

# **A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators**

**Isaac Boaheng**

University of the Free State, South Africa

**Series in Language and Linguistics**



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*A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators* is an engagingly written, hands-on study of the art and science of Bible translation written by an African scholar primarily for an African audience. It provides a very thorough presentation of the essential principles, methods, processes, and intricacies of Bible translation from beginning to end, including pre-project planning and final draft testing. The various stages of this vital interlingual communication process are carefully and clearly explained in a sequence of logically arranged major sections and individual chapter units. In this book, Boaheng not only takes his readers on an engaging tour of the social and linguistic challenges facing African Bible translators (as they move between linguistic and cultural traditions to make the Bible accessible to people in the language they best understand), but he also provides a practical guide for navigating these troubling and tempestuous waters in Bible translation. Helpful thought-provoking review exercises are also supplied at the end of each chapter to test and encourage the progressive learning process.

The fact that an experienced African Bible translator has authored this book makes the text especially relevant for the continent of Africa, where so much translation and revision work is currently either underway or being planned. To this end, I can heartily recommend this book as an essential resource. It would also serve as an excellent introduction to this subject in Universities, theological schools and seminaries. How I wish I had this systematic guide available for service in the field some years ago when I was serving as a United Bible Societies Translation Consultant in Southeastern Africa! All African Bible translators and Translation Consultants working today will certainly benefit by having this *Handbook* close at hand! Boaheng needs commendation for such a resourceful piece.

**Prof. Ernst R. Wendland, PhD**

Stellenbosch University, South Africa & South Africa Theological Seminary  
Retired Translation Consultant, United Bible Societies

This book is a useful guide for people who would like to serve in the ministry of Bible translation. It also provides vital information for those who would like to learn about the theory and practice of Bible translation or who are studying translation in the academy. It introduces the rudiments of Bible translation in readable style and offers very useful suggestions, particularly regarding how to translate idioms, figures of speech and other cultural features in the mother-tongue context. It fairly accounts for the necessary theoretical considerations of Bible translation and proceeds to highlight specific contextual matters that frequently prove challenging in any mother-tongue translation exercise. Another useful feature of this book is that it comes from someone who is

currently an active member of his own mother-tongue translation team, working hard to reduce the word of God into his own mother-tongue. This makes Boaheng's book unique as he addresses issues he himself is confronted with daily in the translation exercise. Written specifically with the African context in mind, this book seeks to address the numerous challenges involved in transferring Judeo-Christian concepts, thought categories and ideas from the Bible into various African mother-tongues with the intention of facilitating translation. The book is highly recommended.

**Rev. Dr. Frederick Mawusi Amevenku, PhD**

Senior Minister, Evangelical Presbyterian Church, Ghana,  
Senior Lecturer (New Testament Studies) & Director of Graduate Studies,  
Trinity Theological Seminary Legon-Accra, Ghana

Bible translation is critical to the Christian faith because Christianity is a religion whose authenticity is not limited to a particular language. This makes the field of Bible translation very critical in academia and world Christianity. It is the translation of the Bible that led to the establishment of Christianity in territories outside Palestine, where the faith began. For the gospel to be understood rightly and applied appropriately, one has to read it in a language he/she understands. In that regard, Lesslie Newbigin stated that "if the gospel is to be understood, if it is to be received as something which communicates truth about the real human situation... 'make sense,' it has to be communicated in the language of those to whom it is addressed and has to be clothed in the symbols that are meaningful to them" (Newbigin 1989:41). This calls for principles and guidelines for mother-tongue biblical translation for translators.

In the book *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, Isaac Boaheng critically and convincingly examined issues at the heart of mother-tongue Bible translation in general and in the African context in particular. The work looked at how various genres, idiomatic expressions, figures, etc., ought to be translated and interpreted to communicate meaning to African Christians. A reflexive study of the book brings to mind the core duty of the early church fathers when they were faced with translating the Bible from its initial languages of Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek to communities not familiar with the biblical languages (Aryeh 2014: 281-301). Boaheng clearly pointed out that mother-tongue biblical translation is not limited to merely replacing terms in the Source Language with terms in the Receptor Language but the dynamic translation that focuses attention on the Receptor Language and culture that does not conflict with the message of the Bible (Nida 2003:77).

