

**SOCIO-RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM
CHURCH OF TONGAREN, KENYA (2011-2023)**

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DECLARATION

Declaration by Candidate

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my loving parents: My dad John Wanaswa and Mum Lydia Museve for their financial, spiritual, and emotional support during the time of writing this work.

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ABSTRACT

New Religious Movements (NRMs) have been confronted with rapid social and cultural transformations which lead to rise of conflicts and struggles over collective identities. This case applies to The New Jerusalem Church (TNJC) found in Tongaren, Kenya founded by Eliud Wekesa who is identified by his followers as "Jesus" of Tongaren. The purpose of this study was to investigate the socio- religious transformations within NRMs using a case of TNJC in Kenya in the 21st century. Currently, there are different confusing explanations on the founder, origin, history and doctrines of TNJC that has led to continuous suspicion and accusations on its followers by the society. The general objective of this study was to investigate the socio-religious transformations of the New Jerusalem Church. Specifically, it sought to ascertain the following objectives: to explore the history of TNJC in Tongaren; to find out the beliefs and practices of TNJC of Tongaren and to determine the socio-religious transformations of TNJC. The study took place in Tongaren Sub County, Kenya. It was guided by the Social Movement Theory coined by Charles Tilly and Sidney Tarrow (2004) to analyze the group's emergence and socio-transformation between 2011 and 2023 in Tongaren sub-County Bungoma, Kenya. This was a qualitative study that adopted the exploratory research design that was cross-sectional in nature. The target population was TNJC members and non- TNJC members of Tongaren, Bungoma County. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilized to obtain information. Primary data was gathered from 22 key informants who were purposefully sampled for interviews and focus group discussions while secondary data was gathered from secondary literature in libraries. Collected data was analyzed through content and thematic analysis. This study found out that the emergence of TNJC movement was as a result of the call of the founder (Eliud Wekesa), religious and cultural factors. The religious factors included the need by members of TNJC for a satisfying religion while the cultural factors included the forces of globalization such as freedom of religion. The study also established that this movement had undertaken Socio-religious transformations through time in terms of dressing, marriage and family life, education, health, dietary prescriptions, economically and politically. These socio-religious transformations have impacted TNJC way of life and the larger society. The study concludes that, other than having a deep history TNJC has a variety of religious beliefs and practices. The movement has transformed its members' way of life. To avoid suspicion and accusations from the society, this study recommends that there should be registration of NRMs by the government where their objectives must be clearly scrutinized, the society should be aided in understanding NRMs and their practices. It also recommends that NRMs among them TJNC should be given an opportunity to promote socio-religious transformations. The study will benefit the society by providing an impetus for people to understand NRMs. It will help them understand the TNJC's founder, practices, beliefs, and its socio-religious transformation processes.

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OPERATIONAL TERMS

- Angels-** “Spiritual” human beings within TNJC who act as the messengers or guardians of human beings. Their main purpose according to members of TNJC is to serve *Yesu wa Tongareni*
- Bible-** A religious text considered to be sacred by members of TNJC. These texts include instructions, stories, prophecies and revelation from God accepted by TNJC Christians. According to TNJC members, the bible has three major divisions: The Old Testament, the New Testament and the *Agano Jipya safi* testament. Just like the New Testament and The old Testament were written by biblical authors, the *Agano Jipya Safi* Testament is being written by human angels who are TNJC members.
- Charisma -** Is a spiritual gift granted by God to the recipient. Charismatic gifts include prophecy, healing and speaking in tongues, among others.
- Disciple-** Is a dedicated follower of *Yesu wa Tongaren* and other aspects required by the leader.
- Jesus of Tongaren-** Is the self-proclaimed Jesus of Bungoma in Tongaren. He is also called *Yesu wa Tongaren*. He is the religious leader of TNJC found in Tongaren Bungoma County in Western Kenya. Members of TNJC consider him as the incarnation of Jesus of Nazareth.

- Mwalimu-** Means teacher, founder and leader of TNJC.
- Registered Members-** Refers to TNJC members who have registered in this Church
- The Church-** Is both a spiritual and visible communion of believers who share common beliefs and practices and strive to continue the mission of Jesus Christ on earth. It is a collective body of Christians adhering to one particular opinion or form of worship and interested in both the spiritual and physical needs of humanity.
- Unregistered Members-** Membership from other Christian denominations, religions and creeds who worship alongside the registered members.
- Worship-** The response of a religious person to the Holy.
- Socio-Religious Transformations-** The re-structuring of social aspects of life through religious influence
- New Religious Movements-** These are upcoming spiritual movements.

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMS

AIC's	- African Indigenous/ Independent / Initiated/ Instituted Churches
AICN	- African Israel Church Nineveh
ATR	- African Traditional Religions
CMS	- Church Missionary Church
CMS	- Church Missionary Society
COG	-Church of God
DYM	- Dini Ya Musambwa
FAM	- Friends American Mission
FGD	- Focus Group Discussion
GNIM	- Good News International Ministries
IBEACo	- Imperial British East African Company
LM	- Legio Maria
NCKK	- National Council of the Churches of Kenya
NLM	- Nomiya Luo Church
NLM	- New Life Ministries
O.I	- Oral Interviews
PAG	- Pentecostal Assemblies of God
PAOC	- Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada
TNJC	- The New Jerusalem Church

CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

This thesis is an exploratory research that was conducted on the founder, clerical leaders and members of The New Jerusalem Church. It highlights the history of the New Jerusalem Church in Tongaren, Bungoma County, their beliefs and practices and their transformation practices within the period of its formation from 2011-2023.

This chapter presents the foundation of the study that includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study, research questions, and the purpose of the study, scope and limitations of the study, theoretical framework, literature review and lastly the research methodology.

1.1 Background of the Study

New Religious Movements (NRMs) are a major forms of Christianity in Africa today. Kenya has a population of 47, 664,296 (State of Kenya Population report, 2021) with a composition of 14.7% protestants, 23.4% Catholics, 11.9% Hindus, 11.2% Muslims, 1.6%, Atheists and 1.7 % African Traditional Religionists (ATR). However, the total population identifying itself with New Religious Movements has not come out openly as they are syncretic between African religion, Christianity or Islam. Most of these New Religious movements occupy a peripheral position in the Kenyan society and their religious functions are not well known as some focusing on social challenges while others are political (Siavoshi, 2017)

Christianity was introduced in Kenya in 1844 by Johann Ludwig Krapf of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Krapf established a CMS station at Rabai, Mombasa (Owino *et al*, 2017). Due to language barrier and influence from Islamic communities,

Johann decided to move along with fellow missionary Johann Rebman into the interior parts of Kamba land and Taita. It was until the 1870s after conversion of freed slaves at Frere town near Mombasa that Christianity started spreading in the coastal parts of Kenya.

Thereafter, in 1883, the CMS found its way into interior parts of Kenya leading to establishment of missions in Voi, Nairobi, Kikuyu and Ukambani. This was possible after the establishment of the British East Africa Protectorate and the building of the Uganda Railway which aided transport of the missionaries (Owino *et al*, 2017). Later, in 1901, the American Friends Mission organized the Friends Africa Industrial Mission in Western Kenya led by W. R. Hotchkiss who established a Centre at Kaimosi (Owino *et al*, 2017). In 1905, another US-based missionary joined through the Church of God under the leadership of Yohanna Mbila, a South African who was later recognized as an outstanding evangelist in Kima, Bunyore-Western Kenya. Later in 1906, the German Seventh Day Adventist (SDA) commenced their missionary work in Kisii and Luo Nyanza. Afterwards, the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada began their mission in Western Kenya in 1921 where they set up a mission center at a place known as Nyang'ori.

These missionaries paved way for later success of the Church in Kenya. However, initially their approaches were largely negative towards African religion. They condemned African rituals and practices and painting them as; dark, bad and of no-value. As a result, they denied Africans leadership positions (Ositelu, 2002:31). Consequently, they outlawed some African cultural practices such as polygamy and initiation practice which created dissatisfaction among some Africans. As a result, some African Christian converts formed their own African Independent Churches (A.I.C's) where they incorporated African practices which had not been tolerated by

the missionary churches (Adogame, 2005). Examples of such movements were; Dini Ya Musambwa under the leadership of Elijah Masinde in 1930 (Mwangi, 2016) and the Church of the Lord (Aladura) in Ghana (Akindolie, 2020). These movements were aimed at restoring the traditional Luyha and Ghana religions respectively.

After 1970s, more New Religious Movements (NRMs) sprung among the Luhya and the Luo people of Western Kenya due to the post-colonial political, cultural and social crisis as well as the issue of struggle for enculturation of their African cultures (Nandi & Kima, 2015). In addition, their African desire for healing and helping fellow Africans to face real life challenges became their motivation (Adogame, 2005). Such movements include, the Nomiya Luo Mission founded by Yohana Owalo in 1914 which broke away from the Roman Catholic Church, the Roho Movement which was founded by Alfayo Odongo which split from Friends Mission in 1912, Dini ya Roho which was founded by Jacob Buluku and Daniel Sande which also broke from Friends Mission in 1927 (Akunda,2010). Other movements include Legio Maria Movement by Luo Prophetess Aoko a splinter group of the Roman Catholic Church in 1963, the Africa Israel Church Nineveh which started under the foundation of Paul David Zakayo Kivuli and split from the Pentecostal Mission in 1942 (Nandi *et al*, 2015).

Kenya currently has a large number of organized prophetic new religious movements led by self-declared prophets that promise spiritual salvation to their adherents. Such movements include New Life International Ministries founded by Pastor Ezekiel Odero in 2010, Good News International Ministries (GNIM) founded by Paul Nthenge Mackenzie and his first wife in 2003. These movements have been known for attracting enormous crowds than usual in their churches and to public meetings. Pastor Odero's New Life Church came to be known publicly after he pulled a huge crowd that was rumored to be over 50,000 at the Kasarani Stadium, Nairobi (Mutuku, 2023). This was

one of the largest crowds ever pulled in Kenya by a religious leader. Not even a politician had raised such a huge crowd. The GNIM of Pastor Mackenzie came into the limelight in the April 2023 when they were associated to being cults due to indoctrinations in their teachings. Paul Mackenzie, leader of the Good News International Church, was accused of ordering his followers to starve their children and themselves to death. It was revealed that Mackenzie had allegedly instructed members of this particular church to starve themselves in order to "meet Jesus," resulting in the deaths of more than 200 people. Western Kenya is also not exceptional as such movements have been seemed to emerge. Some of these movements include; Lost Israelites Ministries of Jehovah Wanyonyi, the Jerusalem Church of Christ of Prophetess Mary Snaida Akatsa, and Muungano Church of Holy Spirit for all Nations of Nabii Yohana (Ronald Nakalila). Remarkably, these movements exhibit a combination of aspects of African traditional religions and Christianity.

Notably, these new movements were formed in order to offer responses to the historically unprecedented levels of change in every aspect of their lives. Such areas of life included cultural, economic, social, political and religious that followed the imposition of colonial rule that began in the second half of the 19th century. Seemingly, these movements are highly pluralistic and syncretic in nature since they freely combine some doctrines and practices from diverse sources within their belief systems. Some are usually founded by a highly charismatic and authoritarian leaders believed to wield extraordinary powers or insights (Adedibu, 2022). There are a number of explanations regarding TNJC especially on its history on the personality of the founder, its doctrines, observances and practices. The foregoing has resulted into several questions than answers arising from the general society. In order to understand TNJC, this study specifically, sought to answer the following questions; what is the history of the

formation of the New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren, Bungoma County? What are the distinctive beliefs and practices of The New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren Bungoma County? What are the socio-religious transformations of TNJC between 2011-2023?

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Kenya is a home to many religions. Apart from the mainline churches, the country has many NRMs. Some of these NRMs were founded to oppose colonization and to challenge some doctrines introduced by the early missionaries. However, after the end of the era of colonization, more new religious movements have kept springing up with unclear motives. Some of them such as the Good News International Church of Paul Mackenzie have proven to be dangerous to the society through indoctrination leading to massive loss of lives. Just like other parts of Kenya, we have NRMs springing up in Bungoma County such as the Lost Israelites Church of Jehova Wanyonyi and TJNC of Yesu wa Tongaren. There is scanty information on reasons for the emergence of these NRMs and the role they are playing to promote socio-religious transformations of their members. There is need to answer the question on, what are motivations for the formation of NRMs in Kenya in the 21st century? We take a case of the New Jerusalem Church (TJNC) which emerged in 2011 with an overall objective of investigating the socio-religious transformations of NRMs in Kenya in the 21st Century. Specifically, this study sought to fill gaps of knowledge on the history of the formation of TNJC of Tongaren, the distinctive beliefs and practices of TNJC of Tongaren and the socio-religious transformation of TNJC between 2011 and 2023.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The overall objective of this study was to find out the socio-religious transformation of The New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren, Bungoma County between 2011 and 2023.

Specifically, the study aimed at achieving the following objectives;

- i. To explore the history of the New Jerusalem Church in Tongaren, Bungoma County
- ii. To find out the religious beliefs and practices of the New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren.
- iii. To interrogate the socio-religious transformation of TNJC between 2011 and 2023.

1.4 Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions;

- i. What is the history behind the formation of the New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren, Bungoma County?
- ii. What are the distinctive beliefs and practices of The New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren Bungoma County?
- iii. What are the socio-religious transformation of TNJC between 2011-2023

1.5 Justification of the Study

Despite the fact that the TNJC of Tongaren was founded in 2011 upon the founder's divine heavenly summons in Bungoma County, Kenya, very little is known about this NRM. The movement's worship style, beliefs, and practices are highlighted more in the scanty resources that are currently available. This study is timely because no serious scholarly account has been given to it so far. In the recent times, TNJC has attracted a great deal of attention from journalists who have provided interesting exaggerating stories about its various spectacular activities to woo readers. However, these write ups have only been partly helpful to those wishing to understand it shallowly. Due to the shallow information about this church, a more in-depth study was needed.

It is vital to research the Luhya's unique syncretic integration of indigenous religion and Christian beliefs since doing so might help other churches in their efforts to indigenize Christianity.

This study makes contribution to policy matters on legal reforms regarding the registration of churches to prevent future emergence of harmful\ill- intended NRMs such like the GNIM that is linked to the Shakahola Massacre.

This study aided in understanding other religions and their practices\ belief systems because they inform their Identity, give them a sense of belonging and history. This might in turn help to prevent religious intolerance.

Through the TNJC movement in Tongaren, this study echoes to the contribution of NRMs into socio-religious transformations of the society. Undergoing modifications by NRMs as a response to the demands of the times may enable other NRMs to stay relevant in a shifting world.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

Western Kenya's Bungoma County, namely Tongaren Sub-County, was the sole focus of the study. Eliud Wekesa, also known as "Yesu wa Tongaren," resides in Tongaren and is considered as the founder of The New Jerusalem Church in Tongaren. It explored the history and transformation of the New Jerusalem Church since the period of its formation to date. Further, the study confined itself to members of the church as respondents for focused discussion groups and the oral interviews. Bungoma County was the best choice of the area study because most of the worshippers resided there and that is where it was founded. The study was limited to the period between 2011 and 2023.

1.7 Literature Review

1.7.1 Introduction

This chapter reviewed related literature to the objectives of the study. The review explored the phenomenon of religious independence in Africa, Kenya and later in Bungoma County, the emergence of some religious movements, their observances and practices, their transformations since their formation to date and their impacts to the societies.

1.7.2 Historical reasons for the rise of NRMs

Most scholars maintain that the main causes of the rapid emergence of independent religious movements is due to socio-economic and political factors occasioned by social injustices and disruption of African social life by colonialists and missionaries. It seems most NRMs in Africa emerged to challenge the Eurocentric disposition of the mainline churches (Shangarai, 2015). As a result, NRMs are perceived as African expressions of Christianity. Consequently, this has caused an alarming rate of the exodus of members from mainline churches to NRMs (Masondo, 2005). All NRMs were founded by African nationalists to protest against colonial rule and to pursue the policy of African self-expression and freedom from missionary control. It was the desire of African Christians to have the freedom to exercise their charismatic gifts which the mainline churches did not permit (Nthamburi, 2000).

In Africa, the development of NRMs, started during the colonial period with the desire to attainment of independence. In Africa, NRMs began in 1862 (Masondo, 2014). Further, Masondo estimates that there are more than 7000 indigenous churches in Africa with a total membership of about 35 million Christians. He connotes that we have 180 independent churches in Kenya where majority of them are located in Western Kenya among the Luo and Luhya communities. He notes that, majority of these

movements were founded by lay people who were concerned about the authenticity of the Church and indigenizing Christianity by incorporating African Traditional beliefs and practices. Notably, these movements are flourishing faster than the mission founded churches a factor associated to their deemed relevancy to their adherents.

Factors responsible for the emergence of AICs can be classified into non-religious, religious and theological. According to Joseph Koech (2008: 68), the non-religious factors include historical aspects, political issues and social injustice. Koech contends that:

New Religious Movements result from the need to have some kind of political outlet in the communities concerned, while religious factors include the needs of Africans for a satisfying religion. Theological factors arise because of disagreement over doctrines (Koech, 2008).

Koech's work was significant as it provided the opportunity to understand the developments of African Indigenous Churches (AICs) up until the present. His study showed that there are various reasons behind the emergence of AICs. Up until recently, AICs have been studied as a synthesis of African traditional religions and Christianity.

Schrippa (2019) noted that political circumstances in South Africa gave rise to New Religious movements. The aforementioned was the outcome of societal inequities and a harsh apartheid policy, in which white people exploited Africans and disadvantaged them based on their race. While researching Messianism in Zaire, Were (2014) came to the conclusion that the struggle against colonialism was the root cause of religious independence. The findings from both investigations were helpful in determining the causes behind the founding and expansion of The New Jerusalem Church. It also sheds light on the syncretic blending of Western Christianity and traditional Luhya beliefs.

According to a study by Ogbonna *et al.* (2021) on the Tradition and Continuity in African Independent Religions, the destruction of traditional values and the desire of

oppressed people for freedom from captivity and servitude to foreign powers are the main reasons for the rise of independent churches. Adogame (2014) and Webster (2006), who believe independence as a revolt against imperialism, both accept the aforementioned viewpoint. The prior research was very instructive and helped this investigation identify the variables that led to the formation of TNJC in Luhya territory.

In contrast to the aforementioned viewpoint, Johnson (2011) contends in his study on the *Aladura movement in West Africa* that the formation of African independent churches was primarily inspired by creative religious movements that offered safety and spiritual guidance in the context of newly formed groups rather than the social, economic, and political issues that Africans faced during the colonial period. Johnson also praises the crucial role that inspirational African leaders have had in the expansion of independent religious movements. Johnson also looked at the psychological, political, and economic factors that contributed to the creation of indigenous movements. Johnson's research was helpful in studying the causes of the establishment of the TNJC, whose leader claims to have been called by God. Onah & Agbo (2021) on their study on the growth of churches in Nigeria argued that the high proliferation of NRMs in Nigeria was due to Gods divine calling. This is in tandem with many founders of NRMs who claim that God called them into the ministry or that they had a revelation to spread the gospel. Seemingly, the divine call to spread the gospel made people to resign from jobs or businesses to start the ministries. On establishing ministries, many of them established churches in response to the call. Notably, not all resign; some combine their new ministry alongside their jobs or businesses. The foregoing is aligned with the call of John Eze the founder of Christ Family Ministry who claimed that God called him in 1987 when he lived at Kano State, Nigeria to go to his town Umuegwu, Neke in Isi-Uzo Local Government Area, Enugu State to start a Christian based

ministry. Interestingly, many of the founders of the NRMs have the potential of displaying the power of spiritual gifts to authenticate their call. They claim to have acquired their gifts from God. This study done by Onah and Agbo provided useful insights in understanding the causative factors for the emergence of TNJC.

In his article, *Christianity in Africa: From African independent to Pentecostal-charismatic churches*, Meyer (2004) noted that because of socio-historical and religious circumstances, some African cultures are more prone to Christian independence. Meyer believes that the Kenyan Luo are extraordinarily high on this scale in the context of his thesis, and that this is why various distinct religious sects have emerged among them. Meyer continues by saying that independence shows a revolt against a Christianity that had "over-Europeanized." In order to satisfy their desires, Africans yearned to express their religion in a way that satisfied them. This study showed the emergence of African religious movements like the TNJC, which placed a strong focus on African culture in their religious awareness.

Simon Kimbangu, the founder of an independent African Church of Jesus Christ on Earth, used Christian symbols and more crucially saw himself as the figure of Christ, according to Hill's (2000) study on the BaKongo Cosmology in Simon Kimbangu and Simon Mpadi's Christian rite. Unexpectedly, Kimbangu is against polygamy, sexual dancing, and the employment of traditional religious symbols. His ideas propagated among the Ba-kongo from Zaire to Angola and surrounding regions. According to Hill, the colonial uprooting offered the chance for the movement to center around Kimbangu, a prophetic figurehead. This research benefited from the important insights provided by this study, particularly in relation to the symbolic use of regalia by TNJC members.

According to Pfeiffer's argument from 2007, independent religious movements are an essential and legitimate component of the worldwide church as evidenced by their approach to spreading the gospel, their worldview, and their method of mission. He went on to say that these groups, like the traditional mission churches, have their shortcomings but continually work to establish Christ as Lord. Meyer's (2004) claim that the collision of three interfering cultures—traditional, colonial, and missionary—is the root cause of the entire movement of religious independence supports Pfeiffer's theory regarding its causes. These studies offered valuable insight into the transformation process the TNJC movement undertook in search of locating its role and mission within the greater Christian fellowship. Pfeiffer's contention that independent churches developed as a result of patriotic endeavors and political goals is opposed by Phiri (2016). He claims that the foundation of independent churches is cultural struggle and claims that independency is strongest where there has been strong cultural conflict and that it is absent when a group has been shielded from the shock of cultural conflict.

Adogame (2005) investigated the development of the church over the course of the last five centuries, beginning with the birth of the Ethiopian Orthodox church in the 15th century and continuing through the early Portuguese missionaries and the church's crucial role in modern-day Africa. Additionally, he examined all facets of Christianity in Africa, including its ties to traditional beliefs, practices, and politics, and formed connections between Protestantism, Roman Catholicism, Ethiopian Orthodoxy, and the many autonomous religious movements in Africa. Adogame noted that independence is a rebellion against imperialism regardless of the fundamental social, political, or religious reasons. He links the rise of the TNJC, also known as "Watu wa Yesu wa Tongareni," to elements that also influenced the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. His work

was essential to this study's success, particularly in identifying the variables that affected the TNJC's emergence.

A number of academics have written books about African religious life, customs, and the social history of certain communities. Mbiti (2015) shared a common understanding of the widespread religiosity of traditional African civilization and claimed that Africans are well known for their religiosity. He believes that religion enters every aspect of life so thoroughly that it is impossible or difficult to isolate it. He goes on to say that religion is the most important component of traditional culture and likely has the biggest impact on how people think and behave. According to Asante & Manama (2009), all people are naturally religious since God made them that way. Mbiti agrees that man is incurably religious. Cipriani (2015) connects the conditions that may lead to the creation of religious movements in society to the decreasing integrative role of religion in his book *Sociology of religion*.

Numerous academics have conducted research on religious independence in Kenya. According to Clarke (2004), African leaders who were protesting against generalized white domination rather than mission churches are to blame for the creation of separate religious movements. He contends that several components of African socio-religious and cultural life that are fundamental to the African family, religion, and many other aspects of the African way of life have been destroyed in some way by western Christian doctrines. He also thinks that the development of stratification, with Europeans at the top and Africans at the bottom, led to frustrations that eventually led to independence. His academic work was important to the research since it shed light on the processes that led to the TNJC Movement's formation.

Wepukhulu *et al* (2017) studied the Dini ya Musambwa and Mumbo's cult's political, psychological, and sociological roots. Their study into the two protest movements in Kenya is seen in the context of a political-religious rural uprising that started in the late 1930s in the northern regions of Kenya's Western province. Although some of these movements emerged independently of any direct relationship with a particular church, their contention was that these movements started by seceding from Christian missions. Since the studied religions were founded in western Kenya where the TNJC was founded, it was crucial to find out whether the TNJC was founded as a result of the identified causes.

In her study entitled *The Boundary-Crossing Influence of African Initiated Churches (Aics) on Youth in Emuhaya District, Western Kenya*, Susan Kilonzo, (2010) claims that African traditional culture and traditions, as well as ethnicity, are the only factors contributing to the growth of the Church of Christ in Africa Johera and the African Israel Church Nineveh. According to Mbula, these movements served as institutions that fully met the requirements of the African people. The study's foundation was laid by the aforementioned, which shed light on traditional African values and traditions. This study showed that the TNJC movement was born out of a revolt against European missionary imperialism that aimed to impose western forms of worship on Africans.

Gimode (2015) investigated the religious experiences, dynamism, and responses to the physical and social settings of the Abalogoli, a section of the Luhya in western Kenya. He noted that the entrance of Islam and Christianity was a significant turning point in the development of Logoli religion. He believed that rather than replacing the native religion, the introduction of the two enhanced the Logoli spirituality.

Numerous academics have examined the historical background and elements that contributed to the development of the Nomiya Luo Church (NLC). Adongo (2015) examines secondary and primary sources to recreate the history, dynamics, and practices of the NLC. She goes into further detail on gender roles and how the church views women. She notes that the development of social relationships is influenced by gender and the independent Christian theology. Along with being members and leaders, women in the NLC also influence this church's religious beliefs. Additionally, according to Adingo (2020), the NLC, which first appeared in 1907, was a church uprising that led to dramatic breakaways and the establishment of autonomous churches that proclaimed the gospel with overtly political connotations. John Owalo, the founder, was the first Christian rebel to join the new Christian faith, but on his own terms and without accepting the white man's way of life, according to Otieno (2018) in his study on the emergence and foundation of the NLC. With regard to this study's analysis of the elements that contributed to the birth of the TNJC movement, this work was incredibly instructive.

Hinga (2017) contends in her study of the Legio Maria church, which examines the theological significance of religious independence in Africa, that independent churches are not merely outliers of orthodox Christianity and that Legio Maria was fundamentally preoccupied with theological issues, particularly the quest for salvation as liberation from oppression in its many manifestations. This was also helpful in the study's analysis of the connections between the mission churches and the TNJC movement.

It is clear from the material examined above that researchers have differing opinions about what led to the emergence of independent churches. Therefore, it makes sense to suggest that a number of variables, rather than just one, may have contributed to their

origin. The economic, sociocultural, and religious conflict sparked by the missionary church doctrines in Luhya territory in the late 2000s is what gave rise to the TNJC movement. In order to understand the transformational changes in the political, economic, and social life of the TNJC community in Tongaren and their effects on society, this study looked at these developments.

1.7.3 Beliefs and practices of New Religious Movements

NRMs emphasis on prayer. According to these movements, prayer does not only form the bedrock for their practice and doctrine but they also believe that prayer is the fountainhead of all their blessings and successes (Onadipe, 2005). Due to the emphasis on prayer, the Yoruba of Nigeria refer to these churches as Aladura (praying people). This means that NRMs have no other business other than praying. To the Yoruba, spiritual leaders are referred to as ‘Baba Aladura’ while the term ‘Iya Aladura’ is used for women to show their insistence on prayer several times a day. Majority of these movements have their prayer groups known as “prayer warriors” (Clarke, 2004).

Onadipe, (2005) in his book, *Contextualization: A key to Effective Preaching among the Yoruba of Nigeria* notes, that NRMs prefer to be identified by the term ‘spiritual churches’ to imply that the church is directed to them by the Holy Spirit. Most of the founders and leaders are men and women in search of spiritual contemplation and all claim for spiritual motivation for the founding of their organizations. Onadipe connotes;

The Holy Spirit is believed to feature prominently in their worship as He manifests through visions, interpretation of dreams, ecstatic behavior and prophetic utterances. It is for this reason that some of these church members are enjoined to wear white gowns. They claim ‘the Spirit likes white apparel which is the sign of the spirit-purity or holiness.

It is clear that the Holy Spirit is emphasized in NRMs. This is evident on how these movements emphasize the manifestation of the Spirit in the church. It is through the

manifestation of the Holy Spirit that members of NRMs are able to deal with the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs hence, offering a solution to all of life's problems and a way to cope in a threatening world. They proclaim that God saves the soul, heals the body, and provides answers to the fears and insecurities inherent to Christians. It is the same Spirit that is concerned with the spiritual oppression, and liberation of Christians from afflictions. It is in this message that makes the Holy Spirit significant in NRMs for He manifests his presence and power personally in these churches, making a dynamic relationship between God and his people possible.

According to Van den Toren, D. B. (2013) in his article, *Teaching ethics in the face of Africa's moral crisis: Reflections from a guest* sickness is one of the common reasons for attending NRMs. For Ayegboyin and Ishola, testimonies of healing, soundness and miracles are common from many followers concerning their answered prayers in NRMs. In most cases several converts claim that they first went to hospital or consulted traditional healers in vain on restoration of their health. Notably, these movements have special days set aside for healing purposes (Van den Toren, 2013). Ayegboyin and Ishola's work was very important to this study especially when identifying the major beliefs of TNJC. Consequently, this study explored on the practices of NRMs with special reference to TNJC leadership roles. According to members of this movement leadership in this church focuses on their charismatic and inspired African leaders. The study further unveiled TNJC's strict dietary rules that burred consumption of Pork, alcohol, smoking or drugs abuse. Further, the religion TNJC prohibits fornication, adultery, divorce and abortion.

1.7.4 Socio-Religious Transformations of NRMs

The period from the nineteenth century to the present has been characterized by the establishment and growth of the NRMs strand of development of Christianity. This

phenomenon has given birth to indigenous Churches and prayer groups in Africa (Ayegeboyin & Ishola, 2011). These groups have not only taken root but they have proliferated and shown phenomenal growth especially in Africa. It has become well known that several trends have emerged within NRMS since the period of their formation. Among the transformations has been the theological dimension to the struggle for the socio-religious and political transformation of the conditions of inequality and oppression from within the missionary founded churches and colonialists. It is for this case that resulted to the Black Theology, a theology of liberation in the African setting, in response to particular circumstances that led to formation of African Initiated Churches in South Africa (Kgatle, 2023). Another major transformation within these movements has been the theological exploration into the indigenous cultures of African peoples, with particular stress on their African Christian religious traditions. In this trend, the broad aim within NRMs has been to achieve some integration between the Christian religious experience and African traditional religion in ways that would ensure the integrity of African Christian identity and selfhood.

The study also sought to examine the impact of TNJC as a NRM to the society. This is a movement that emerged during a time when Christians were craving for religious liberation. Despite the fact that there is a surprisingly large number of NRMs, they also play major roles of impacting the members and by large communities in societies in where they emerge. However, the issue of impacting members varies all the way from individual to individual and from movement to movement. The impact also varies depending on the positions the members occupy in the movement whether the members are new converts or seasoned members. Members of any particular society after joining these NRMs, find spiritual fulfillment otherwise their previous religious institutions could not offer. Some find direction, meaning, hope for salvation, sense of belonging

and to develop their spirituality and all other manner of spirituality that they felt they were denied in the 'outside world'.

At the individual level, NRMs also provides multiple mechanisms of dealing with the challenges people experience in their daily lives. They are perceived as sources of motivation, positive and life-affirming ethics and they provide spiritual endurance (Cilliers & Nell, 2011) in situations of severe adversities. The fact that they cater to the spiritual cosmology of large parts of the population makes their support to the individual both highly relevant and effective. Other than fostering passiveness and escapism from the profane world, their spiritual activities and notions of salvation are directed towards the 'here and now' (Robert, 2009). Through their activities, their members are able to gain freedom from the adverse circumstances in which they find themselves in. Such circumstances include material, social and spiritual aspects. Through comprehensive healing, the NRMs enable their members to acquire agency over their own lives. They are mediators of transformation, both with respect to members' lives and regarding the mediation of the rapid and fundamental social change experienced by many people in developing countries (Cilliers and Wepener, 2007).

One of the major activities of NRMs is healing. This is evident through their way of showing support and encouraging their members to overcome different conditions in their daily lives at different times. In NRMs, spiritual forces, which can be dismissed to being superstitious from a western perspective, are part of the daily reality for many people (Phiri, 2016; Pretorius, 2007). It is thus important to take this perception of the world seriously and take it into account in the case of cooperation with NRMs (Grab *et al*, 2020).

Bompani, (2010) points out:

They take the negative forces within African cosmology seriously by responding to real problems as perceived [...], namely witchcraft, sorcery, and evil spirits, understanding that it is acceptable to interpret socio-economic hardships and deprivation in contemporary society within the context of adverse cosmic forces. The idea that NRMs are considered experts in granting people protection and fortification against the powers of evil accounts to a large degree for their popularity and growth (p. 309).

