

## **The Bible in Ateso - Uganda: A Contemporary Christian Community Perspective on the 1961 Translation**

**Okello Godfrey**  
**St. Paul's University**

### **Abstract**

*The Bible is the Sacred Scriptural Text of the Christian religion that gives narration of the historical events pertaining the genesis of the earth from its initial establishment to the spread of Christianity in the first century, CE. Mutually, the Old Testament and New Testament Texts have experienced translation alterations over the centuries brought about by duplication of different editions and the need to create the Bibles that communicate to the Christian community in their local languages. The Teso Christian community in Uganda primarily depends on the translated word of God which is made manifest to them through the Bible. Spiritually, they feel strengthened whenever they read and listen to God's word in their native language. However, the contemporary Ateso Bible published in 1961 has many challenges and many Christians of Teso are limited to use it, subsequently leading to ineffective use of the Bible in the present era. This article therefore, is written to bridge the existing spiritual gap of the Bible and that of the contemporary Christian community in view of the Ateso Bible in Teso. Using qualitative enquiry, this article was guided by one study question: How do Iteso contemporary Christian community of Uganda evaluate the 1961 Ateso Bible translation? This article purposed to establish the factors affecting Ateso Bible in addition to highlighting the social-spiritual effects that Ateso Bible in Uganda have had on the community. 20 participants from the Roman Catholic Church and the Anglican Church were purposively sampled to participate in the study. An interview guide was formulated to capture the objectives of the study. The findings confirmed existing challenges in the Bible. A number of factors affecting the Bible were identified by the participants and reported including, preference for clear, accurate and natural version of Ateso Bible since the Bible is "God's Word".*

**Keywords: Bible in Uganda, Teso-land, 1961 Contemporary Translation, Christian Perspective, Gap Bridging**

### **Introduction**

Among the Teso Christian community of Uganda, the Bible is the most profound document treated with care in reverence as "God's Holy Word" to mankind. Breneman affirms that, the Bible is the book of redemption whose chief theme and purpose is God's great plan of salvation (1993:15). This tool is used both internally and public by the Church for ministry. The same tool is used in the community for the society's moral, spiritual and social values preservations from decadence. In the public service, it's usually used for oath undertakings especially when recruiting new entrants into the system. More so in court, it's commonly valued when evaluating opinion matters of a particular case by methodically swearing while lifting. However, the purpose of this article is

to give a brief background of the 1961 Ateso Bible in Uganda, to reveal the perception of the contemporary Christian Church in Teso regarding the Bible, to show some of the effects that have been encountered emanating from the perception of the Bible by the Christian community in Teso and consequently suggest the probable recommendable resolutions bridging the gap generated by the stated version in the lives of Iteso Christian community. In this article, we will briefly examine the biblical concepts of the Bible Translation, then put-forward the community's perception of the 1961 Ateso Edition. However, it should be noted that God's word does not change but God's world changes in every generation. These changes therefore call for the Church in each generation to interpret and apply God's Word for God's people correctly.

### **1. A Brief History about the Iteso and the 1961 Contemporary Ateso Bible**

The Iteso of Uganda are an ethnic group of people that are found in the eastern part of the country an area termed as "Teso", they speak "Ateso" and they are generally accepted as belonging to the Nilo-Hamitic or Half-Hamitic family of tribes (Lawrence 1957:7). The Iteso are socially contagious and hospitable, religiously they believe in the God called "Edeke" although this noun is doubtful as imperfectly translated during the missionary era (Opak 2019:10-14). Economically they are small firm investors both in commercial and agricultural production majorly dealing in subsistence farming. In terms of politics, they are a minority and by history they are pastoral warriors. In this contemporary era culturally, they are united all over the world under ICU literally defined as Iteso Cultural Union through the leadership of Emorimor the third Papa Paul Sande Emolot enthroned on 22<sup>nd</sup> -October 2022 upon succession of the late Papa Augustine Lemukol Osuban who reigned from 2000-2022, who also took over from Papa Epapurasi Imodot who served as an interim "Emorimori" since the inception of the Union in 1998 (Augustine Lemukol 2017:7-11). Today in Uganda, the Iteso number three million forty-five thousand seven hundred fifty of Uganda's population (UNBS 2014:150).