*A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators* is a significant response to challenges of mother-tongue Bible translation that many African scholars such as B. Y. Quarshie, John D. K. Ekem, and Howell A. Allison, among others have cogently mentioned (Quarshie 2002: 4-14; Ekem 2010: 34-37; Allison 2010: 21-33). Boaheng analyzed the need for sign language mother-tongue translation principles that are not deeply harnessed in Africa. I recommend this book to biblical scholars and students to further explore sign language mother-tongue biblical translation in Africa. The book is a Competent Based Training (CBT) module for mother-tongue Bible translators and biblical studies students. The format is simple, such that non-theological clergy could adapt it for use during missions. I commend Isaac Boaheng for such a groundbreaking work to sustain the scholarly discussion concerning mother-tongue Bible translation and for pointing out novel areas for further consideration in the academy.

**Rev. Dr. Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh, PhD**

Senior Lecturer (New Testament Studies) & Rector,  
Perez University College, Winneba, Ghana

I am grossly limited by words to concisely describe the practical resourcefulness of the book in your hands. However, to put it mildly, without any form of exaggeration, the book *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators* brings to the reader scholarly insights and discussions about key issues in Bible translation viewed from an African perspective in particular. The fact that this book has been written by someone who is a Bible translator himself makes it a very important document that will contribute immensely to the development of the academic field of Translation Studies in Africa and beyond. I am sure that both present and future generations will benefit greatly from this excellent piece. I wish this book to be not only in the hands of Bible translators and translation consultants but also of all students of the Bible. It will serve as a handbook to the Translator for sure, an additional help to the Consultant, and a reliable Commentary to the Christian Scholar. I highly recommend this book to everyone who desires to understand God's word and apply it appropriately.

**Apostle Monty Abraham**

Epie Bible Translator  
Bible Society of Nigeria

As an African mother-tongue Bible translator, I understand the need for a resource material aimed at addressing the challenges associated with Bible translation in Africa and beyond. Rev. Isaac Boaheng has responded to this need by his well-researched publication, *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, which provides vital data to educate readers on the theory and practice of Bible Translation. The book traces the history of Bible translation from the Septuagint to modern translations. An African mother-tongue Bible translator himself, Rev. Boaheng pays particular attention to the African context and deals adequately with most of the key challenges that confront African translators daily with particular reference to cultural idioms, proper names (places, peoples), units measures (weights, length, heights), figurative language (metaphor, simile) and others. He cites concrete and relevant cases from various parts of Africa to illustrate the principles taught. A unique feature of the book is the chapter on sign language Bible Translation. Not much has been published in this area with reference to the African situation, and I hope readers will take the opportunity to learn from this book. There are thought-provoking exercises at the end of each chapter to help the reader review carefully what has been taught in a particular chapter before proceeding to the next. This is a valuable resource of knowledge for pastors, missionaries, laymen, and Bible translators, translation consultants and lecturers in the field of translation studies. I do not only recommend this book but also commend my good friend, Rev. Boaheng, for such a bold step in producing a one-stop source for Bible translation, particularly in Africa.

**Mrs. Magdalena Shilongo**

Oshindonga Bible Translator  
Bible Society of Namibia

I wholeheartedly dedicate this book to The Very Rev. Prof. John David Kwamena Ekem, Kwesi Dickson-Gilbert Ansre Distinguished Professor of Biblical Exegesis & Mother Tongue Hermeneutics (Trinity Theological Seminary, Legon, Ghana), Translation Consultant (Bible Society of Ghana) and Vice-Principal (Methodist University College, Accra, Ghana).