Generally, there is consensus in the literature that the need for healing is the main reason to join an NRMS (Bompani, 2010; Urban, 2015; Pretorius, 2007; Schlemmer, 2008; Frost, 2016; Robbins, 2007). The emphasis on spiritual healing can be problematic at some point if it is favored as the only remedy for physical health problems it would be rash to depict NRMs as being skeptical towards modern medicine in general (Mohr *et al.*, 2007; Pretorius, 2007).

Apart from providing concrete means to deal with the challenges, NRMs are also directed towards enabling their members to lead a good life (Mohr *et al.*, 2007). They are considered as a strong source of agency over their own personal situations. They not only do take care of the needs of their own members (Masondo, 2014; Pretorius 2007). Masondo, (2014) points to the St John's Apostolic Faith Mission that offers these services irrespectively to somebody's church affiliation. In addition, services such as healing and other activities are often offered to non-members during times of predicaments in other NRMs. Because NRMs' support to the individual is holistic, including elements of the African spiritual world view, it is particularly relevant and effective (Bompani, 2010).

The NRMs also play a major role in the transformation of members' lives. The transformative potential of the NRMs is highly emphasized in different sources. In South Africa for instance, during Apartheid, the Black people experienced

marginalization and discrimination due to persistent economic and social structures. It is through the NRMs that members affirm their own positive identity (Masondo, 2014). They give a chance to black people who were being discriminated against by the ruling white minority; they felt respected by their fellow African church members and could occupy respected positions in their churches (Bompani 2010; Masondo 2014). Identity and social status continues to be the most important features in South Africa 20 years after the Apartheid rule. The literature provides many examples of the transformation of lives through church membership (Barnard, Nell & Maya, 2014; Mafuta, 2010; Masondo, 2014; Meyer, 2004; Schlemmer, 2008). Notions of salvation are related to people's present lives. To members of these particular congregations, God is considered to have the power and authority to provide deliverance from the adversities people face. God is also believed to care and protect them from negative spiritual forces (Barnard *et al.*, 2014). NRMs thus offer protection and support in various situations where they contribute to the stabilization of their members' lives, equip them with resilience (Meyer 2004) and this, in turn, enables them to lead their lives out of their own power. In many cases, this protection is conducive for material success, especially in the more Pentecostal/Charismatic Churches where the gospel of prosperity is preached and a high degree of self-reliance and entrepreneurship are advocated and practiced (Schlemmer, 2008). Many church members who join NRMs claim that their personal relations had improved since they joined them, not least because their own behavior had changed. They were more balanced, more patient and more tolerant than before as further reported by Schlemmer, (2008). Moreover, Bompani (2010) points out those NRMs put a strong emphasis on good citizenship.

Through the high degree of group coherence and trust, NRMs are conducive to collective action in the interest of their members as well as the community (Bompani,

2010). This especially concerns local service delivery issues like housing, education, water and health services as well as issues such as crime and HIV, which directly affect the lives of their members. Because of their fragmentations, NRMs do not speak with a unified voice. Nevertheless, Pretorius (2007) points out that especially in cases of joint political interest, cooperation between NRMs do take place. As a form of politics 'from below' (Bompani, 2010), NRMs are platforms for their members to criticize state corruption and discrimination as well as to claim their rights.

While the NRMs impact member individual lives, they also play significant roles to the societies in which they emerge. At the social level, Muturi (2014) observes that NRMs constitute important resources of social capital whose main objective was to provide networks of mutual support to those that need them most they assume a function of risk-mitigation for their members. As a source of information about many aspects of the profane and spiritual life, they serve to reduce transaction costs. With respect to the attitude towards politics, the old dictum of NRMs being apolitical has to be differentiated. Recent research has shown that they can be focal points of actions in the common interest of their membership towards political institutions, at least at the local level. While NRMs have a conservative attitude towards gender relations, they also serve as mediators of intra-family conflict and the reduction of domestic violence as affirmed by (Mbiti, 2004).

These studies indicated an overall picture on the contributions of New Religious Movements to Socio-religious transformation but not focused on the TNJC. They were instrumental in helping identify if TNJC has had an impact on the society from individual level to societal level.

1.7.5 Conclusion

Related literature was reviewed on socio-religious transformations of NRMs specifically on historical reasons for emergence of NRMs, beliefs and practices of NRMs and Socio-religious transformations of NRMs. However, of all these literature none of them gave an account of TNJC specifically on:

- i. The history of the New Jerusalem Church in Tongaren,
- ii. The religious beliefs and practices of the New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren.
- iii. The socio-religious transformation of TNJC between 2011 and 2023.

1.8 Theoretical Framework

This study was guided by the Social Movement Theory.

1.8.1 The Social Movement Theory (SMT)

The Social Movement Theory (SMT) was coined by Charles Tilly and Sydney Tarrow (2004) who argue that social movements were formed with the purpose of signaling change especially to people who were airing out grievances. These movements transform into mass movements aimed at religious, social or political change, which are rarer.

Charles and Sidney (2004), in their work *Towards an Integrated Perspective on Social Movements and Revolution* offer a particularly useful summary of the theory, including its evolution and its causal logic. Over time it, has been accepted and advanced by other proponents of the theory with Cummings (2018) putting into consideration that SMT posits that political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and framing processes explain the necessary conditions that transform grievances into activism. In their process of taking shape, social movements are highly visible collectives that aim to mobilize

large numbers in order to effect change. Social movements tend to draw on preexisting groups and their networks to mobilize individuals into loosely affiliated collectives. The authors (Sydney and Tilly, 2004), describe three variables that scholars of SMT have identified as necessary conditions for social movements to emerge: Relative Deprivation, Collective Behaviors and Resource Mobilization.

Over the course of history, numerous social movements have arisen and fundamentally altered the societies in which they took place. According to Sydney and Tilly (2004), political chances that combine conventional and unconventional modes of action and build on social networks and cultural frames serve as the catalyst for social movements. Large, typically powerless and uninvolved groups of individuals make the decision to support or oppose social change using novel strategies in social movements. According to this study, poverty and the emergence of new religious movements are related. It is predicated on the idea that new religious groups enlist the support of individuals who are marginalized in the present society and believe they are not getting a fair share of what is ostensibly available.

This study was guided by the social movement theory, which made the assumption that people who feel deprived of certain resources are the origins of new religious movements like the TNJC. The TNJC came together to create a new world order where people could find acceptance and value among one another in addition to expressing their goal to end relative deprivation. This movement was started in opposition to the missionary churches' unhealthy competitiveness, leadership disputes, and theological doctrinal disagreements. It was discovered that the Abaluhya community encountered different distributions of highly esteemed qualities such as power, prestige, status, and opportunities for social and religious participation when missionaries were present. As a result, individuals or groups within the mission churches felt disadvantageous in

comparison to others and consequently formed socio-religious groups. In order to provide spiritual chaplaincy that addressed the deprivation issue, TNJC arose.

All told, the study showed that the confrontation between European missionary churches and local cultures and religions was what led to the establishment of the TNJC in Western Kenya. In order to improve their living situations, these community of believers worked cooperatively to favorably alter and transform social, political, and economic reality.

1.9 Philosophical Paradigm

It is important to add a philosophical perspective in any research study because it forms the basis of the findings. This study employed the constructivist research philosophy that maintains the fact that what is socially constructed as reality is a result of the human mind from his daily experiences (McEvoy *et al*, 2011). The social nature of religion has been recognized for many years and from an Epistemological perspective. Reality is thus created by the mind, and different social realms, organizations, cultures and experiences can, therefore, create multiple social realities (Highfield & Bisman, 2012). Although what is real is specific to an individual, similarities may exist between individuals.

This section thus presents an opportunity to examine the emergence of New Religious Movements (NRMs), specifically TNJC of Tongaren, Bungoma County. It will specifically focus on providing detailed information of the history of TNJC, the church's beliefs and practices, the major socio-religious transformations that the church has undergone since its inception and the impacts it has to the general Kenyan society. A constructivist research approach and an associated qualitative methodology were

used in the actual research study. Thus the emphasis of this section was on the research design and research process, rather than on the research results or findings.

At the inception of the study, dearth research on literature review related to the emergence of NRM, beliefs, practices and doctrines and major socio-transformations encountered was undertaken. The studies were conducted while providing useful insights into the related objectives of this thesis using a qualitative methodological approach. (For example Barraza, 2002, Satia *et al*, 2022, Ogola *et al*, 2015, Oginde, 2023, Anderson, 2010). Hence, the nature of the research and the sensitivity of the topic, as well as the dearth of qualitative research in this particular setting, pointed towards the appropriateness of a constructivist world view for enriching and adding depth to the understanding of TNJC emergence, practices and worship.

1.10 Research Methodology

1.10.1 Research design

This was a phenomenological, qualitative study that utilized an exploratory research design that was cross-sectional in nature. It dealt with beliefs, practices, teachings, opinions, behaviors and attitudes of members of TNJC. The overall objective was to interrogate the socio-religious transformations of NRMs in relation to TNJC.

1.10.2 Area of Study

The study was carried out in Tongaren, Bungoma County. Bungoma County is located at 0.5695° N and 34.5584°E. This county neighbors Kakamega County to the North and Trans-Nzoia County to the South. It is predominantly occupied by the Ababukusu sub ethnic group of the Luhya. The study limited itself to Tongaren Sub-county which is the home of Eliud Wekesa also known as “Yesu wa Tongaren” the founder of TNJC.

1.10.3 Target population

The target population for this study included the adherents of TNJC and non-adherents of TNJC who live within Tongaren Sub County. Twenty-two key informants who had knowledge about the emergence of TNJC in particular its beliefs and practices, teachings and doctrines were the subjects to the study.

1.10.4 Sampling procedure

This study used cluster, purposive and snowball sampling to select its participants. Residents living around Eliud Wekesa's home were sampled through cluster sampling. Later, snowball sampling was used to identify 5 clerical leaders of the TNJC and two community leaders who were key informants of the targeted leadership positions. During snowballing, members of TNJC referred the researcher to leaders whom they considered to be more knowledgeable about the emergence of TNJC, its teachings and doctrines.

Purposive sampling was used to select 15 key respondents. Key informants were selected basing on their perceived capability to have adequate information about the history of TNJC, indigenous beliefs and practices of TNJC and the socio-religious transformations of TNJC since 2011.

1.10.5 Sample size

22 respondents were selected through purposive and snowball sampling basing on predetermined variables like membership, age, gender and leadership roles. The study only recruited members who were above 18 years of age. They included 5 clerical leaders, 2 community leaders, 5 women, 5 men and 5 youths. The clergy and members of TNJC were treated as key-informants in the study.

1.10.6 Sources of Data

This study utilized both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was obtained from 22 key informants who were believed to have knowledge on the foundation of TNJC, the doctrines, teachings, beliefs and practices of the church and the socio-religious transformations.

Secondary data was obtained from written materials such as journals, magazines, newspapers, government publications, seminar papers, dissertations, books and articles on the socio-religious transformation of TNJC.

1.10.7 Data Collection Methods

Both primary and secondary methods of data collection were used to obtain data.

1.10.7.1 Secondary Data

Published accounts from early travelers, missionaries, and colonial administrators were incorporated in secondary data. Books, journals, relevant articles, unpublished theses, seminar papers, periodicals, and newspapers were additional sources in this area. Secondary data was gathered from a number of libraries, including the Institute of African Studies, the Margaret Thatcher Library at Moi University, the Kimilili Public Library, and the Catholic University of Eldoret Library. Internet resources made a valuable contribution to secondary data.

1.10.7.2 Primary Data

Primary data was collected using interviews, non-participant observation and Focused Group Discussions.

1.10.7.2.1 Interview Method

In-depth Interviews were used to gather information from selected Church leaders who were key informants of the study. The method entailed the use of in-depth oral interviews because of the small number of leaders. An Interview Schedule was employed by the researcher to gather qualitative data. It also sought to probe the leaders on factors that led to the emergence of TNJC and the socio-religious transformations of TNJC. The researcher was guided by an interview schedule that was made up of open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were used to allow greater in-depth response from the respondents and also allow the researcher to further probe the responses given. The interviews were recorded for later analysis with permission from the interviewees. The study conducted seven interviews on the founder, four clerical leaders and two community leaders who were interviewed on, the history, doctrines and the Socio-religious transformations of TJNC.

1.10.7.2.2 Focus Group Discussion

The study used three focus group discussions to get information from fifteen members of TNJC. Each group comprised of five members of TNJC. The three groups were for five women, five men and five young people who identified themselves as members of TNJC. Focus group discussion guides were used to provide a list of items for discussion. This instrument sought to explore the member's perception of the founder and the socio-religious transformations of TNJC. It also aided the study in understanding some of the beliefs, practices and observances within TNJC. During the discussions, in-depth probing was used by the researcher in search for clarification of points and ideas on the history, doctrines, and transformations of the church. FGDs were used because they permitted a greater depth of response from the respondents who gave their feelings without restrictions. They were also effective because of the

homogeneity of the groups and they also provided room for interactions. Like the interviews, the discussions were recorded for later analysis with permission from the participants. Short notes were also taken during the discussion.

1.10.7.3 Observation

The researcher used non-participant observation to collect salient information not possible through oral interviews. A non-participant observation guide containing pre-determined set of characteristics to be observed was used to explore some of the practices within TNJC such as baptism, weddings and worship service. Events observed were recorded with permission from participants by means of a video recorder for further interpretation later from the members.

1.10.8 Data analysis

Data was analyzed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis was used to help in analyzing of different ideas discovered from interviews and focus group discussions to analyze TNJC beliefs, practices and the major socio-transformations of the church. The process of analysis was possible using thematic tool. It began by transcription of the collected data. The audio recorded during research was converted into word since the data that was converted to soft copy was coded. Codes were applied to the data according to the themes where words that were mentioned repeatedly used by the respondents were categorized. This categorization was based on the objectives of the study. The categories created were later interpreted by making a comparison with existing literature.

Steps to ensure that the study yielded comprehensive findings were undertaken by the use of more than one data collection instruments since they complemented each other.

A pilot study was conducted with members of The Lost Israelites Church in Kakamega County. To test the reliability and validity of research instruments were tested.

1.10.9 Validity and reliability of the research instruments

The validity and reliability of the research instruments were determined through a post-validation conference where key informants were taken through the data to validate where what was written was true or false.

1.10.10 Ethical Considerations

Permission to conduct the research was sought from the National Council for Science and Technology (NACOSTI) before beginning data collection. Anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents in the study was maintained at all times. The identity of participants was concealed and information obtained from them was limited to the development of this study. The names of the participants were kept anonymous by the researcher and those presented are not their real names but pseudo names. The researcher duly informed all the research participants of the purpose of the study. Their consent was sought before engaging them. Participants were also informed of their right to withdraw at any stage of the engagements in the research should they feel uncomfortable with the process. No form of coercion or enticements was used to obtain information from the participants. All interviews and focus group discussions were recorded with permission of the research participants. Data that was stored in electronic devices and hard copies were destroyed at the end of the study. Finally, all references to other author's works were acknowledged by the researcher in this thesis to avoid plagiarism.

1.11 Conclusion

This chapter presented the background of the study, statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study, research questions, and purpose of the study, scope and limitations of the study, theoretical framework, literature review and lastly the research methodology.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GEOGRAPHICAL, SOCIAL, HISTORICAL, RELIGIOUS AND ECONOMIC SETTING, OF BUNGOMA COUNTY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the context for understanding the TNJC's evolution and its interactions within its environment i.e. Bungoma County. The chapter looks at Bungoma County, which is the home of TNJC. The chapter focused in particular on Tongaren Sub County, which is the location of TNJC. The chapter looks at the social, political, and economic tenets that the TNJC movement is obviously built around. The lifestyle of the Ababukusu is covered in this chapter. The Ababukusu political government is later explained. It has a well-organized economic life and is particularly concerned with the wellbeing of its people on a socio-religious level. In order to establish the background in which the TNJC movement among the Ababukusu people originated in 2011, this chapter begins by analyzing the Ababukusu people of the wider Bungoma and subsequently scoops to Tongaren.

2.2 The Geographical context of TNJC

Bungoma County is located in the Western region of Kenya, East Africa. Bungoma County is located at 0.5695⁰ N and 34.5584⁰ E in the former Western Province of Kenya. It is situated approximately 420 kilometers northwest of Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. Bungoma County shares borders with the following counties: Busia County to the west, Kakamega County to the south, Trans Nzoia County to the north, and Uasin Gishu County to the northeast. The equator passes near the southern part of Bungoma County. It's headquarter is found in Bungoma town. It has a population of 1,670,570 people with 812,146 males and 856,389 females (2019, National Census Report). It covers an area of 2,069KM² (Mkutu *et al*, 2014). Administratively, Bungoma County

has nine constituencies, namely, Bumula, Kabuchai, Kanduyi, Kimilili, Mt. Elgon, Sirisia, Tongaren, Webuye East and Webuye West.

Bungoma County is known for its diverse ethnic groups, with the main ones being the Ababukusu, Tachoni, Sabaot, Banyala, and Idakho. It is mainly the home of the Ababukusu (also known as Ababukusu) a sub ethnic group of the Luhya ethnic group. They are among the 18 sub tribes of the Luhya community found in Western Kenya. Other sub-ethnic groups of the Luhya include: Wanga, Ababukusu, Banyala, Bunyore, Maragoli, Tiriki, Marachi, Gisu, Samia, Tachoni, Batsotso, Isukha, Kisa, Marama, Idakho, Kabarar and Khayo. Among these sub ethnic groups, Ababukusu are known to be resilient and aggressive people who stood up against the British rule in the late 19th century. They are fondly remembered for resisting the British in a war that started at Lumboka and eventually ended at Chetambe hills near Webuye (Wekesa, 2021).

The Ababukusu border ethnic groups such as the Kalenjin to the North East (are sometimes referred to as Elgon Masai) and border the Tachonis and Kabarar from in the south east and North respectively. Other neighbors of the Ababukusu are the Nyala and the Gisu from the South. Following is a map showing the position of Bungoma County in Kenya.



Figure 2.1: Location of Bungoma County in the Map of Kenya

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

Tongaren Sub County is one of the sub-counties within Bungoma County in Kenya. It is located in the western part of Bungoma County, adjacent to the border with Trans

Nzoia County. The Sub County in Bungoma County has a population density of 187,343 people (2019, National Census Report). It consists of six administrative wards which include: Naitiri, Mitua, Mbakalo, Soysambu, Ndalua and Tongaren. Tongaren is the administrative center of the entire Tongaren sub-county. It is also home to the sub-county headquarters. Naitiri is located in the northeastern part of Tongaren Sub County; Naitiri ward is known for its rich cultural heritage and is inhabited by the Tachoni community.

The main economic activities of Tongaren people include: Agriculture (mixed farming and livestock keeping); manufacturing services and general retail. Agriculture is the backbone of the sub-County's economy since most families rely on crop production and animal rearing. Crops grown primarily for subsistence include; maize, finger millet, sweet potatoes, bananas, irish potatoes, and assorted vegetables. On the other hand, the main cash crops grown include macadamia, sugarcane, cotton, coffee, and sunflower (Koi & Wakhungu, 2018)

The main livestock kept include cattle, sheep, donkeys and pigs. In addition, some farmers keep poultry and bees. Most farmers sell milk and poultry products. The farmers sell their milk through cooperatives societies such as Kikai and Naitiri (Koi & Wakhungu, 2018). Majority of residents in sub-County conduct trade and business in major market centers such as Misikhu, Naitiri and Kiminini.

Majority of the population in Tongaren belongs to mainstream Christian denominations, such as Catholic and Protestants. However, some have remained faithfully in traditional religious movements like Dini ya Musambwa and TNJC.

Under the manufacturing sector, Tongaren Sub County is also not left behind as it hosts the famous Naitiri Sugar Mill established in 2021 and it serves over 2,500 farmers. This

Sugar Mill provides farmers with a stable source of income. Other factories within the sub county include Tongaren Coffee Society, Naitiri Milk plant and other large bakeries (Bungoma County Integrated Development Plan, 2013-2017).

There were more than 290 schools within the entire sub county by the year 2020 (Amukowa, 2009). The main education institution within the area is Nabing'eng'e vocational institute which was started in 2020. It is a public polytechnic located about 10 km from Tongaren Town along Matunda- Kamukuywa road. Other major institutions of higher learning include Bungoma North Technical Institute, Mbakalo Diploma Teachers Training College, Nyange Teachers Training College, Wabukhonyi Teachers Training College, Matili Polytechnic and Ndalul Medical Training College. The sub-county also has schools such as Bishop Philip Anyolo Kakamwe Secondary School (Ferdinand Omanyala Alma Mater), Friends Mitua Girls, Birunda P.A.G Secondary school and St. Patricks Naitiri. Major professionals from this region include Prof Nandi (the Vice Chancellor Kaimosi Friends University), Prof. Makokha formerly of Maseno university, Dr. Abdalla of University of Eldoret (Science Department), Dr. Mukhisa Kituyi former Secretary General UNTAD and Presidential aspirant (2022), Prof. Akaranga of University of Nairobi and Prof. Ngome Kibanani (Former Deputy Governor aspirant Bungoma County). Tongaren is also home to the famous Arch Bishop Philip Anyolo of The Arch Diocese of Nairobi. Following is a map indicating the wards of Tongaren sub county.

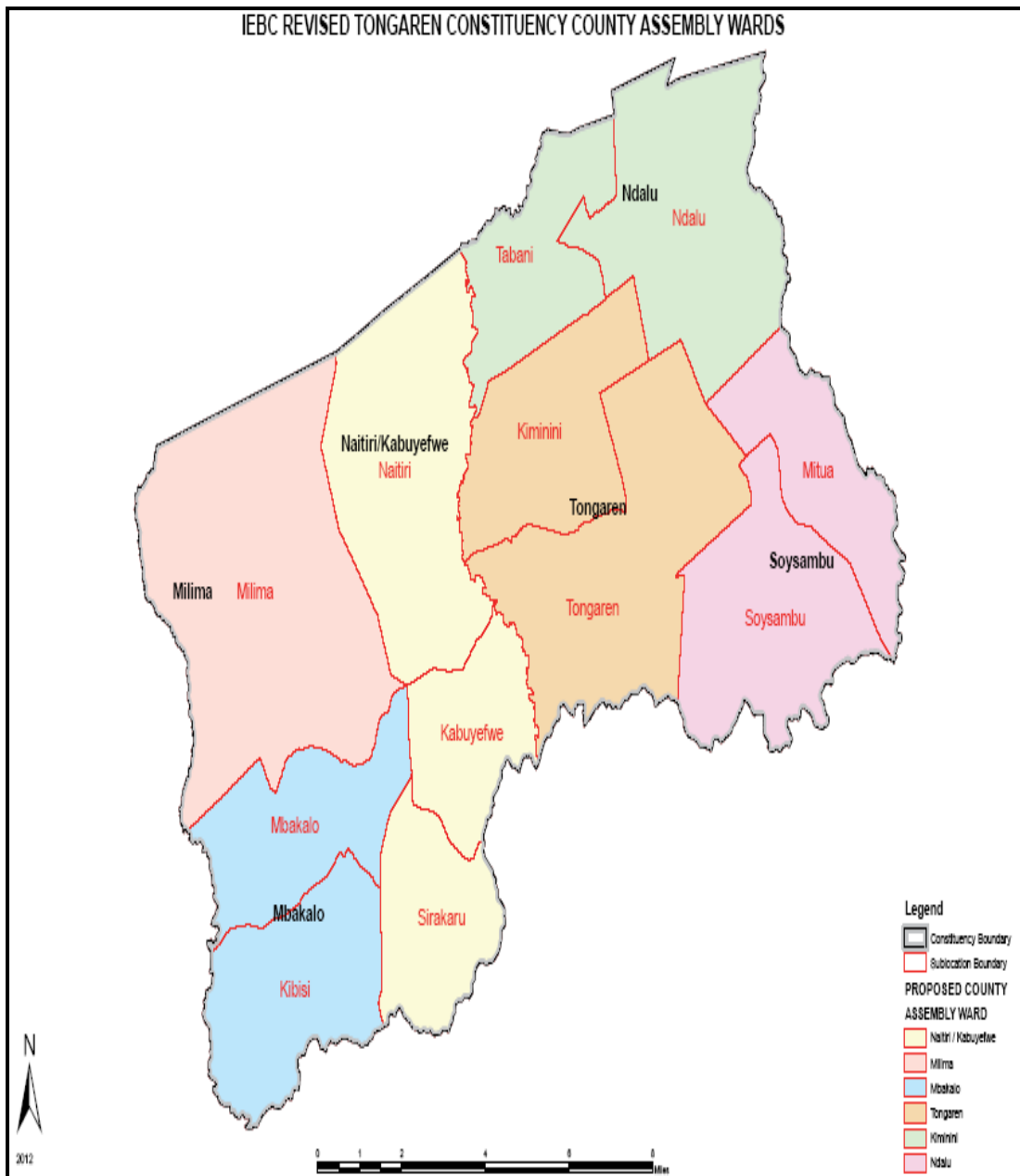


Figure 2.2: Tongaren Constituency Map

Source: Kenya National Bureau of Statistics

2.3 The Religious Organization setting of the Ababukusu in Tongaren Sub County

The Ababukusu traditional religion is a formal religious organization like modern religions. It is a religion based on a system of beliefs, practices and traditions that is passed down through generations.

Ababukusu religion is embedded in Ababukusu culture where religious practices and beliefs are centered on the family or clan. Belief in ancestors is considered to be an

important part of the spiritual world and many religious practices are centered on them. Most families have a sacred space or shrine in their home where they offer prayers and sacrifices to their ancestors. The Ababukusu also have community-wide religious practices, such as festivals and ceremonies that involve multiple families and clans. These events often involve music, dance, and offerings to ancestral spirits.

While there is no centralized religious organization, there are religious leaders within the Ababukusu community who are responsible for overseeing and guiding religious practices. These leaders may be elders within a family or clan, or they may be individuals who have demonstrated spiritual knowledge and leadership skills. However, in recent years, there have been efforts to formalize the Ababukusu traditional religion into a more organized structure. This has included the establishment of religious schools and the creation of written texts to preserve and transmit traditional beliefs and practices. Overall, the Ababukusu traditional religion is a decentralized and community-based system of beliefs and practices that is deeply rooted in the culture and traditions of the Ababukusu people.

2.3.1 The Concept of God in Ababukusu religion

In Ababukusu religion, the concept of God is known as *Wele Mukhulu*, which means the "Great One" or the "Creator." The Ababukusu people believe that *Wele Mukhulu* is a distant deity and does not directly interact with humans. Instead, they worship ancestral spirits, who act as intermediaries between humans and *Wele Mukhulu*. These ancestral spirits are believed to have the power to intervene in the lives of humans and can provide blessings or punishments based on the actions of individuals. *Wele Mukhulu* is believed to be the creator of the universe, including all living and non-living things. He is considered to be all-powerful, all-knowing, and omnipresent.

2.3.1.1 God as the creator

In Ababukusu religion, *Wele Mukhulu* is believed to be the creator of the universe, including all living and non-living things. *Wele Mukhulu* created the world and all that is in it, including humans, animals, plants, and even the spirits that inhabit the world. As the creator, *Wele Mukhulu* is seen as the source of all life and the one who sustains the universe. The Ababukusu people believe that they are dependent on God for their existence and that their lives are in His hands. They also believe that everything in the universe has a purpose and that God has a plan for each individual's life. The Ababukusu people express their gratitude to God through various rituals and ceremonies, such as offerings of food and drinks, prayers, and sacrifices. They believe that by acknowledging God's role as the creator and provider, they can gain His favor and blessings in their lives.

To the Ababukusu, God is uncreated and His Mighty power is manifested through his activities (Barraza, 2002). The Ababukusu recognize Him by an equivalent term *omukimba* translated as 'maker'. *Omukimba* created the universe and maintains it.

The Ababukusu people believe that before creation, 'there was nothing and that God created everything visible and invisible in this universe out of nothing (Nganga, 2018). It is from this regard that the Ababukusu community holds the Ababukusu myth of creation to explain this view of creation.

2.3.1.1.1 The Ababukusu myth of creation

The Ababukusu people have another myth of creation that explains how the universe and humanity came into existence. According to this myth, in the beginning, there was only darkness and chaos, and nothing existed except for a vast and formless void. In this void, there was a being named Nyasaye, who was lonely and desired

companionship. To fill the emptiness, *Nyasaye* decided to create the universe and everything in it. He began by creating the earth, the sky, the sun, and the moon, followed by the plants and animals. However, *Nyasaye* was not satisfied with his creation, as there was still no intelligent life in the universe.

To solve this problem, *Nyasaye* created the first human, who was a woman named Nasirumbi. Nasirumbi was given the power to procreate, and she gave birth to the first Ababukusu people. Nasirumbi's children were also given the power to procreate, and they populated the earth. In this myth of creation, *Nyasaye* is seen as the creator, and Nasirumbi is the mother of all humanity. The Ababukusu people believe that their existence is a result of this creation story and that they are part of a larger cosmic order created by *Nyasaye*.

The Ababukusu people still hold this creation myth in high regard, and it plays a significant role in their cultural and spiritual beliefs. The myth serves as a reminder of their origin and identity as a people and reinforces their connection to the larger universe created by *Nyasaye*.

2.3.1.2 Greatness and Supremacy of God

When the Ababukusu refer to the word 'God', they are talking about the living eternal Being who is the source of all life. He is self-existent and is the one whose power sustains the universe. In the Ababukusu Traditional Religion, God is seen as Supreme and Great over all His visible and invisible creation. As a way of expressing the Greatness of God, the Ababukusu refer to Him as '*Were Onyala*' which is translated as Great one, Great God or Great King (Nganga, 2018). The concept of the greatness of God is present among the Ababukusu, which often view God as the ultimate source of all power and authority in the universe. Among the Ababukusu, God is often creator of

all things and the ultimate judge of human actions. The greatness of God is also closely tied to the idea of divine providence and protection. The Ababukusu believe that God watches over them and provides for them in times of need, such as during times of drought or famine.

God's greatness among the Ababukusu is reflected in His ability to create and sustain the universe, including all living and non-living things. God's greatness is also reflected in His interactions with human beings. They express their appreciation for God's greatness through various rituals and ceremonies. They offer prayers, sacrifices, and gifts to God as a sign of their gratitude and devotion.

In Ababukusu culture, God's greatness is also reflected in the roles and responsibilities of community leaders. Elders and spiritual leaders are expected to act as representatives of God on earth, guiding and directing the community towards righteousness and justice. They are seen as servants of God, responsible for upholding His values and principles in the community. His greatness can be expressed through the wonders of Creation and the great miraculous mighty happenings such as storms and lightening.

2.3.1.3 God as both Transcendent and Immanent

The Ababukusu God is seen as transcendent, it means that God is not limited to a particular place and time as human beings are. It means that God lives outside the natural world in which human beings live. It also means that human beings can never fully comprehend the will or thoughts of the Supreme Being. He is beyond their understanding. It further means that God is always there first: He is the creator of all things and the initiator of all events. Finally, it means that human beings feel awe when they remember the presence of God. He is good and trustworthy in a way that they are not.

As an immanent God, the Ababukusu see Him as a God whose presence is felt by people within the natural world. This means that they feel His presence around their surroundings, and through what happens to them and their families. The Ababukusu see God as very present within the natural world to help protect and deliver his creation, although at the same time, He transcends the natural realm. When they say that God is immanent in the world, they are presenting an attribute that shows God as dwelling among them or within them.

The Ababukusu Religion knows God as both transcendent and immanent since He is perceived to be beyond any reach. God's transcendent nature permeates over their saying 'God is made by no other' (Nganga, 2018). They refer to Him as 'He who is there now as from the ancient times'. They further enclose this feature of God to the sky and that's why they recognize Him as 'the everlasting One who dwells in the heavens and sky'. To them, Gods existence is never ending and it is preceded in the beginning of His creation too. He transcends in all boundaries and that's why the Ababukusu think that the sky is beyond human reach and God dwells somewhere beyond.

According to Nganga (2018), Gods immanent nature among the Ababukusu is confirmed through how he meets the need of His people. Due to His Mightiness, the Ababukusu address Him through prayers, invocations, offerings and sacrifices. To them, God exists in all objects as well as He manifests through natural phenomena. They prefer to designate God as 'The one who fills their cups' to illustrate Gods generous nature of providing all their daily needs.

In all, the idea of God as both transcendent and immanent among the Ababukusu can be seen as a way of reconciling the paradox of a God who is simultaneously beyond

human understanding and present in everyday life. This understanding of God allows for awe and reverence for the divine, as well as a sense of intimacy and connection with the divine in the midst of the joys and challenges of daily life of the Ababukusu

2.3.1.4 God as Almighty

The term "almighty" is often used to describe God's power, sovereignty, and omnipotence. Among the Ababukusu community, God is viewed as the creator of the entire universe and all that exists within it. As such, God is considered to be all-powerful and all-knowing, with the ability to do anything that is consistent with His nature and character.