Regarding the origin of the Iteso, history holds that their ancestors came from Abyssinia in Ethiopia and entered Uganda through Karamoja many years ago (Lawrence 1957:7-8). After several decades far along, the Iteso were exposed to Christianity, missionary education and civilization influences during the missionary era (John Baur. 2009: 218-227). The year 1902 marked the establishment of the Church in Teso following Semei Kakungulu's political subjugation of the region. Later in 1910, the Church received the first ever translated portion of

Mark's Gospel published in the local Ateso language and by 1961, the complete Bible was published for use by the Church in Teso (Mojola 1999:151-153). So far, six decades have elapsed since the receipt of this version in Teso and the generation that was familiar with the social cultural context and language by which it was written have gone to be with the Lord except for a few, thus leaving the current generation struggling with comprehension because of the events that have happened since then. This has created a huge comprehension gap of the Bible.

There are several texts that support the notion of local language Bible use and interpretation globally in all communities across continents, nations and locally, but for this case we shall limit the references to only three citations. Among the many Bible stories, we shall single out the story of the Ethiopian eunuch who needed help from Philip to explain to him what he had read in the scroll of Prophet Isaiah (Acts 8:26-39). Probably, the scroll had been written not in his mother tongue but in a language he did not understand. The scriptures state:

“Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, go south to the road—the desert road—that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza. So, he started out, and on his way, he met an Ethiopian eunuch, an important official in charge of all the treasury of Candace, Queen of the Ethiopians. This man had gone to Jerusalem to worship, and on his way home, was sitting on his chariot reading the book of Isaiah the prophet. The Spirit told Philip, go to that chariot and stay near it. Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. Do you understand what you are reading? Philip asked. How can I, he said, unless someone explains it to me? So, he invited Philip to come up and sit with him ....” (NIV 1986:1101-1102).

Likewise, the incarnation story in John 1:14-15 theologically speaks of the transition of God into mankind through the Virgin Mary. God was born as human, grew among the Jews and spoke the Jewish cultural native language but not the tongue of angels despite being God with all the power and ability to do so. When He was mature, He practically preached and spoke within the Jewish synagogues, public places, and temples in both rural and urban areas, using the local language. He further instructed the twelve disciples using the local tongue. By Jesus speaking the language of the community, it created the cultural and social bonding as he disseminated his message to the audience. Each time he tried speaking in parables he often had a challenge of being misunderstood by the listeners which always forced him to labour reinterpreting his parables in the local language to have them clearly understood. This explains how valuable and powerful local languages are. Having this in mind, the Bible has this to say:

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me’” (NIV 1986:1063).

Looking at the event that took place at Babylon especially at the tower of Babel in Genesis 11:5-8, God commissions the many languages heard and spoken today when He confused a people that spoke one tongue and scattered them all over the world. This implies that God is the author of all languages and every dialect is as important as any other, God is omniscience thus knowing all languages unlike man who is limited in this capacity. So, any person wishing to reach out to the scattered people or nations, he or she can only effectively do so by honorably reaching to them in their respective native languages. In this situation a foreign missionary would need to first learn the local language or have an interpreter to perfectly deliver the message intended for such a community. The same spirit further applies to the word of God delivered, preached and taught in our communities in such a manner that its best heard when interpreted in the local tongue. The Holy Scriptures confirm God’s dominion over mankind at the tower of Babel when He demonstrated authority over mankind, the same scriptures attest that God is unlimited in speech, fashion, art, creativity and He is delighted in the variety of languages as it is written:

“But the Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building. The Lord said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” So, the Lord scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city (NIV 1986:12).”

The Bible is generally a powerful tool, it does not only provide the word of God, but a unifying tool that has brought believers from all over the world to live as one body of Christ despite their racial variances and political boundaries. Regionally, it does the same and more strongly when it is written in the language of each community. The Bible should be clearly documented, accurate, natural, meaningful and effectively communicating in any given local dialect in order to win souls to God’s kingdom. All these three analogies justify the need for local language translations of the Bible in our communities. Historically, the Bible has been written in different languages namely: Hebrew, Greek, Latin, Aramaic, French, English among others and it has further been formatted into many different versions such as audio, digital, textual, bilingual and so forth (Bible Translation

Brief 2018:1-30). In 1961, the Bible reached Teso land in the form of text, written in Ateso language and today, the same Bible has been digitalized and audio recorded.

## **2. How the Ateso local language Bible has been viewed**

Despite being the word of God and the only Ateso Bible translation in the community for the last sixty years, this Bible currently has been perceived as containing many impediments ranging from the textual translation of the Holy scriptures, to the climax of its textual print, which has caused many contemporary Bible users in Teso, including those in the diaspora to have numerous queries of concern about it. Diagnosing deep into the text, this paper presents some analysis of the Ateso community's perception of some Bible texts.