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# Foreword

Translation is an ancient activity. It is as old as the beginnings of human language diversity. As long as human language diversity has existed, the need for communication across human cultures and languages has been both necessary and real. Humans are social beings who are ever desirous of communication among themselves and of bridging the barriers across their various communities, cultures and languages. Unfortunately, the existence of these barriers across the diverse human communities and their often mutually unintelligible languages poses an apparently insurmountable obstacle. Admittedly, the need to surmount the obstacle is overwhelming. Reasons for this need are numerous and diverse—economic, religious, educational, cultural, political, and so on.

We see this need exemplified in the first recorded translation of the Hebrew Bible (or the Old Testament) from the original source language (Hebrew) into ancient Greek, which was at the time the widely spoken and written language of the Mediterranean world. This was some 200 or so years before the birth of Christ. There was the need to have the Hebrew Bible available in translation in the famous library of Alexandria. However, there was an even greater need to have the Jews in the Greek diaspora, who could no longer read their religious book in its original Hebrew. This reality led to the need to have the Hebrew Bible translated into ancient Greek. The resulting translation was the Septuagint.

Interestingly, the translators of the ancient Greek Septuagint and other major Bible translations that followed, such as Jerome's Latin Vulgate, Martin Luther's German Bible, or the Authorized King James Bible were not done by professional translators. The professionalization of translation is a recent phenomenon. It was part of the development of translation studies as an academic field of study driven by the urgent needs for translation and interpretation in business, industry, education, government, religion, medicine, politics, travel and tourism, and so on.

The professionalization of translation studies has led to the growth of translation research and study, and to the development of specialized knowledge, and as well to the training and formation of translators, and to the publication of studies and books on the subject. Translation studies has developed into a highly specialized multi-disciplinary field of study and activity, drawing on such other inter-disciplines as linguistics, literary studies, cultural studies, social anthropological studies, sociology, psychology,

philosophy, historical studies, subject related studies, which includes biblical studies, individual language studies, among others.

Translation is currently carried out everywhere and in every field and activity. Bible translation is part of the ongoing global translation enterprise. There are Bible translators in every country and on every continent. Languages with millions of speakers to languages with a few thousand speakers are all a part of this global translation enterprise. The goal of Bible translation is to contribute to the dream of seeing everyone hear God speak their own languages.

My good friend Rev Isaac Boaheng is to be congratulated for taking the time to share with the reader some of the insights and key principles of the art and science of Bible translation, and specifically Bible translation in Africa. His book *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators* is simply and clearly written. Its main focus is Bible translation in African languages. Isaac is not an ivory tower writer contributing to an area where he lacks practical hands-on experience and know-how. On the contrary, Isaac is himself a Bible translator in one of the Ghanaian mother tongues (the Bono dialect of the Akan language). He is widely read and well-trained in translation theory and practice. He has participated over time in the well-planned and well-equipped, international United Bible Societies Translation workshops and seminars manned by first-class translation scholars and facilitators. Isaac has not only benefitted from these seminars and workshops; he brings on board his experience as a translator.

It has been my honor and privilege to know Isaac, and I do not hesitate to commend this well-written book to a wider audience and readership.

**Aloo Osotsi Mojola, PhD**

Professor, Philosophy and Translation Studies,  
St. Paul's University, Limuru, Kenya  
Honorary Professor, Faculty of Theology and Religion,  
University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa  
Retired Translation Consultant and former Africa Translation  
Coordinator, United Bible Societies

# Preface

The Christian Church exists to fulfill the Great Commission of making disciples of all nations (cf. Matt. 28:19-20 and its parallels). This is a cross-cultural activity involving one's encounter with different cultural and linguistic traditions. Since language is the main vehicle of communication, an effective cross-cultural mission requires the translation of the Bible into the language of the audience. Vernacular Bible translation is, therefore, imperative for a successful missionary enterprise.