The Ababukusu hold on to the belief that ‘duties and challenges are easy to do as that which God performs but difficult to do as to which God enables not’. He is all powerful such that His power is beyond all humans some people compare Him with Thunder. God’s omnipotence also manifests through the Ababukusu saying, *‘Niye ouma nio sivala sirie’* (He who roars so that all nations be struck with terror) (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The Ababukusu perceive God as eternal. They do not see the Supreme Being as one who will one day cease to be or one who will eventually die. They see Him as the eternal and immortal One who ‘lives forever to satisfy the human soul’. This is why “they hold that the Supreme Deity is ‘the Ever-living Reality’ whose being stretches to eternity. The Eternity of God is very much associated with His nature. According to the Ababukusu people, ‘God is everlasting’ to imply that He was there, He is there, and He will exist forever (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). They also associate him to the heaven and thus they express his immortality as that ‘The heaven never dies, only men do’.

Apart from the foregoing manifestations of the nature of God among the Ababukusu, He is given numerous attributes by these people (Nganga, 2018). They believe him to be Kind, generous and Merciful to his people. In the case of personal and natural problems or difficulties, people feel the need of His urgent help and feel him as Merciful. Ababukusu stories depict God as one who can be angered by human acts and thus people appease Him through sacrifices and offerings. Disasters in the society such as droughts, famine and thunder are often associated with God's anger.

The attributes and the activities of the Ababukusu God above deserve acts of worship from his creation. The Ababukusu worship the Supreme Being through sacrifices, offerings, prayers, singing and dancing (Asante & Manama, 2009). At the same time the Ababukusu people try as much as they can not to dishearten this God but always engage to satisfy and please him. Prayers worship and sacrifices are the most common ways in which the Ababukusu community shows gratitude to God.

The acts of worship mainly constitute sacrifices and offerings by Ababukusu traditional religion followers. Here, sacrifice refers to cases where animals either whole or partly are presented to God, supernatural beings, spirits or the living dead. Offering refers to items in kind like foodstuffs and not necessarily animals are presented for appeasement. Offerings can extend to items such as wine, milk, bread, vegetables, honey, millet, eggs, cloth, and agricultural equipment and so forth whereas sacrifices can extend to animals such as donkeys, chicken sheep, goat etc (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The Ababukusu offer sacrifices during times of drought or delay of rain, after an epidemic and at the harvest of the first fruits. The sacrifices they make are of a particular color. They believe that 'God is the one whom sacred rites and sacrifices are made or paid' (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). They also perform sacrifices during the time of a

newborn baby, naming ceremonies, circumcision and initiation ceremonies, wedding ceremonies, funerals and during harvest time.

The concept of God as almighty generally serves as a cornerstone of the Ababukusu, emphasizing God's power, sovereignty, and ability to intervene in the world in ways that are consistent with His nature and character.

2.3.2 Duty of the Ababukusu towards God

The Ababukusu consider God to be a supreme being or creator who possesses divine attributes such as omniscience, omnipotence, and benevolence. There is a deep sense of reverence and respect for the divine, and recognition that the Ababukusu have a duty to honor and serve God in their daily lives. This duty is often expressed through prayer, worship, and acts of service to others, as well as through adherence to moral and ethical principles. The Ababukusu hold to the belief that humans have a responsibility to maintain balance and harmony in the world, and that this requires a respectful relationship with the natural world and the spiritual realm. This duty may involve acts of stewardship, such as caring for the environment, as well as spiritual practices such as offering prayers and sacrifices to the divine.

The Ababukusu focus on the importance of community and social responsibility, with a belief that serving others is a way of serving God. This duty may involve acts of charity, hospitality, and generosity towards others, as well as a commitment to justice and the common good. This means that the duty of the Ababukusu towards God is shaped by a variety of cultural, religious, and spiritual traditions, each emphasizing different aspects of the relationship between humans and the divine. They emphasize the importance of living a virtuous and moral life in service to God and others.

The attributes and the activities of the Ababukusu God deserve acts of worship from his creation. The Ababukusu worship the Supreme Being through sacrifices, offerings, prayers, singing and dancing (Asante & Manama, 2009). At the same time the Ababukusu people try as much as they can not to dishearten this God but always engage to satisfy and please him. Prayers and sacrifices are the most common ways in which the people from Ababukusu community show gratitude to God.

2.3.2.1 Sacrifices and offerings in the Ababukusu traditional Religion

The Ababukusu people are a Bantu ethnic group who live in Western Kenya. Their traditional religion that includes various beliefs and practices related to sacrifices and offerings. In the Ababukusu traditional religion, sacrifices and offerings are seen as a way of communicating with the divine and seeking the favor and blessings of the ancestors and other spiritual entities (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). The types of sacrifices and offerings vary depending on the occasion, the nature of the request, and the spiritual entity being addressed.

One common form of sacrifice in Ababukusu traditional religion is the offering of animal blood. This is typically done as part of a larger ritual or ceremony, and is believed to symbolize the blood of the ancestors or other spiritual beings. The blood is often poured on a sacred site, such as a tree or rock, as a way of honoring and communicating with the spiritual realm.

Another common form of sacrifice is the offering of food or other goods. This may include offerings of maize, beans, or other crops, as well as offerings of livestock or other valuable items. These offerings are typically made in exchange for blessings or favors, and are often given as part of a larger ceremony or ritual.

In addition, the Ababukusu people also have a tradition of offering prayers and invocations to the ancestors and other spiritual entities. These may take the form of songs, chants, or other forms of communication, and are believed to help establish a connection with the spiritual realm. The Ababukusu perform sacrifices at times of drought or delay of rain, after an epidemic and at the harvest of the first fruits. The sacrifices they make are of a particular color. They believe that ‘God is the one whom sacred rites and sacrifices are made or paid’ (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). They also perform sacrifices during the time of a newborn baby, naming ceremonies, circumcision and initiation ceremonies, wedding ceremonies, funerals and harvest time.

2.3.2.2 Prayer in the Ababukusu Traditional Religion

Prayer is an important aspect of the Ababukusu traditional religion. The Ababukusu people believe in a supreme being who is the creator of the universe and who is responsible for the well-being of all living things. They also believe in ancestral spirits who have the power to intercede on their behalf and provide guidance and protection.

Prayer in Ababukusu traditional religion takes many forms, including spoken word, songs, dances, and offerings. Prayers are often directed towards the Supreme Being and ancestral spirits, and are used to express gratitude, seek guidance, and request blessings. Prayers may be offered in both private and public settings, such as during family gatherings, community events, or religious ceremonies.

The Ababukusu people have a strong connection to nature and often worship at sacred sites such as mountains, rivers, and trees. They also have shrines and temples dedicated to ancestral spirits, where offerings and sacrifices are made. The Ababukusu people have a strong tradition of dance and music in their worship practices. Traditional dances

such as the Isikuti and Sikuti involve energetic movements and drumming, and are often performed during religious ceremonies and other celebrations.

The Ababukusu believe that the sky or heaven is the dwelling place of God and thus cannot be separated from the heavens. This explains why members of this community pray while facing the sky. They consider the sky as Were's place of residence. Moreover, prayer is the most common form of worshiping God among indigenous African people as it forms the center of their day to day life. To the Luhya, prayers can be individual, family or communal (Gumo, 2017). Their main purpose is either to seek blessings of the day or night, make requests to satisfy a particular need seek for security against evil spirits or give thanks. Such prayers are usually as short as;

“God be with us...Amen” (Mikaili, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Family prayers typically take place throughout different rites of passage like birth, initiation, marriage, and death and typically involve the entire extended family. Gumo (2017) claims that a family group establishes communication with God in each of these situations. However, family prayers may also be said while dealing with illnesses in people or animals, when adopting a man from a different tribe, or during rituals of purification and cleaning.

Asante & Manama, (2009) further notes that communal prayers are conducted publicly under sacred sites found on hilltops, under sacred trees, at river banks, graveyards or homes of religious specialists for communal worship and sacrifice to God.

2.3.3 The belief in taboos by the Ababukusu

A taboo is a set of religious prohibition instituted by traditional religious authorities as instruments for moral motivation and guidance (Osei, 2006). Taboos exist in most cultures, both Western and non-Western. They are good examples of informal

institutions in African communities, where the norms determine human behavior. In many traditional societies in the world, taboos guide human conduct towards each other and the natural environment. They controlled and regulated behaviour towards one another or towards specific phenomena. Among the Bukusu, they are solemnly meant for protecting the sanctity of their shrines and the wellbeing of their worshiping communities. Osei further notes that these prohibitions deterred evils in the society such as murder, suicide, rape, incest and religious sacrilege. Just like other African communities, taboos among the Ababukusu influence members of the community to conform to societies' values, norms and symbols of the social system (Chigidi, 2009). Hence, taboos are meant to offer conformity by issuing threats of unpleasant consequences should they disobey God.

The Ababukusu use taboos correspondingly to control, guide and regulate the behavior of its members. Among the Ababukusu community, taboos are taken seriously since they are believed to have been imposed by traditional rulers and priests on their behalf and in the general interest of the community an idea that seems to have been borrowed by the members of the TNJC (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Therefore, taboos are an important in the Ababukusu traditional culture. They are beliefs and practices that are considered sacred or forbidden, and are intended to maintain social order and protect individuals from harm. Some common taboos among the Ababukusu include:

Prohibition of eating certain foods: The Ababukusu prohibit of eating certain animals such as monkeys and hyenas. Certain foods are also considered taboo during specific occasions or events, such as eating eggs during funerals.

Prohibition of certain behaviors: The Ababukusu has strict rules prohibiting adultery, theft, and lying. These behaviors are believed to disrupt social order and can result in

punishment. Respect for the elderly: The Ababukusu has a strong cultural value for respecting and honoring the elderly. Taboos surrounding disrespect of the elderly include using inappropriate language, failing to show proper deference, and neglecting to care for elderly relatives.

Prohibition of witchcraft: It is considered taboo among the Ababukusu to accuse falsely someone of witchcraft and to use witchcraft for harm or personal gain.

Respect for sacred sites: The Ababukusu believe in the existence of sacred sites such as caves, rocks, and trees, which are believed to be inhabited by spirits. It is considered taboo to disrespect or damage these sites, or to use them for personal gain.

All in all, taboos are an important part of the Ababukusu traditional culture, and are used to maintain social order and protect individuals from harm. They are deeply ingrained in the beliefs and practices of the Ababukusu people, and continue to play an important role in their lives today

2.4 The Social Organization of the Ababukusu

The Ababukusu people are a Bantu ethnic group who are primarily found in Western Kenya, particularly in the Bungoma and Trans-Nzoia counties. The Ababukusu are among the 18 sub-tribes of the Abaluhya community of Western Kenya. They have a rich and complex social organization that is based on family, clan, and age-set systems.

The family is the most important unit of Ababukusu social organization. It is typically headed by a patriarch, who is responsible for providing for and protecting the family.

The family unit is extended to include grandparents, uncles, aunts, and cousins, and is considered to be the foundation of Ababukusu society.

Clans are the next level of social organization among the Ababukusu. Clans are made up of several related families and are headed by a clan elder who is responsible for settling disputes and maintaining social order within the clan. Clans also have their own customs and traditions that are distinct from other clans.

The age-set system is another important aspect of Ababukusu social organization. This system divides the population into groups based on their age, with each group having its own distinct roles and responsibilities. For example, the youth age-set is responsible for performing manual labor and providing security, while the elder age-sets are responsible for providing leadership and guidance.

Ababukusu society also has a strong system of governance and leadership. Leaders are typically chosen based on their age, wisdom, and experience, and are responsible for resolving disputes, maintaining social order, and providing guidance to the community.

The Ababukusu set up was based on traditional pillars that embraced cultural values. These values were later on that handed down from one generation to another over the years. The Ababukusu myths hold on to the idea that the tribe was composed of many clans that occupied a given village led by a village head man who was answerable to the Council of Elders. Members of this Council of elders were rain makers, herbalists and diviners and priests. Their main function was to settle disputes both land and individual, distribute land and they were the final court of appeal. Every Ababukusu typical arrangement had a homestead, which was made up of a number of families that were frequently related through kinship ties.

In addition to being acceptable, polygamy was seen by the Ababukusu as a sign of a man's prestige and riches, elevating his social and political standing. As a result, the male served as the family's leader and had numerous wives, each of whom had her own

private hut and granary. Women's standing was very different from men's. Women continued to be dependent on male guardians as daughters or husbands while men evolved to become more independent with age (Barasa, 2022). Women were given only a few limited abilities due to experience and age. In a polygamous marriage, the first wife had power over the other wives, particularly through her influence over the husband. For instance, if a second wife was to be married, the diligent first wife had to be advised (Wekesa, 2022). In fact, she would even choose a girl for the husband to marry in some instances (Were, 2014).

At least one Ababukusu clan belonged to every Ababukusu. It was a taboo for persons belonging to the same clan to intermarry (Wekesa, 2023). The Ababukusu permitted polygamy; in a polygamous homestead, each wife had a "side" that was a region outside of her hut that was defined by her daily activities. Each woman's offspring in a polygamous arrangement belonged to her homestead, which was both a physical location and a social unit (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). For efficient management of the homestead, the polygamous patriarch would live on any of his wives' farms. The village, which refers to the settlement on a ridge comprising numerous autonomous homesteads connected by a network of footpaths typically affiliated with a specific sub-clan, served as the center of community life for the Luhya.

According to age, the Ababukusu assigned people the following roles or statuses: infants, young initiates, warriors, young ladies, women, men, and elders (Were, 2014). Young individuals of the same generation began to group together by age after circumcision. Later, they developed into warriors who protected the locals from outsider attacks (Kariithi, 2020). The family leader and older members were in charge of imparting to the children not only the necessary morals but also spiritual lessons like respect for God. As a result, a community was formed by many related families. It was

crucial for other things, like sharing, and it also made one feel secure and like they belonged (Ibid). Like many other Bantu people, the Bukusu' economic existence has historically been centered on farming. They were mixed farmers who engaged in both crop cultivation and livestock management (Wanzala *et al.*, 2012). The Ababukusu raised sorghum, beans, millets, and arrowroot among other crops. Additionally, they kept goats, sheep, and cattle. Since they were offered as sacrifices in several religious ceremonies, goats were particularly important to the Ababukusu (Oucho, 2002).

Each family served as a separate economic entity. The entire family, including the children, had financial responsibilities. As a result, work was separated into groups based on gender and ages. Men took care of the livestock, cleared the land, built walls around the homesteads, and provided protection. When it came to raising children, cooking, fetching water and firewood, thatching buildings, plastering walls with clay or cow dung, and agriculture chores like planting, weeding, and harvesting, women were generally viewed as caregivers. Boys would follow their fathers or uncles to the grazing field during their training by the seniors, while girls were taught how to do housework by their moms, aunts, and grandmothers (Sabar, 2012). Unless there was an emergency, a guy would rarely take a woman's chore. According to Were (2014), any man or woman who performed the opposite sex duties was viewed as a nosy parker. The division of labor guaranteed that everything was organized and systematic, resulting in material wealth. Due to their knowledge in iron smelting and working, they made iron tools including spears, knives, hoes and sickles among others. In their iron working and smelting, they manufactured iron tools including hoes, spears, hammers and many others (Musungu, 2016).

The Ababukusu community held a strong disapproval of laziness. Through songs and proverbs, the indolent people were mocked (Musungu, 2016). The core of Ababukusu

economic activity was religion. If it didn't rain, people sought out rain-makers to call on the spirits and make God happy to send rain. They were also particularly concerned about avoiding practices that were thought to contaminate the country, such as murder, rape, and immorality. This is due to the fact that a contaminated field would either not be able to produce or would require ritual cleansing (Nganga, 2018). The Ababukusu of Bungoma County traded with neighbors including the Kalenjins, Tesos, and Arabs in addition to farming (Wanzala *et al.*, 2012). They engaged in barter trading, exchanging the goods of their farms and their iron equipment for honey and animal items. Both sexes participated in trading activities. Women were primarily responsible for transporting and selling grains at the market, while men were responsible for bringing sheep, goats, or cattle for sale. Trading hubs and routes were situated next to markets with available commodities for trade.

By the 19th century, the Ababukusu were land cultivators, iron workers and smelters and livestock keepers. They kept livestock including cattle, goats and sheep. These animals were used for cleansing purposes. The domestic animals provided them with milk, blood, and hides for making traditional cloths. They supplemented their diets with hunting and gathering. They hunted wild animals like antelopes, gazelles, buffaloes and hares. They gathered honey, edible roots, leaves and mushrooms, wild fruits including loquats and guavas. They also gathered birds like quills, guinea fowls and termites. In their agricultural practice, they grew vegetables such as millet, sorghum, bananas, yams, cassava, *simsim*, pumpkin and other vegetables. Cassava, yams, sweet potatoes, and maize were traded for pots and livestock through the barter system (Wanzala *et al.*, 2012).

Trading hubs for certain goods including swords, spears, and cloaks emerged in Sirisia; maize was traded in Tongaren; iron was traded in Chwele; yams, sweet potatoes, and

swords were traded in Bukembe; goats were traded in Misikhu and Cheptais; and beans, onions, and tomatoes were traded in Chwele (Wekesa, 2023). Wekesa adds that these trade activities also sparked the development of trade routes connecting the Transzoia, Kakamega, Busia, and Uasin-Gishu Counties with the County. Both Kakamega – Webuye – Kanduyi – Malaba - Busia - Mumias and Bungoma – Chwele – Lwakhakha – Cheptais – Kapsokwony – Kamukuywa – Misikhu – Tongaren – Kiminini - Kitale were on these routes. Crafts including pottery, basketry, and dressmaking were among the other economic activities carried out by women, while males engaged in beekeeping, wood carving, and smithing. A significant economic activity was the production of salt, which involved burning papyrus rush to make ash that was then utilized as salt (Ibid). At the clan level, family was seen as an economic unit and economic activity was done collectively. Despite being managed by a trustee, land was owned collectively (Kariithi, 2020).

Religious beliefs, particularly the veneration of ancestors who established a strong commitment to ancestral land, reinforced family ownership. Due to the fact that it served as the ancestors' home and met the people's material necessities, land had greater value than only its economic worth (Satia *et al.*, 2022). The veneration and propitiatory sacrifices of the ancestors were significant components of Ababukusu worship and religious beliefs. They were also viewed as subjects of prayers. The significance of the Ababukusu religious belief system, which pervaded every part of their lives, was demonstrated in this section, which was crucial to the chapter.

2.5 The Cultural Fabric of Ababukusu

The Ababukusu people have a rich cultural tradition of rites of passage that mark significant transitions in an individual's life. These rites of passage have deep cultural,

social, and spiritual significance, and are designed to prepare individuals for new roles, responsibilities, and challenges in life (Wafula, 2006). The significant rites of passage for the Ababukusu people include, birth, initiation, marriage and death

Birth: The birth of a child in Ababukusu is celebrated with great joy and fanfare, and is considered a significant event in the family and community. The young baby is named after the grandparents, and a feast is held to mark the occasion. Naming is an essential aspect of Ababukusu culture and holds great significance. Just like other African societies, a person's name is believed to reflect their identity, personality, and destiny. Names are often chosen based on the circumstances of the child's birth, family history, or significant events in the community (Murumwa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Naming was significant as it reflects identity and destiny of the child. The name may describe the circumstances of their birth, their character, or their future aspirations. This belief is based on the idea that a name is not just a label but is an essential part of an individual's being. Wafula (2006), further notes that naming practices among the Ababukusu often reflect a connection to one's ancestors and lineage. Children are often named after grandparents, parents, or other relatives to honor and preserve the family history and legacy. In addition, names in traditional African culture often reflect cultural values and beliefs. For example, names may be chosen to express gratitude to God or the spirits, to reflect the importance of community, or to celebrate virtues such as bravery or wisdom. Generally, naming ceremonies are often held to mark significant life events such as birth, initiation, marriage, or death. These ceremonies may involve rituals, feasts, or gifts and serve to reinforce cultural traditions and values.

Initiation: Initiation into adulthood is one of the most important rites of passage among the Ababukusu people. It marks the transition from childhood to adulthood and involves

circumcision for boys and clitoridectomy for girls. This rite of passage is a critical aspect of Ababukusu culture and is believed to make the initiates more responsible and mature. Circumcision is a significant rite of passage among the Ababukusu people. The practice involves the removal of the foreskin from the penis of male initiates and is typically carried out during adolescence as part of the initiation into manhood (Nyongesa, 2014). The procedure is performed by a traditional specialist called '*Mukhebi*'. Circumcision is always considered a significant event in the life of a boy, and its successful completion is a source of great pride for the individual and their family. It is believed to have spiritual significance that is associated with the belief in the power of ancestors and is thought to provide protection and blessings to the initiates. The practice is believed to be hygienic and is associated with cleanliness and purity. It is seen as a way of preserving their traditions and values. The practice has been passed down through generations and is an essential part of their cultural identity.

Marriage: Marriage is considered a significant rite of passage in Ababukusu culture. It involves a complex process of negotiation and payment of dowry, which signifies the groom's readiness to take on the responsibilities of a husband and provider. Marriage is a critical aspect of Ababukusu culture and is viewed as a way of strengthening family ties and social relationships. It provides a sense of security and stability for the couple and their families, and is an essential part of the social fabric of Ababukusu society. The payment of dowry is a significant aspect of the Ababukusu marriage process and is seen as a way of providing economic security for the bride and her family (Wepukhulu *et al*, 2023). It is associated with the belief in the power of ancestors and is thought to provide blessings and protection to the couple. Marriage is an essential part of Ababukusu culture and is seen as a way of preserving their traditions and values.

The practice has been passed down through generations and is an essential part of their cultural identity.

Death: Death is considered a transition to the spirit world among the Ababukusu people. Funeral rites are conducted with great care and attention to detail, and the deceased is mourned for several days before burial. Death is believed to have spiritual significance among the Ababukusu people, and their customs and rituals are designed to help the soul of the deceased transition to the afterlife (Mayende, Chacha & Waweru, 2023). For example, they may hold a wake to allow the soul to say goodbye to loved ones, and the body is buried with certain items to assist the soul on its journey. Death rites are a way of supporting the bereaved and strengthening community ties. The community comes together to mourn and support the family, which helps to ease the burden of grief and provide comfort during a difficult time. Death rites are a critical part of Ababukusu culture, and their customs and rituals have been passed down through generations. They are seen as a way of preserving their traditions and values, and honoring their ancestors and loved ones who have passed away. Many of the customs and rituals associated with death among the Ababukusu people have symbolic significance. For example, wearing certain clothing or jewelry may symbolize the mourning process, while the slaughtering of a bull is a symbol of respect for the deceased and their family.

During this study it was revealed that, the rites of passage among the Ababukusu people have significant cultural, social, and spiritual significance and they have been embraced by the TNJC. During interviews, the respondents argued that they serve to mark the significant transitions in an individual's life and prepare them for new roles, responsibilities, and challenges. These rites also reinforce the cultural values and traditions that are important to the Ababukusu people, and ensure that they are passed down to future generations.

2.6 Conclusion

Finding the Ababukusu way of life was the aim of this chapter. The Ababukusu possessed clear-cut political, social, religious, and economic systems. They were politically governed by a council of elders. They had a strong economic foundation built on farming and animal raising, with trade serving as a supplement. In terms of religion, the Ababukusu held rituals to commemorate life transitions like birth, initiation, marriage, and death. This chapter tries to unveil the background of the Ababukusu who are the main characters behind the development of TNJC

CHAPTER THREE

THE HISTORY OF THE NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH OF TONGAREN, BUNGOMA COUNTY

3.0 Introduction

In order to answer the question what is the history behind the formation of The New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren, Bungoma County, the chapter starts by discussing the early links of the Ababukusu with the world, the introduction of Christianity to Ababukusu land and Christian missionary work in Ababukusu land. It will later on look at the history of The New Jerusalem Church and the possible factors that led to the emergence of The New Jerusalem Church.

3.1 Historical Background of TNJC

TNJC has its roots in the Christian missionary activities that took place in the Bungoma County region of Kenya during the early 20th century. The church's history can be traced back to the arrival of European missionaries, particularly representatives of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) from Britain. The CMS missionaries began their work in the area around Tongaren in the early 1900s, introducing Christianity and establishing schools and churches. The missionaries focused on preaching the Gospel, teaching Christian doctrine, and providing education and healthcare services to the local population (Owino *et al*, 2017).

As the Christian faith took root in the Tongaren area, a local young man who belonged to one of the Catholic Churches in Tongaren claimed to have received a call from God to start his religion. The young man, Eliud Wekesa Simiyu known as *Mwalimu* declared himself Jesus. The TNJC was established as an independent Christian denomination that emerged out of this community. The exact date of its founding is not readily available, but it took shape in the year 2011.

The TNJC has its unique characteristics and practices, influenced by the cultural context of the Tongaren community. It combines Christian teachings with traditional African elements, incorporating local cultural expressions into its worship and spiritual practices. The TNJC has grown to become a significant religious presence in the Bungoma County region, with a network of churches and a community of believers who identify with its teachings and practices. The denomination continues to play a vital role in the spiritual and social life of its members and contributes to the broader religious landscape of the region.

Christianity was introduced to Ababukusu Land, in Western Kenya, during the colonial period in the late 19th and early 20th century. Christian missionaries from various denominations, including the Catholic Church and Protestant denominations such as the Anglican and Presbyterian Churches, established missions in the area and began to evangelize the local population.

The Swahili and Arab trade caravans that traveled to Buganda in pursuit of ivory and slaves before the arrival of the Europeans trekked through the Nandi Hills (Reid, 2020). Along with pillaging and robbing rural people, coastal traders introduced new forms of exchange, such as cowrie shells and beads, which took on a monetary function, and increased demand for imported commodities from other countries (Ibid). The Berlin Conference and the division of Africa, which were completed in 1885 and 1890, respectively, marked the beginning of the British taking control of her area of influence. Once the Royal Charter was obtained in 1888, the British decided to transfer the administrative responsibility to a private business in order to save money. Ivory and rhino horns from the interior were traded by the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEACO) with textiles, copper wire, iron, and porcelain goods from abroad (Kimani, 2018).

However, IBEACo was compelled to give up its charter to the government in 1894 due to a lack of funding and a variety of other issues. In July 1895, after the Company was dissolved, the British government directly took over management of the region (Ibid).

The region between the coast and Lake Victoria was initially deemed unprofitable by the British administration, but the need to protect the road to Uganda led them to designate the region as British East Africa Protectorate. During the British occupation, there were violent outbursts in Western Kenya. The first contact between the Ababukusu and the Europeans was in the years 1886 and 1918. This was the period when the British organized military expeditions against among the tribes were the Agiriama, Aembu, Abagusii, Kipsigis and the Ababukusu. The military expeditions against the Ababukusu were so disastrous that it came to be known as the 'Lumboka' and 'Chetambe' massacres (Makila, 2014).

With the establishment of colonial rule, the Ababukusu became subject to a number of forces working toward change. Their incorporation into a new and very large political entity threw together many former independent African nations. The political entity was also responsible for attracting European and Asian immigrants.' This created an entirely new context with which had far reaching effects on them. More specifically, there followed some colonial policies which sought to marginalize and control their nationalistic spirit. This aimed at assimilating the people into colonial systems (Branch, 2017).

The religious specialists, medicine men and council of elders were no more. The community lacked leaders. This was evident on how community support and care vanished. As this was going on, missionaries from Europe and England continued to spread the message of a loving, caring and an invisible God. Many people embraced

this message of missionaries but then, they started resenting it with the emergence of brutality of colonialism propagated by the Whites from Europe (Ogolla *et al*, 2019). Kenyan ethnic groups that were not willing to forego their old age independence (Ogolla *et al*, 2019). From the few sampled works concerning the Ababukusu reception of Europeans and their histories clearly show that the puritanical adoption of Christianity as was the goal of the mission churches. However, this did not go well with the Ababukusu African traditional culture.

The studies above were informative to this chapter as it provided an impetus for understanding on how Christianity arrived in Ababukusu land. It is at Ababukusu land where TNJC is stationed.

Initially, the Ababukusu people were resistant to the introduction of Christianity, as they were deeply attached to their traditional religion and way of life. However, over time, the missionaries were able to gain converts by offering education, medical care, and other forms of assistance to the local population. As more and more Ababukusu people began to convert to Christianity, the religion began to have an impact on Ababukusu culture and society. Christian values such as charity, forgiveness, and love began to influence the social and moral norms of Ababukusu society. In addition, Christian schools and hospitals became important institutions in the area, and many Ababukusu people began to adopt Western-style education and medical practices.

Today, Christianity is one of the dominant religions in Ababukusu Land, alongside traditional African religions and Islam. The majority of Ababukusu people are either Roman Catholic or Protestant, with a smaller number of Anglicans and members of other denominations. Christianity continues to have a significant impact on Ababukusu culture and society, influencing everything from family values to political beliefs.

Christianity experienced a renaissance in the 18th century, and there was a pressing desire to take the gospel abroad. African nations were seen by Europeans as urgently in need of the message of Christ. This resulted from European explorers' accounts that Africa was a gloomy continent and a haven for sorrow, crime, and devastation (Earle, 2005). The people of Africa were thought to be barbaric and primitive. As a result, missionaries felt compelled to visit the "black" continent and its inhabitants as soon as possible.

The early Christian missionaries who came to Ababukusu Land were mainly from European countries such as Britain, France, and Italy. These missionaries came with the aim of spreading Christianity and "civilizing" the local population (Wasike *et al*, 2020). One of the earliest missionaries to the area was the Catholic priest, Father Louis van der Heyden, who arrived in Ababukusu Land in 1902. He was followed by other Catholic missionaries, including the Holy Ghost Fathers and the Mill Hill Fathers, who established mission stations in various parts of the region.

Protestant missionaries also arrived in the area around the same time (Amatsimbi, 2013). The Church of Scotland Mission established a mission station in Kima, while the Church Missionary Society (CMS) set up stations in Kandunyi and Kimilili. The Anglican Church also established a presence in the area through the CMS.

The Friends Church which was originally called 'The Religious Society of Friends' arrived almost at the same time. It began in England under the leadership of George Fox who was the founder of a movement known in the beginning as "publishers of the truth and children of the light". George Fox's experience led to what is called the light of Christ (The Holy Spirit) that dwells in the hearts of ordinary people. He saw this as a seed that was planted by God inside a person which would only grow when it was

cultivated by the Holy Spirit. He believed that to those who repented, there was no longer any need to wait for the second coming of Christ, that Christ was already here and He could be known through the inner light (Gushee & Stassen, 2016).

Willis Hotchkiss became the first Friends missionary to arrive in Kenya in 1902 after a long history in which the church had undergone during the periods of transformation, both in England and the United States of America (Simwa, 2015). Once in western Kenya, the pioneer FAM missionaries established the first station in 1902 at Kaimosi, among the Tiriki. The Tirikis are among one of the Ababukusu sub-ethnic groups. At the same time, the Ababukusu were also undergoing a process of change, which had been introduced with the establishment of colonial rule.

Willis Hotchkiss, a FAM minister provided the first link that brought Evangelical American Friends' mission to Western Kenya. Hotchkiss had received his initial training at the Cleveland Bible Institute and while there, he received the "call" to work in Africa. He had earlier tried to work with the Africa Inland Mission among the Akamba community of Kenya. However, they failed due to lack of financial support. The missionaries had earlier hoped simplistically for the consequent development of a self-supporting African church but contrary to their expectation, the missionaries did not find the Akamba eager to accept the Christian message. This, among many other factors resulted to the Akamba to becoming Christians, they had to be converted to the belief of faith in God, repentance of what Christians perceived as sin, and confession of Jesus Christ as the Son of God. It was after the failure to convert the Akamba that Hotchkiss changed tactic to the industrial mission concept and the holistic development policy, which entailed both evangelical and secular propagation of Christianity. After what was supposedly a failure in Ukambani, Willis Hotchkiss returned to the USA for

a reorganization trip. While in the USA he got support from Arthur Chilson and Edgar Hole who were ready to accompany him to East Africa to engage in missionary work.

In April 1902, the trio sailed to East Africa to initiate the work. The three missionaries stopped over in England and Ireland, where members of the British Yearly Meeting donated the metal Devonshire house which was shipped to Kenya in 1903. The three missionaries arrived at Mombasa on June 24, 1902. Using the newly constructed railroad, they arrived at Kisumu in July confirming the significance of Kenya – Uganda railway in the inland missionary work. When the three pioneers arrived at the then railway terminal on Lake Victoria, the railway officials and C.W. Hobley, the District Commissioner, were very helpful (Omulokolii, 2004). Hobley, a scholar as well as a government official, had collected valuable information on the local people such as the Maragoli. He gave a missionaries dictionary with several hundred Luloogoli (Maragoli language) words, which became the basis of the Friends Church study of that language (Simwa, 2015). Hobley also assisted the missionaries with planning a tour through North Kavirondo and Nandi districts and invited them to accompany him on a visit to Mumias, his district headquarters. Thus, the Friends Church arrived in western Kenya with a clear advantage and a considerable fund of goodwill from other missions and the colonial administration.