**Name of God:** Borrowing an example from the Acholi Bible translation that has been in use for decades in which the name of God was mismatched by the missionaries in their era as “Rubanga,” which also happens to be the name of the spirit that causes tuberculosis of the spine. Thus, Rubanga is also the Hunchback spirit among Acholi. Since then, the Acholi community worships the spirit of tuberculosis and the Hunchback as indicated in their Bible as “God” (Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole 2005:35). Attributing the name of God as the spirit of tuberculosis and the Hunch back as it is the case in the Acholi Bible sounds ridiculously blasphemous to the name of the Universal creator but this cannot be blamed on the community for they were blindly misguided many years ago. Likewise, looking at the name of “God” known as אֱלֹהִים in the Old Testament Hebrew and θεός in the New Testament Greek languages have been viewed in Ateso Bible by the community as inaccurately translated by the missionaries as “Edeke” whose meaning is dreadfully conceived from disaster to mean disease or illness. The noun has 3,974 drowned occurrences in Ateso Bible and through the period, the Iteso have been blindly praising “Illness” as their creator (Opak 2019:10-14).

**Orthography:** Glancing into the Bible orthography in comparison with the current writing styles found in Teso, the Ateso Bible is the only unique document that still considers usage of an outdated writing alphabet with letter “D.” This character appears over 52,000 times in the Bible. The character itself is a combination of two distinct consonants namely “N and G” conjoined to make a single letter (Ateso Bible 1961:3-1237). Tracing the origin of the letter “D” especially on how it

entered into the Ateso Bible, the history dates back to the era of missionary work in Teso through which the evangelists who brought the gospel to Teso were from Buganda.

The gospel was preached using the Luganda Bible but the converts were taught to read using “Amateka” which means words of introduction. The “Ametaka” referred here had the following vowels and consonants: Aa, Ee, Ii, Oo, and Uu. The consonants included: Ww, Yy, Kk, Pp, Tt, Mm, Bb, Ll, Nn, Rr, Dd, D̄, Ss, Cc, Jj, Gg, and NYny (Amateka 1950:2). Those who were prepared for baptism and confirmation were instructed using “Katekisumu” known as Catechism (Katekisumu 1950:1-27). Something worth mentioning is that, all these documents were written in Luganda using the Luganda alphabet. When the Church in Teso was established, the Church translated “Amateka and Katekism” from Luganda to Ateso, but some unique letters like “D̄” remained immune and preserved in the alphabet. During the translation of the Ateso Bible, the “D̄” found its place in the Bible. In contrast, the Ateso orthography created in 1960s was reviewed years after by Ateso language board, and being a language, it continued to develop. The current Ateso orthography has twenty consonant letters: b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, ng, ny, p, r, s, t, v, w, y with the following vowel letters: i, u, e, o, a (Ateso Orthography pamphlet 2019:5-9). Through the recent discoveries as the language grew, five more vowels known as lighter vowels for Ateso language have been developed by the board which include, ī, ū, ē, ō and ā. Lighter vowels were introduced to resolve the reading and pronunciation challenges that arise in reading and pronouncing words that have the same spelling but have different application (Revised Orthography 2019:9).

In the contemporary era, within the field of education, the Ateso language taught in schools no longer use “D̄” in the teaching orthography, this has been substituted with “NG (ng),” (Esther Akello 2012: 1-56, Fountain Thematic Curriculum 2016:1-30, Akonya John 2006 :1-45). Another example is the Community magazine called “Etop,” meaning the bright morning star circulated weekly across Teso and other parts of the country is also written based on the school alphabet without “D̄.” Teso journalists or news broadcasters capture daily news using the common alphabet that the community uses, that is “NG” in place of “D̄” in their writings. Surprisingly even the Church documents in Teso today are no longer recorded using “D̄” except the Ateso Bible.