I was appointed a Bible translator in October 2017. In addition to other training programs, I had a two-year Translators' Training Program at the St. Paul's University (Limuru, Kenya) comprising the following courses: Biblical Hebrew, Biblical Greek, Translation Theory & Practice, Old Testament & New Testament in their Cultural Settings, Old Testament Interpretation & New Testament Hermeneutics, Linguistics & Translation, and Discourse Analysis of Old Testament & New Testament Texts. I was privileged to study at the feet of seasoned United Bible Societies Global Translation Advisors, including Dr. Misheck Nyirenda (from Zambia), Dr. Samy Tioye (from Burkina Faso), Rev. Dr. Brigitte Rabarijaona (from Madagascar), Dr. Lénart de Regt and Dr. Marijke de Lang (both from the Netherlands) and Prof. Elizabeth Mburu of International Leadership University, Africa International University and Pan-Africa Christian University in Nairobi, Kenya and the Africa Regional Coordinator for Langham Literature. I also had the opportunity to interact with Prof. Aloo Osotsi Mojola (retired Translation Consultant and former Africa Translation Coordinator, United Bible Societies) and Rev. Dr. Kees de Blois (United Bible Societies Translation Consultant and Interregional Consultant for Computer-assisted Translation and Publishing). It was a great privilege to study together with over sixty Anglophone Africa Translators from Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zambia, Sudan, Namibia, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Zimbabwe, and others.

As I interacted with my lecturers and fellow African translators, I became convinced that even though there are various publications on Bible translation from which one could make a choice, most existing publications on the subject of Bible translation fail to address practical challenges that confront the African mother-tongue Bible translator. This situation served as the immediate impetus for writing *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, a concise, systematic, logical, and thorough presentation of the essential principles, methods, processes, and intricacies of Bible

translation in Africa that seeks to address the social and linguistic challenges facing African Bible translators in their quest to transfer God's message from the biblical languages into various African languages.

This book is an introductory study that examines key theoretical and practical issues to equip readers with the basic skills required to translate the Bible naturally, accurately, faithfully and clearly into their mother tongues. Since proper translation enhances the interpretation and application of Scripture, the book will also improve the hermeneutical ability of the reader. The twenty-chapter book is divided into two parts: the first part deals with theoretical issues related to Bible translation in general (with the African context in focus), whereas the second part focuses on key practical matters in translation. The choice of the issues discussed and the mode of discussion were informed by my experience as a translator and a researcher. Going through the stages of drafting, harmonization, external review and Consultant's checks, I have encountered a lot of challenges which many translators also encounter in their projects. In each case, I paid critical attention to the nature of the challenge and the way it was eventually resolved. I discuss some of these practical issues in part two of this book, with the hope of addressing others in subsequent publications.

The book begins with a general introduction which sets the tone for the discussions in the chapters that follow. Chapter two focuses basically on what characterizes a good Bible translation and what errors one needs to avoid in Bible translation. Chapter three deals with pre-translation activities (such as the formation of the translation team, preparation of a translation brief), the stages involved in the actual translation work and publication of the text. The fourth chapter introduces the reader to the Bible by examining such issues as the attributes, canonization and inspiration of the Bible and how a proper understanding of the nature of the Bible should inform Bible translation activities. The next two chapters deal with the history of Bible translation. Chapter five considers this history globally, starting from the first Bible translation project, which took place in Alexandria (in Egypt), to modern versions of the Bible. It begins with a brief discussion of the emergence and development of the subject of Translation Studies and then continues to consider the major epochs in the development of Bible translation. In chapter six, attention is given to the African story of Bible translation. The first part deals with Bible translation projects that took place in Africa before missionary Christianity was introduced to the continent. The second part accounts for Bible translations into major African mother tongues starting from the missionary period.