After eight weeks of walking both Hotchkiss and Hole were often disabled by malaria, a suitable site was found on the 10th of August at Kaimosi. The missionaries decided to work among the Tiriki in what had become North Kavirondo District of Western Kenya. The area seemed suitable for implementing the Friends' ideas about salvation and civilization. Events leading to the selection of Kaimosi site were recorded in a letter by Chilson; He reported that, Kaimosi was a place with many things favorable for a

mission location. There was vast land unoccupied by the natives, and splendid drinking water. Hundreds of natives lived within reach (Wekesa, 2021).

Wekesa further notes that the establishment of FAM stations in Kenya was a slow process. The early missionaries endured hardships such as uncertain safety as strangers in a foreign and hostile land, personal tragedies and diseases. The first two decades of FAM's work were primarily a pioneer homesteading operation. By 1918, the Friends had established a vibrant and growing church among the Tiriki and spread to other Luhya regions, particularly among the Maragoli and the Ababukusu. The missionaries had chosen western Kenya for the activities among the Abaluhya (Simwa, 2015). In later years, they embarked on developing of the Quakers/Friends Church institutions such as Friends Kaimosi Church, Friends Kaimosi schools (both primary and secondary schools), Kaimosi Bible School and Kaimosi Hospital. The first Africans to be converted to Christianity in the region were Akhonya, Johhanne, Amugune and Joel Litu and Jafferson Ford. Joel Litu translated the Old Testament in Lulogoli language therefore making it the dominating language in Friends church in Western Kenya.

Later, the FAM missionaries soon began to open new stations that fostered greater success in reaching a larger segment of the Abaluhya. Among the new stations opened was the Lugulu mission station that was opened at Lugulu started in 1913. The missionaries who were living in Lugulu proudly reported in a conference that over one hundred spoke definitely to being saved and forty-four sought the baptism by the Holy Spirit. This was interpreted as the beginning of revival, (Gushee & Stassen, 2016).

Traditional African culture was deep rooted among the Ababukusu. To the missionaries, these cultural aspects of the Ababukusu were challenging to their mission.

For example, no Ababukusu accepted to be initiated from a hospital because parents feared that the initiates could be forced by the missionaries to reveal secrets of the ceremonies. In addition, young Ababukusu ‘adults’ felt embarrassed and humiliated by boys who had undergone circumcision traditionally. Those who were circumcised from hospitals were termed as ‘children’. As a result, the missionaries’ disliked the Ababukusu culture while some of the Ababukusu resisted the FAM missionaries for their stand on these Ababukusu customs (Simwa, 2015). This means that, the FAM missionaries were seen by some of the indigenous persons as enemies of Ababukusu religion as they banned some indigenous practices such as dancing, smoking and beer drinking with allegations that they are sins.

The Friends church also took a very firm stand against polygamy and adopted monogamy as an approval for Church membership (Wekesa, 2021). This requirement proved difficult for the Ababukusu to comply with. The Ababukusu were reluctant to accede to missionary demands that they abandon activities and customs long deemed as socially important.

Wekesa further notes that these early missionaries faced many challenges in their efforts to spread Christianity in Ababukusu Land. The Ababukusu people were initially resistant to the new religion, hence treated the missionaries with suspicion. In addition, the region was challenged by rugged terrain, disease, and hostile climate, making it difficult for the missionaries to travel and establish mission stations. Despite these challenges, the early missionaries persevered and were able to gain converts by offering education, medical care, and other forms of assistance to the local population. They translated the Bible into local languages and worked with local people to establish

schools, hospitals, and churches. In doing so, they laid the foundation for the growth and spread of Christianity in Ababukusu Land.

In 1940, a protestant movement; Dini ya Musambwa emerged among the Ababukusu led by Elijah Masinde, a former member of the Friends African mission who had been expelled because of being polygamous (Mukanda *et al*, 2015).This movement had taken root among the Tachoni people neighboring the Ababukusu people. During efforts to resist missionaries, a church building at Lugulu belonging to FAM was set on fire in 1941, by the followers of “Dini ya musambwa”. The DYM worshippers offered sacrifices at the traditional family shrines called “*namwima*” and “*wetili*”. In addition, they read the Bible, used the cross as a symbol and prayed in the name of God the Holy Spirit. They believed and taught doctrines on millennium promises when all the problems of the world would come to an end, when the foreigners would have been evicted and all their wishes would be fulfilled, (Gushee & Stassen, 2016).

In spite of taking over a number of symbols and customs from Christian churches, Dini ya Msambwa remained basically a movement built on foundations of their ancestors. Perhaps these may be one of the reasons for the rise of TJNC an aspect that will be investigated in the next sections.

3.2 Early Years and Foundation of TNJC

The New Jerusalem Church is the church of Eliud Wekesa well known as ‘*Yesu wa Tongaren*’. Its history can be traced a long way from the social, cultural and religious developments of Christian civilization. The members of TNJC credit the formation of this movement to their founder whom they believe is a return of the historical Jesus of Nazareth with the submission to the will of God.

TNJC founded in 2011 by Eliud Wekesa, a Kenyan from Tongaren in Bungoma County. Stories and circumstances surrounding his birth and childhood are mysterious. Wekesa was born in 1981 in a village known as Lukhokhwe in Tongaren. He is the last born among his six siblings. His father's name was Francis Wekesa Simiyu while his mother's name was Cecilia Simiyu. Both of his parents were farmers. His parents died when he was young but he finally managed to attain basic education. Eliud went through his early formal education in Mukuyuni Primary School from Standard One to Standard Seven just like any other child in Lukhokhwe. As a result of his exposure to formal education he can read and speak and write English, Kiswahili and Abaluhya languages. Eliud is commonly known by his followers as 'Mwalimu' (Teacher) or 'Jesus of Tongaren'. Mwalimu '*Yesu wa Tongaren*' believes he is the real Jesus Christ on a mission to save the world (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Before his call, he was a committed Christian in the Catholic Church. He was baptized to the Catholic Church in the year 1982 and attended all the Catholic rituals. At the age of 10, Wekesa started having dreams and seeing visions. In one of his visions, he saw prophets and prophetess of the Old Testament such as Abraham, Deborah, Lydia, Elkanah and Joel who descended from heaven and greeted him as 'the mighty chosen one'. Later, on in another vision, he saw himself walking around a world that was full of stars under a blue sky. In another vision he saw the end of the world and God asked him to enter into the underground world in a journey of three days. After experiencing these dreams, God told him to serve Him.

He received another vision at the age of twelve years where he heard a voice call his name and told him to do some calculations with assistance from a prophet who he recognizes as Prophet Gideon. Wekesa explained as follows:

‘When the time came, I chose not to refute this message. On that particular day, I saw heavens open then God and Prophet Gideon descended. God wore glittering white clothes with a sword in His hands. Using the sword, He drew a square on the ground and told me to help him calculate.’ Immediately the squared box was filled with blood that filled the whole world. Later, I saw different kinds of fish with different colors which God commanded me, to take care of’ (Wekesa, O.I, 2022 June 9).

From the vision, it is clear that God called Eliud at his tender age. Mwalimu Yesu believes God gave him the name “*Yesu*” in order to fulfill his mission on Earth. He was asked to preach to the people and tell those who believe in his world that they will live forever. During the visions, God asked him to quit all that he was doing to serve Him through converting people unto Him. He further explained that the blood in the visions referred to human beings while the fish with different colors referred to people of different races.

He officially received his divine call to his ministry in 2011 while he was 30 years old. The Holy Spirit descended on him commissioning him to establish a New Jerusalem in Kenya. He received a vision while he was at Kamukuywa Market along Kitale – Webuye Road in Tongaren, Bungoma County. During the vision, he saw God’s prophets wearing bright clothes with sandals on their feet with cotton bags and rods in their hands. Afterwards, a voice from heaven commanded him to leave all that he was doing to accomplish his mission on earth. In a vision, Prophet Moses called all other prophets one by one. He then saw a bleeding human heart that he later found out that it was Jesus of Nazareth’s heart oozing blood covered with flames of fire. Suddenly, the heart entered into him and a voice was heard from above saying...

‘That is my chosen son. Listen to him and to you my son, your house is henceforth a house of kings and it is blessed. Your name will therefore be ‘Jesus’ for you are the savior of the world.’

From that period henceforth, Wekesa believes that his name is 'Jesus' and his mission on earth has begun. Consequently, having witnessed the transformations, some people thought he had gone mad because of the expressions he was making.

Though raised from a strong Catholic foundation, he defected in the year 2011 with several others who felt that the Catholic Church was hindering their progress of salvation. According to him, he felt that the Roman Catholic's mode of worship and religious teachings was not satisfying to his soul's beliefs and practices. He had a genuine thirst for spiritual nourishment that was unexplainable. He explains that through the call he had received from God, it felt like there was a new deeper level of spirituality that only God was directing him to. The foregoing is in line with Pretorius's (2007) discovery that there are people within the mainline churches that feel unfulfilled hence; they experience a desire for a deeper level of spirituality. At this point, Wekesa says that he was ready to give up everything for the sake of God. Later, he formed a movement of his own.

Before his call, Wekesa lived a normal life that included having one wife and seven children, attending beer-drinking parties and discos. After this call Wekesa changed his lifestyle and devoted his life to prayer and intensive Bible study (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). He started his evangelical activity and teachings in 2009, which drew many of people to his group. He preached piety, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and repentance. The majority of the crowd appeared to be drawn to his lectures on repentance. He preached a message of emancipation from missionary churches' enslavement. The teachings of Wekesa, according to a member, were very relevant for the populace at that time, when they desperately needed God to deliver them from the cruelty of spiritual slavery (Njukhilile, O.I , 2022, June 9).

During his home fellowships in his new formed independent Church, he began to experience more intense regular dreams and visions. He claimed that he experienced spiritual renewal and led his members to non-compulsory prayer meetings where they could publicly confess their sins. As time went on, more individuals started to join Wekesa's church as a result of their newfound personal encounters with the Holy Spirit and their awareness that this church catered for their society's more profound spiritual needs. In 2011, TNJC was founded in Tongaren, Bungoma County, as a result of his work.

He spent a lot of time studying the Bible after receiving his divine calling, focusing on the teachings of the Old Testament. Speaking in tongues, meditations, dreams, and intercessory prayer were all used in conjunction with prayers (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). His entire life got closely entwined with the founding and growth of TNJC, the first such religious organization in Western Kenya. Wekesa is the supreme leader of this church and is usually assisted by 'human angels' like Angel Gabriel, Rueben and Micah to perform his duties. He is the supreme leader with the mandate to baptize new converts, conduct marriages and ordination ceremonies. He chose twelve disciples to help him run his church. The 12 disciple's names are in accordance to the descendants of Jacob.

3.2.1 Factors that led to the Emergence of the New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren

TNJC of Tongaren was started in 2011. Different scholars have cited numerous reasons for the emergence of AICs; amongst them are the non- religious factors, religious factors and theological factors (Meyer, 2004). Joseph Koech (2008) identifies non-religious factors such as historical factors, personal factors, political factors and social injustices whereas religious factors are the need by Africans to have a spiritually

satisfying religion. Further, theological factors can also lead to NRMs due to disagreements over church dogma.

Just like other NRMs, the TNJC came up to create space for religious independency. It is claimed that the TNJC came up as a result of Globalization in Kenya. It is evident that globalization has created favorable conditions for the emergence of NRMs in Kenya TNJC not being exceptional. Scholars do not agree on a single term for the definition of globalization. However, the Merriam-Webster dictionary defines *globalization as a process of gradual integration of world economy and collapse of trade barriers*. These forces of globalization include efficient transportation, immigration, instant global communication, cultural linkages, cultural liberalism, human rights, democracy, secularization, individualism, freedom of religion, freedom of expression and emerging pluralistic societies. These forces have created a fertile ground for growth of NRMs in Kenya and particularly in Tongaren, Bungoma County.

Religious and Social liberalism, has given people more freedom to join the religion of their choice. Liberalism renders legitimacy to cultural pluralism, which gives rise to a multitude of worldviews in human society (Bamidele, 2017). Moreover, liberalism allows the formation of new religious ideologies to develop and proliferate in the new global world, without unbearable pressure to conform to conventional social norms. Strong concern for human rights in this globalized world also gives shelter and recognition for different types of NRMs. For the case of TNJC the members are promised a solution to the challenges and hardships they are facing in life by their founder.

Another factor that resulted to the emergence of TNJC is the founder's religious experience. Religious experiences according to Zalta *et al* (2002) are encounters

between supernatural beings with human beings. Such encounters seem to have specific realistic objectives towards a specific human being. That reality can be an individual, a state of affairs, a fact, or even an absence, depending on the religious tradition the experience is a part of. Many important founders of religions, both orthodox and NRMs, were inspired through some religious experiences. During field work, four out of five respondents agreed that they were converted because they had one form of religious experience either directly or indirectly. Other members of TNJC claimed that they had a radical transformation of life or worldview, and adopted a new commitment as a result of their religious experience. Eliud Wekesa, the founder of TNJC believes he got inspiration from God in 2011 to start TNJC because he believed God told them to do so.

The TNJC started after God's calling (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Wekesa claims that, God called him after a revelation to spread the gospel. Wekesa who is also known as 'Yesu wa Tongareni' clearly stated that God called him officially in 2011 when he was 30 years old. He was at Kamukuywa market his home town in Tongaren Sub County to start a ministry of propagating true Christianity. He personally claims to have heeded to the call of God to the important mission of spreading His word on Earth. In turn, he explains that God assured him protection and guidance. He further claims that he was instructed to begin a Church which should be known as 'TNJC', the mother of all churches on Earth meant for all races, religions and creeds.

In addition, the TNJC started due to spiritual hunger of the people of Bungoma. Most of the missionary churches in Bungoma could not satisfy the spiritual hunger making some Christians to join TNJC for spiritual nourishment. Wekesa claims that members of Bungoma County were in dire need of a satisfying religion. The TJNC addresses most of the people of Bungoma's needs such as the spiritual, psychological, social and

physical needs. During field work most members of the TNJC explained that this religion gives them self-fulfillment which they missed before joining it.

Wekesa asserts that the Holy Spirit played a role in the founding of his church. Because of this, the followers of this religion refer to themselves as "Watu wa Yesu wa Tongaren," which translates to "the chosen people of Jesus of Tongaren" (Barasa O.I, 2022, June 9). He desired to build a people among the Africans through whom he would reveal his will. Believers in the TNJC hold that these are the final days and that God will shortly begin a brand-new heaven and world. Everyone is asked to live a life that will result in the gaining of salvation because their time in this world is considered to be transitory (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The presence of charismatic leaders who are able to inspire and mobilize followers is often a key factor in the emergence of this religious movement. Most people are attracted to TNJC because of the fruits of the gifts of the Holy Spirit presented by God to their leader (Barasa O.I, 2022, June 9). After Gods revelation to the founder, they received the gifts of the Holy Spirit of prophesy, healing, and speaking in tongues. Since then, members of this church display spiritual gifts. Eliud Wekesa experienced a Trinitarian vocation to his mission in 2011. According to Eliud, this marked a turning point and hence the birth of his Church. Seemingly, God's revealing his mission to Eliud Wekesa came during the right time when missionary churches were unable to meet the problems of the people such as illness, misfortunes, poverty, encounters with evils, barrenness and most of their social problems like lack of love and understanding towards their adherents. People who go to his church hold him in the highest regard, and they were amazed by his ability to heal the sick and do other amazing things. His wife claims that at one point he performed a miracle by turning water into tea (Khaemba, 2023).

TNJC came up as a rebellion to injustices in the Roman Catholic Church (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). The Catholic Church interfered with some of their cultural traditions by denouncing and rejecting several of their Luhya customs. For instance, the Church of Scotland Mission created a priority list of the customs that needed to be abandoned. According to Mwangi (2016), these were practices that were thought to be at odds with Christian values but weren't necessarily actively hostile to them and were therefore to be permitted to fade away on their own. Respect for ancestors' spirits, the traditional sacrificial system, and the use of sorcery and prophecy all fall under this category. Polygamy and sexually explicit dances were among the customs that were condemned as being incompatible with Christian values and hence inappropriate in a Christian community. The missionaries also objected to practices such as polygamy and the exposing of the dead that were thought to be unhealthy or unsanitary.

TNJC of Tongaren also emerged as a response to a perceived loss of traditional cultural values in the area. The movement sought to reclaim and preserve cultural traditional beliefs and practices, while also incorporating Christian elements such as use of drums during worship. TNJC emerged as a response to a perceived loss of traditional cultural. Denunciation of the Bukusu culture, which missionaries had perceived as primitive and demonic, went hand in hand with the adoption of previous Christian missionary teachings among the Bukusu population (Wekesa, 2021). Critically, we can deduce that this was accomplished without considering their significance to the Bukusu people's traditional way of life. The missionaries attacked their native healing practices right away since they conflicted with their Christian missionary teachings. European missionaries referred to Bukusu local healing as witchcraft and paganism. In addition, they were viewed as being anti-civilized (Robert, 2009). The missionaries established health centers in their mission stations where they referred the ill African converts in

an effort to prevent these practices. The four pillars of Western civilization—the school, the church, a health facility, and a farm to provide some income—were therefore present in the majority of mission stations. Africans were also converted in the schools and medical facilities (Robert, 2009). African converts were dissatisfied because mission churches were unable to understand the Bukusu's salvatory demands, which were plainly communicated in relation to the illness's causes. The Bukusu converts who returned to their ancient religions that provided supernatural healing left a spiritual void.

Spiritual Revival: The founding of the New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren sparked by a perceived need for spiritual renewal or a desire for a more personal and transformative religious experience. People felt a spiritual hunger or dissatisfaction with existing religious institutions and sought a new religious movement that offered a different approach or emphasized specific spiritual teachings.

Cultural and Societal Factors: The cultural and societal context in which TNJC of Tongaren emerged played a role in its founding. This includes factors such as social unrest, economic challenges, or changes in the local community. The TNJC arose as a response to these challenges, offering a sense of hope, meaning, and community.

The New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren also presented unique doctrinal teachings or interpretations of existing religious beliefs. These new ideas or interpretations resonated with individuals seeking alternative perspectives or deeper understandings of religious principles.

Community and Social Support: The establishment of the New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren was driven by the need for a close-knit community that offers social connections, emotional support, and a shared sense of purpose and identity. Religious

movements often provide a sense of community, belonging, and support for their members.

Syncretism and Cultural Synthesis: The TNJC emerged through the blending of different religious traditions, beliefs, or practices. It incorporated elements from traditional Bukusu beliefs, Christianity, or other religious influences, creating a unique syncretic expression of spirituality.

The African worldview is governed by certain forces, which are thought to act in situations that are beyond the control of humans (Mbiti, 2015). TNJC in Tongaren Sub County adopted the Bukusu way of life and created a movement that believed in and practiced the curing of physical illnesses through spiritual practices, an outlook that considered both the physical and spiritual well-being. Following the missionaries' prohibition of certain Abaluhya traditional customs such as polygamy, ceremonial dancing, and drinking traditional beer, TNJC supporters in Tongaren withdrew, rejected wearing western clothing, and refused to purchase westernized goods. Additionally, they were hesitant to continue tolerating the patronizing behavior of the missionary-founded churches, whose membership was severely separating them from the mainline churches due to their level of societal integration (Omenyo, 2011). The TNJC of Tongaren in Bungoma rose to prominence as a result of the aforementioned elements, which include receiving God's divine call, the yearning for African self-expression, and religious freedom from missionary influence.

3.2.2 Jesus of Tongaren's acceptance in the society

During the beginning of his ministry, Wekesa received a lot of backlash from members of his society (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Having been seen growing up with human parents (Francis Wekesa Simiyu and Cecilia Simiyu) who were farmers, he faced

rejection for the people lacked belief in him. To the people of Tongaren, Wekesa was a farmer's child. He grew up in Lukhokhwe Village, and they knew him as just a commoner. To others he was a childhood friend whom they had seen grow, he was schoolmate and a classmate. And so, the people of this locality took offense at what he was doing and who he claimed to be. They felt entitled to define *Yesu wa Tongaren* according to their terms (Wekesa, O.I 2023, January, 2). He was in turn accused of blasphemy by the local authorities. In their eyes, when *Yesu wa Tongaren* claimed to be the incarnate Jesus he was insulting God. He at some point was arrested with his followers (Mikaili, O.I, 2022, June 9).

In response to the people's unbelief, Wekesa quoted mark 6:1-6 claiming 'a prophet receives no honor in his hometown.'

3.2.3 Registered membership population the TNJC

Members of TNJC movement are united by a belief in each human's ability to enter The New Jerusalem hence the name The New Jerusalem Church. They profess a holiness of all believers inspired by their founder Eliud Wekesa. In 2022, there was an estimate of 1000 officially registered members of the TNJC with 18% being youths, 32% children while 48% adults (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The headquarters of TNJC is located in Lukhokwe village, Tongaren Sub county Bungoma County. Mostly it operates on a coalition basis with other churches. For instance, it has over 100 Christians who are members of other denominations from other counties in Kenya who come in for prayers and fellowships.

3.3 Education Background of the Members

Initially most TNJC members of Tongaren Bungoma County did not embrace western education because their founder, Eliud Wekesa considered it as the root source of all

evil. To Wekesa, anything Western in nature except the Bible was opposed by the members of TNJC (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). In addition, he considered education to be worldly and instructed his members to ignore it in order to concentrate on the heavenly kingdom.

However, over time, the current TNJC members have come to the conclusion that education is important and that their kids should pursue higher education (Nasike, O.I, 2022, June 9). Thus, a voice of change from the rigid, restrictive views that forbade education inside this movement has been made. Barasa emphasizes that:

‘TNJC children should go up to the university just like other children because if they fail to do so, then they will be left behind in terms of development and you know, today everyone is looking forward to development’ (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The first generation of the educated, committed, and focused TNJC elite class emerged as a result of the rise of the organization's educated members starting in 2012 (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Following this, TNJC students from Tongaren began to enroll in educational institutions in large numbers by the year 2020 in order to pursue basic and higher education, which they believe is essential to the growth of the community (Njukhilile, O.I, 2022, June 9).

3.4 Economic Patterns of Members of TNJC

The New Jerusalem Church members are urged by their leader to take on economic responsibilities in order to help their families and the community. Everyone in the family, even the children, has a financial responsibility to fulfill. As a result, the division of labor is based on sex and age. Men are known for providing security, supplying the family with food and necessities, clearing ground in front of planting season, erecting fences around farms, and taking care of the animals (Wanjala, O.I, 2022, June 9). The majority of the time, women are considered to be caregivers who

raise children, cook, get water and firewood, thatch buildings, plaster walls with clay or cow dung, and perform farm work including planting, weeding, and harvesting. Boys are taught to go to the grazing field with their father or uncles, while girls are taught by mothers, aunts, and grandmothers how to do household tasks, according to the gender of the children in each family of this particular new NRM (Njukhilile, O.I, 2022, June 9). According to four out of five respondents, a male is unlikely to take on a woman's duty unless it is an emergency; the division of work is systematic and orderly to ensure the material well-being of the movement's participants. Laziness is highly condemned.

TNJC accounts indicate that agriculture is the main source of income for their members and it has been practiced by its members for quite some time. This is authenticated by their vast amount of knowledge regarding farming practices. Currently, they grow maize for subsistence and sugarcane as a cash crop as well as wheat and coffee. Cattle and sheep are kept respectively for milk and meat. However, cattle are also kept by members of this movement for offers of sacrifice (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The founder of TNJC Wekesa teaches that 'man cannot serve both God and wealth' He asserts that money is as a result of incorporations of the Kenyan culture with the Western society where wealth has triumphed over God. Wealth is generated by members of TNJC through inheritance, leasing of property, buying of property and land while other members acquire wealth through gifts (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). However, Wekesa claims that there is nothing wrong with wealth in itself if it is acquired righteously; nevertheless, it is wrong to desire to have more wealth. For the case of TNJC, they use their wealth to help the less fortunate members in the society. Barasa a member of TNJC claims that they have a duty to help each as a global family (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Tongaren's neighboring settlements, known as TNJC, were notoriously indolent and seldom bothered to work. Additionally, they opted out of owning property and participating in traditional economic activities (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). They were content to live simply as they awaited their ascension to celestial glory and saw no reason to rise out of their predicament, being the poorest of the poor (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Since its founding, TNJC members have emerged from self-isolation and started collaborating with the rest of society as they seek other economic endeavors beyond basic farming methods in response to changing conditions. By starting self-help projects and cooperative organizations, they have actively participated in the government's efforts to increase productivity and hence the welfare of the populace (Murumwa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Their commitment to integrity, honesty, and trust propelled many of them to greater economic success across a range of industries (Key respondent 21, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Many people gathered riches and power in the society as the elite TNJC class of 2011 emerged. Their passion for making money is evidence of how TNJC has evolved into contributing members of society. Many people in Tongaren engaged in trade activities and got along well with other people in the community (Wanjala, O.I, 2022, June 9). The early TNJC members' reputation for exclusivity and isolation was successfully eradicated by this transition. By 2011, the TNJC community in Tongaren had quickly caught up with the rest and built more gorgeous churches, permanent residences, and other structures, while others had relocated to urban locations in search of work and business prospects. However, even though the industrial sector of the economy of the nation experienced significant expansion, most TNJC members were still mostly located in rural areas by the year 2020.

In conclusion, Eliud Wekesa's TNJC of Tongaren has made a significant contribution to the economic life of the community by embracing education and participating in economic activities to reduce poverty among its members in the Tongaren countryside. Many TNJC members got interested in dairy and poultry farming, cash and subsistence farming, and commerce, while others found work in the nearby Kamukuywa and Kimilili towns and other areas.

3.5 Hierarchy of TNJC

Hierarchy is a term used in churches to denote how authority of rank and power is held according to the principality instituted by Christ in his church (Macdonald, 2019). In TNJC, hierarchy involves having the authority of governing and ministering Gods word. This authority is divinely ordained by God and gave the primacy of authority to *Yesu wa Tongaren* (Wekesa, O.I, 2023, June 9). The TNJC hierarchy is divided into the hierarchy of orders with God the father as their head. This hierarchical order includes God, The Holy Spirit, Jesus (Jesus of Tongaren), and Angelic beings, Disciples, Pastors and Deacons.

The following diagram indicates hierarchy of beings in TNJC

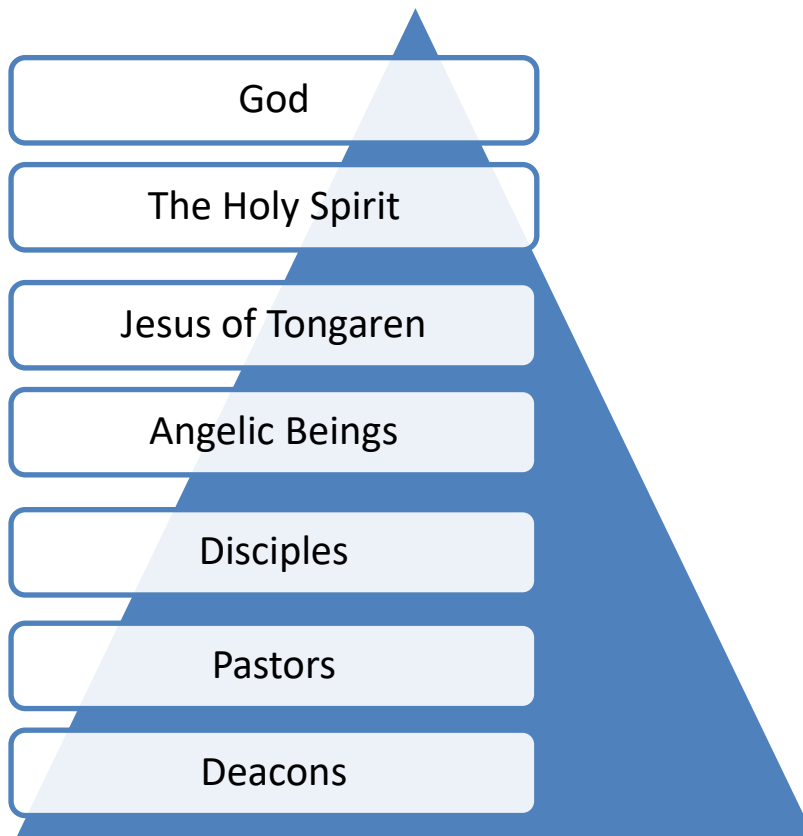


Figure 3.1: Hierarchy of Beings in TNJC

Source: *TNJC records (2022)*

From the above chain of hierarchy God is at the top above all authority. Members of TNJC regard God as the creator of the entire universe and all things in it. He is attributed to being omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscience (Muloli, O.I, 2022, June 9). Beneath God, is the Holy Spirit who is entirely without material bodies. To members of TNJC, the Holy Spirit was present before the creation of the universe and through his power; everything was made through God the Father. Jesus of Tongaren comes third on the hierarchy. He is the founder, leader and owner of The New Jerusalem Church. To the members of this movement, he is the incarnation of Jesus Christ of Nazareth (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Later on are the angelic beings whose purpose according to Topistar an angel in TNJC is:

Communicating revelations from God, glorifying God and recording the events of Jesus of Tongaren. (Topistar, O.I, 2022, June 9)

The disciples within TNJC are those who have been given the authority by Jesus of Tongaren to preach over all nations in order to attain unity within the church. Through them, the ministry of Jesus of Tongaren is preserved. Priests appear second last on the hierarchy. By the authority vested in them by their overall leader and founder, they have the power to administer the holy Eucharist and blood of Christ to the members of TNJC the deacons serve as helpers to the pastors in matters pertaining pastoral care of the sick and poor (Samweli, O.I, 2022, June 9).

3.6 The Growth and Expansion of TNJC

The spread of TNJC spans between the periods of its formation in 2011 and now. This has in turn resulted to a spread that is fast reaching to the communities around Tongaren Sub County and far beyond. Wekesa shared his religious beliefs with others. This was done through one on one conversation and large gatherings (crusades) (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). His views were seen as a threat to the society for he was accused of blasphemy several times. Wekesa however did not give up on his mission since he believed it was the will of God. He continued to share his beliefs without despair. In the same year, 2011 he managed to convert his wife and later his children. Conversion of people to TNJC was majorly boosted by the founder himself. Most of the significant spread occurred in 2012 with the help of his wife Nabii Benjamin (Mikaili, O.I, 2022, June 9).

His home in Lukhokhwe village in Tongaren was used as a gathering place for many of the first converts. As of 2016, there were 200 members of TNJC who had been converted from other denominations (Wekesa, O.I 2023, January, 2). By 2020, TNJC population had increased immensely to 500 congregants (Kataka, O.I, 2022, June 9). In

Lukhokhwe village in Tongaren, one out of four people are members of TNJC. Out of children born within the year 2022 in this locality, 30% are members of TNJC making this movement fast growing by births.

Just like other AICs, TNJC leader and founder Wekesa was opposed to the doctrines and theology brought by the Western Christian missionary churches (Maria, O.I, 2022, June 9). So far, there is only one church of TNJC which forms its headquarters in Tongaren Bungoma County. Consequently, there are plans underway to expand the church due to its massive attraction from all parts of Kenya. Currently, in 2023, the church's population is at about 1000 believers (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

3.7 Challenges and Resilience of TNJC

During the beginning of his ministry in 2011, Wekesa, the founder of TNJC was met with opposition from both the people within his locality and the government officials. He disagreed with the Bungoma County officials over indoctrination. In 2012 Wekesa was accused by the Tongaren society of being blasphemous leading to constant harassment, arrests, fines and imprisonment together with his followers (Wekesa, 2022). Maria, a member of TNJC claimed:

Their places of worship could be destroyed by the authorities to some extent. (Maria, O.I, 2022, June 9).

During this period, these members of TNJC were suspected of associating and helping their founder Eliud Wekesa in claiming to be Jesus Christ (Muloli, O.I, 2022, June 9). Most probably, this was because Eliud Wekesa was a strong religious leader who claimed that he was the incarnate Jesus of Nazareth referring to himself as 'Jesus of Tongaren'. He is since referred to as 'Yesu wa Tongaren' by his followers. The members of TNJC claim that they did not view their leader as a claim of being Jesus Christ but instead to them as per Samweli a member of TNJC:

He is the true promised biblical Messiah who only came to fulfill the Old Testament Prophecies. (Samweli, O.I, 2022, June 9)

In one incident, Wekesa was denied a permit to hold meetings both private and public by the local authorities. It was believed that he was exorcising people by the power of witchcraft claiming that he was the 'Messiah'. His leadership prowess was proven when he led TNJC members to Bungoma Chief Magistrate in 2011 to seek for formal permission to hold their meetings freely without Mukuyuni Police Administration interference (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). His request was granted and made it possible for TNJC to hold church services and evangelistic meetings at Wekesa's home without fear of being arrested.

In 2023, Wekesa was arrested by Bungoma Director of Criminal Investigation officer where he stayed in custody for five days. He was accused of unlawful operation of unregistered church, radicalization of his teachings which were termed offensive and against the law and money laundering through church donations and compulsory tithes. Bungoma Principal Magistrate, Tom Orlando later on released him due to failure to provide sufficient evidence against him (Kiriimi and Anyango, 2023).