**Typing Errors:** This is yet another area of concern where several citations and references of typing errors in Ateso Bible have been noted in the community. These inaccuracies range from

nouns, verbs and conjunctions among others which have been incorrectly typed. The case in point among several examples in the Bible is the noun in Hebrew בָּבֶל “Babylon” found in Jeremiah 38:22. This noun which refers to one of the biblical cities in Israel has been wrongly typed as “Baulon” instead of “Babulon” as the supposed correct spelling of the word in Ateso native language. The omission of the second letter “b” from the noun Babylon may cause misunderstanding by the reader of the Bible accompanied by the pronunciation effect during the reading process. Another illustration of mis-typed words is in Matthew 28:20 which refers to “All” in English. The quoted word is wrongly typed as “Kete” instead of “Kere.” Among the verbs that have been wrongly typed include the verb in Isaiah 45:2, which in Hebrew אֶיְיָקִי means “I will make smooth.” In the Ateso Bible, this verb is written as “Eiyakini” instead of “Eiyaikini.” The omission of letter “I” between “A and K” in the middle of the word causes the word to lose its intended meaning, thus causing a problem in the Bible. Typing errors have a negative impact on the use of a Bible in any given community. First and foremost, it misleads the reader, secondly, it causes failure of understanding about what was originally intended of the text, thirdly, it propagates bias and mistrust by the reader or listener thus making scholars, communities and some individual personalities to raise criticisms towards the text as well as being in possession of a negative perception about the particular Bible.

**Book Introduction:** Although biblical scholars coupled with Bible translators’ reason that introductions are not part of the Bible, this is not the case with the common Bible readers deep in the village for they consider everything in the Bible as the word of God. Several Bible readers in Teso have a conceived mind that Ateso Bible omits the key aspect of Bible introductions. The argument here is that, book introductions valuably give a preamble of the historical facts that help to address the five empirical questions often asked by translators, theologians, scholars and other biblical readers among others. Such questions normally revolve around: How, Who, Whom, When, Where and, Why the book was written. Having background details of a text, sometimes known as introduction, guides in addressing the “How” question which makes the reader understand the genre of a particular book, whether it’s a “Letter, Narrative or Poetry.” Knowing the genre of the book helps the reader or the preacher to better understand the interpretation rules of a given book and hence avoid treating a narrative text as a poetry text or rather as a letter. Understanding the background genre which is always placed within the introduction helps Bible readers or users how to approach the text without confusion. The question of “Who” is normally asked in order to

explicitly understand the author of a particular book and all the biographical accounts about the writer. The “Whom” question is normally asked in reference to the audience to whom the content message or book is originally intended for, while the “When” question relates to the time and period of authorship by the writer. As regards to “Where,” most questions phrased in this manner are normally inquisitive of the geographical location, place or country where the writing of the book was done, and finally the “Why” question is usually asked to explain the intent or purpose of writing a given book in any community or phenomenal environment. Based on the Ateso Bible used by the Church in Teso, this Canon lacks all the needed introductory material on each book of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, the last book of the Anglican Canon.

**Subtitles:** Related to the point of introductions as already stated is the exclusion of sub-titles in Ateso Bible. Like the use of Chapters and Verses in any Bible translation, so is the importance of sub-titles in the Ateso Bible if included. Despite the significance of the Chapters and Verse numbers, sub-titles equally help Bible readers, scholars and preachers to quickly access the Bible texts because they quicken the location process of portions and texts in the Bible as required by the reader. Secondly, sub-titles act as Biblical themes developed from the major topic of the book which aids to simplify the understanding of the reader especially when a major topic of the book is broken into smaller units. Sub-titles have a positive role, for example for the evangelists, they act as themes for preaching, discipleship, counselling classes among others, while for a mere Bible reader, it enables the person to comprehend scripture on topical domains that apply to the day-to-day life. Based on this evaluation, the Ateso Bible has been noted as having a vacuum in this regard.

**Ambiguity:** Cases of ambiguous translations have been cited in the Ateso Bible. Examples of such obscurity include the confusion caused in translating the two distinct nouns “James and Jacob.” In Matthew 4:21, the Bible speaks about “James” written as Ἰάκωβον in Greek who was described as the son of Zebedee (Newman 1993:8), while in Genesis 25:26, the Bible talks about “Jacob” inscribed in Hebrew as יַעֲקֹב who is understood as the son of Isaac and grandson of Abraham (Hebrew-English Bible 2014: 39). In the Ateso Bible, the two distinct personalities have been synonymously translated in Ateso dialect as “Yakob.” The fact that the two nouns have identical translations in the local dialect makes the readers of the Ateso Bible confused in distinguishing between James and Jacob as inscribed in the original languages.