The seventh chapter focuses on three major theories of translation, namely: linguistic approaches, equivalence theories and functional theories. There are many other theories of translation; I considered these three theories because of their huge influence on Bible translation in Africa as compared to the other philosophies. Guidelines are given to the reader to know the appropriate approach to use in translating a given text. Chapter eight deals with textual criticism, the process involved in determining as close as possible the original biblical text. The chapter shows the need for textual analysis of biblical manuscripts to arrive at the original text. The focus of the ninth chapter is the place of hermeneutics/exegesis and intertextuality in Bible translation. The chapter contends that “while a good exegete does not automatically make a good translator, a good exegetical skill is an indispensable tool for making a high-quality translation.” Among other things, intertextuality helps the translator to (at least partly) determine the meaning of a text based on its use in another literary document. In chapter ten, the book considers the linguistic aspects of Bible translation, while the next chapter highlights strategies that can be employed in making ambiguous texts clearer for the reader without compromising meaning. The issue of explicitation and structural adjustment is the subject of chapter eleven. In some cases, the translator finds no lexical equivalence for a biblical expression. The question of whether to use an approximate local expression or to adopt the foreign term in the translating text becomes crucial in such situations. The twelfth chapter, through a critical discussion on the concepts of foreignization, domestication and cultural adaptation, gives some guiding principles for dealing with such cases.

The next seven chapters deal with selected practical issues in Bible translation, namely the challenges associated with and strategies for translating cultural idioms, proper names (places, peoples), units measures (weights, length, heights), figurative language (metaphor, simile) and others. Illustrations are taken from various parts of Africa to cater for the need of different African societies. The twentieth chapter takes up the challenge of sign language translation, focusing on the need, challenges, and prospects of sign language Bible translation in Africa. The book concludes with a recap of the major points discussed as well as recommendations for the development of translation studies.

I have avoided the use of many technical terms; those which are used have been explained to enhance comprehensibility. Almost every chapter includes an introduction outlining the main issues in the chapter, illustrative texts with translations, chapter summary and review exercises that help the reader revise the work before proceeding to the next chapter. It is hoped that African

Bible translators, translation consultants, biblical exegetes, undergraduate and postgraduate students and everyone who desires to know more about the Bible and its translation will find this work worth reading.

**Isaac Boaheng**

June, 2021  
Sunyani, Ghana

# Acknowledgments

Foremost, I thank God for his grace throughout my life. Coming from a less endowed family, I did not imagine I will get this far. All glory to the LORD for picking me from the pit and placing me where I am today. I am indebted to many scholars whose works were consulted in preparing the manuscript.

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Prof. Aloo Osotsi Mojola (Retired Translation Consultant and former Africa Translation Coordinator, United Bible Societies) for writing the foreword to the book after a critical study of the manuscript. Prof. Mojola worked as Africa Area Translation Coordinator of the United Bible Societies from 2000 to 2006, during which he oversaw the work of about thirty biblical/linguistic/translation consultants working in over two hundred Bible translation projects in Sub-Saharan Africa. He supervised various translation projects under the care of these consultants, in their various locations in Senegal, Gambia, Mali, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, Cameroon, Democratic Republic of Congo (former Zaire), Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Seychelles, Mauritius, Madagascar, Mozambique, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Angola, Botswana, and South Africa. He has participated as a Translation Consultant of the United Bible Societies in the translation of over 61 Bibles and New Testaments in different African languages. He has about eighty publications in the field of Translation Studies, Philosophy, Linguistics and others. Prof. Mojola has recruited, trained and mentored several Translators and Translation consultants; no wonder some people call him “the ancestor” of Bible Translation in Africa. He has participated in Bible Translation conferences, consultations and missions around the globe in all the continents, including most countries in Africa and several countries in Europe, Asia, North America and South America. To have a person of this stature critically study your manuscript and write a foreword to it is a great honor. The positive comments he made about the manuscript served as additional motivation to get the manuscript published. I have learnt a lot through my interactions with him. Prof. Mojola, may God bless you with more years and good health.

