keep it; no reference is made to the Law.

Rose’s English version of the TPsJ translates ʕəḡan-‘ēden as (Garden of Eden), highlighting the basis for similar renderings in some of the English versions. However, the LXX, which was meant to be read by non-Jews, presents it as παραδείσω *paradeisō* (paradise), which denotes the idea of a delightful, beautiful, pleasurable, pleasant place. The LXX would assume this posture of translating ‘ēden for its audience who hitherto would not easily understand the term. This is in keeping with the idea that translation goes with interpretation. It is against this backdrop that this paper would advocate for a suitable translation and interpretation of ʕəḡan-‘ēden in Akan/Twi Bibles, which render the phrase literally as *Eden turo* (AsTB, AkTB) and *Eden ture* (MfTB).

The Yahwist account on the making of humankind (Gen 2:4-7)

Introduction of the event (v. 4)

The Yahwist account of creation, characteristically, attempts to give the creation story a universal twist (von Rad, 1961). The narrator indicates that the generations of the world came from the LORD God (YHWH) as well as all the creations in the universe (Westermann, 1987). The idea of YHWH, being the creator and sustainer of the universe and all the inhabitants in it –both human and non-human entities, is clearly presented by the creation narrator(s). The power and the creative qualities of YHWH are ably articulated in the various events and the teleological nature of elements of nature (Brueggemann, 1997; Kanu & Ndubisi, 2021) described by the author(s).

The setting of the event (vv. 5-6)

Genesis 2:5-6 introduces the event of the formation of humans by describing the time, place conditions and process prior to that event (Walton, 2015). One comes across the fact that the earth/ground was created and all the plants of the earth were created by YHWH before the human was formed. God caused water to come out of the ground to water the plants he had created. The narration seems to portray the view that a conducive atmosphere was created by God for humans who were to be made (Wenham, 1987). That atmosphere was also going to be suitable for flora and fauna to thrive, which could portray a beautiful scenery. The element of water coming out of the ground and watering

the plants that were on the earth also reveals that the ground was moistened enough to be moulded into a shape (Kanu & Pilani, 2025).

The LORD creates a *ḥāḡan-‘ēden* “beautiful garden” for humankind (vv. 8-14)

vayyiqqah, is from the Hebrew primary root, *lāqah*, a *qal waw* consecutive imperfect third masculine singular verb, denoting, (to take or receive) (Strong, 1980: 3947; Bangsund, 2015: 294). In the text, *vayyiqqah*, should be translated as (and he took) (Sawyer, 1976: 98), referring to the LORD God as the subject and the human becomes the object of the sentence. This could reveal an idea of YHWH leading the human to the beautiful environment created for them.

vayyannihēhū, can be analysed morphologically as consisting of a *waw* conjunction, *hiphil*⁶ consecutive imperfect third masculine singular verb.⁷ Its primary root comes from *yānah*, meaning, (to deposit); by implication, (to allow to stay, lay down, let alone, place, and set down) (Strong, 1980: 3240). The *hiphil* forms of the root, usually come with the *dagesh* as is the case of the text (Gen. 2:15). The verb in context, can therefore be understood as the LORD God, causing the human to stay in the garden. In the simplest term, “he put,” “deposited or placed” the human in the garden. This means that the human’s occupancy of the garden was not a choice he made but rather he was made to stay there to play a role for the creator. Waltke affirms that God’s placement of the human in the beautiful garden suggests that humanity is meant for fellowship in the garden, with God, its creator and chief gardener (Waltke, 2001). This implies that God’s action in making that beautiful garden and placing the human there was pragmatically to create an atmosphere for relationship and interrelationship (Kanu & Pilani, 2025). Thus, Adam and Eve’s expulsion will make them feel like castaways in a strange land (Waltke, 2001: 86).