Another aspect of ambiguity is reflected in translating the terms, “City, Town, and Home.” In the Ateso 1961 Translation, all these three nouns of geographical locations have been synonymously rendered as one generalized word in the local dialect as “Ere.” According to Ateso dialect, “Ere” literary means a home-state where a family dwells. The challenge here is that; the Bible does not distinctively specify these Biblical nouns of urban geographical settings but instead generalized the interpretations as “Ere” meaning “Home-state.” When a reader encounters the noun “Ere” in Ateso Bible, the person has to internalize the context in which the word has been applied, that would mean to find whether it implies City, Town or a Home-state in transcription. To the theologian, drawing the distinction of these terms may seem easy unlike the common reader who will find it challenging.

Still on the point of ambiguity is on the manner the name “Lord” in reference to deity, and the common title “Lord” have been expressively translated pausing a serious problem of not understanding the two referenced words as applied in the Ateso Bible. The name “Lord” also known as יהוה “Yahweh” who is the universal creator have been translated over 7000 times in the Ateso dialect as “EJAKAIT” in block letters (Genesis 2:4), while “Lord” in reference to the title of honor for all earthly masters understood as יהוה “O my Lord” in Hebrew, is also translated in Ateso Bible as “Ejakait” lower-case letters (Genesis 23:6). The challenge with this translation is that, within the Teso community, the word “EJAKAIT or Ejakait” written either in block or lower-case, literally means a title of honor which is used while addressing a dignitary. Such notable titles include: “Mister, Chief, Prince, Sir, Noble one.” The Ateso translation however chose to use “EJAKAIT” with block writing for the name “Yahweh,” and Ejakait with lower case inscription for the title “Lord” without any footnote or concordance reference to guide the reader on how one word in Ateso dialect have been applied in two varying contexts. Anyone encountering “EJAKAIT or Ejakait” in Ateso Bible faces a risk of treating the translation as having one meaning yet the two different styles of writing have been distinctively applied to mean two different applications of the text which raises a serious confusion for the reader or preacher without proper theological knowledge of the Bible in its broader perspective.

**Application:** Another side of concern for the Ateso Bible deals with applicability in the real practical aspect of the daily life in the community. This perspective is based on the many accumulative factors as discussed above affecting the Bible. Because of the generational gap,

archaism of the Bible, the many translation obstructions as reflected in the previous views in connection to the Bible all amount to the bigger challenge in the making of the Bible apply to the real lives of the people. When a majority of Church ministers believed to have some theological training about the Bible comprehensively fail to understand the Bible which is a tool for preaching then the Bible ceases to communicate and becomes irrelevant. On the other hand, however, if the pulpit knows less of the Bible, how far worth the pew? Because it is generally believed that God's word through the Bible flows from the pulpit to the pew where mass congregations belong by means of ministers of the Word of God helped by the power of the Holy Spirit. By this observation, the 1961 Ateso Bible has had trouble in its applicability within the community inclusive of some Church ministers.

**Print Font:** Lastly, the 1961 Ateso Bible has been viewed by the Christian community in Teso as also having the problem of the print font. The argument here is that, the Bible has been printed in a very small font size which makes the readers to struggle in visualizing the tiny characters of the biblical text thus over-straining the sight of the readers. This is the community's greatest challenge with the Ateso Bible especially among the aged group.

### **3. Effects of the Ateso Bible on the community due to its observed impediments**

Based on what has been fronted, the Teso Christian community have several felt effects as a result of many factors that obstruct the clear usage of the Bible in the community. These effects present poor description of the contemporary Ateso Bible in use thus increasing concern and more queries that revolve around Bible translations as well as the global translation ministry worldwide. The narrative underneath presents some of the effects directly conceived from the Bible by the community, among them includes the following.

Noting from the 1961 Ateso Bible translation, it is very striking to observe that the Church of Christ in Teso meant to be one body of Christ, was preaching a solitary gospel of Christ and is split based on the name of God  $\text{יהוה}$  in the Old Testament Hebrew and  $\text{\theta\epsilon\acute{o}\varsigma}$  in the New Testament Greek languages. A single sect of the Church in Teso (Roman Catholic) worships a God named as "Lokasuban" which implies the creator, while the other denominations (Anglicans, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, Adventists) among others all uplift, worship and praise "Edeke" interpreted as "illness" as their God. The two diverse names in use for over sixty decades since the inception of

the Bible in Teso have kept the Church in Teso separate and the Ateso Bible has been the source of argument and talk of the day in many public debates. Several queries have been raised in the public through the concerned personalities, known and anonymous in connection to the usage of the noun Edeke in both worship and prayer books and its implied meaning in the Bible but little or nothing at all has been documented by the Church in response to these concerns.