Prof. Ernst R. Wendland (also Retired Translation Consultant, United Bible Societies) is acknowledged for writing an endorsement for me. We met this year (2021) at an e-conference organized by the South African Theological Seminary on the Fourth Gospel, and afterward, I approached him to evaluate my manuscript and write an endorsement for me. He readily did so despite his tight schedules. I am very grateful to you, Prof. Wendland. May God continue to keep

you healthy and strong. Rev. Dr. Frederick Mawusi Amevenku (Senior Lecturer in New Testament Studies & Director of Graduate Studies, Trinity Theological Seminary Legon-Accra, Ghana), my lecturer, mentor and friend, played a key part in this work, from drafting to publication. He is acknowledged for his contributions toward this and other publications. Rev. Dr. Daniel Nii Aboagye Aryeh of Perez University College (Winneba, Ghana) critically evaluated the book and contributed an endorsement. May God richly bless you! Apostle Montgomery Abraham of the Bible Society of Nigeria and Mrs. Magdalena Shilongo of the Bible Society of Namibia are also appreciated for recommending this book to public readership.

The Very Rev. Prof. John D. K. Ekem is appreciated for his mentoring role and for his contributions toward the development of my ministry and translation work. I am particularly grateful to The Rt. Rev. Daniel Kwasi Tannor, the Bishop of the Sunyani Diocese of the Methodist Church Ghana, for his fatherly counsel and support. Dr. Misheck Nyirenda, Dr. Samy Tioye, Rev. Dr. Brigitte Rabarijaona, Dr. Lénart de Regt, Dr. Marijke de Lang, Prof. Elizabeth Mburu and Rev. Dr. Kees de Blois are appreciated for directly or indirectly shaping the materials presented in this book.

I owe profound gratitude to my parents, Mr. Noah Nti (posthumously) and Mad. Mary Ampomah, for their care, love and support. I pray that my mother will enjoy the fruit of her labor. May God richly bless my siblings, Yaw Boahen, Kofi Boachie, Samuel Boahen, Hayford Ampaabeng-Kyeremeh, Racheal Oforiwaa, Collins Frimpong, Solomon Amo, for their encouragement and support. My in-laws need a special mention at this point for their unfailing love and support. Mr. Adu Ofori and Mad. Mary Twenewaa, may you live longer than you expect. My brothers-in-law, including Isaac Adu-Ofori, George Adu Prempeh, Seth Adu-Ofori and Samuel Adu Gyamfi, have supported me in diverse ways and need to be acknowledged in a special way. Mr. Anthony Asiedu and his family (Berekum) contributed immensely to my ministerial formation and must be appreciated for their benevolence.

I thank my wife and children for their love, support and patience that contributed to the success of this research. My dear wife, Gloria Adu-Agyeiwaa, and lovely children, Christian Adom-Boaheng, Benedict Adu-Boaheng, Julia Ampomah-Boaheng and Kalix Ohene-Boaheng; this is how far your sacrifice, encouragement and prayers have brought this work. I really appreciate your efforts.

I am extremely grateful to my friends and colleagues in the various institutions in which I serve for the impact of their interactions and help in the process of writing this book. To the staff of Vernon Press, I say God richly bless you. Amen!

# Introduction

In this book titled *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators*, Rev. Isaac Boaheng, an enterprising Ghanaian biblical scholar and systematic theologian, has prepared a commendable manual for Bible translators and Bible translation administrators in Africa. Rev. Boaheng brings on board a solid background in theology and Bible translation, acquired from his studies in Ghana, Kenya and South Africa, as well as from his association with the Bible Society of Ghana for the past four years as one of three translators assigned to the Bono Bible Translation Project. This rich exposure has, by divine providence, gifted him with the rare ability to skillfully articulate pertinent issues of contextual theology in the Ghanaian/African setting. The book handles an important subject matter that can be placed under the umbrella of African biblical hermeneutics. It throws light on the key principles required for translating and rooting the Judeo-Christian Scriptures (i.e. the Bible) on African soil. It also highlights procedures for organizing Bible Translation Projects right from their inception through to their completion. Such an approach carries the obvious advantage of facilitating an appreciation of processes involved in the translation of the Bible into various African languages. Apart from ushering us into the rudiments of Bible translation for the hearing and reading audiences, the author admirably devotes a chapter to a discussion of translation principles for the non-hearing community via the art of Sign Language. This is indeed a most welcome development, because Sign Language Translation in Africa—which addresses the needs of an otherwise “forgotten” audience—can be viewed as being in its infant stages. The latter observation powerfully reminds us that Bible translation is an artistic exercise that ought to be carefully balanced with its scientific component of critically engaging texts, using a variety of interpretative approaches, including the conventional historical-critical methodology. It is an undeniable fact that Bible translation work in Africa stands to gain from the disciplines of biblical studies (including a mastery of source texts in Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek), African linguistics, cultural anthropology and translation studies. Boaheng’s book demonstrates an awareness of these vital components. There is a sense in which we can make a case for the book as a noble attempt to build on the classic works of Bible translation experts such as Eugene Nida, Kathy Barnwell, Ernst Wendland, Aloo Mojola, Lynell Zogbo and Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole, to mention but just a few.