ḥāḡan-‘ēden, contains an inseparable preposition, *ḥā*, denoting, “in” or “on.” It is followed by *ḡan* (a garden) (Strong, 1980: 1588) which is a noun common singular in construct, properly translated as, “garden of.” This shows a compound relationship between *ḡan* (garden) and the next absolute object, *‘ēden*. Some scholars are of the view that *ḥāḡan-‘ēden* refers to a specific but inaccessible place (Collins, 2020: 69; Brown, 1884: 3; Lewis, 1968: 170). The garden has been understood as representing a territorial space in the created order where God invites human beings to enjoy bliss and harmony –with the divine, with one another, with the animals, and with the land on which they dwell. The goal of this paper is not to wade into the debate on the location of the Garden of Eden but harness its theological meaning and relevance in biblical history and compare it with its parallel renderings in Akan Mother-tongue Bibles. Regardless of the geographical uncertainties, the theological view is that “God is uniquely present in this sacred space” (Waltke, 2001: 85). *‘ēden*, is presented as a proper noun feminine singular, translated as “Eden,” the home region of human (Strong, 1980: 5731). However, this may not be a specific or separate place within the world but a metaphor for the world where humans dwelt. The primary root of this word is, *‘ādan*, from which comes the feminine name, *‘ednāh* which means, (pleasant/beautiful) (Strong, 1980: 5727), (pleasure, delight). In Syria, there was a place called *Beyith Eden* (Beth-eden) meaning, (house

⁶ *Hipuil* stem of a verb is understood to be a causative active form of the verb.

⁷ *BibleWorks*, 9.

of pleasure). The term is used here clearly as a geographical designation, which came to be associated, naturally enough, with the homonymous but unrelated Hebrew noun for enjoyment (Speiser, 1964: 16). “This garden is described as a place of unparalleled beauty, with rich fertile soil supporting a variety of lush vegetation and fruit-bearing trees. Where air is filled with the sweet fragrance of flowers, while a crystal clear river flows peacefully through its midst, providing nourishment to the land” (Borisov, 2024: 198). Ten Hoopen (2021: 171) affirms that Eden is a luxurious and fertile place, rich in water and mythically located in the East.

From the analysis, *ḥāḡan-’ēden* (Garden of Eden) can therefore be translated as “a garden of pleasure,” describing the blissful and recreational nature of the home region of human. The Garden of Eden is a temple garden, represented later in the tabernacle. Angels (cherubim) protect its sanctity (Gen. 3:24; Ex. 26:1; 2 Chron. 3:7) so that sin and death are excluded (Gen. 3:23; Rev. 21:8) (Waltke, 2001: 85-86). The topography, foliage, and heavenly river all depict a scene of paradise⁸ in the Garden of Eden (Waltke, 2001: 85-86). It is instructive to note that in the Genesis passages, the narrator is interested in the idea the garden portrays, more than its geography. There, Eden symbolized a state of unbroken fellowship between God and humans. The expulsion from the garden was more than a physical move. It indicated that humans had sinned, disobeying God's command. It is also significant that Eden was not only a luxurious place to be enjoyed, it was a place where humans had work to do (Harris et al., 2003: 639).

“Garden of Eden” as rendered in the Akan/Twi Bibles

Current Akan Versions of the Text (Gen. 2:15)	English Equivalence of the Text (Gen. 2:15)
AsTB: <i>Na AWURADE Nyankopɔn de onipa no kɔtenaa Eden turom sɛ ɔnnɔ na ɔnwɛn hɔ.</i> ⁹	And the LORD God took the human and settled him in the Garden of Eden to weed and watch it.
AkTB: <i>Na AWURADE Nyankopɔn de onipa no kɔduaa Eden turom sɛ ɔnnɔw na ɔnwɛn hɔ.</i> ¹⁰	And the LORD God took the human and settled him in the Garden of Eden to weed and watch it.
MfTB: <i>Na EWURADZE Nyankopɔn faa nyimpa no, na ɔdze no kɔtoo Eden ture no mu de onsiesie hɔ, na ɔnhwɛ hɔ.</i> ¹¹	And the LORD God took the human and sent him to the Garden of Eden to organize it and watch it.