Next, the Bible in Teso presents the challenge of the scriptural misunderstanding due to the many translation issues contained in the text. Many Bible users have failed to comprehensively understand the scriptures in their original context as interpreted in Ateso language Bible. The typing-errors, translation misinterpretation among other obstructions in the text have all contributed towards the misunderstanding of the Bible among the Iteso Christian community of Uganda. Thus, the edition remains underutilized as it is being left in the hands of the aged group. Many Teso preachers and youth have distanced themselves from Ateso Bible in preference of the alternative English translated editions in the community.

Another scenario is the challenge of the language reflected in the translation. In this aspect, the Ateso Bible has a communication gap emerging from archaic expressions, vocabularies and hard statements used in the current Bible which do not communicate to the contemporary generation. The availability of these outdated words coupled with the language grammar, poses a heavy burden of not understanding the scripture as the word of God meant to be preached and heard by everyone.

In addition to the above is the challenge of the desire for Ateso Bible translation. The argument here is that, the community has a declining interest in reading the Bible, instead the community influx especially the elite cluster now prefers English editions compared to the Bible in the local language. This is a common phenomenon evident among the youth as well in the Teso community. The local language Bible, because of the many barricades within it has been left mostly for the elderly. Surprisingly, even a majority Church ministers in Teso prefer English translations for ministry than the Bible in the native language. This observation confirms the common belief which states that it is greatly believed and observed that many people in the world highly read English Translation Bibles compared to Bibles translated in their native languages.

In summary, there are many other challenging effects bestowed to the community, all having their root interlinked to the 1961 Ateso Bible edition. Among such effects include wrong doctrinal

teaching as resulting from misinterpretations contained in the Bible. This is common with the Church ministers of low theological training with limited knowledge about the biblical source languages (Hebrew and Greek). Because of their inability to visit original languages, they are therefore forced to preach from the Ateso Bible though they cannot thoroughly comprehend it. Next is the effect of confusing narrative texts with poetry due to absence of basic book introductions that assist in providing a preamble guidance of a particular book. Lastly, but not limited among the effects is the bad spirit of disownership of the Bible as some Christians no longer read the Ateso Bible as they attribute this to the condemned tiny Bible font.

#### **4. Proposed recommendation to bridge the created gap**

Considering all the views on this document, it would therefore be sensible for the Church in Teso to consider prioritizing the revision of the 1961 Ateso Bible used in the community. The Church and all the concerned stakeholders should put in place immediate and appropriate measures to locally, nationally and internationally raise resources needful to facilitate the revision project in order to have the long overdue Bible reviewed. Such measures could involve suggestion of both local, national and international fundraising, designating certain percentage of Church collections to the project, proposal writing to appeal for donor funds locally and internationally, engaging the national government especially on matters to do with taxes on Bibles and other necessary support to service the dream. Revising the Ateso Bible is urgently necessary for the good of the community and God's eternal kingdom that every believer yearns for after this earthly pilgrimage.

Embarking on this plan, the Church with all partnering stakeholders will require to develop a translation brief, which would help to guide the final quality standards of the revision project by specifying on the revision approach that would be appropriately applicable to the current generation Bible readers. This would require taking decisions of choice from the numerous translation methods such as Dynamic Equivalent, Formal correspondence approaches as demonstrated by Nida 1964 and many more approaches among others such as Skopos theory, which advances more of the purpose of the translation to determine the final destination of the translation product. While developing such a brief, the Church will need to review the former operational translation brief developed way back while translating the 1961 Ateso Bible to avoid replication of the common errors. A translation brief has several gains in the field of translation, but for this case, it's very significant to observe that, it helps to draw a road map for the translation

or revision project by projecting when it is likely to end. The projection provided substantially guides on how much resources are needed to complete a particular project of translation for purpose of better planning.

By adapting all the above, the Church in Teso in due time should consider developing an Inter-Confessional Version of the Bible that would ecumenically draw together bigger denominations that profess the same faith into an ecumenical participatory act of the Bible translation or revision. However, since the 1961 Ateso Bible was entirely an input and contribution of the Anglican Church in Teso and so qualifies it to be termed an “Anglican Conon,” it would be better in the future to involve other denominations in the participatory work of the translation or revision recommended by taking a team of translators from the bigger denominational pillar Churches such as the Anglican and Roman Catholic Church in Teso to constitute a translation or revision panel, while other denominations would be represented in the reviewers’ committee to ensure team balance. This suggestion would eliminate criticisms for any given translation that eminently arises as a result of lack of denominational representation in the translation or revision process of the Bible.