3.8 Relationship between members of TNJC and members of other religious movements

TNJC is a 21st Century Christian NRM but they feel that they do not fit within the categories of Catholic, Orthodox or Protestant churches but they choose to remain separate from other Christian groups. They identify themselves with ecumenical movements such as the Pentecostal movements whom they share common religious grounds (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). A concern for religious piety, peace and social justice often brings members of TNJC together with other Christian churches and other Christian groups within Tongaren sub county in Bungoma County.

Most adherents believe in continuing Gods revelation of truth. Eliud Wekesa, the founder claims:

Christ has come to teach people Himself. (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Diverse theological beliefs, understanding of the ‘manifestation of the Holy Spirit’ and statements of ‘faith professions and practice of piety’ have always existed among TNJC adherents (Nanyama, O.I, 2022, June 9). Too much emphasis is laid on guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Members of this particular NRM testify their religious beliefs and their spiritual lives from the life and teachings of their founder *Yesu wa Tongaren* (Lucia, O.I, 2022, June 9). Their beliefs and practices are based on biblical texts.

Members of TNJC distance themselves from practices that seem to be worldly or pagan celebrations such as Christmas because they believe Christmas is a pagan festivity (Maria and Nelima, O.I, 2022, June 9). TNJC adherents call denominations within Tongaren in Bungoma County to turn into the New Jerusalem which is TNJC since it is the only gateway to heaven.

Members of TNJC believe that the state is an institution just like the family. Wekesa, notes that:

The issue of governance is well supported from the scripture through the roles played by judges, kings, priests and prophets (Deuteronomy 16:18-22). In a family, each individual is given different roles to play by God. (Wekesa, O.I 2022, June 9)

Just like kings and judges, members of TNJC believe that the government plays the same role by dispensing justice and protecting the vulnerable people in the society. Similarly, the church plays the prophetic role of being the conscience of the nation, proclaiming Gods expectations and calling people back when they fall short of the same

(Muthuku *et al*, 2023). Wekesa's respect for governance can be seen when he presented himself before the police in April 2023 after they summoned to investigate him and his religion.

Members of TNJC believe that the role of the church as far as government is concerned is to equip Gods people for works of public service in the various institutions in which God places them. The church's engagement with the government is not about the church members getting into elective positions, but rather about ordinary Christians bringing the kingdom of God by doing his will forever wherever they are (Wekesa, O.I 2022, June 9). *Yesu wa Tongaren* aims at bringing people under his rule by creating a new community of people with a whole new identity.

During the period of this study, *Mwalimu Yesu* has one wife and eight children. His followers identify his wife as '*The wife of the lamb*' and have been religiously renamed as *Nabii Benjamin* while her children have names of the great prophets of the Bible. His wife is quite supportive to her husband's work and she believes her husband is a true prophet. His believers get to see him perform miracles such as healing the critically ill people. It is claimed she started her relationship with Eliud after being commanded by a voice from heaven.

"I ascended to the top of the mountain, where I discovered Mwalimu. I cannot express how grateful I am to have been selected out of all the ladies that live on this earth", the wife said, (Khaemba, 2023)

Wekesa believes that because of the level of sin that exists in the world, only a small percentage of its eight billion inhabitants will be able to enter paradise (Wekesa, O.I, 2023, June 9). To him, he will only take 168,000 believers with him to heaven (Khaemba, 2023).

3.9 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to examine British colonial control and missionary doctrine in Bukusu territory. The Bukusu way of life was destroyed by the tremendous socioeconomic, political, and religious changes brought about by this encounter. Teachings from missionaries condemned African traditional practices including polygamy and female circumcision. The Bukusu discontent gave rise to political and militant opposition to the colonial regime, including the Dini ya Musambwa. In light of this, the goal of this study was to comprehend the context in which the TNJC of Tongaren in Bungoma was established up. According to the report, Tongaren, Bungoma County's religious, political, social, and economic systems might all be blamed for the city's explosive rise. The political, economic, and social ramifications of the TNJC's establishment and expansion in Tongaren were profound.

The Tongaren TNJC members, led by Mwalimu, have not been able to go out to other ethnic groups in search of converts, hence the majority of their followers have stayed Bukusu (Lucia, O.I, 2022, June 9). They have been actively involved in projects supported by the government, such as the building of harambee schools, cattle dipping facilities, churches, and the planting of cash crops like coffee and tea. The large majority of TNJC members in Tongaren believed that their spiritual well-being should come before all other considerations (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). According to the TNJC, this life is only temporary, hence one should live a life that will ultimately result in salvation.

The church exhorts followers to raise their level of living and educate their children (Ibid). They supported their kids' pursuit of higher education while enrolling the elderly in adult literacy programs. It is sufficient to say, in conclusion, that TNJC Tongaren members were more deeply and realistically concerned with their fellow members'

social and spiritual wellness than political activity. The TNJC movement engaged in politically motivated social programs or government-initiated development projects with the goal of enhancing the welfare of their constituents.

CHAPTER FOUR

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF THE NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH OF TONGAREN

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings on a bid to find answers on the question of what are the distinctive beliefs and practices of TNJC of Tongaren Bungoma County? In order to answer this question, the chapter starts by discussing the Luhya traditional worldview, analyses the doctrines of the TNJC on the Supreme Being, Divinities, Spirits and ancestors. It also analyses their beliefs and practices on matters ecclesiastical attires and dressing, way and days of worship, baptism, and rites of passage.

4.1 Relationship between TJNC and the Luhya indigenous worldview

A worldview is a fundamental cognitive orientation of an individual or society encompassing the whole of the individuals or society's knowledge and point of view (Kurka 2004). A worldview can include natural philosophy, fundamental, existential and normative postulates, or themes, values, emotions and ethics. One important trait about TNJC is its insistence on bringing forward a Christian church based on a Traditional Luhya outlook. This church is well known for its incorporation of both the Luhya and the Christian culture. According to Wekesa, the TNJC spiritual way of life is informed by the Bukusu worldview which is incorporated in their beliefs, teachings and doctrines. The Traditional Bukusu culture is a strong part of their teachings, and they are adaptable enough to meet their needs. They have a different understanding in phenomenal happenings such as forces of evil, spirits, their rites of passage and way of worship. However, with the hold onto their beliefs and practices their Christian faith is upheld. The church has experienced rapid growth into different regions within the same locality due to its ability to bring people closer to God through preaching of relevant

messages that meet the people's needs. According to Mokhoathi (2017), the African worldview should be respected and the gospel should be explained in words that the populace can comprehend.

The members of the TNJC practice a brand of Christianity that is consistent with their own historical background and distinctive cultures. This has resulted to a richer worldwide with the social institutions, nature, objects, other people and spirituality. TNJC worldview is one that is based on different themes such as Supreme Being, belief in Divinities, belief in Spirits, belief in Ancestors, magic and witchcraft and rites of passage.

4.1.1 Belief in Supreme Being in TJNC

In Africa, there is a widespread strong belief in a Supreme Being, God. African societies are rich in the awareness of a Supreme Being to the extent that no native-born African is unaware of the supreme Beings' existence (Olumbe, 2008).

Among the Bukusu, the Supreme Being, Were, is the Creator of everything and Sustainer of life. This concept of God as a Creator across African is explored by Mbiti (2004) who describes God as Excavator, Cleaver, Moulder, Carpenter, Originator and Begetter to define his creative power. In Bukusu religion, God is revered as omnipresent. Thus, they say 'He is like air', 'The One who sees everything' and 'He who is met everywhere' (Olumbe, 2008). Though the above statements attest to God's omnipresence, it is noted that in everyday life of the Bukusu people, there is a very strong belief that God is much closer to man and earth but not further away from the heavens. Due to this fact, He is hence considered as an "A terribly remote God" by Africans (Donovan 2019).

‘Gods terrible and remote’ nature emanates from various myths among the Bukusu community about how God got angry and left the earth for the far heavens after man disappointed him. This angry nature is seen during thunderstorms. He is therefore distinctly removed from the daily affairs of this world. However due to his caring, forgiving and loving nature He can be approached any time one is faced with a challenge and tribulation (Namulunda, 2011).

Another attribute of the Bukusu religion God is that he is Omnipotent, All-Powerful. All majestic deeds, such as earthquakes and rain, are attributed to Him. Namulanda argues that the Bukusu claim that He is the One “who roars so that the nations be struck with terror” Furthermore, God is seen as the Provider; the one who provides rain to enable people to farm and animals or wild fruits for food and life.

God is also considered as Omniscient and All-Knowing. Therefore, nothing happens without his knowledge. As a way of appreciating Him humans are expected to worship him through sacrifices and offerings (Namulunda, 2011). There is also the belief in many gods and spirits who are lower than and subservient to the Supreme Being.

The nature of God among the Bukusu religion is the same as that of TNJC. The two religions are in agreement that, God manifests in every aspect of any member of TNJC’s life. Just as the Bukusu believe in one Supreme Being (God), TNJC members describe God as being Omnipresent, Omniscient, benevolent, merciful, Father, eternal, creator who was not created (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). The idea and convictions of TNJC members regarding God are reflected in His names, traits, deeds, and character, which are aspects of the Bukusu traditional religion. Sumbayi a member of TNJC claim that:

Our leaders were called by God and this should be able to show how strongly we believe in Him and how special our connection with Him is. (Sumbayi, O.I, 2022, June 9)

The founders of TNJC assert that they were chosen by God to lead the church (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Wekesa, the TNJC of Tongaren, asserts that despite the usage of masculine metaphors in portraying God and the theology of the Godhead, which holds that there are three individuals in the Godhead- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit- the problem of God's gender has no bearing.

The TNJC members, like the Bukusu, referred to God in a general way that had no gender implications, indicating that God is thought to be both male and female because "transcendent beings have no partial gender but are complete" (Nganga, 2018). The fatherhood of God, according to TNJC, does not refer to human dads, but rather to God the origin of all being.

4.1.2 Scriptures of the TNJC

Scriptures refer to sacred texts that are considered to be divinely inspired or revealed in various religious and spiritual traditions (Boyd, 2023). These texts contain teachings, stories, and insights that are believed to hold important spiritual and moral truths. Unlike the Bukusu religion which relied on oral traditions, the TNJC relies on the bible as their scripture. The Bible is a collection of religious texts that are considered to be sacred in Christianity. It is composed of two main parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament consists of 39 books that were written before the birth of Jesus Christ and primarily focus on the history and beliefs of the Jewish people. The New Testament consists of 27 books that were written after the birth of Jesus Christ and focus on his teachings, life, death, and resurrection.

Every TNJC member values the Bible much and views it as the foundation of their faith. Their manner of life is greatly influenced by the Bible. The TNJC in Tongaren

holds the Bible in such high regard that, contrary to what Wekesa claimed, it does not suffice to simply call it the book of God:

The word of God is the way, the truth and the life. It is very paramount in our Christian life especially how it provides relevance to our beliefs and practices. It is our shield, defender and protector. Everything we do we find the guidelines in the Bible. Especially the Old Testament. It gave the Israelites guidelines on how they were supposed to live on all aspects of life. Be it circumcision, marriage, way of worshipping God, code of dressing for all genders and so forth. (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Wekesa, the founder of TNJC, delved deeply into the Bible and spent years seeking its wisdom (Kataka, O.I, 2022, June 9). Since the organization's founding, TNJC members have gathered once a week to pray and read the Bible. The members of this congregation must adhere to all laws and teachings that are supported by biblical references. The books of Leviticus and Numbers are the primary sources for all the laws and restrictions that TNJC members in Tongaren follow, including what to eat and what to avoid. For instance, according to Numbers 6:5-7, this congregation was not permitted to shave their heads or their beards, which is consistent with the regulations that God gave the Israelites. 'The Bible says' or 'God says' is used as a punctuation in most of their sermons, hymns, and testimonies because of this. In order to "establish a Biblically based religious tradition" (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9), TNJC strives to adhere fully to Biblical teaching. Their fundamental basis for the majority, if not all, moral principles that guide their belief in revelation is the Bible.

Every time TNJC members encountered a theological problem, particularly one that ran against to their traditions and beliefs, they unanimously looked to the Bible for answers. For instance, they cited Scripture when providing precise instructions on spiritual subjects. It should be noted that the TNJC leader used the Bible to resolve a number of contentious issues that the early church faced. These included the custom of growing

beards and not shaving hair. As directed in Numbers 6: 2–10, early church members did not shave or trim their beards.

Members of the TNJC steadfastly cling to the Bible as the fount of all wisdom. Nothing is practiced by them that is not derived from or cannot be found in the Bible. Consequently, the Bible has been used to evaluate every part of their beliefs. In fact, they held that the Bible is another way that God communicates with His people in addition to dreams and visions (Wekesa, O.I 2022, June 9). It should be highlighted that the Bible is the major source of the moral principles that guide TNJC members' way of life. It is undeniably a source of power; and those that adhere to its advice the most benefit from it. In support of his assertion of its significance to the faith, Ndung'u (2000: 236-247) notes:

“...the Bible is used as though it transmits some mystical power which makes things happens....the Bible is treated as though it transmits a power responsible for the suffering the person is experiencing. The Bible is more than a text; it is a ‘religio- magical symbol of God’s presence and power”.

The TNJC leader is convinced that, with the correct faith and mediation, what the Bible describes as having occurred in the past can happen again now. It is important to emphasize how the Bible and the Bukusu worldview are apparently related to one another. Traditional Bukusu religion has parallels in TNJC Christianity, which emphasizes its oneness in the universal appeal to the spirits that underlie all of nature's powers. Because they could "hear and see a confirmation of their own cultural, social, and religious life in the life and history of the Jewish people as portrayed and recorded in the pages of the Bible," as Mbiti (2003) writes, TNJC adherents as well as other African communities readily absorbed the Bible. The Old Testament teaching was a major source of inspiration for the TNJC leader for the same reason it spoke to many of the values that were crucial to an African way of life. This was amply demonstrated

by "the importance of fertility and sexuality, the place of ancestors, polygamous practice, the importance of land and a host of other cultural and religious similarities" (Robert, 2009; Clark, 2006:5; Simwa, 2015).

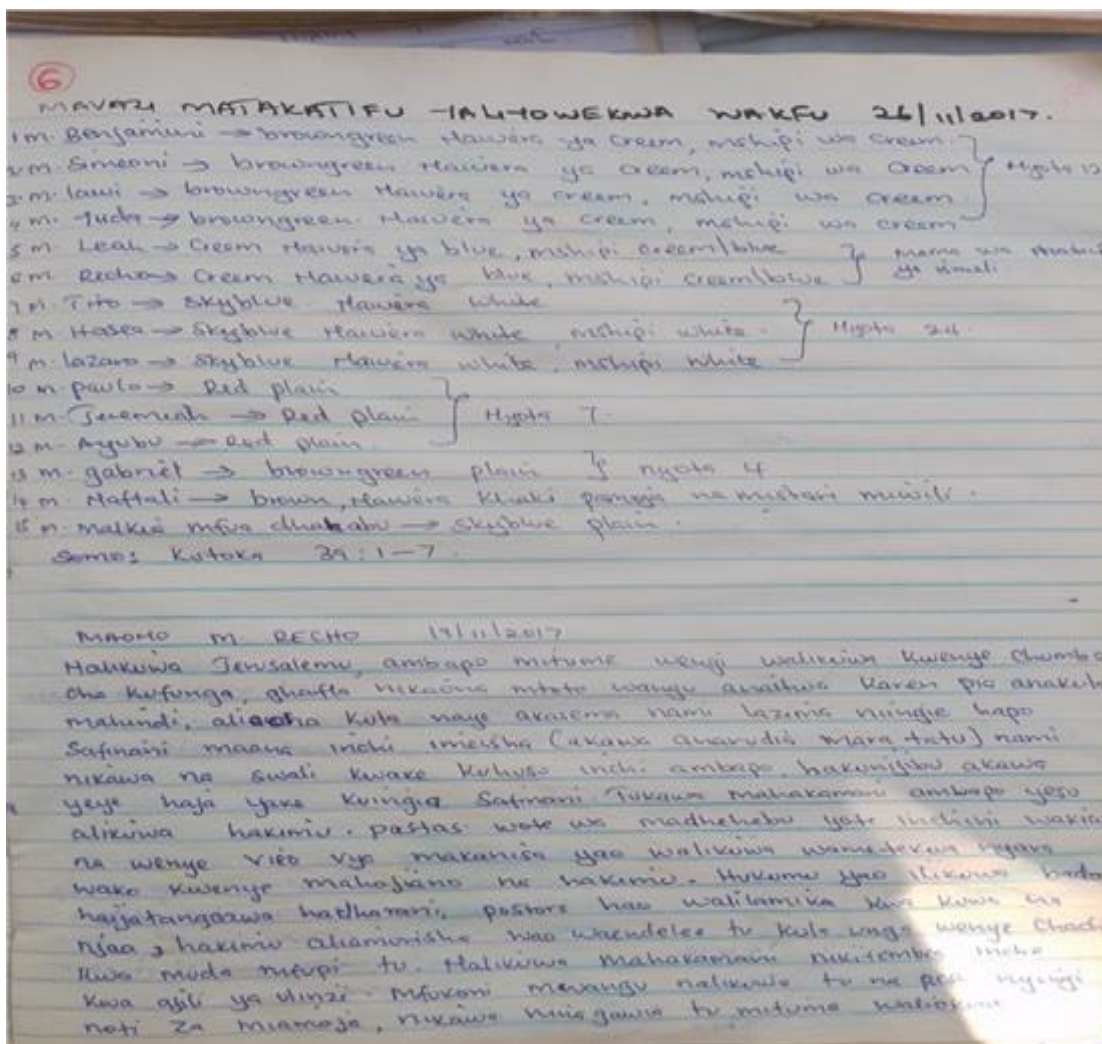
The Bible is not viewed by TNJC as only literary works but rather as theologically the subject of God. They perceive the Bible to be 'God's existence taken for granted and tied to how the world came into being, what went wrong with it, and God's plan for its eventual reconstruction and salvation' (Powell, 2012). Wekesa trusts the Bible to be "a normative standard for the faith, practice, and their worship" because he believes it to be a continuing truth (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Thus, Mikaili a church leader claims:

The Bible became the foundation for comprehending God's character and requirements, and as a result, its interpretation became an important aspect of this church. (Mikaili, O.I, 2022, June 9).

He further claims that he will create the third testament to supplement the Old and New Testament of the Bible, during his sermon, some of his adherents record his teaching which will be used to create the third testament (Mikaili, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Wekesa has disciples whom he calls 'human angels' who help him in writing scriptures that will be published soon (Wekesa, O.I, 2023, January, 2). The aim of writing these scriptures is to keep record of Mwalimu's daily activities, endeavors and actions. Mwalimu calls the scriptures *Agano Jipya Safi* meaning A New Testament that is Clean (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). The name of this Testament was allegedly revealed to him by God through a vision. The *Agano Jipya Safi* is regarded continuation of the New Testament of the Bible.

Following is a sample of the TNJC *Jipya Safi* Testament according to Angel Racho's Vision



Source: TNJC records

4.1.3 Belief in Divinities in TJNC

Divinities (*Abenami*) are supernatural beings or deities that are worshiped or revered in TNJC. They are often associated with specific aspects of nature or human experience, and are believed to possess great power and wisdom. African religions partly recognize a group of being popularly known as divinities. These beings have been given various names by various West African writers such as ‘gods’, ‘demigods’, ‘nature spirits’, divinities, and the like (Ekeke & Ekeopara, 2010). Mbiti explains that the term “covers personification of God’s activities and manifestations, the so-called ‘nature spirits’, deified heroes, and mythological figures” (2003). This belief in divinities is a common

phenomenon especially in the Bukusu culture were the concept of ‘divinities’ is clearly expressed, as there are so many divinities. Mbiti (2003) has that there are as many divinities as there are human needs, activities and experiences, and the cults of these divinities are recognized as such.

As seen in Chapter Two, in African communities, there are two major groups namely: the Principal Divinities and Minor Divinities. Principal divinities are regarded as part of the original earthly things. (Ekeke & Ekeopara, 2010). They includes such divinities as thunder divinities and earthly divinities, solar divinities, rain divinities, fertility divinities. Others also have divinity associated with death. The Bukusu believe that all these divinities were created by the Supreme Being. Mbiti, (2003) explains that in Africans, divinities:

They have been created by God in the ontological category of the spirits. They are associated with Him, and often stand for His activities or manifestation either as personifications or as the spiritual beings in charge of these major objects or phenomena of nature.

According to Mbiti’s explanation, the African communities Bukusu included believe that these divinities are under the Supreme Being in the order of things. They can also be seen as manifestations of the characteristics or attributes of the Supreme Being. Similarly, this school of thought resembles the TNJC claim that God created the universe and all its creations for the benefit of humanity. Hence, the divinities are brought into being to serve the will of the Supreme Being. Wekesa argues that;

“Rainfall, thunderstorm, were brought out into being so that God can profess his powerful nature to human beings. All these things are created to benefit human creatures and animals with regard to the divine ordering of God.” (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9)

This view of Wekesa however, rejects the notion of the divinity of Jesus Christ being created. For TNJC members, they believe that ‘Mwalimu’ (Jesus Christ) was not created but came out (brought forth) from the Father and so shares almost all the

attributes of the Father. It is in this regard that he is considered as a deity. This is why he is called the Son of God.

4.1.4 Belief in Spirits in TJNC

The term "spirits" can have a variety of meanings depending on the context in which it is used. In general, spirits are believed to be non-physical entities that exist in a realm beyond the physical world. The belief in spirits is found in many cultures and spiritual traditions throughout the world, and they are often associated with supernatural or paranormal phenomena. Africans believe in, recognize and accept the fact of the existence of spirits, who may use material objects as temporary residences and manifestations of their presence and actions through natural objects and phenomena (Ekeke & Ekeopara, 2010). They further note that this does not however imply that, traditional religion in Africa was an alienation in which “man felt himself unable to dominate his environment, in the grip of ghosts and demons, under the spell of the awe-inspiring phenomena of nature, a prey to imaginary magical forces or cruel and capricious spirits”.

Among the Bukusu traditional religion, the various forms of spirits separate category of beings from those described as divinities. They are considered as powers which are almost abstract, as shades or vapors which take on human shape; they are immaterial and incorporeal beings (Namulunda, 2010). As immaterial and incorporeal, it is possible for them to assume various dimensions whenever they wish to be seen.

The Bukusu believe that spirits are created by God but differ from God and man. Man has in various occasions addressed these spirits anthropomorphically by attributing human characteristics such as thinking, speaking, intelligence and the possession of power which they use whenever they wish.

TNJC members believe that spirits are what remains of human beings and animals when they die physically although they created by God. This group of Christians believes that both human beings and animals have souls and spirits which continue to live with the spirits of dead men after they died. In this way, the world of the spirit is a picture of the material world where humans and animals live.

These spirits do not possess material body through which they could be seen but they may incarnate into any material thing in order to make themselves seen for any reason or purpose (Namulunda, 2011). People have however experienced their activities and many folk stories in Africans tell of spirits described in human form, activities and personalities, though sometimes, these descriptions are exaggeration created by the elders to teach special lessons. Since they are invisible, these spirits are thought to be ubiquitous, so that a person is never sure where they are or are not.

Spirits are a common fundamental belief among the Bukusu people of Tongaren in Bungoma County. It is a common belief that the existence of a person continues after death; he or she becomes a spiritual being and acquires characteristics of immortality and eternity. According to the Bukusu there are different categories of Spirits. There are evil spirits, good spirits and the Holy Spirit (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

4.1.4.1 The Evil Spirit

The New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren (TNJC) is a Christian denomination that emphasizes Christian teachings and beliefs. In Christianity, there is a belief in the existence of evil spirits or demons, which are seen as spiritual beings opposed to God and His will. Christianity teaches that evil spirits are fallen angels who rebelled against God and were cast out of heaven. These spirits are considered malevolent and are believed to seek to deceive, tempt, and cause harm to individuals.

Within the TNJC, as with most Christian denominations, the focus is on the power and victory of Jesus Christ over evil spirits. The teachings and practices of the TNJC would typically emphasize prayer, faith, and reliance on God's protection and deliverance from evil. Members of the TNJC would likely be taught to resist and overcome evil spirits through prayer, spiritual warfare, and adherence to Christian principles. The focus is on the authority and power of Jesus Christ to overcome the influence of evil spirits and to provide protection and spiritual strength.

Evil spirits (Ebisieno) are considered as both unclean spirits, impure spirits, deceiving or lying spirits, demonic spirits that work against God (Ekeke & Ekeopara, 2010). Among the Bukusu, the spirits of witches are never supposed to acquire the status of ancestral spirits. Witches are believed to be evil people by nature; hence they automatically become evil spirits. Witches who die are said to wander and reincarnate into dangerous animals like hyenas (Phiri, 2010).

The Bukusu belief that that the spirits of living human beings can be sent out of the body on errands to create havoc to other persons in body, mind or estate. These actions are performed by witches who are known to have guilds or operate singly. The spirits perform different tasks can act either invisibly or through a lower creature an animal or a bird.

The spirits of witches from this community meet regularly for their ceremonies in forests, on trees or under trees at night (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). However, Wekesa abhors witchcraft and their actions. He notes:

Their main aim has always been to cause havoc on other human beings. All witches should in fact be burnt. No one should be spared. It is such a barbaric act to cause suffering to a fellow human being (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Members of TNJC led by their founder *Yesu wa Tongaren* believes that witchcraft must be tackled with the understanding that the Great Commission directs Christians to discipleship so that they can grasp the new life they live in Christ. Hence, with the understanding of the work of the Holy Spirit, they clearly understand the manifestation of evil spirits (Acts 16:16-18) through the power of discerning. *Yesu wa Tongaren* therefore claims he has a difficult task as far as dealing with witchcraft is concerned. His main mission is therefore first leading people to acknowledge the manifestation of the Holy Spirit and God in their lives. Wanjala a member of this movement agrees with the views of their founder by claiming:

Everyone who receives the Holy Spirit and is ready to acknowledge God automatically becomes a child of God who has the power to set people free from any forms of captivity. (Wanjala, O.I, 2022, June 9)

No matter how deeply someone might be involved in witchcraft, confessing Jesus as their Lord and a Savior is their only key to true salvation.

These spirits will seek amends and payments for the injustice from the guilty parties. The members of TNJC believe that an angry spirit can cause very serious quarrels within a family, misfortune, and loss of property, wealth or life. Wekesa concludes by saying that “the fear of making a spirit angry can act as a sanction for ethical behavior ensuring social harmony.” (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9)

According to members of TNJC, Spirits whether good, evil, tribal or ancestral do not have any family or personal ties with human beings, and so cannot be regarded as the living dead. Intrinsically, spirits are strangers, foreigners, and outsiders in the society (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). TNJC members believe that angry spirits cause terrible harm on men such as madness, epilepsy and other terrible sickness.

4.1.4.2 Good spirits

Among the Bukusu, good spirits are those which are directly concerned with the welfare of the living. They act as guardian angels, being active in the day-to-day activities of their people. Just like Mbiti (2003) good spirits “are guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities.” It is commonly believed that the good spirits of good people live in the spirit world in with Were/Nyasaye. Just like the indigenous Bukusu religion, Barasa a member of TNJC, believes that:

The spirits of good people reincarnate into harmless animals or humans (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

4.1.4.3 Belief in Holy Spirit by TJNC members

In Christianity, the Holy Spirit is considered to be the third person of the Holy Trinity, along with God the Father and God the Son (Jesus Christ). The Holy Spirit is believed to be a divine and eternal presence that works within the world to bring about God's will and to guide and empower believers. The TNJC beliefs in one God who is three entities in one, God the Father, God the Holy Spirit and God the Son (Yesu wa Tongaren). The concept of the Trinity among the TNJC, manifest Yesu wa Tongaren as the incarnation of God. They claim that the three are united in essence but distinct in person with regard to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Hence, it is held that Eliud has two natures: the divine nature and the human nature since he is both God and man (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). The Holy Spirit is the second person in the Holy Trinity who comes between God the Father and *Mwalimu*. The TNJC Christians assert that they look to the Holy Spirit for direction and counseling. Although the idea of the Holy Trinity is shared by all Christians, many churches, including TJNC, disagree with how the Holy Spirit expresses Himself (Uzukwu, 2012).

After one believes, confesses sins, and repents, they must be immediately filled with the Holy Spirit to be considered a legitimate member of TNJC. Members of TNJC believe in the presence of the Holy Spirit, whose expression can occasionally take the form of bodily manifestations like speaking in tongues and ecstatic prophecy. They view the Holy Spirit as a dynamic energy that supports Mwalimu in his ministry rather than as a passive entity. While upholding their distinctly African worldview, TNJC devotees frequently talk in tongues in divine languages that the listeners are unaware of. Their faith is founded on the conviction that the Holy Spirit works, endowing people with the ability to resist sin and temptation and live morally upright lives (Kataka, O.I, 2022, June 9). The TNJC in Tongaren firmly believes that each of its members is spiritually inspired and that they have a person named "Mwalimu" who can speak with God and the spiritual world directly and interpret visions for them (Topistar, O.I, 2022, June 9).

When under the influence of the Holy Spirit, some people experience ecstasy and make statements that other people may not understand (Makona, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The Holy Spirit convicts people of sin, reveals the truth from the Bible, and bestows blessings on them in the form of knowledge, wisdom, prophecy, preaching, speaking in tongues, interpreting tongues, and healing (Uzukwu, 2012). Furthermore, the Holy Spirit bestows to people the fruit of love, goodness, patience, joy, and faith (Kataka, O.I, 2022, June 9). Thus, one of the distinctive features of TNJC in Tongaren is the belief in the Holy Spirit, which is strongly evident as being essential to their worship. Indeed, Legio Maria, Dini ya Roho, and Nomiya Luo are Spirit movements, (Park, 2010) as is TNJC.

This concept of the trinity can be depicted in their prayers as:

*God our Father, God the Holy Spirit, God the Son have mercy on us
(Baba Mungu, Baba Roho Mtakatifu na Baba Mwalimu tuonee
huruma), (Topistar, O.I, 2022, June 9)*

Indeed, the Trinity's active, present, and working organ in the TNJC is the Holy Spirit. This is due to TNJC's belief that the trinity's creatures play various roles at various points in history. According to Wekesa, O.I. (2022, June 9), the TNJC hold the view that God the Father closely cooperated with the patriarchs Abraham and Moses, just as He does with His son Yesu wa Tongareni in the early church. The TNJC consistently emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is active today, especially in their songs.

When the power of the Holy Spirit overtakes a person, they lose control and roar like lions, according to certain TNJC members (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). According to Kataka, the Holy Spirit is like a clothing to a follower that they cannot live without. The Holy Spirit covers a believer's life in a similar manner as how clothing does (Kataka, O.I, 2022, June 9). However, the Holy Spirit leaves a sinner naked as soon as he commits a sin.

Therefore, none of the TNJC's members can endure without the Holy Spirit (Topistar, O. I, 2022). To be baptized, for instance, one had to begin sincere prayer until the Holy Spirit revealed his baptismal name. The TNJC hold that the Holy Spirit speaks to them immediately, gives and renews the believer's strength, and leads him to eternal life. Similar to this, they acknowledge and declare the role of the Holy Spirit as the driving force behind spectacular acts performed by prominent prophets and inside the church (Ibid).

As was previously noted, the Holy Spirit frequently makes an appearance when singing, dancing, and praying as revealed by prophets or prophetess. In response to the query

about the appearance of the Holy Spirit, one respondent made the following observation:

'The Spirit reveals Himself to prophets. He may reveal what regalia one needs to wear and the color, dress, birth and baptismal name, marriage partners, as well as warnings on impending dangers or occurrence of disasters like sicknesses, floods, earthquake, drought and famine' (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Given the foregoing, TNJC's awareness of the Holy Spirit also explains their decision to dress in religious garb, which represents reverence to the Lord (Ibid). It should be noted that the TNJC considered the Spirit to be a person even if they avoided using language to describe Him. According to Pfeiffer (2007), "He is addressed as a personal divine being and not as an impersonal manipulated being." TNJC holds a firm belief in the presence of both good and evil spirits in accordance with Ephesians 6:12, which states, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." While evil spirits are thought to be rebellious to God and under the power of Satan, who leads organized hordes of wicked spirits and inflicts and even possesses individuals to cause bodily and mental disease, good spirits are allegiant to and obedient to God. The operations of TNJC are guided by the Holy Spirit, not by any human being (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

In TNJC of Tongaren, the focus is primarily on Christian teachings and beliefs, which emphasize the presence and work of the Holy Spirit. Christianity teaches that the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity and is seen as the divine presence of God in the world and in the lives of believers on the positive influence and work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is believed to guide, empower, and transform believers, helping them to grow in their faith, understand God's word, and live according to Christian principles. Members of the TNJC are likely encouraged to cultivate a personal relationship with

the Holy Spirit through prayer, worship, and obedience to God's teachings. The Holy Spirit is seen as a source of comfort, wisdom, and spiritual gifts that enable believers to live a godly and fulfilling life. Additionally, within the TNJC, there may be an appreciation for positive spiritual experiences, such as experiencing God's presence, divine interventions, answered prayers, and spiritual gifts like healing or prophecy. These experiences are often attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers. It is important to note that while the TNJC may focus on the positive aspects of the Holy Spirit, it does not promote or encourage the worship or veneration of any spirits or entities other than God. The emphasis is on the worship of God through Jesus of Tongaren and the empowerment and guidance of the Holy Spirit.