All the three selected Akan/Twi versions of the Bible have avoided translating fully, *ḥāḡan-’ēden*, (garden of eden), except to render *ḥāḡan*, as *turo*, (AsTB, AkTB) and *ture* (MfTB), (garden). Meanwhile, the Hebrew phrase under study is a noun construct. In the

⁸ The term paradise is derived from the LXX's rendering of Eden by *paradeisos* from Old Persian *pairi-daeza*, which meant, “an enclosed park and pleasure ground.”

⁹ New Revised Asante-Twi Bible published as *Twere Kronkron* (Accra, Ghana: The Bible Society of Ghana, 2017), 4.

¹⁰ *Akuapem-Twi Bible published as Kyerɛw Kronkron* (Accra, Ghana: The Bible Society of Ghana, 2012), 4.

¹¹ *Revised Mfantse-Twi Bible published as Baebor* (Accra, Ghana: The Bible Society of Ghana, 2019), 4.

phrase, *bāgan* is the construct form whereas '*ēden* is the absolute form. In Biblical Hebrew, a noun that is in construct is expected to be read and treated together as one by readers and interpreters. In addition to that the idea the term denotes, cannot be left concealed, only for readers to go searching for it from Bible concordances and dictionaries. There is the need to make its meaning clearer in the reader's context. If the Israelites understood all the nuances the term, *bāgan*-'*ēden* (Garden of Eden) connoted, the Akan readers cannot be left in the shadows to struggle for its meaning.

The study has established from the morpho-syntactical analysis that the term, '*ēden*, from its root, denotes a "garden of pleasure" or "blissful and beautiful garden," largely, because of its wonderful varieties of flora and fauna. This idea of the term, provides a useful clue for Twi Mother-tongue Bible translators to consider translating it fully for a clearer understanding for its readers. The Twi translators, for instance, could make use of Twi adjectives such as *fēfē/fēfēw*, "beautiful," or "pleasant," as equivalent for '*ēden* (Eden).

Thus, one could posit that should the phrase, *bāgan*-'*ēden* (Garden of Eden), be translated as *turo fēfē* (AsTB/AkTB) or *ture fēfēw* (MfTB) "pleasant/wonderful/beautiful garden," the Akan readers would better appreciate the full nuances. This assertion becomes stronger when one considers the fact that the Akan communities in Ghana are mostly located in the forest zone and the city of Kumasi, where majority of Akan people live, has over the years, won the accolade, "the Garden City of West Africa," due to its beautiful green areas in the 1940s" (Amoako and Adom-Asamoah, 2019: 210; Maxwell, 1928: 219-223).¹² Thus, fully translating the term, using Akan/Twi adjectives such as have been suggested in this paper to depict the wonderful and beautiful greenery, and varieties of fauna that might have characterized the Garden of Eden in the creation story (Candlish, 1979: 370), would foster a deeper ecological consciousness among Akan readers regarding the sacred responsibility to preserve and care for the environment.

Translation principles employed in the Akan/Twi Mother-tongue Bibles

Bible translation is the representation of the content of source documents in such a way that the full effect and intent of the source text are made available to the reader (Kuwornu-Adjaottor, 2018: 69). This is corroborated by Basil Hatim and Jeremy Munday (2004: 6) who view translation as an act of conveying meaning from one language to another, while carefully accounting for the unique socio-cultural background of the target audience. Thus, Boaheng (2022: 7) urges translators to explore all effective means of transmitting the source text in a way that resonates with and is easily embraced by the intended audience. The principal goal of Bible translation is to convey the sacred content of the source text into a target language in such a manner that its theological, spiritual

¹² See Clifford Amoako and Gifty Adom-Asamoah, "From the Seat of a Traditional Kingdom to a Garden City: The Socio-Spatial Politics of Managing Green Areas in Kumasi, Ghana," *African Geographical Review*, 38:4, (2019): 210. DOI: 10.1080/19376812.2018.1436076. According to them, established in 1817, Kumasi, Ghana's second largest city was accorded the accolade "Garden City of West Africa" in the 1940s due to its beautiful green areas. Today, Kumasi has lost its 'Garden city' accolade, owing to poor management of these 'green areas.' See also John Maxwell, "Ashanti: Kumasi: The Garden City of West Africa," *Journal of the Royal African Society*, Vol. 27, (107), (1928): 219-223.

and contextual significance is significantly preserved and rendered intelligible to the receiving audience (Twumasi-Ankrah, 2022: 46). Translations ought to be expressed using a kind of language register, which is easily comprehensible and can simultaneously retain the texts’ formality, structure, doctrinal accuracy (Nkwawir, 2013), tense form, and theological message.