The Church in Teso should consider adding [a]. Introductions for all books in the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, [b]. Sub-titles, [c]. Bible illustration where necessary, [d]. Concordance to explain some hard biblical statements in the Bible translation, [e]. Adding additional cross references to already existing ones in Ateso Bible of 1961, [f]. Likewise, adding additional footnotes to the ones that already exist in the current Ateso Bible and finally, [g] consider adding table of weights and measures to the new Bible translation that would be revised. All the above quotes have equal footing of significance in the translation or revision. In contrast however, although theologians and specifically Bible Translators argue that, what have been highlighted here as illustrated is not the “Word of God,” and especially the “Chapters and Verses” in the Bible, but to a lay person who reads a Bible by faith, everything included in the Bible translation is wholesomely treated as the “Word of God” and it is sacredly perceived by faith. These additions play a key role in helping Bible readers to comprehend the Bible, besides any Bible edition without help guides is commonly perceived as having errors because the readers compare biblical texts that circulate within the Church market.

Furthermore, the Church must consider Greek and Hebrew text resources of the original languages while attempting to develop any Bible translation or revision of the Bible. As a point of emphasis, Greek and Hebrew texts are trustworthy and reliable resources compared to other translations because they are interpretations of other translations that exhibit recurring errors inferred from one translation to another which is not the case with the original source languages. In addition, the original sources help in ensuring the continuity of the original meaning preserved in its social, cultural and geographical context of the text by maintaining the sense, form, meaning and all other textual qualities. So, making use of the original resources as base texts of the translation or revision greatly assists in eliminating criticisms normally arising from the theological world of understanding such as critics from the biblical scholars and experts in the field of translation.

The Church in Teso should seriously consider the aspect of the orthography by adopting the current new alphabet used by the Ministry of Education for teaching both English and local languages. By so doing, the Church in Teso should replace the letter “D” as reflected in the current 1961 Ateso Bible and in the common Ateso Prayer book with a suitable substitute of “NG” currently used in the teaching of all educational curriculums including the local languages in Teso. This would create the great impact to the Bible readers since it will resolve some challenges of ambiguity in the biblical text.

Regarding disagreements on the name of God, the Church is significantly honored and trusted worldwide as the strong advocate of peace resolution on earth and for centuries the Church has been well-known for this. The Holy Scriptures attest to this in Matthew’s Gospel 5:23-24, “So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.” For this reason, the Church can therefore be trusted in reconciling the translation by cordially sitting on a round table to harmonize the discrepancies that revolve around “Edeke and Lokasuban” commonly read in Ateso scriptures. In so doing, the Church can have the option of considerably adapting one of the Teso community names of God that were discarded by the missionaries during their era in the continent. The deity nouns such as Eloiloi, Eleemu and Elohim (Opak 2019:5-6) were greatly exalted and worshipped in Teso prior to the alteration of all things in Africa by the missionaries.

As a point of concern, when making preparation to do the necessary revision to address the problems and challenging effects highlighted, the Church should considerably increase the print font of the Bible. This would extremely create the greatest impact since it would ease the visualization of the print text by the reader thus simplifying its readability compared to when the text is produced in a tiny font as it is in the 1961 Ateso Bible.

Generally, the Church should remember to consult the original living Ateso dictionaries within the region. By this, the Church should collaborate with the old resourceful native people who very well know their language so as to accurately inform the translation or revision based on their social, economic, political and religious experiences. Based on this, the Ateso language board, the retired clergy and Iteso Cultural Union (ICU) association would be of great significance to improve the quality of the translation or revision once involved in the consultancy aspects of the local understanding in the special areas of interest of the translation or revision. On the other hand, the involvement of the said possible allies in the revision or translation assignment as living dictionary consultants would also guarantee ownership of the project and the Bible when finally published.

The Church together with the cultural leaders should also introduce possible measures to encourage the community not to be biased by their native dialect. The leaders in Teso should work harder to ensure that the local community embraces and passionately love their native language in a way of speaking, writing and reading the written Ateso both in scripture form and resourceful textbooks. By so doing, this would significantly reduce prejudice that some natives have towards reading Ateso Bible translated in the local dialect claiming to be more English oriented in the community.