In conclusion, it is undeniable that the Holy Spirit is indispensable to the TNJC community in Tongaren. It is highly acknowledged, understood, and appropriated that the Spirit's functions exist. This church offers a celebratory faith that is distinguished by the use of spiritual music, dancing, and vigorous drumming. It is thought that these practices call forth and stir the Spirit's presence and actions, which lead to healing, prophecy, and the direction and guiding of the entire movement. Because of the TNJC's propensity for spirituality, they were practically forced to accept the designation of "spiritual" (Roho) church, which they still bear today (Park, 2010). This is why the Holy Spirit is revered in TNJC as the ultimate initiator, renewer, reviver, and revealer as well as the teacher, supervisor, and source of life, salvation, and all spiritual and physical wellbeing of the church and its adherents, and most importantly, the driving force behind this church's phenomenal growth.

4.1.5 TNJC Understanding of Jesus

The Christian belief in Jesus Christ is a central figure. He is considered to be the Son of God and the Messiah. According to Christian belief, Jesus was born in 4 BC in

Bethlehem to the Virgin Mary and was raised in Nazareth. He began his ministry at around the age of 30 and preached about the kingdom of God, performed miracles, and gained a large following. Members of TNJC do not believe in the Jesus of Christianity but in Eliud Wekesa as their savior and Messiah. He is well known as *Yesu wa Tongareni* which can be translated as Jesus of Tongaren and *Mwalimu* by his followers.

Wekesa claims:

My duty is to accomplish the mission which Jesus of Nazareth did not accomplish. (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Members of TNJC agree that *Mwalimu* is the promised messiah in line with Prophet Isaiah's prophecies (Isaiah, 53). To them:

Isaiah's predictions were fully accomplished through Wekesa's early life where he grew in humble circumstances at Tongaren. (Nasike, O.I, 2022, June 9)

It is claimed that he grew from a humble background of small-scale farmers (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). The phrase Jesus of Tongaren was first heard in the public through K24 media station in 2016 after they had gone for an interview to his homestead in Lukhokhwe, Tongaren (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

To the members of TNJC, it is believed that *Yesu wa Tongareni* was with God even during the creation of the world and all that is in it. *Yesu wa Tongareni* is therefore the son of God and he is still one of the three persons who make up one God. This means that Eliud Wekesa claims to be equal to God. Just like the Jews who opposed the works of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. *Yesu wa Tongareni* has undergone various false accusations that have landed him in to the local authorities in Trans Nzoia and Bungoma counties (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). He was at some point condemned falsely just like Jesus Christ of Nazareth leading to his imprisonment (Lucia, O.I, 2022, June 9). The following is a picture of *Mwalimu Yesu*.



Photo courtesy of Eliud Wekesa

Members of TNJC believe their founder and leader already existed in heaven before descending to this world. It is claimed that he reincarnated and was born through the power of the Holy Spirit as a human being and renamed Eliud Wekesa. *Yesu wa Tongaren* was born of human parents in Lukhokhwe village in Tongaren, Bungoma County (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). His mission came into actualization at the age of 30 when God called him and stated his intended mission on earth (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Eliud Wekesa believes to have powers of saving the world and the entire human race (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). According to him, God first sent him to Nazareth to die in the place of human beings but instead he was rejected and crucified before completing his mission. After death, he claims to have risen from the grave and ascended to heaven. Further, he believes God sent him again to Tongaren 2000 years later to continue with the mission of saving everyone in the world. Further, he claims that he will continue to exist for the next 77 years. He claims to have authority to choose people who will go to

paradise. He claims that he will choose 160,000 people to go to heaven while 8 billion people will be burnt in hell.

In TNJC, Jesus of Tongaren is believed to be:

The Messiah, the Savior who was sent by God to reconcile humanity with God and provide the means for eternal life. (Lucia, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Members of TNJC place their faith in *Mwalimu* as their Lord and Savior and believe that through his death and resurrection, they can receive forgiveness of sins and have a restored relationship with God. The teachings and life of *Mwalimu* as recorded in the Bible, particularly in the New Testament, form the foundation of TNJC's beliefs and practices. The TNJC emphasizes the importance of following *Yesu wa Tongaren's* teachings, such as love, compassion, forgiveness, and righteousness, as a way of imitating Christ and growing in faith. Worship in TNJC typically involves prayer, singing hymns, reading and studying the Bible, and reflecting on the life and teachings of Jesus. Sermons and teachings focus on understanding and applying the teachings of *Yesu wa Tongaren's* in everyday life.

Correspondingly, members of TNJC believe that apart from casting out evil spirits, *Yesu wa Tongaren* has powers to control the weather, healing the sick and providing essential needs for the less unfortunate. During one of the FGDs members claimed that *Yesu wa Tongareni* did the miracle of turning water into tea (Lucia, O.I, 2022, June 9).

4.2 Doctrinal Differences and Unique Teachings

As seen from the previous chapters, the study of NRMs is a complex phenomenon with various characteristics that help distinguish them from other alternative religions. Their beliefs, practices and cultural expressions hence vary greatly from other socio-religious

institutions. Here are some of the core beliefs and practices that distinguish the members of TNJC from other NRMs.

4.2.1 Worship in TNJC

Worship is a term used to describe the act of showing reverence, honor, and devotion to a deity, religious figure, or other object of religious or spiritual significance. Worship can take many forms, including prayer, meditation, singing, offerings, and ritual practices. According to Barasa:

We TNJC members rely on prayers for they considered them to be the source of all of their benefits and achievements, as well as the foundation of their practice and theology (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

An essential component of their worship is prayer. The TNJC offers a variety of prayers, including private prayers, communal prayers, and songs. The way that TNJC communicated with their God was through prayer. According to Wekesa, O.I. (2022, June 9), TNJC demanded that prayer be the only method of receiving divine revelation.

During the fieldwork, informants confirmed that the Tongaren TNJC prays in a manner distinct from other Christian denominations. Everyone is expected to rest on Sunday because it is their day of worship. On days of worship, nobody is supposed to work or even go to the store to buy food.

We practice piety, which is why we dress in garments revealed by the Holy Spirit since God is holy (Muloli, O.I, 2022, June 9).

They also hold that it is improper to wear shoes or bring money into a place of worship. Additionally, there was no distinction between how men and women conducted themselves during prayer since both of them raise their hands in prayer in a position of receiving God's blessings (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). During worship services, Wekesa is attended to and protected by human angels, in addition to the disciples who surround him. Following is a picture taken during one of the TNJC's worship services:



Source: www.nation.africa.com

As was the case everywhere, the TNJC in Tongaren boosted their prayers in 2022 because they felt obligated to do so for the nation, which was enslaved by the election season at the time (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). So, in order to focus on their prayers, they would make pilgrimages to their church. As pilgrimages to their church became a typical occurrence for TNJC in Tongaren, they grew to be regarded as extraordinary because they would carry special revelation. Throughout this time of prayer, they would receive a number of revelations and directives that would later become the cornerstone of TNJC beliefs and practices (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The Tongaren TNJC pray with their eyes closed, as is customary in many Christian churches. It is stated that Eliud Wekesa, the founder and leader of TNJC, received the instructions on how to pray. The approach was to hold the notion that God's home was a holy place. Additionally, the issue of money might make the holy place impure because, according to the Bible, the location where God dwells should only be used for worship and not for commerce (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9) praying with the hands

raised in the air and the eyes closed. According to Kataka, they pray with their eyes closed in order to:

Avoid getting sidetracked by our surroundings and to put ourselves in a better position to receive visions (Kataka, O.I, 2022, June 9).

In prayer, exorcism, prophecy, and vision are given particular focus and attention. Divine healing, also referred to as prayer-based physical healing, is an essential component of TNJC faith. In reality, the two most often cited justifications for attending church services are the healing of illness and liberation from oppression. TNJC in Tongaren Sub-County has designated Thursdays and Fridays as days exclusively for healing purposes through divine prayers, it was discovered during the fieldwork (Barasa, O.I 2022, June 9). On these days, medicinal substances like holy water and oil are frequently consecrated. Additionally, it was discovered that some TNJC prophets, angels, and prophetesses asserted to have particular healing abilities through prayer (Ibid).

Throughout the study, it was observed that people from all walks of life were going to the houses of their leader to seek spiritual healing. Those who claimed to have experienced healing and miracles typically gave testimonies of them during the FGDs. Many of the people who were healed had gone through horrifying events like demonic possessions (Topistar, O.I, 2022, June 9). This explains why many who are disgruntled and disillusioned with the mission churches' approach to the problem of evil seek out the spiritual TNJC healers.

According to Sumbai, O.I. (2022, June 9) TNJC worship is characterized by screaming, intense shaking of the body, and the presence of the Holy Spirit. Members summon the attention, strength, and activity of God, Jesus of Tongaren, the Holy Spirit, and the

heavenly powers against the malevolent evil spirits through effective prayer and complex ritual action (Ibid). Sumbai further notes:

Adoration, confession, intercessions, requests, and gratitude make up the role and structure of prayer. (Sumbai, O.I. 2022, June 9)

Psalms and the recital of holy names are used to make petitions (Matumbai, O.I, 2022, June 9). The aggressiveness, ritualism, and fervor of their devotion are key characteristics that were noted throughout the fieldwork. According to Matumbai, the TNJC views prayer as the only route to the paranormal, the key that unlocks the cosmos, the source of miracles, and the road to enlightenment. Any TNJC member who wants to be called and utilized by God must fulfill this requirement (Matumbai, O.I, 2022, June 9).

One important feature of TNJC prayer was that it frequently adopted different shapes on its own, following the Holy Spirit's guidance. It may cause the worshippers to scream, shout loudly, make unusual noises, go into a trance or experience euphoria, and occasionally utter things they cannot understand (Njukhilile, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Others might feel compelled to wrestle, fall to the ground, walk back and forth, gesticulate, and occasionally jump as a result. (Samweli, O.I, 2022, June 9)

In the Tongaren TNJC group, prayers were exceedingly significant and even came before dreams, prophecy, and visions. The act of praying "spiritualizes the individual and absorbs him or her into realms where lust desires and craving of the natural person are completely done away with" (Meyer, 2004). Wherever TNJC members gather for worship, this component of fervent prayer continues to draw large crowds and bystanders who witness spiritual power, salvation, and solutions to socio-religious, cultural, spiritual, and economic challenges.

As earlier mentioned, their normal day of worship is on Sundays. The service usually begins by going through a room the members call ‘an ark’ that is slightly adjacent to their main church. In this room, one is supposed to enter bare footed, confess their sins then exit outside through another door before entering the main church. Unfortunately, both the researcher and the assistant were not allowed to enter into the main church due to several reasons, among them is the presence of henna on the hands, having dreadlocks and wearing ear studs. For the case of the research assistant, it was due to the fact that he was having a moustache and jeans trousers. To Mwalimu, this implied that such people were still living for the pleasures of the world, an action that both God the Father and the Holy Spirit were against. However, Wekesa explains that the service involved intense and thorough prayer sessions with the congregants. During the session, the ‘angels’ and ‘prophets’ are usually in control of the process with the help of Mwalimu and the Holy Spirit.



Yesu wa Tongaren's angels kneeling before him after a church service.

Source: Shiro Mbugua (UGC)

From outside, songs of praises could be heard accompanied with clapping, dancing, ululations and use of drums. In the congregation there are usually women who take

notes of the events of the day. These women are not allowed to stand up during the entire service. The women, Wekesa recognizes them as his human angels help him to carry out God's intended mission of preaching the gospel.

Following is a picture of *Yesu wa Tongaren* preaching in one of his sermons.



Source: Afrimax English

After the main sermon, the congregation walks out of the church singing and dancing surrounding the compound seven times. This session is led by the angels and prophets while “Jesus of Tongaren” follows keenly. According to Mwalimu, moving around his compound seven times signifies Gods intended mission on earth. Going seven times signifies moving to all nations of the world spreading the gospel and casting out demons.

4.2.2 Belief in angels in TNJC

Angels are considered to be divine or supernatural beings who act as messengers, guardians, or helpers of humans. They are often depicted as winged humanoid figures, sometimes with other symbolic attributes. According to TNJC, these are both finite and special supernatural beings that are created by God to serve Him and humanity. They act as God's human helpers, human protectors, proclaimers of God's message, dispersers of revelation, guardian, ministering of Gods will and executers of the Divine will of God (Nelima, O.I, 2022, June 9).

In line with Luke 20:36, TNJC followers have always referred to angels as God's offspring (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). They are portrayed as God's agents, ambassadors, and messengers who are obedient to Him and of unquestioned integrity (Kataka, O.I, 2022, June 9). As such, "they are helpers and protectors to people in need, as proclaimers of news or mediators of revelations from God, and as guides and guardians" (Lucia, O.I, 2022, June 9). Angels are regarded in the TNJC as ministering Spirits whose functions could not be limited to specialized categories but were presented in broad and varied auxiliary functions.

Members of the TNJC think that angels exist and carry out functions that are comparable to those of the Holy Spirit. They act as messengers, defenders, and advisers for the followers of God. They are mediators between God and man. Wekesa notices this;

Angels are messengers who protect and guard us and relay reports to God on our behavior here on earth. Besides providing protection to us, they offer blessings to us. Even at death, it is your guardian angel who takes your soul to God (Wekesa, O.I 2022, June 9).

Equally significant was the fact that human angels were in TNJC and that their roles did not contradict or diminish the primacy of the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, and the

Trinity in TNJC's spirituality. Wekesa Confirms that within TNJC there were two types of angels namely regular angels and personal guardian angels. The regular angels act as guardians of people and all things physical. To the members of TNJC, these angels are sent as messengers to humanity. Personal guardian angels on the other hand protect and warn humans, as well as act as warriors on behalf of God (Wekesa, O.I 2022, June 9).

The human angels are given names similar to biblical characters such as Jacob, Leviticus, Daniel, Joseph, John and Joel. Wekesa clarified this claim by saying that:

“The task and names of angels are given to certain individuals in the church upon the revelation and guidance of the holy Spirit. They assist me in carrying out the task ahead of me during the day. With them are always a note book and a pen to note all the experiences that we may encounter. Similarly, specific angels are invoked from time to time perhaps in an attempt to deal with specific issues affecting the church” (Wekesa, O.I 2022, June 9).

The TNJC has a fervent belief that angels visit individuals and take on human likenesses. These devotees extend hospitality to outsiders because of this. According to Nanjala Murumwa, a respondent,

"God's angels with human likeness unexpectedly visit people of God, and because of this TNJC members show hospitality to strangers" (Murumwa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

4.2.3 Baptism in TJNC

Baptism is a Christian ritual that involves the use of water to symbolize the cleansing of sin and the spiritual rebirth of the believer. Baptism is considered to be an important rite of passage in many Christian denominations, and is usually administered by a priest or minister. TNJC borrows from the Biblical examples where in the Old Testament, baptism was done through ritual washing or immersion in water hence cleansing one from evil. They insist on ablution as stated in Exodus 40:31-32 where Moses, Aaron and his sons used to wash their hands and feet whenever they entered the Tent of

Meeting or approached the altar, as the Lord commanded Moses so that he would be clean. In addition, they refer to Leviticus 14:9 where Prophet Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed. In these instances, immersion in water signifies repentance and acquiring a new status as a 'new being'. During baptism it is interpreted that water is used to wash away all the iniquities and cleanse them from sins and transgressions.

The TNJC also use the example in the New Testament where John the Baptist continued the tradition of baptism. They adapt the tradition of Jonah baptizing Israelites all the way from Jerusalem and Judea and the whole region of the Jordan after confessing their sins (Matthew 34-6). Further, they support the ritual of baptism as stated in 1 Peter 3:21, whereby Apostle Peter advises people to turn from their ways to Christ through baptism. To Wekesa baptism is a public declaration and identification by born-again Christians which signifies the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus.

The members of TNJC acknowledge the importance of baptism as one of the sacred rites. It was observed that they practiced Spirit baptism as opposed to water baptism practiced in many missionaries founded churches. According to Wekesa, Baptism is a pre-requisite to other rituals such as circumcision, marriage, and even death. To the members of this congregation, baptism was embraced early enough by their founder Eliud Wekesa who baptized the earliest members of TNJC in the year 2011. After baptism, members are given new baptismal names depending on the revelation of the Holy Spirit. As noted earlier, baptism among TNJC was initially done by Eliud alone. A person must have attained the rank of senior elder in the church in order to be eligible to be a baptizer. The TNJC held that an individual should only be baptized once the Holy Spirit had revealed their baptismal name to them (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9) as

opposed to other churches which baptized both adults and newborns. In the case of children, a parent or guardian must be included to help as much as possible. Baptism involves a conversation between the Baptizer and the candidate to be baptized.

To allow for the gift of the Holy Spirit to the members, TNJC also practices baptism by complete submersion in water. A new convert's baptism was marked by excitement and jubilation from the congregation that was present. The happiness stems from welcoming home a prodigal child who was once lost but has since been located. This reminds me of the biblical parable of the prodigal son, who after being away for a long time decided to come home one day and was greeted with joy and rejoicing.

One was considered to be a sincere believer after baptism, and those who had converted were granted a new name and new regalia. A faithful soldier's entrance into the army of Christ, which was always at war with the devil, is supposed to be marked by the regalia (Matumbai, O.I, 2022, June 9). Simply put, they respect baptism because it forgives sins, frees one from evil, and provides him a new identity and start. Adherents of the TNJC also hold that baptism unites one to the broader body of Christ and gives one the opportunity to join Jesus during the Parousia. They actually had the belief that their names were entered into the Book of Life following baptism. (Topistar, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Since the TNJC believes in the power of the Holy Spirit, who among other things, as already mentioned, reveals to the candidate their baptismal names through prayer, they do not provide any instruction prior to baptism, unlike other Churches. If after praying one had still not been given a baptismal name, their leader and other prayer leaders assisted that person in praying. The candidate and the elders met the day before the scheduled baptism. This early arrival serves the objective of giving the applicants time

to purify themselves in order to please God. Prayers, repentance, and sacrifice-giving are all methods of purification. Additionally, guidelines on how to conduct themselves throughout the ceremony are given to the candidates to ensure that baptism goes off without a hitch. (Sumbai, O, I, 2022).

Baptism by immersion is followed by baptism of receiving of the Holy Spirit. It is usually conducted on Sundays while being witnessed by whole congregation. Males and women sit in separate pews during worship, with males on the right and women on the left. At the sanctuary, members received the gift of the Holy Spirit with Mwalimu's assistance after praying to ask for forgiveness.

Women angels in the church have more minor functions and are not elevated to the same level as men angels. However, the bulk of those with the gift of prophecy in the TNJC were women; it is believed that women use the gift to make up for their low status in the church (Topistar, O.I, 2022, June 9).

In conclusion, gaining a new name is the most significant aspect of TNJC baptism. As was already mentioned, these names are highly prized since individuals prayed for days or months for the Holy Spirit to reveal them to the applicant. They awaited the dream, vision, or prophesy that would reveal the candidate's baptismal name (Murumwa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Most of these names came from the Old Testament, particularly those that belonged to individuals of great character. Biblical figures including Abraham, Moses, Aaron, Samuel, Elijah, Jeremiah, and Joshua were among them. Contrarily, Deborah, Miriam, Lydia, Dorcas, Rebecca, Rachel, Naomi, and Ruth are the most common female names in the TNJC (Mumbai, O.I, 2022, June 9). These titles represented the new skills that had been bestowed upon one by the Holy Spirit upon

baptism. The door to perform any rituals for TNJC new converts was then opened upon baptism.

4.2.4 The TNJC understanding of Sin

According to Christian beliefs embraced by the TNJC, sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Sin is viewed as a universal problem that affects all human beings, leading to a separation from God and a distortion of our true nature. The TNJC teaches that sin is not merely the commission of specific wrongful actions but also includes the condition of the human heart, characterized by self-centeredness, rebellion against God, and a propensity to do what is contrary to His will. Sin refers to an act that is considered to be contrary to the will of God or to go against moral or ethical principles (Zalta *et al* (2002)). Sin can take many forms, including acts of commission, such as lying or stealing, as well as acts of omission, such as failing to help someone in need. Sin is often seen as a reflection of a person's internal state and can be accompanied by feelings of guilt or shame.

The consequences of sin, as understood in TNJC, include spiritual separation from God, guilt, brokenness in relationships, and the potential for eternal separation from God. The TNJC emphasizes the need for repentance, which involves acknowledging one's sins, confessing them before God, and seeking His forgiveness and reconciliation (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). The TNJC teaches that forgiveness of sins is made possible through the sacrificial death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. They believe that through faith in their Jesus of Tongaren, individuals can receive forgiveness, experience spiritual renewal, and be reconciled to God (Lucia, O'I, 2022). To address the issue of sin, the TNJC encourages its members to strive for a life of righteousness, guided by the teachings of Mwalimu and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. They promote

living in accordance with God's commandments, practicing love, forgiveness, and moral integrity.

To the members of TNJC, sin is seen as an immoral act against God's law and causing harm to others (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Many TNJC members agree with Wekesa's view that sin turns humans away from God and towards themselves and their own desires. However, humans can still bring back their relationship with God by way of God rescuing the sinner from their hopeless conditions. Members of this congregation view all sins as equal and serious and that they may bar one from getting baptized unless they confess and get baptized.

4.2.5 Rites of passage and the Concept of Ritual uncleanness

Rites of passage are ceremonies that mark transition from one stage to another (Wanyonyi, 2019). These ceremonies are important in any given African community although they vary community from community. Earlier, it had been noted that the Luhya traditions had a significant influence on the TNJC of Tongaren, as well as other places, in terms of their way of life and worship. As a result, all indigenous Luhya rites of passage were highly revered by members of this faith. The rites of passage among the TNJC began at birth and finished at death. Names, becoming an adult, and marriage were additional rites of passage.

To members of TNJC, as soon as a baby is conceived, their lives begin and it continues until they die. Every single person is made in the image of God. This goes hand in hand to during the time of conception too. Therefore, aborting a child for members of TNJC is same as killing a person made in the image of God:

“Life begins at conception. As soon as a baby has been conceived, it becomes a real person that should be given same rights as a person”
(Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9)

The meaning of life according to TNJC Christians is ultimately found in their founder *Yesu wa Tongareni* (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). In light of this, life for members of this congregation cannot be without meaning unless it revolves around their maker and founder. It is a journey that involves knowing God and trusting Him every moment, especially in the darkest ones.

Giving birth is a widely celebrated event for TNJC since it results in the spread of life. In accordance with the gender of the infant, the woman refrains from attending church for 33 days after giving birth for boys and 66 days for girls (Leviticus 12:4-5) (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Wekesa adds that because the lady is regarded as filthy after this time period, she and her child went to the church to participate in the cleansing ceremony. It's significant to note that neither the husband nor the child's father received any prayers or cleanses. It is argued that the male should have prayed for himself, cleaned his clothes, and bathed in water to cleanse himself of the taboo on the day the wife was cleansed.

After birth, the child was given a name. Members of the TNJC rigidly take names for their children from the Bible, particularly names of powerful figures in the Old Testament. According to popular belief, these names bestowed upon their bearers the same energy that decorated these biblical characters (Lucia, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The rite of adulthood is the third major initiation rite in TNJC. To the members of TNJC adulthood rites are usually done at the onset of puberty age (around 12-13 years of age). At this stage, their main focus is to ensure the shaping of productive community oriented responsible adults. This transition is exceedingly important to members of TNJC since it is during this stage that the initiate is systematically guided and directed in their life cycle. At this stage, when the youth (both boys and girls) of TNJC reach

the stipulated age they are expected to transform into adults and they often receive guidance from selected church members or church leaders. Among the teachings that the initiates undergo are the rules and taboos of the society, moral instructions and social responsibility (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Marriage is the fourth rite of passage that the TNJC places a great deal of emphasis on since it elevates a person's social and ecclesiastical position (Njukhilile, O.I, 2022, June 9). If a man is not married, he cannot become an elder. It's also crucial to note that the girl was given control over the wedding date because it couldn't fall on a day when she had her period because that rendered her ritually unclean and prevented her from taking part in any ceremonies (Nafula, O.I, 2022, June 9). In addition, since members of this specific congregation regarded Sunday as a significant day for performing their rites and ceremonies, weddings in the TNJC were held on Sunday (Sabbath day), just like any other ceremony (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Death is the ultimate rite of passage. The Africans viewed death as a permanent separation between the deceased and the family's living members. It became evident during our research that TNJC members had numerous rituals and beliefs regarding dying. Attending funerals and burial ceremonies, as well as touching the coffin or the ground while it was being buried, was considered ritually unclean for TNJC members.

Barasa observed:

'It is a taboo to touch the dead, the coffin and the soil during burial. One is considered unclean after they return from any funeral or burial ceremonies. However, we have some people among us who are selected to do this job' (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Additionally, it was decided that if photos were to be taken at a funeral in this church, they were to be removed away from the casket. In contrast, touching or getting close to a coffin is a widespread practice in other Christian groups. As a result, married males

are chosen in TNJC to carry out burial rituals. However, these men need to be upstanding citizens and committed churchgoers. These men cannot use the same bathroom or live in the same house as the others after the burial because they are regarded as dirty. To prevent contaminating the populace, they are not even permitted to shake hands in greeting. After that, they were sequestered for seven days in a room for purification by holy water sprinkles and prayers before reuniting with the other members (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Those who are employed are permitted to come in for work, but they must join the others in seclusion in the evening until they have been cleansed. This custom is thought to have originated in the Bukusu tradition, where the bad energies that might infect the living were viewed as the primary cause of death. Eliud Wekesa once forbade his disciples from going to funerals. Members are forbidden from touching dead bodies and run the risk of being dismissed from the church if they do.

“As the church head priest, my role is to ensure that their spirit is well nourished on spiritual matters. My calling is not to bury the dead when my members die” (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

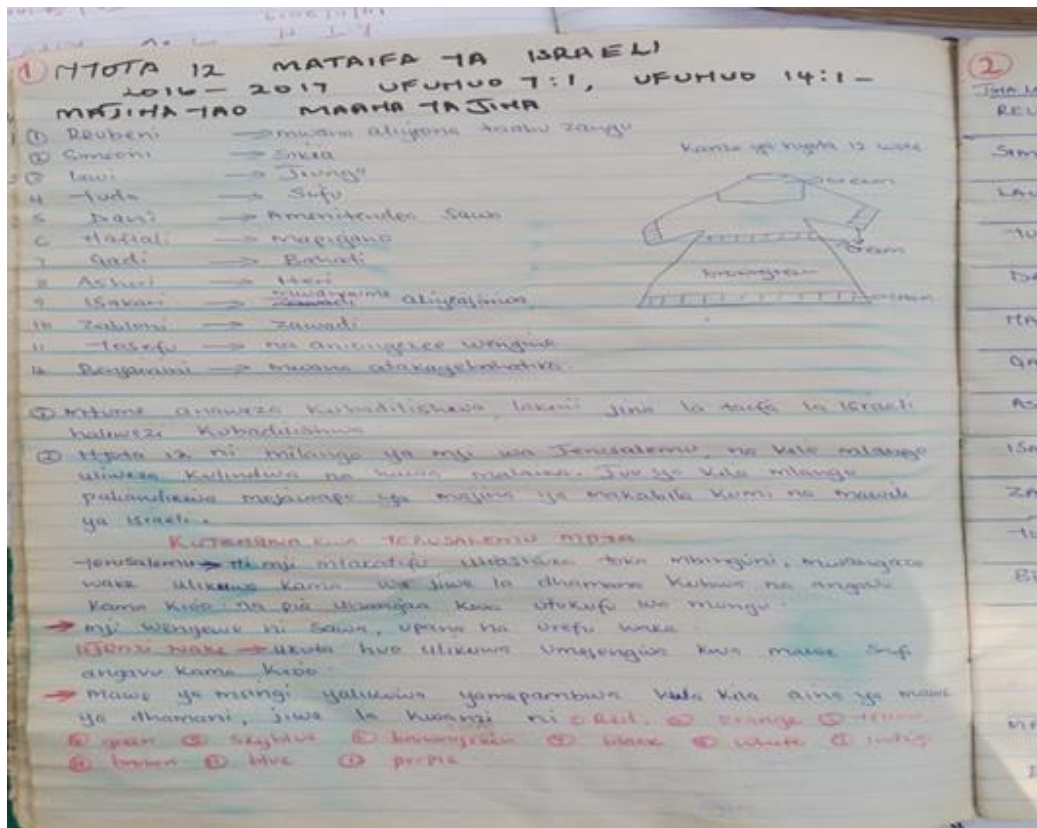
4.2.6 Ecclesiastical attires, days and places of worship

The types of uniforms used by various Church congregations serve as identifiers (Skelton, 2010). In contrast to other Christians, Tongaren Sub County residents who belong to the TNJC dress differently. In fact, the way a TNJC member dressed set them apart from those who belonged to other denominations. This aspect of their attire serves as a visible indicator of their unique identity from other religious groups. Pfeiffer noted the following:

‘The wearing of uniforms or dress contributes to a rich diversity, which helps to determine the identity of each group and psychologically permits an experience of uniqueness, self-esteem, newness and release from daily drudgery’ (Pfeiffer, 2007).

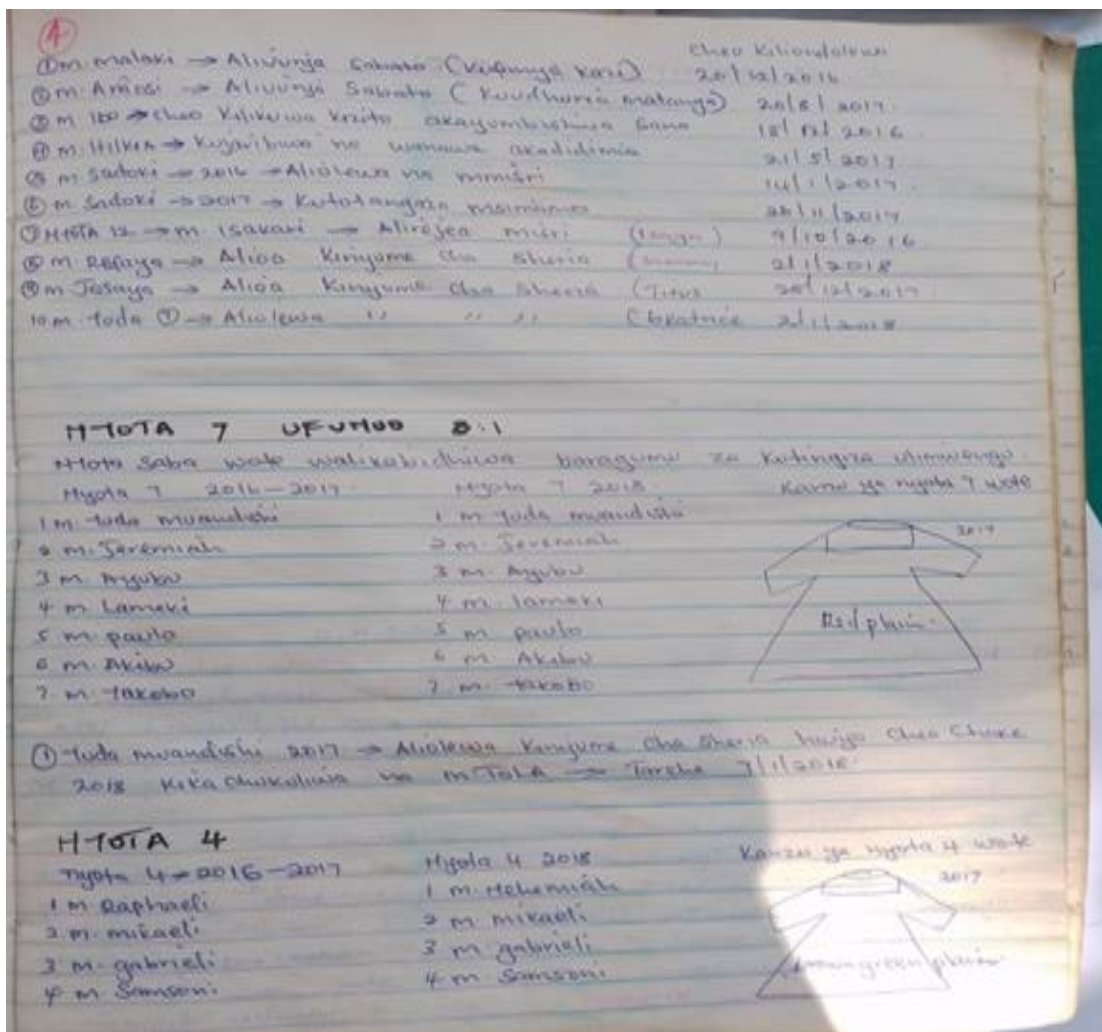
The TNJC fashion sense has generated a lot of discussion in the community. In the TNJC, the practice of dressing is taken so seriously that each article of clothing must first be prayed for and revealed by the Holy Spirit before being worn (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). He also adds that they do not simply put on any clothes because they were very concerned about spiritual uncleanness, which they believed might be caused by dirty clothes. Members of TNJC sought the Holy Spirit's guidance in everything they accomplished, as was previously mentioned. The TNJC claimed that its style of dressing came from the Holy Spirit and was only revealed after prayer. It is thought that members of this church were only given instructions regarding how to dress and what color to wear through prayers. Their distinctive clothing colors were a way to identify them from other people and their trademark.