Rev. Isaac Boaheng belongs to the younger generation of Bible translators whose passion for the provision of life-transforming mother-tongue Scriptures for their communities propel them to make their voices heard in a constructive

manner. Our young, enterprising author leaves no stone unturned in ensuring that what he produces meets acceptable standards required by the Forum of Bible Agencies. The book is presented in a user-friendly format and promises to be of great benefit to all categories of Bible translators and Bible translation administrators. It showcases the fundamental hermeneutical principles of understanding, analyzing and re-packaging texts for particular audiences, conscious of the fact that layers of interpretative tradition that have, since ancient times, characterized biblical texts, ought to be transposed into fresh contexts, including those from present-day Africa. Precisely, we need to acknowledge the fundamental fact that texts have always been undergoing a metamorphosis in response to changing circumstances. This point throws into question the myopic approach of handling ancient biblical texts as if they were “fossilized documents” that have fallen, so to speak, from the skies, and simply need to be drilled into the *tabula rasa* minds of receptor audiences.

For one thing, Bible translation and interpretation are done by people of flesh and blood who are presented with fresh opportunities to contextualize and re-semanticize biblical texts in response to the religio-cultural, economic, social and political exigencies of their time. This does not in any way overlook the key issue of divine inspiration. That God has always been speaking to people throughout the ages in languages that they can understand is dynamically demonstrated through the Incarnation whereby according to the Prologue of John's Gospel, the Christologically re-interpreted Logos became flesh and pitched his tent (dwelt) among us: *Kai ho logos sarx egeneto kai eskēnōsen en hēmin* (John 1:14a). The history of Bible translation and interpretation shows consistently that no meaningful communication can take place without this incarnation principle where divinity condescends to reach out to humanity in ways that can be best understood by the latter, our limitations notwithstanding. This calls for deep humility even as we interact with biblical texts. We need to be conscious of the divine-human engagement which involves God's use of frail human interpreters, who are limited by their circumstances, to make his purposes known from generation to generation. The ministry of Bible translation implies, therefore, that translators are expected to engage texts critically with lenses from their own contexts, while at the same time acknowledging that God, who once upon a time, spoke to ancient peoples via their languages and culture (in the case of the Bible, via ancient Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek languages embedded in Ancient Near Eastern, Hebrew, Hellenistic/Graeco-Roman cultures), still has a word for us via our current life-settings. Herein lies the validity of considering Bible translation as a comprehensive spiritual exercise supported by its artistic and scientific dimensions.

Boaheng's book comes at a time when many African communities await translation of the Judeo-Christian Scriptures (the Bible) into their languages. Bible Societies and sister organizations are being called upon to make judicious use of such an opportunity. This unfinished task of Bible translation in Africa requires the recruitment and training of qualified translators and reviewers. I have no doubt at all that these will benefit immensely from the insights offered by this book. It is hoped that the exercises provided in *A Handbook for African Mother-Tongue Bible Translators* book will facilitate effective mother-tongue interactions with the Bible and positively impact receptor communities.

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