Bible translation is the scholarly and linguistic enterprise of rendering the sacred Christian scriptures into a language that is entirely distinct from the original texts. The process aims to communicate the divine message with such clarity and resonance that readers in the target language perceive it as though God is speaking directly to them in their own vernacular. The act of translating the Bible encompasses more than mere linguistic substitution; it involves a faithful and vivid representation of the source material. The objective is to preserve the original intent, theological import, and communicative purpose of the biblical texts, ensuring that these are fully accessible and comprehensible to the target audience without distortion or loss of meaning.

It is worth emphasizing that the adoption of a suitable translation approach plays a pivotal role in revitalizing ancient sacred scriptures within modern Bible-believing communities. The nexus between ancient Bible believers and contemporary believers is fundamentally theological in nature, rooted in a shared pursuit of divine understanding (Twumasi-Ankrah et al, 2022: 50). Among African Bible readers, this theological orientation constitutes a primary motivation for engaging with scripture. Consequently, translating the Bible into indigenous African languages such as Twi has proven to be an effective means of facilitating theological comprehension and spiritual resonance. Such translations enable Twi-speaking Christians to access biblical truths in a culturally and linguistically familiar framework, thereby enhancing their capacity to fulfill theological expectations embedded within the biblical text.

There are several theories or philosophies of translation but literal, and dynamic equivalence are the main ones. Literal translation (Formal equivalence) emphasizes accuracy by closely matching the source language’s words and structure in the target language (Kuwornu-Adjaottor, 2018: 80). The approach aims to preserve the original text’s integrity, often resulting in a “word-for-word” translation (Watt, 2002: 247). Nevertheless, literal translation presents a significant challenge, given that linguistic meaning is not inherent in words themselves but is instead constructed through the interpretive frameworks individuals apply to them (Kuwornu-Adjaottor, 2018). It is intellectually sound to assert that the meaning of a word, phrase, or expression is inextricably linked to its contextual framework—encompassing the cultural, ideological, and experiential dimensions that inform and shape the communicative environment in which it is employed (Wilt & Wendland, 2008: 249).

An alternative and a more contemporary approach to translation is dynamic or functional equivalence, introduced by Eugene Nida. Grounded in the linguistic concept of “equivalent effect,” this method prioritizes conveying the intended meaning of the original text over a literal rendering of its words—promoting the use of clear and accessible language to ensure that the message resonates effectively with the target audience (Nida & Taber, 1982: 210). Bible translations employing this approach enhance reader accessibility by faithfully reflecting the original author’s intent to convey scripture in the vernacular of their audience.

However, some scholars have criticized the dynamic equivalence approach, contending that it presents various challenges. Philip Noss (2007), for example, contends that the dynamic method overlooks linguistic theory, a functional element of translation, thereby rendering it inadequate. On their part, Mojola and Wendland (2003) assert that Nida's articulation of translation constitutes a theoretical framework grounded in conduit metaphor, which conceptualizes communication as simply a transfer of meaning from sender to receiver. S. E. Porter (2007) argues that Nida does not take the theory far enough whereas Leland Ryken (2002) believes that Nida has gone too far and would like to retrace his steps to a more literal approach.

A critical examination of the renderings of the Hebrew phrase, *ḥāḡan-ʿēden* in the selected Akan/Twi mother-tongue Bibles suggests that the principle underlining the translation could be largely literal or formal equivalence. Though, in some instances within the pericope of Genesis 2:15, all Twi versions –and occasionally one or two versions –show that the exegetes applied the principle of dynamic equivalence. For instance, in the translation of *ḥāḡan-ʿēden* in Akan/Twi Bibles, it can be observed that translators consistently adopted a literal approach, preserving *ʿēden* as a proper noun that remains untranslated in Twi. In all the cases, the principle implemented has in one way or the other helped or twisted the understanding of the text among the indigenous Akan readers.