The Holy Spirit always directs them to wear a *kanju* (derived from Kiswahili kanzu) while praying. The members of TNJC wear this long robe during prayers and days of worship, according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Lucia, O.I, 2022, June 9). These attires are for all the members of the congregation regardless of their leadership positions, gender and age. The idea of cleanliness required for the selected priests is intended to be reflected upon in the *kanju*. They want to dress simply rather than impressively. The men are required to wear pants, not shorts, underneath the *kanju*. As a result, the ladies are required to wear modest dresses or a pair of skirts over their *kanju*. They shouldn't wear jewelry because it is deemed worldly, whether it be on their wrists, heads, or ears. Members of the TNJC community might wear ties and shoes, and they could wear sandals made from recycled car tires. This is an expression that signified piety and non-worldliness interests (Wekesa, 2022). Below is a picture of the different colours of regalia the members of TNJC. Different colors within TNJC and their significance.



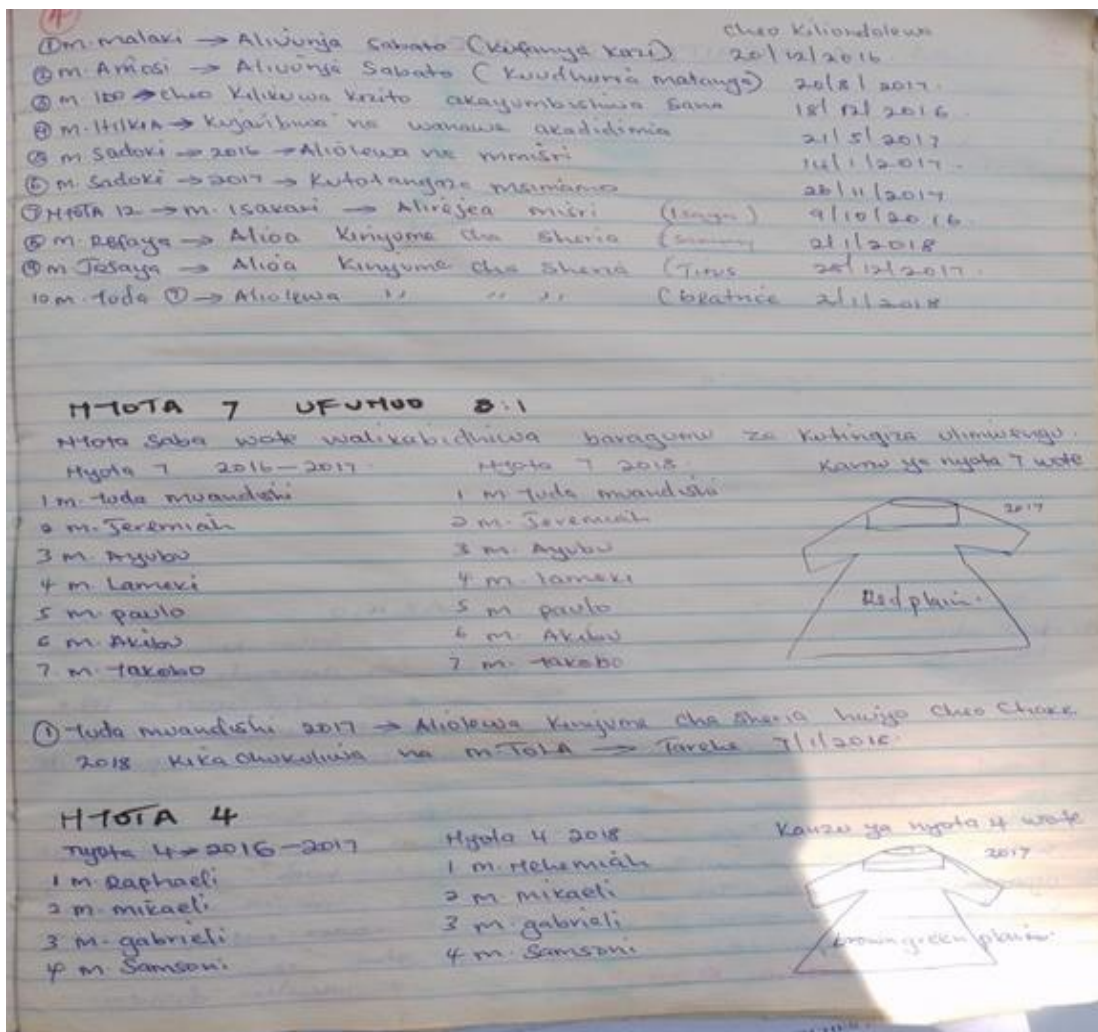
The members receive different revelations on the type and colour to be worn. The above is a regalia according to 'Mwalimu's' revelation.

Source: TNJC



Source: TNJC archives

The founders' outfit was completed by additional items in addition to their clothing. These featured a pole and a cotton sling bag. The Bible, which stands in for the rules and covenants, is in the bag, along with a pen and a notepad where they wrote down their convictions and declarations, which served as a reminder of who they were. He enjoys carrying a stick, which conveyed authority (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). On his pilgrimage, he carried staffs and rods as a symbol of his leadership and as weapons to fend off savage beasts, bad spirits, and other forces.



Pic above: Different regalia worn for both men and women.

Source: TNJC

The holiness of clothing has continued to have an impact on TNJC members' way of life and has given rise to powerful religious symbolism among adherents. Dressing also serves as a marker, establishing a barrier between believers and daily life or the profane world. It should be noted that a strange finding during the fieldwork was that certain TNJC members, aside from the founder and leader, did not always wear their kanjus, only donning them during church services or on Sabbath days.

Worship is the means by which TNJC expresses their beliefs and way of life. Generally speaking, Sunday was the day of worship for most Christians, however this varied based on the particular denomination. We determined that Saturdays were the day of worship

for the TNJC. Sundays were viewed as a day to commemorate the day that Jesus rose from the dead.

The clergyman who carries the cotton sling bag is occasionally picked by the group's leader, Eliud Wekesa, after being put to the test. The Bible, a notebook, and a pen are required items for this particular leader on Saturdays and other service days chosen during the week, such as Friday. The typical Saturday service, which includes preaching, is not followed on other days of the week instead one-on-one service is provided. During the service, the congregation discussed their concerns with the pastor. It also featured solitary meditation or social gatherings (Njukhilile, O.I, 2022, June 9).

4.2.7 Belief in Eschatology in TNJC

Eschatology is a branch of theology that deals with the study of the end times, or the final events of human history as described in religious texts and traditions. It explores questions related to death, judgment, heaven, hell, the return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead, and the ultimate fate of the world and its inhabitants (Aderibigbe, 2019). In Christianity, for example, eschatology is centered on the belief of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ and the events that will occur leading up to his return. This includes the rise of the Antichrist, the Great Tribulation, the rapture, and the final judgment. Eschatology also involves different interpretations of the events described in religious texts and traditions. For example, there are different views among Christians on the timing of the Second Coming of Christ and the sequence of events leading up to it. These include premillennialism, postmillennialism, and millennialism, among others.

As a result of their belief in the eschatological second coming of Jesus, TNJC members place a strong focus on evangelization. This explains why the Tongaren members

marched in procession to their worship spaces to share the good news with others in keeping with Jesus' instructions to preach to all the nations. They emphasized the value of irregular procession to snare sinners in markets and on roads. The Lord had commanded them to take the gospel to every creature, and by doing this, they were able to reach the unreachable sinners (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

According to Wekesa, eschatology is not only grounded on the Biblical Jesus' Resurrection and proclamation of God's Kingdom, but it is also oriented towards Christ's return in glory, towards the coming of "a new heaven and a new earth" that the Risen and Glorious Christ will bring about upon his return to judge the righteous and the sinners, the living and the dead, and to insure his eternal Reign. This explains Wekesa's mission towards recruiting more converts to TNJC through preaching to them the good news and giving them worldly hope. However, to Him, hope is not the only the objective towards living the final days on earth, but also being ready to acknowledge our sins and repenting, being obedient toward the teachings of God through portraying Christ-like behaviors and having the assurance of a coming divine intervention that will introduce something new that people have failed and will fail to achieve (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The end time is day of the Lord as Wekesa describes it;

"It is the day beyond other days. On this day, there will be roles which will be reversed." (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9)

According to Wekesa, during 'the end times' there will be "the pouring out of God's spirit" to illustrate the coming period of restoration (Joel 2:28) and a coming of a new creation (as referred to Isaiah 65:17-18 and 66:22). To Wekesa, all that the Old Testament predicted will occur in the end and as a matter of fact it has begun already. This is justified through events that are happening in the world such as the Russian –

Ukraine war (2022), COVID19 (2019), Social Injustices such as excessive land grabbing, corruption, sexual abuse, gender-based violence, violation of human rights, denial of medical and education services to the poor through public strikes.

Concerning on how the world may end, Wekesa confirms that the world will end in 2058 however, he is not sure with a specific day and date but it will surely come.

“Worldwide Liberation from 1981 to 2058” (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

He says this as a revelation to him from his father God and that is something that all Christians should wait to testify as it comes into fulfillment.

During this period of Worldwide Liberation, Wekesa, O.I (2022, June 9) confirms that there will be wars and famines and diseases, epidemics, water will turn into blood, and heavenly signs that will alert Christians of the end of the world. These disasters will signify God pouring out his wrath against sin, evil and wickedness. Then will come an antichrist inform of a political ruler who will establish control over the whole earth. He will be backed up by a false religious ruler with whom they will dominate the world. Consequently, the only things that will save human beings from this antichrist are the people of God.

4.2.8 Visions, dreams, prophecies and revelations in TNJC

The TNJC's theological practices were centered on visions, dreams, prophecies, and revelations. Visions are experiences in which a person sees or perceives something that is not physically present, usually in a supernatural or mystical context. Visions can be experienced in a variety of ways, such as in dreams, through meditation, or as a result of religious or spiritual practices. Dreams are experiences that occur during sleep in which the dreamer perceives images, sounds, thoughts, and feelings that may or may not be based in reality. Prophecies are predictions or revelations of future events,

usually based on divine inspiration or supernatural communication while revelations are insights or knowledge that is believed to be revealed through divine or supernatural means. Visions, prophesies, revelations and dreams are seen as a major way through which God communicated his will with the TNJC people. Although the Bukusu people could attempt to discern the will of God through methods of divination, such as reading their dreams, this procedure was involving as it entailed a sacrificed animal. To Wekesa, O.I (2022, June 9) dreams and visions were a type of “Gods inspired divination.” This means that they were a type of divination that was initiated by God Himself. Even so, some members of TNJC sought to experience a revelation or dream by sleeping in the church. If successful, God would appear to the person in a dream. This is called an incubation dream (Horton, 2010), and is sometimes associated with the Old Testament instances with the experiences of Samuel (I Sam 3) and of Jacob (Gen 28).

Their songs reflect the doctrine of their church. Songs were an integral part of their lives and were utilized to convey significant messages. The songs' lyrics include confessions and adorations, with refrains of "Amina," "Halleluya," and "praise God." One of the key components of TNJC music is the drum. The more they pounded the drum, the farther they were said to have held the demon at bay (Ibid). The TNJC offered a celebratory religion marked by vigorous dance and singing accompanied by strong drumming. The church's founder, prophets, and some specific members get revelation of spiritual hymns and melodies from a supernatural source.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter was set to investigate the religious beliefs and practices of TNJC of Tongaren. Amongst them, was their way of baptism, their beliefs in different

worldviews, way of dressing, way of worship, their views on the scriptures and rites of passage? From the findings, it became apparent that TNJC members communicated their beliefs and practices through worship. Although Sunday is generally the day of worship for Christians, there are variations based on the practicing denomination. The TNJC's theological practices were centered on visions, dreams, prophecies, and revelations. It was also revealed that Tongaren TNJC members dressed differently from other Christians. In fact, the way they dressed set their adherents apart from those of other denominations.

It was established that all activities carried out by TNJC members were subject to predetermined guidelines involving the appearance of the Holy Spirit. As time went on, it emerged that some of the regulations that the TNJC members had adhered to religiously, as discussed in the fifth chapter, had actually been altered and softened.

CHAPTER FIVE

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH

5.0 Introduction

The previous chapter, sought to find out some of the major religious beliefs and practices of TNJC in Tongaren, Bungoma County. This chapter seeks to analyze the transformations of TNJC from 2011-2023. It was discovered that while TNJC kept some of their procedures, there had also been significant alterations since it first surfaced. This chapter discusses changes that have been noticed in TNJC in Tongaren, including those that have affected politics, education, dressing, health, employment, and diet. How has TNJC of Tongaren affected the Kenyan society is another subject that the chapter aims to address. These effects that TNJC have on society will be clarified by the Social Movement Theory. The social, political, and economic facets of TNJC members are covered in three categories.

5.1 Socio-Religious Transformations within the New Jerusalem Church

Socio-religious transformations within TNJC refer to the social and religious changes or shifts that have occurred since the inception of TNJC up to date within the TNJC community. The TNJC, led by its founder and leader Eliud Wekesa, also known as "Yesu wa Tongaren" in Tongaren, has undergone substantial change over time, changing its perspective on the world. They believed that their existence was temporary and that there was no need to involve themselves in a world that was rapidly coming to an end (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). However, they heeded the Bible's teachings that "we should enjoy the days of heaven on earth...the righteous shall eat the good of the land" (Matthew 6:33; Deuteronomy 11:21), which prevented TNJC members from completely renouncing the realities of life. This insight made it clear that TNJC

members had a right to enjoy and engage in activities that contributed to their material well-being in the place that the Lord had given them.

The TNJC live a life of extreme simplicity while they wait to enter paradise by participating in earthly pursuits. In this church, good deeds like preaching, Bible study, emancipating people from worldly pleasures, and most significantly, care for the wellbeing of others, were encouraged. According to Wekesa, O.I. (2022, June 9) if one achieved this equilibrium, "he/she would have unbound happiness in the new world as well." This was motivated by the communalist idea that "I am because we are and because we are therefore I am" that permeates African thought (Mbiti, 2003). Traditional Africans and TNJCs only differed in that, unlike the former, who were unified by their shared ethnicity, "the latter were united by the virtue of belonging to one faith" (Park, 2010). As a result, TNJC found it difficult to balance their spirituality with what they referred to as secular difficulties in this world. However, given the realities of the modern world and the effects of globalization, change was unavoidable. It is clear that the movement has changed over time, even though some TNJC members still adhere to some of the organization's earlier fundamental values and principles.

After its official documentation by the Registrar of Societies as a NRM in 2011 by the, the administration stopped harassing them, TNJC continued to evangelize more individuals (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). When the TNJC faced various religious forms in independent Kenya, it underwent evident social-religious transformations in the rapidly changing Kenyan culture (WBBC Magazine, 2019). They were forced to adapt to societal changes, which in certain cases resulted in synthesis, reinvention, and change as well as the revival of the formerly indigenous religion (Odipo, 2019).

Some traditional TNJC activities and ways of thinking had declined as a result of modernization and socio-religious changes in Kenyan society, while others had been revived and modernized (Ibid). The once-rich and-dynamic culture of TNJC, like that of other religions, became diluted as a result of globalization, advanced and increased interaction among people, facilitated by progressive technological changes in communication, knowledge, and skills, as well as the blending of cultural practices, systems, and values.

5.1.1 Transformation in Attires

The importance of clothing in establishing a people's identity and culture as well as a person's personality cannot be overstated. In fact, how one dresses defines TNJC. Africans lost their cultural practice of wearing in traditional hides and skins as a result of the arrival of western fashion (Mwangi, 2016). Mwangi adds that some Africans did, however, at first reject the new fashion trend, with TNJC serving as an example. The way people dressed for the TNJC was examined in the previous chapter. We observed that TNJC participants continued to wear Kanzus as their ceremonial attire (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). The Holy Spirit provided guidance on the TNJC dress code through petitions, instructing them to wear clothing without any specific colors. The TNJC members detested European clothing. Men were not permitted to have various hairstyles, while women were forbidden from donning jewelry because they deemed it to be too "worldly" (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Tongaren TNJC's perspective about clothing style gradually changed. They have a kanju leader and founder, as was already noted. However, through the revelation of the Holy Spirit, they were given new instructions on wearing of the kanju dress (*Ibid*). With modernity, TNJC stopped criticizing Western attire, and many people now choose to wear long pants and the Kanzus instead of shorts (Nanjala, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Up until 2023, this style of attire was still in use. It has remained unchanged despite the rise of the elite, educated, committed class at TNJC (Lucia, O.I., 2022, June 9). However, TNJC ladies are now clothing in a new way, according to fashion. They began donning colorful clothing created in Europe. The clothing is worn everywhere except on worship days and during private services. Respondent Nanjala noted the following:

In Tongaren, the women of TNJC have completely changed in their way of dressing. They wear expensive but simple clothes. Many prefer bright colors like white, green and purple. There is a unique fashion that they prefer however in which the clothes is tailored to be long (Nanjala, O.I, 2022, June 9).

In the focus group discussion, every man concurred that the robes and Kanjus they wore represented purity. They continued to dress in the original antagonistic manner.

Makona remarked:

'Majority have changed and accepted the European sense of fashion that they initially rejected especially the women. However, there are those who still insist on the Kanzu especially when going to the sanctuary. These are mostly the leaders of service, prayer leaders and prophets. The Kanzu is thus an instruction of the Holy Spirit and those that are instructed to wear it must do so to escape punishment because of disobedience. Kanzu signifies the angel of peace' (Makona, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The TNJC of Tongaren, believe that their clothing contains religious meaning, has power over evil spirits, and serves as a distinction between believers and nonbelievers (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). As was already said, the *kanju* acted as TNJC's "trademark" in order to set them apart from the general populace. It is asserted that the Holy Spirit revealed the hue of the *kanju* to be worn through prayer.

Members of the TNJC hold the belief that angels appointed by God to protect them are in charge of them. Depending on the amount of spirituality, position, and role-playing in the church, the angel may alter. It is significant to note that, despite the Tongaren

TNJC's evolution and acceptance of various clothing choices, like as the wearing of shorts, closed-toed shoes were not permitted inside the sanctuary. The reason for this is that the sanctuary was sacred and hence couldn't be dirty.

The habit of wearing clothing in colors other than white was started by their leader Eliud Wekesa, according to this study's anonymous key respondents (Key Informant 21, O.I 2023, January, 2). Because the Holy Spirit talked to every TNJC member, we came to the conclusion that the movement's fashion would continue to change because there was no longer a single organization that set standards for and directed how people dressed. By 2009, many movement members had liberalized, as seen by the current generation of TNJC adolescents whose fashion sense the early members would have described as "worldly." In fact, based on observation, the headgear was the sole thing separating the TNJC kids from the rest (WBBC Magazine, 2022). However, it was noted that even TNJC women in Tongaren had been impacted by shifting fashions and way of life as a result of the quickening globalization process. An elder who served as a crucial informant said the following:

'TNJC founder in Tongaren did not allow women to choose to wear a wedding ring. Women also were not allowed to visit hair salons. They were also not allowed to use other kinds of ornaments like earrings and hair bands. Yesu condemned them as worldly pleasures' (Key informant 22, O.I 2023, January, 2).

This remark stood out among the ladies because the majority of TNJC women continued to wear long, pleated skirts and dresses. They are unable to wear pants and move freely while doing this movement. Any society member who is seen wearing pants shall be wrapped in a wrapper. The founder claims that wearing such garments renders one bare.

The majority of women within this movement have affirmed that before they turned to this sort of dressing, they had been putting trousers and miniskirts. However, they

changed due to *Yesu wa Tongareni's* teachings based on Deuteronomy 22:5 (A lady should not wear men's clothing, and a man should not wear ladies' attire. Any individual who does this is abominable in seeing the LORD your God), they choose to leave what they were putting on and picked this obsolete transformation. In addition, Jesus of Tongaren alleges that people who have braided hair (rasta) won't enter Heaven (Nelima, O.I, 2022, June 9). To him, these people are still living for the earthly pleasures.

5.1.2 Marriage and family life

The marriage institution is held in the highest regard by TNJC in Tongaren, who see it as a priceless gift from God. With its unrivaled effect in preserving the value of fundamental social moral fabrics like the sanctity of marriage and family life, this church has continued to improve the social life in the greater community (Ibid). TNJC strongly opposes polygamy, in keeping with Abaluhya cultural customs.

TNJC members were seen to have altered and condemned polygamy while upholding monogamy alone as the norm during the fieldwork. According to them, the bible specifically stipulates that a man should only have one wife. Wekesa observes;

For it is written Mathew 19:3-9, Genesis 2:24 that 'Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, and said for this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?' (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9)

He informs that in order to avoid polygamous marriages, every man should marry his own wife and every woman to have her own husband to marry so that they can confine themselves rendering their conjugal duties effectively.

Nanjala Murumwa a member of TNJC, who is against polygamy, responded by asserting that:

'A man does not primarily marry for sex, but to have a family, share happiness, labor and wealth with his children. This does not necessarily have to be through marrying many wives. One can just get them all through marrying one wife' (Nanjala, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The monogamous lifestyle was adopted by TNJC members from the Old Testament, when patriarchs like Moses and Zachariah were lauded for their monogamous lifestyles. Members of the TNJC think that God approved of the behavior as a result. Saints from the New Testament like Paul warned against immorality and adultery. According to them, polygamy is a sin and is not permitted in Christianity (Mwangi, 2016).

During the fieldwork, it was noted that polygamy was becoming less common among the Tongaren community that the TNJC served. External causes, such as financial restrictions brought on by the rising cost of living, rather than church policies, were the basis for this (Makona, O.I, 2022, June 9). In order to discourage divorce, members who were already polygamous when they joined the churches were urged to remain together.

Divorce cases among TNJC in Tongaren were typically noted to be uncommon and discouraged. As they are regarded and recognized as a show of piety, righteousness, dedication, and continuity of family values, church marriages are preferred over traditional forms. The TNJC community accepted and acknowledged African customary marriage as a sacred rite of passage that was typically performed with appropriate Christian forms of singing, dancing, and celebration. The priority ascribed to childbearing, which is seen as marriage's primary goal, goes hand in hand with the value of marriage among TNJC. For this reason, childlessness is deeply regrettable since it endangers human life and undermines social order. Due to financial restrictions and the risk of catching HIV/AIDS, many NJC members had changed and rejected polygamy by 2011.

TNJC teaches that sexual relationships are intended to be within the bounds of marriage between a man and a woman. They interpret biblical passages, such as those found in the Old Testament (e.g., Leviticus 18:22) and the New Testament (e.g., Romans 1:26-27, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10), as prohibiting homosexual behavior. Therefore, within the TNJC same-sex sexual relationships are considered contrary to God's intended design for human sexuality. Consequently, individuals within these denominations are encouraged to abstain from homosexual acts and to seek celibacy or pursue heterosexual relationships within the bounds of marriage.

Since the organization's founding in 2011, members of the TNJC in Tongaren have been actively involved in socio-political and economic enterprises in the area's several urban centers, including Kamukuywa Market, Kiminini, Tongaren, and other locations. Many members were forced to relocate to different towns in search of a better metropolitan lifestyle. They were soon confronted with problems including homelessness, unemployment, drunkenness, prostitution, and drug misuse. These eventually led to significant moral slackness and new societal standards. The followers of TNJC were not exempt from changes in lifestyle, ethical issues, or moral dilemmas. A new challenge has entered Africa, pushing a wedge between religious and secular life, which was unheard of in traditional living (Mbiti, 2015). Because of this, Tongaren as a whole developed the impression that "some of TNJC members had become loose morally, that some drunk alcohol and moved around as non-Christians which was unheard of before" (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Due to the structural shift in the global economy in 2011, members of the TNJC community in Tongaren underwent transformations and began acquiring materialistic, individualistic behaviors and ideals that were traditionally linked with western culture. Some TNJC members continued to live a modest, godly, and unworldly lifestyle in

Tongaren in accordance with their founder Eliud Wekesa's teachings. The movement has thus demonstrated both continuity and change over time. A manifestation of "Christianity consistent with their own unique historical experience, rooted self-consciously in their unique cultures", as was previously noted (Mwangi, 2016) is what the TNJC stands for.

Since its founding, the TNJC, led by Eliud Wekesa, has heavily imitated and borrowed from other protestant faiths, which has caused their culture to be lost or diluted and propagated harmful values across the organization. The foundation upon which the TNJC community was formed was the target of this development's conceptual and methodical rage. The community has been impacted by modern Christians' moral deterioration. The spiritual scale has gone downward through time. The neighborhood began displaying signs of the "de-culturizing" impact of western Christianity, which forced the group to ruthlessly cut off its roots and lose its authenticity. It is succumbing to the cultural influence of western churches (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

In today's changing world, when the younger generations are questioning the authority of the parents, it was particularly difficult for the TNJC youth to remain true to God's word (Mbiti, 2015). In a society that is changing quickly, TNJC youth have a responsibility to maintain their moral, ceremonial, and spiritual purity. Many TNJC kids have lost their good Christian character and morals, leading them to rebel against God's word and find themselves immersed in the pursuit of wealth and worldly pleasures. One young participant from the TNJC, noticed that:

"Today, we adapt to the changing world in our pursuit of wealth"
(Mukire, O.I, 2022, June 9).

It was a major obligation for TNJC in Tongaren to teach spiritual principles to young people before and after they reached adulthood. This had been seen at numerous youth

gatherings, seminars, and workshops held throughout Tongaren. It is important to note right away that our fieldwork revealed a significant upward trend in the number of young people joining TNJC.

Members of TNJC are also encouraged to marry amongst themselves. Choosing a marriage partner basing on religion or denomination is not right but for the case of this movement, seeds planted in a person by their church times cannot be ignored. One needs to exercise maximum wisdom and at times to seek intervention of the Holy Spirit and *Mwalimu* because marriage is a critical thing in life. Having seen members of TNJC doing most of the things especially in marriage in a unique way following biblical track (respondent 22, O.I 2023, January,2) was tempted to reveal that however it is very significant if one gets to marry someone from within this movement. He noted that

“Members of TNJC are able to escape infidelity. Immorality is the sin that is mostly rebuked day and night. Having that woman in this ministry dress modestly, there are low chances of cheating in marriage. This is because they won't make other men to lust at them. With those reasons, there is a very low chance for you to experience some kind of cheating in your marriage. Another reason is that children are promised of a better future. This is because of the many restrictions from the movement where children are likely to adapt moral values. Think about a child growing and knowing how to dress well. You will hardly find them causing troubles in discos, bars or doing other filthy things” (Key respondent 22, O.I 2023, January, 2).

It is clear that, this church plays a very significant role as far as morals are concerned within this community. What it feeds its people is what is reflected in this society.

Despite the degeneration of African culture and morals in the face of globalization, TNJC has persisted in drawing a sizable number of young people from all educational backgrounds. According to this study, the church has a young membership from a variety of social and economic backgrounds between 2011 and 2018 (Nasike, O.I, 2022, June 9). The church has a promising future since it can still attract young people as members. The converts are a result of moving in quest of truth and marriage

relationships with families and experiencing spiritual conviction. In response to a question regarding the church's chances for the future, Nasike said:

‘This church has a bright future, you know we attract quite a number of people especially the youth, into TNJC and you know our beliefs are not as before when people would run from this church because members did not go to school’ (Nasike, O.I, 2022, June 9th).

The Roman Catholic Church, Friends Churches, and African Independent Pentecost church (AIPC), among others, are just a few of the various denominations from which TNJC has continued to attract adherents.

5.1.3 Education

The introduction of western education by the white man, whom the Bukusu saw as the adversary of God's people, prevented the TNJC members in Tongaren from embracing it at first. As a result, TNJC opposed everything that was 'western' in nature other from the Bible (Makona, O.I, 2022, June 9). Furthermore, TNJC members disregarded education because they saw it as being of this world and instead focused on the heavenly kingdom. Thirdly, TNJC members kept to themselves and were unable to openly associate with other students at schools (Ibid).

A Tongaren elder affirmed that for a long time, the bulk of TNJC members had not placed a high importance on education;

“TNJC members wanted to preserve their customs and traditions as Africans and were afraid if their children went to school, they would be alienated by others. They could also copy their style like wearing foreign clothes” (Key respondent 21, O.I 2023, January, 2).

The first generation of TNJC of Tongaren was negatively impacted by their initial exclusion from both the missionary and African-led Independent Schools, which made it difficult for them for a very long period to even record their own history (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). The modernizing age, however, has caused TNJC members to shift their perspective on education. Indeed, one of the most remarkable changes in the

history of the TNJC movement is believed to have been the speed at which TNJC members have embraced education (Key Informant 22, O.I 2023, January, 2). By 2011, the majority of TNJC members had enrolled their kids in elementary school, with the majority choosing not to move on to the following grade.

The interest of TNJC members in formal education is said to have occurred after Eliud Wekesa, their leader in Tongaren encouraged his followers to embrace the practice for their own independence. As a matter of fact, Wekesa's children are students of various institutions of higher learning in Kenya. His son is a student at Kiambu College pursuing a diploma certificate while his daughter Nabii Enoke is pursuing Diploma in Social Work and Community Development at Kisiwa Technical Institute based in Kabuchai Constituency, Bungoma County. Currently, Tongaren MP. Dr. Chikati is sponsoring her education (Namachanja, 2023).

Prior to this, TNJC was concerned that their kids would be forced to go to school on Sabbath days. They firmly believed that an NJC youngster would benefit more from skipping school than from skipping Sabbath worship (Kataka, O.I, 2022, June 9). Wekesa was able to persuade many of his followers of the value of education since he had gotten a basic education up to the seventh grade in a mission school before becoming a Christian. He informed parents that TNJC school-aged children would be permitted to leave class early in order to attend Sabbath service (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

A change in their attitudes toward formal education was confirmed in the 2010s by the high rates of school attendance among TNJC youngsters in particular (Ibid). When questioned about whether going to school went against TNJC values, Mukire said:

'Going to school was forbidden by the old people before, but we have greatly changed since then, in fact, it is our parents who encourage us to learn up to the university and for me, I want to be a medical doctor' (Mukire, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Additionally, every respondent who was contacted for the survey said that education was important and that TNJC students should pursue higher education, including enrollment in colleges (Ibid). This offered a voice for change in opposition to the rigid, restrictive views that forbade education. Mukire added the following:

'TNJC children should go up to the university just like other children because if they fail to do so, they will not be able to acquire lucrative jobs that everyone is running for. They will also be left behind in terms of development and you know, today everyone is looking forward to development' (Mukire, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Although the expansion of educated TNJC members was rather slow at first, it picked up speed in 2011 "with the emergence of the first crop of the educated, focused and committed TNJC elite class" (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). By the year 2018, there were several TNJC students from Tongaren pursuing basic and higher education in educational institutions, which they considered was essential to the growth of the community (Ibid). Many TNJC members joined a variety of social and economic roles, including work, business, and trade, as a result of their enthusiasm to further their education. There has been a surge in the number of Tongaren TNJC students studying different degrees in colleges starting in the 2020s, including education, law, medicine, media, and management, to name just a few.

The New Jerusalem Church Student Fellowship (TNJCSF), which is being organized by a group of TNJC students from several higher institutions in Kenya, aims to:

Stop the widespread brain drain of TNJC students, especially those in secondary schools, colleges, and universities (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

This change was required to stop the TNJC students' rising dropout rate, which was noted to be higher than among students in other denominations. It was noted during the fieldwork that a sizable proportion of TNJC youngsters, particularly young males, abandoned their kanjus, especially after completing secondary education (Nasike, O.I, 2022, June 9). Even for individuals who went on to enroll at universities, the practice was reported to be widespread. The results showed that this practice was a result of modernization's effects, which led to juvenile rebellion and challenges to parental authority. TNJC member Zachariah Mukire, a form 4 graduate about to enroll in college, provided the following explanation as to why this is the case:

'Parents force most of us to continue adorning the kanju while in school. Immediately one is of age and can, make independent decisions then the kanju can be discarded' (Mukire, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The New Jerusalem Church Students Fellowship (TNJCSF), in addition to organizing Keshas, which involved gathering at odd hours to sing, dance, and pray together, visiting their mother church in Tongaren, and organizing weekend challenges, will represent the interests of TNJC students in tertiary educational institutions. This advancement will steadily move TNJC up socioeconomic participation ladders within the nation (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Due to their dedication to education, TNJC in Tongaren no longer segregated them and instead sent their kids to school so they might receive an education. The adult education programs were utilized by TNJC as well (Barasa, O.I., 2022, June 9), maybe to give people who had previously been unable to attend school the opportunity to do so now.