Lastly but not least, the Church will need to develop a title of identity for the revised or new Bible translation in order to specifically differentiate between the 1961 Ateso Bible from the revised or new translated edition. Having a different title will significantly assist when it comes to the point of publication, distribution and marketing because it will resolve confusion of clients which definitely means the Church community at large.

Finally, the Church and other stakeholders within Teso, nationally and internationally should work on appropriate modalities and measures of reducing the cost of the Bible, to enable the community to own copies of the Bible. Such modalities for example involve negotiating with Government to uplift import duties and taxes levied on Bibles with a target to reduce the cost. This would

favorably encourage the natives acquire Bibles and this would encourage ownership and usage of the Bible in the local dialect. The more the Teso community is encouraged to speak, read and write Ateso, the more the community familiarizes itself with the language but this has to begin with a step-by-step orientation.

## **Conclusion**

The 1961 Ateso Bible was and is still a predominantly Anglican Canon that has stood for long since its inception by the Church during the missionary period. For sixty decades, this text has been read and used by all categories of people from different denominations and it served its purpose well. Nonetheless, in the modern world where technology and research, education and knowledge, exposure and investments have risen and are still climaxing, the Ateso Bible has been proven ineffectively communicating due to its varying levels of impediments evidenced in the text. The gap between the Bible and the readers today is so wide that the two languages of transmission i.e. the language of the Bible in its historical form and the language spoken today are equally parallel thus conditioning the Church and all stakeholders to pull efforts together in providing a solution bridging the situation as early as possible to save the community that still yearns for the word of God for spiritual edification until the return of Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

Something worth emphasizing is that, a revision or a translation of the word of God known as the Bible in any given language of the community is not injustice to God or the Community so long as the intention is not to deduct or add in unworthy thoughts into the biblical package of God's breathed word (Revelation 22:18-21). All Bible translations must and should exhibit the principle values of accuracy, clarity and originality in order for them to have a significant sense of effective communication for the target audiences in their varying social, cultural, religious and the political boundary settings as they read and meditate upon God's word.



## References

- Akello, E. and Omoding, M. (2012) *Asiomata Nepepe P4, Eitabo lo 1, 2 and 3*. Malaysia: Ateso.
- Akonya, J. (2006). *Kojenu Aisiom Ateso, Eitabo Losodit: Vision For Mother Tongue Development*. Uganda Publishers.
- Amateka (1950) *Amateka Arai Akiro Nusodit Nuk'Asioman*. Education department C.O.U. Soroti Diocese.
- Ateso Bible (1961) *Ebaibuli*. Bible Society of Uganda.
- Ateso Language Board Pamphlet (2019) *The Old Orthography of Ateso Language*. Kampala.
- Ateso Language Board Pamphlet (2019) *The Revised Orthography of Ateso Language*. Kampala.
- Baur, J. (ed.) (2009). *2000 Years of African Christianity: An African Church History*. Pauline Publication Africa.
- Bible Society of Uganda (2018) *A Brief on Bible Translation Work in Uganda*. Kampala.
- Fountain Thematic Reading Scheme (2016) *Esemero kec Aguti ka Ekale kec Opus: Ateso Primary Two Book 1*. Fountain Publishers: Kampala.
- Hebrew-English Bible (2014) *The Holy Bible in Hebrew and English*. The Bible Society in Israel.
- Katekisumu (1950) *Katekisumu Nugeet Naka Lukibatisa Ka Aidokokinio Akanin*. Education Department C.O.U Soroti Diocese.
- Lawrence, J.C.D. (1957). *The Iteso: Fifty years of Change in a Nilo-Hamitic Tribe of Uganda*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Lemukol, A. (2017) Iteso Cultural Union. *Iteso Clans Directory-Atekerin nuka Iteso*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition. Kampala.
- Loba-Mkole, J. and Wendland, E. R. (eds.) (2005). *Interacting with Scriptures in Africa*. Nairobi: Action Publishers.
- Mervin, B. (1993:15) *The New American Commentary. An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture Ezra, Nehemiah Esther Vol. 10*. B & H Publishing group Nashville, Tennessee.
- Mojola, A. O. (1999). *God Speaks in Our Own Languages*. Bible Societies of Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.
- Newman, B. M. (1993) *The UBS Greek New Testament*. In Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger (eds.) (2001).

*Running Greek-English Dictionary: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. Stuttgart:Germany.*  
Opak (2019) *The God of Iteso before the Christian God.* Kampala Uganda.  
Uganda Population and Housing Census. (2014). *Analytical Report, Uganda Bureau of Statistics.*