Multiple elements contribute to flaws in translation within receptor languages. A fundamental difficulty in translation arises from the absence of exact lexical, idiomatic, and rhetorical equivalents in the target language that can fully convey the meaning of the source text, since no two languages articulate thought in precisely the same manner (Rhodes, 2009: 26). In certain cases, some translators draw upon prior translations as source material for rendering texts into a third language (Asamoah, 2022: 1). Engaging translators who lack proficiency in the source and/or target language inevitably contributes to translation imperfections (Mojola, 2003: 156).

One would agree that insufficient understanding of biblical text often leads to misinterpretation and misappropriation of the text, and can sometimes lead to overemphasis and fanaticism which have serious consequences for Christian spirituality, discipleship, and the survival of the church. It is thus, imperative for one to study how the text has been rendered in the Akan versions of the Old Testament vis-à-vis the source texts. For a better text, the result of such a critical study may lead to a proposal of alternative renderings. Thus, the current study has attempted to achieve that goal of presenting alternative translations for Twi mother-tongue readers. There are several Akan versions of the Bible, but the study limits itself to the Asante-Twi Bible (AsTB), Mfantse-Twi Bible (MfTB), and the Akuapem-Twi Bible (AkTB).

Proposed translation of Genesis 2:15 in Akan/Twi Bibles

From the foregoing textual and morpho-syntactical analysis of the text (Gen. 2:15), this paper's proposed translations are presented in the tables below for Akan mother-tongue readers:

Proposed translation of Genesis 2:15 in Asante-Twi

English	Verse	Asante-Twi (AsTB)
And the LORD God took the human and placed him in the <i>Beautiful Garden</i> to cultivate and to take great care of it.	15	<i>Na AWURADE Nyankopɔn de onipa no kɔduaa turo fɛɛfɛ no mu sɛ, ɔnyɔ mu adwuma na ɔnhwɛ so yie.</i>

Proposed translation of Genesis 2:15 in Akuapem-Twi

English	Verse	Akuapem-Twi (AkTB)
And the LORD God took the human and placed him in the <i>Beautiful Garden</i> to cultivate and to take great care of it.	15	<i>AWURADE Nyankopɔn faa onipa no de no kɔtenaa turo fɛɛfɛ mu hɔ sɛ ɔnye mu adwuma, na ɔnhwɛ so yie.</i>

Proposed translation of Genesis 2:15 in Mfantse-Twi

English	Verse	Mfantse-Twi (MfTB)
And the LORD God took the human and placed him in the <i>Beautiful Garden</i> to cultivate and to take great care of it.	15	<i>Na EWURADZE Nyankopɔn faa nyimpa no, na ɔdze no kɔtenaa ture fɛɛfɛw no mu de onsiesie hɔ, na ɔnhwɛw do yiye.</i>

Conclusion

This paper has drawn attention to inaccuracies in the rendition of the Hebrew phrase, *ḥāḡan-‘ēden*, into some Akan/Twi mother-tongue Bibles. It is proposed that the phrase should be translated to reflect what is in the MT and LXX παραδείσω *paradeisō* (paradise) “beautiful garden” or garden of delight.” The alternative translations postulated in the study are meant to provide the Akan Christian community with an accurate, faithful, and better translation that would enhance mother-tongue theologizing. This paper, critically studied the Akan translations of Genesis 2:15 and argues that the biblical and theological concept of *ḥāḡan-‘ēden*, resonates well with the Akan greenery environment, rich in flora and fauna. Given the availability of Twi phrases that can suitably and fully capture the meaning of the term as found in the Masoretic Text (MT) and the Septuagint (LXX), translators and interpreters are encouraged to adopt the proposed renderings. It is believed that the proposed translations could generate an interesting perspective in the ecological discourse of Akan Christians. This paper may therefore prompt a holistic analysis of other Ghanaian mother-tongue translations and probably lead to the revision of existing versions.

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