John Barasa remarked that:

My parents did not send him to school even though he had always been eager to learn. (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Knowing the value of education, Barasa joined in an adult education program that taught basic literacy and English in addition to sending his children to school (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

This is not to indicate that TNJC members did not face difficulties while pursuing their degree, though. They first experienced discrimination, as was the case with the school that required short skirts as a uniform. Members of the TNJC feel excluded in these situations because they do not wear short dresses. These schools kept preventing the girls from wearing their long dresses, displaying blatant discrimination against them. An anonymous contributor expressed regret that several schools in Nairobi County required girls to wear short dresses, which was against the TNJC faith. She discovered:

‘Even if the schools would treat our girls specially and allow them to put long skirts, we are always worried because our girls would be influenced by the others and at that age the adolescent peer pressure will suffice’ (Nanyama, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Nevertheless, TNJC's passion for knowledge seemed irresistible despite the obstacles, especially in the world that is changing so quickly right now. With members actively promoting abilities in important spheres including theology, media, intellectualism, and science in society, TNJC grew dynamic.

5.1.4 Health

Over time, the perspective of TNJC in Tongaren regarding health has shown both consistency and change. Members of the TNJC were adamantly opposed to the adoption of western medicine at the height of their organization. They were so firmly committed to the group's ideology that they would rather perish than receive prompt medical attention. According to their leader and founder Eliud Wekesa, it was a religious obligation not to seek medical care (Makona, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The TNJC also disapproved of early medical treatments since they trusted in faith healing, which meant that when someone was ill, a religious leader would offer prayers for their recovery. Faith healing has been performed by TNJC churches since their founding (Makona, O.I, 2022, June 9). Here, people with health related issues such as respiratory illness, mobility problems, bone diseases and cancer would gather together in hopes of getting healed. They prayed together in faith believing that with the intervention of God those who have faith get healed of their illnesses. They considered this form of healing as divine / miracle healing. It involves removal of any existing physical illnesses or discomforts through the use of divine intervention (Castillo, 2021).

It was until 2011, after the local government intervention that some members agreed to seek medical attention (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Later, some TNJC members began seeking healthcare just like the rest of the population. Mikaili made a note of;

I seek medical services when am sick because even the doctors use knowledge that is given by God. We believe that the doctors treat and God heals. God said that we are His co-creators and hence we should continue with his creation, (Mikaili, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Many TNJC have progressively grown accustomed to using hospital drugs to treat people's health issues. Today, medical services are able to diagnose and treat many previously unexplainable illnesses. Many problems that were formerly attributed by TNJC to the mysterious realm might be easily explained by scientific understanding.

While we make these findings, it's crucial to keep in mind that some TNJC members in Tongaren have stayed conservative and have continued to practice the outdated form of faith healing. This is due to their conviction that only God has the power to heal, and that using any other healing technique would contaminate the body, the Holy Spirit's temple.

During the fieldwork, it was discovered that three out of the fifteen TNJC members still adhere to faith healing and are unable to see a doctor or receive medical care.

5.1.5 Dietary prescriptions

Members of this faith have been extremely severe about adhering to the dietary regulations outlined in the Laws of Moses since the beginning of the TNJC movement in 2011 (Makona, O.I, 2022, June 9). Anything that had come into contact with blood was off limits to them. The TNJC was initially restricted to eating only the meat they had themselves slaughtered. A certain TNJC member was given the task of killing inside and outside the church so that the others may purchase. Typically, Friday was designated as the day of the slaughter (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The TNJC was quite strict about its food requirements (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Any food cooked in regular fat was inedible to them. They scrupulously avoided eating pork because they believed the animal to be impure in accordance with Deuteronomy 14 (Ibid). They only used milk cream and fat from the animals they killed. They consequently thought that animal fat was pure and free of impurities that could pollute the body. Tobacco, alcohol, cigarettes, and other intoxicating substances were outright prohibited for its members (Lucia, O.I., 2022, June 9). Additionally, because they were believed to have come into touch with blood, they avoided eating the internal parts of the murdered animals, including the heart, liver, lungs, kidneys, and pancreas (Ibid). Following this movement required strict adherence to the dietary restrictions, proscriptions, and ablution requirements outlined in the book of Leviticus. Due of their inability to eat in public or at social gatherings, TNJC became social outcasts. In our fieldwork, we found that the non-NJC members isolated the TNJC due to their selective feeding behaviors. Lucia noted that:

'In the Bukusu culture, eating is a social practice and we share a lot. However, if one cannot eat your food, you also cannot eat his. We believe such kind of a person is a witch' (Lucia, O.I, 2022, June 9).

After 2011, a significant portion of TNJC in Tongaren underwent transition, started eating food prepared with regular cooking oil, and even began bringing meals to social occasions. Pigs, rabbits, ducks, and many kinds of fish are among the animals that are prohibited from consumption. However, food restrictions loosened significantly by 2022, when TNJC elites started to emerge. It was noted during the fieldwork that they interacted with a variety of people in hotels and consumed meals of various varieties, independent of the type of cooking oil employed (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

5.2 Political Transformations in TNJC

Many young people swore to enter the country's various academic and professional areas after the TNJC educated elites began to emerge. Individual TNJC members in Tongaren have recently started to show interest in politics. The appointment of a TNJC member from Lukhokwe to the position of MCA in 2022 serves as a prime example. Unfortunately, Elvis Sitati won it during the initial phases of nomination (Njukhilile, O.I, 2022, June 9). However, very few Tongaren TNJC members have managed to advance politically by being appointed to the government by the year 2022 (Odipo, 2019).

It should be emphasized that some TNJC members in Tongaren continued to believe they were heavenly citizens and avoided political activity ever since it was formed. They engaged in religious prejudice, which caused many people to stay politically marginalized. They also discouraged its members from taking part in civic duties like voting or running for office. Murumwa is one of few TNJC members who has never participated in politics or encouraged voting. She, on the other hand, remained silent

about it, and before the neighbors discovered out, he used to attribute his inability to vote on having misplaced his ID card. Murumwa observed:

'As neighbors, we could sometimes want to accompany each other to vote. Every time they could call me, all I could say was that my Identity Card is lost. After all they knew how essential an identity card was for voting. So, definitely I could not vote without it.' (Murumwa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

People's perception of TNJC, which they viewed with scorn, mistrust, and suspicion, was influenced by this behavior. The goal of religion in politics is undermined by such bigotry because "a higher civic involvement enables religion to contribute to social change which generates the social capital for community development and social opportunities, complementing the state and the market forces" (Ochanda, 2003).

Politics adopting TNJC members in Tongaren asserted that God was concerned with the spiritual and material well-being of His people. They referred to a passage from the Bible where God sent Samuel to anoint a king for the Israelites. Tongaren's TNJC political involvement, however, remained minimal. To clarify their place in society and "provide leadership salted with the fear of the Lord," TNJC needed to engage in politics more visibly (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

5.3 Economic Transformations in TNJC

It was thought that TNJC did not participate in traditional economic activities. As they awaited the glory of heaven, the Tongaren members of the TNJC held that simplicity was what they were meant to pursue (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). As a result, they were considered as the poorest of the poor (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). The unemployed, the sick, and those who were uneducated were TNJC's main clientele. These participants appeared uninterested in undertaking any actions that would benefit their financial situation.

TNJC in Tongaren altered and underwent an economic transformation in response to modernization and the complication and uncertainty of life. The informal sector, which was dominated by unemployed people who had to use their ingenuity to make a living, was where TNJC historically found themselves starting in early 2011 (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Because they lacked the official education and technical credentials required for the formal "white color" jobs, they decided to go into self-employment. In the beginning, TNJC members purposefully chose not to send their kids to school out of fear of discrimination and concern that they could pick up wrong morals (Murumwa, O.I, 2022, June 9). They started raising their kids using a "hands-on" method. As a result, the father's profession was typically almost effortlessly passed down to the male children (Mukire, O.I, 2022, June 9). This explains why members of TNJC possess expert artist talent in a variety of vocations, including carpentry, masonry, stone dressing, and tailoring. Considering that the majority of businesses are open on Saturdays and Sundays, it should be noted that the formal sector had various requirements that would force them to violate the Sabbath. Additionally, some workplace dress codes might undoubtedly exclude TNJC members. As a result, the unorganized sector developed into a successful career that matched their level of spirituality and financial prosperity.

It is clear that starting in 2012, Tongaren members changed and began to be more critical of the ideology of its founder, Eliud Wekesa, who believed that the materialist world was wicked and temporary. Many elite TNJC members began to engage in many economic activities beyond the straightforward farming methods of their early forebears (Murumwa, O.I, 2022, June 9). By 2011, a large portion of TNJC members held the view that success and money were gifts from God, and that man must work hard to achieve prosperity in order to experience life to the fullest. Their commitment

to integrity, honesty, and trust propelled many of them to greater economic success across a range of industries. As a result of this shift, numerous TNJC of Tongaren members amassed wealth and power, which eventually led to greater socioeconomic mobility in the community.

Contrasting sharply with proto-TNJC members who lived in abject poverty as a result of their conviction that the universe was evil and temporal was the current TNJC members of Tongaren's positive socioeconomic mobility. One of the doctrines of the TNJC is that money is the source of all evil, according to an elder in this village who defined TNJC members as people who rarely wear boots or shoes, require that buildings be constructed of local materials (Key Informant 22, O.I 2023, January, 2). The TNJC in Tongaren underwent significant changes as a result of this good fortune, the ascent of the TNJC elites in 2011, and the successful eradication of the social stigma of exclusivity and isolation from the rest of society.

By 2011, the TNJC community had to quickly adjust if it wanted to keep up with the rest. They actively participated in the construction of churches and schools and raised money to help impacted members with their medical expenses. Many constructed decent, long-lasting homes back home. Many people moved into cities in quest of work and business prospects.

In 2020, the group's leader, Eliud Wekesa, created a philosophy encouraging his followers to adopt a habit of properly managing their finances. This then had the effect of stimulating savings, investment, and economic expansion. The church employed Mary Muloli, a businesswoman in the Tongaren settlement of Lukhokhwe, to collect and hold member contributions. Members took out loans against this cash and repaid them with negligible interest (Muloli, O.I, 2022, June 9). Many people first perceived

the TNJC movement as an organization of the uneducated and underprivileged members of society (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

This has since changed since the church has always taken the lead in praising government activity that affects all sectors of the economy. The church offered alternatives to the methods used by the secular sector to address the nation's socioeconomic problems. This is accomplished through their transcendental power-based spiritual teachings, which provide the underprivileged with hope, meaning, and purpose (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Due to their commitment to integrity, a strong work ethic, and altruism, Tongaren's TNJC members' social interactions and upward economic mobility are still influenced by their faith and culture. The movement placed a high importance on morality and good work ethics, appealing to people's consciences and fostering healthy social relationships that promote effectiveness and peacebuilding. The majority of TNJC members in Tongaren have remained proactive in supporting economic progress in the nation as a result of the economic transformations that have been observed in the church, "which has resulted in their liberation and spiritual gratification," in the larger context.

5.4 Organizational Structure of TNJC in Tongaren

Tongaren's New Jerusalem Church was founded as a group of people without a formalized hierarchy of authority or membership procedures. It was once available to anybody who repented of their sins and embraced Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, but it had no written rules or restrictions (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Eliud Wekesa, who presided over the TNJC in the past, would issue directives after receiving them from the Holy Spirit.

Gradually, the TNJC underwent change to become a fully-fledged ministry with a hierarchy of leadership and central administration (Ibid). However, it must be kept in mind that the TNJC faith featured elements of the Luhya traditional religion, which are also visible in its organizational structure and leadership. For instance, much as there are Angels and Archangels, TNJC fellowships are leader-centered and have senior leaders in addition to their founder. The fact that everyone was wearing kanjus suggested that there was no obvious separation between priests and laypeople (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The formal hierarchy for administrative tasks and a religious arm that deals with solely religious issues make up the two levels of church government. While the latter involved evangelistic work, discipline, planning and officiating at ceremonies like baptism, marriage, priestly ordination, and funerals, the former involved general administration, including building the Church's facilities and liaising with the local authorities and government on all official matters and issues relating to the welfare of the entire community (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). The Chairman, who is the organization's originator, as well as a Secretary General and Treasurer made up the administrative staff. Their founder, who is still the baptizer, a preacher, and a prayer leader, was present in the religious spheres.

The chairperson was always its founder and general leader, and their responsibilities included praying for the congregation and officiating special events including weddings, ordinations, baptisms, and the dedication of newly constructed church facilities. Since the TNJC was established in 2011, Eliud Wekesa has served as its first chairman (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

In addition to leading burial rites and the local congregation and overseeing church services, the founder also baptized new believers. A preacher's duties included preaching and delivering sermons on Sundays, while a prayer leader was in charge of leading the church community in prayer (Lucia, O.I, 2022, June 9). The church angels who served as the founder's aides and the authors of his impending bible were other notable individuals.

A new leadership hierarchy was proposed with the rise of the elite class of 20s at TNJC. The TNJC of Tongaren was compelled by this to accept "formalization of the church activities as part of the wider trends towards realism" (Rukioya, 2012). In the 2018, a new hierarchy with Angels, Disciples, Pastors, and Deacons was established (Nelima, O.I., 2022, June 9).

In response to shifting social trends, the TNJC of Tongaren had to rebuild its churches from the temporary structures with mud walls and grass thatched roofs to permanent structures with exquisite architecture. Small groups of TNJC followers used to gather outdoors on Sundays for services, while others could be seen preaching, singing, marching in processions, and praying on roundabouts, under trees, and along roadsides (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Nelima a member of TNJC, greed this claim by saying:

Due to the availability of knowledgeable staff, TNJC publicly conducted crusades, or preaching and evangelizing to everyone regardless of their ethnicity (Nelima, O.I., 2022, June 9).

The movement grew rapidly once the first generation of TNJC elites emerged, both in urban and rural areas, proving the organization's viability in the Kenyan spiritual market. Nevertheless, this expansion has been continual and intensive, with smaller units arising from mother bodies and each taking on distinctive names (Ibid).

The TNJC in Tongaren offered a celebratory religion distinguished by extraordinary dancing, singing, and drumming. The ethos and rhetoric of TNJC are centered on the appropriate use of spiritual music, hymns, and sacred language as a conduit for revelation. They expressed their practices and beliefs through song and dance (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). The forceful usage of the drum, combined with handclapping, dancing, and foot stomping, is a common element in TNJC tunes and lovely melodies. Because of the TNJC music's intensity, pace, and enthusiasm, African spirit can be seen in the songs and dance. The TNJC holds the opinion that the ferocious drumming keeps the evil spirits at bay (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). He further claims:

This has become part of us anyway. This is more of our identity.
Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9)

The rise of an elite class in Tongaren in the 1920s that was educated, committed, and focused saw a major divergence from the previous singing and dancing to the TNJC spiritual hymns. The singing and dancing of TNJC religious songs was altered by the younger generation of gospel performers. They sought to modernize tired hymns by transforming them with the use of contemporary instruments like the guitar (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). They also created and recorded gospel music with hip-hop tunes in Kiswahili and English, which has gained popularity with the general public. The young TNJC members made this daring effort to counter the prevalent narrative that painted them as primitive and uneducated.

5.5 The Position of Women in TNJC in Tongaren

The Tongaren TNJC assigned women secondary duties to the men. Instead of being at the core of the church and society, they remained on the periphery (Lucia, O.I, 2022, June 9). They were largely sympathetic and lacked a voice in the church hierarchy (Lucia, O.I., 2022). As was already said, the TNJC faith draws heavily from the Luhya

traditional religious structure, where women were subordinate to men. The Bukusu women were barred from religious careers like sacrifices due to gender inequality, but they were heavily involved in household tasks like cooking, raising children, and keeping the family together (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

In order to generate and preserve life, as well as to contribute to the instillation of socio-religious values and morals in the family and society, we as women have traditionally played caregiving roles that have placed us in a unique and crucial position. (Nanyama, O.I, 2022, June 9)

The political, social, economic, and religious structures of Bukusu society were therefore controlled by men (Ibid).

In the TNJC, women have generally supported the men and have not participated fully in church or organizational decision-making (Nanjala, O.I, 2022, June 9). Mikaili a woman leader in the church claims:

The women in TNJC provide spiritual and moral support in the church through prayers and songs, just like the men do. (Mikaili, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Additionally, women have been given a strange role in helping the founder write his next bible. This is clear when people are spotted taking notes on the preacher's sermons during church sessions. Angels are under the direction of a woman named Topistar, an Arch angel. She is designated as the traveler who hears guidance from God and the group's founder Eliud Wekesa. It is important to note that Topistar was a well-liked angel who had exceptional spiritual charm, which led TNJC members to elect her to a leadership position (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The example of Topistar shows that women are an integral, vital, and significant force behind the life of TNJC, even though the TNJC faith does not believe that women are capable of handling leadership roles in the church. Women were not left behind during

the rise of the TNJC elites. Since then, enlightened women from the TNJC have remained steadfast in their support of women's participation in church service.

Since 2011, a large number of enlightened women from the TNJC have actively participated in community service with courage, conviction, energy, and strength. (Nasike, O.I, 2022, June 9)

They participated in communal worship by using the Holy Spirit's gifts, such as prophecy and healing. A few ladies in TNJC "Performed acts of healing and driving away evil spirits" in Tongaren, according to Wekesa (O.I, 2022, June 9).

As gifts from God's spirits that enlighten power, women are given a central and revered role in the church's healing ministries, worship, and social life. Tongaren's TNJC restricts women to jobs including child care, teaching, and maintaining the property's cleanliness. Lucia, a TNJC respondent, stated:

Women in "TNJC play a vital role in the church. For instance, some are chosen to be leaders after been put under observation for long and proved to be leading good family life. They teach moral conduct to the children, lead in songs and prayers as well as maintaining the neatness of the church. Women are resourceful problem solvers and therefore spirited social justice leaders who serve with a servants' heart for healing and restoration of justice in the community. They are well recognized when it comes to receiving the Holy Spirit because it is said that men receive him first and women later but the Holy Spirit possess the latter more because they will speak in tongues in long prayers. During functions in church, women who prepare food for the congregation must be married" (Lucia, O.I, 2022, June 9).

The role of women in TNJC women in Tongaren should not be disregarded in light of the aforementioned topic. According to Uzuoku (2012), "women are the pillars all over the world; they bear witness to the image of God within them and the hope and renewal for the church rests within this witness." The status of women in many churches continues to be one of the most divisive topics in gender-power politics both inside and outside of the church because "history has it that the church too cannot be absolved from the evils of inflicting lamentable injustices on women" (Mupangwa, 2021). This

is true despite the fact that "women comprise the large majority of active church members and are the sustaining force in almost every congregation" (Kainerugaba, 2013).

Many churches have failed to adequately accept and respond to women's gift by marginalizing them in significant areas of involvement, despite the fact that they are prepared for and interested in very demanding and hard roles. However, "women are still the majority in the spiritual and liturgical life of the church" (Uzukwu, 2012). Given that "many Christian churches and denominations reserve their priesthoods or equivalent positions to men," the complete ordination of women in church leadership positions has generated controversy. According to some Christian sects, women have a lower status because of a divinely ordained hierarchy (Chireshe, 2012). "A visitor from another planet would find it odd that, despite the fact that women make up the majority of churchgoers, religious beliefs either do not place a high value on female sex or, at the very least, have been misconstrued over the years to assign women a subservient position in religious rites. They are no longer permitted to administer sacraments or lead religious services (Clarke, 2006). In TNJC in Tongaren, this was the situation.

TNJC women have not had a voice in the church hierarchy despite their strong spirituality and acknowledged service to the church. However, as they carry out these responsibilities, they come to be recognized as being able to provide charismatic leadership services at various levels. Because of Topistar's magnetism, more women ought to hold leadership positions at TNJC (Nanjala, O.I, 2022, June 9).

2011 marked a turning point in the history of TNJC as the educated elite began to emerge and things started to improve. Since that time, women in the church have had more status and power than ever before. The place of women in the contemporary TNJC

in Tongaren is fascinating. Women have significant visibility inside the prestigious TNJC, participate in decision-making, and hold some level of influence (BBC Swahili Magazine, 2019). During this time, women from the TNJC played important positions in both the informal and formal economic sectors, much like their male counterparts. They ran businesses, participated in fundraising efforts, sewn, baked cakes, and ran families. Numerous people found employment in the government, education, and religion, actively contributing to the country's economy.

The role of women in TNJC has changed as a result of the significant changes the globe is going through as a result of industrialization, formal education, the commercialization of the economy, feminism, and other modern social factors. Gender roles are undergoing significant transformations in both the secular and religious spheres, and TNJC informed women are speaking out with a new intensity and voice as they continue to praise men's leadership.

5.6 Other Socio-religious Transformations

The TNJC community experienced changes in its worship practices, such as the introduction of contemporary music, the use of multimedia technologies, or modifications in liturgical formats. These changes reflect a desire to engage with younger generations or to adapt to evolving cultural contexts.

Socio-religious transformations within the TNJC involve an increased emphasis on community engagement and outreach (Wekesa, O.I 2023, January, 2). This includes initiatives to address social issues, support charitable causes, or actively participate in community development projects. TNJC members prioritize social justice, compassion, and making a positive impact on society.

The TNJC community may experience socio-religious transformations through the integration of cultural elements and practices into their religious expressions. This could involve incorporating traditional songs, dances, or ceremonies into worship services, recognizing the value of indigenous cultural practices, and promoting cultural identity alongside Christian faith. This includes incorporating local cultural elements into worship services, rituals, or celebrations, while still maintaining the core Christian teachings and beliefs (Murumwa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Gender Roles and Equality: Socio-transformations within the TNJC involves changes in attitudes and practices regarding gender roles and equality. There is increased emphasis on (Lucia, O.I, 2022, June 9) promoting gender equality, recognizing the value and equal worth of both men and women in the church and society, and empowering women to take on leadership roles within the TNJC.

TNJC members participate in interfaith dialogue and engagement with members of other religious communities. This involves seeking common ground, fostering understanding, and working towards peace and harmony among different religious groups.

Over time, there are theological reflections and discussions within the TNJC community that lead to shifts in understanding or interpretations of certain aspects of Christian doctrine. This results in adjustments in the teachings or emphasis on particular theological beliefs or practices.

5.7 The Impact of TNJC in the Kenyan Society

5.7.1 Introduction

TNJC in Tongaren under the foundation and leadership of Eliud Wekesa emerged in 2011 due to the religion- cultural crisis with the missionary founded churches in

Tongaren. This movement did not decline during the modernization period but it has since continued to reach and convert many into its faith. TNJC has contributed immensely to the spirituality and preservation of values and traditional institutions of its adherents in Tongaren, Bungoma County.

Motivated by the Social movement theory, Tilly observes that many social movements throughout history have emerged and dramatically changed the societies in which they occurred. Tilly (2004) argues that social movements are triggered by incentives created by political opportunities, combining conventional and challenging forms of actions and building on social networks and cultural frames. This is the case of TNJC as the movement penetrated into the minds of the Bukusu people of Tongaren through contextualization of the Bible truth and de-westernization of the missionary church culture. Hence, they prevailed in interpreting the Bible from Africans' perspective. The relevance of TNJC is therefore obvious in the entire life of TNJC members of Tongaren. Its relevance entirely ranges from their culture, spirituality, political, social life, economy, to education which are attributed to three main factorial levels which include the individual level, the social level and lastly the institutional level. It is therefore evident that, the relevance of TNJC has led to its proliferation and hence has attracted numerous memberships from all walks of life in Bukusuland. Interestingly, some of both the missionary churches and NRMS have taken into consideration to incorporate some of the ideals of TNJC into their churches especially in the areas of respect for some of the African culture they found compatible with the Christian Bible.

5.7.2 Individual level – Healing, spirituality and ethics

5.7.2.1 Healing

This study revealed that TNJC's worldview includes various elements of African spiritual realm such as the belief in spiritual forces and a strong relationship with the

ancestors (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Through this worldview, two classifications of diseases can be distinguished: 'Natural diseases' and diseases related to the spiritual world (Phiri, 2016). This implies that spiritual, psychological, physical and material aspects of life as well as social relations can cause diseases (Pretorius 2007; Frost, 2016).

A central focal point in TNJC activities, hence, is healing. Healing among TNJC members can be seen as a process to support and encourage their members to overcome conditions in their lives others perceive as deficient. According to TNJC, the Spiritual forces that could be dismissed as superstition from a Western perspective are part of daily reality for many people. It is thus fundamentally important to take this perception of the world seriously and to take it into account in the case of cooperation with TNJC (Gräb 2015). In fact it is especially because of the fact that TNJC just like other AICs, do not reject this set of beliefs that they reach so many people. Bompani (2010) points out:

They take the negative forces within African cosmology seriously by responding to real problems as perceived [...], namely witchcraft, sorcery, and evil spirits, understanding that it is acceptable to interpret socio-economic hardships and deprivation in contemporary society within the context of adverse cosmic forces. The idea that AICs are considered experts in granting people protection and fortification against the powers of evil, accounts to a large degree for their popularity and growth (p. 309).

Healing is one of the main reasons as to why many members join TNJC (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). According to Barasa, TNJC has provided a concrete means to deal with the challenges since their activities are all directed towards enabling their members to lead a good life (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Hence, they are a strong source of agency over their own personal situations. They do not only take care of the spiritual needs of their own church members but they also offer these services to members of other denominations. TNJC members often offer healing and other church activities to non-

members because TNJC just like any other AICs support to the individual is wholistic, relevant and effective (Bompani 2010).

5.7.2.2 Mediators of transformation: Transformation of members' lives

TNJC's transformative potential is highly emphasized especially in contexts of marginalization and discrimination. As experienced in other denominations due to persistent economic and social structures, TNJC enable their members to affirm their own (positive) identity (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). While other denominations, the congregants are discriminated against tribe, in TNJC, the adherents were respected among their fellow church members and could occupy respected positions in their churches. Identity and social status continue to be important features to members of this potential church. The field study available provided several examples of transformation of lives through church membership.

Notions of salvation are related to people's present lives. God is considered to have the power to provide deliverance from the adversities people face and protect them from negative spiritual forces (Barnard *et al.* 2014). TNJC thus offer protection and support in various situations and challenges their members could face. During such adversities, they contribute to the stabilization of their members' lives, equip them with resilience (Meyer 2004) and enable them to lead their lives out of their own power. In many cases this is conducive for material success, especially in TNJC where a gospel of prosperity is preached and a high degree of self-reliance and entrepreneurship are advocated and practiced (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

5.7.2.3 Moral Ethics

Adherence to a specific ethical code is seen as proof of successful healing and true membership of TNJC of Tongaren in Bungoma Sub County. This implies, the

prohibition of violence, crime and drug and substance consumption, the prohibition of behaviors and aspects considered as a hindrance to a good life, gambling, attending of secular parties and observance of strict sex morals (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Far from only being restrictive TNJCs' ethics also include rules for social interaction. Wekesa notes that the, members should adhere to strict ethical codes besides adherence to the above-mentioned rules. Virtues such as love, compassion, mutual support, respect, adherence to certain biblical commandments regarding social interaction (The Ten Commandments, Romans 13:1–8; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:17), honesty and peacefulness were named as most important values. A member, Sumbayi explained ways in which the church enabled him to deal with his family problems. He responded that:

I was having a family issue and so anger was cropping up daily. My marriage was at the verge of breaking because of a mistake I owned. That anger was there because she was threatening to go back to her parents' home with the children. No one close to me was willing to resolve our issue. Not even our village elders. They all claimed I had to learn it from a hard way this time round. That anger was just on me. It was not easy for me. There are these social problems that cause depression and anger. So, to guide you, to say, you must leave this and do this that is where the church has taken a stand and said you cannot deal with anger by drinking alcohol. In order to deal with that anger you must get your background. And that is where sometimes, spiritually, you need someone who can guide you, lead you to your culture. So that is where our church came in to play its role of reuniting my family. Just after you get your answers, you must forget about your past. This is where I am now. I am staying with my wife and children and we are happy. It has helped my wife not to have a grudge towards me and I promised to love and appreciate her all the time (Sumbayi, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Many church members joined TNJC because their personal relationships had improved since; at least their previous behaviors had changed (Wekesa O.I, 2022, June 9). They were more balanced, more patient and more tolerant than before. Moreover, Bompani (2010) points out that New Religions put a strong emphasis on good citizenship.

5.7.2.4 Meditators of Social Change

The role of the church in any given community is to support the individual member both at the spiritual level, for example with prayers, and through solidarity, consolation and counseling (Schlemmer, 2008). The dense social structure of TNJC provides stability and in other cases it serves as a ‘place to feel at home’ is a very important aspect as far as the individual wellbeing is concerned (Kilonzo, 2010). Some members of TNJC locating to different places for reasons known to them may face different adversities and conflicts and TNJC provides safe spaces (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Pretorius (2007) describes the New Religions as “sheltered corners” in an ever-changing urban milieu’. TNJC offers a ‘portable framework of values’ as their structures simultaneously reflect those of traditional communities (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9) and adapt them to the actual living situation (Urban, 2015). It is thus no coincidence that often their members flourish in towns. The church empowers their members to recognize and develop their own positive identity in the context of a changing society (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). By providing a social network of security and support TNJC empowers them to deal with the challenges of their living situation and to improve their lives (Mohr *et. al*, 2007).

5.7.3 Social level – Social capital and socio-political attitudes

5.7.3.1 Social capital

Social networks are found in any group setting or community founded specifically for mutual support guided by strong bonding forces and based on trust (Masondo 2014). Social capital is defined as ‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words to membership to a group’ (Hauberer, 2014). Hence social capital considers an individual as part of a group and

not to society as a whole (DeFilippis, 2001) that have high propensity to support one another (Meyer 2004).

TNJC also has such social networks that are important sources of social capital for their members. These networks are important especially in contexts of adversities. The members' benefits from the congregation in cases where (spiritual) guidance and practical support is needed (Murumwa, O.I, 2022, June 9). In cases of unexpected negative events (such as deaths in the family or loss of employment) the member benefits from spiritual, physical and material support. According to Muloli a member of this movement:

Nearly every member fosters a practice of visiting and praying for sick people – often irrespectively of whether they are church members or not. (Muloli, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Moreover, TNJC provides safe spaces for their members and promote a culture of non-violence in the communities (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Many members of TNJC form informal savings groups (commonly known as chamas), to which they regularly contribute a certain amount of money. The total sum contributed will be paid to each one in turns or to all of them at the end of a certain accepted period, for example at the end of the year. Also, during burials, they provide financial and practical support to the affected members of TNJC, even though they are normally not organized by church structures. TNJC are important sources of information for their members, for example about housing and employment. During collecting of data 20% of the interviewees stated that other church members helped them to find work or construct both temporary and permanent houses.

5.7.3.2 TNJC and politics

While AICs are traditionally portrayed as apolitical, recent research indicates that this hypothesis has to be differentiated (Bompani 2010; Heuser 2008; Pretorius 2007). TNJC might be less involved in national political debates than Mission Churches, but they are active at local level (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). As part of the poor segments of the society they know the immediate needs and make them heard. According to Bompani (2010) AICs are comparable to social movements but, unlike those, do not separate religious and political areas:

Most of the church members [...] defined the religious community as a network of solidarity to fight for their proper social rights, like education, health, knowledge about HIV, economic support and housing. (p. 666)

Through the high degree of group coherence and trust TNJC members are conducive to collective action in the interest of their members as well as the community (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). This especially concerns local service delivery issues like housing, education, water and health services as well as issues such as crime and HIV and AIDS, which directly affect the lives of their members.

5.7.3.3 TNJC and gender

The TNJC advocates for mutual respect regardless of the gender. Although their take on gender roles is generally conservative, they promote a healthy and peaceful family life and often take a stand against domestic violence. The church offers counseling specifically with regard to marriage or family problems. It should be noted that there were less family conflicts among the church members during field study and men tended less to beat their wives. Considering the high prevalence of domestic violence in Western Kenya this alone has to be acknowledged as a positive development.

Nonetheless, with regard to TNJC view on gender relations and women's position in the church women are allowed to occupy leadership positions (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). Especially the founder's wife often takes on responsibility for activities like leading the women's league and conducting certain ceremonies or services in the absence of her husband Eliud Wekesa.

When it comes to the role of prophets there is consensus in TNJC. Both men and women are given this position. Field data showed that women played an important role in this church, even though they did not hold leading positions. In TNJC women form the majority of active church members for they both build and sustain the strong network of support within the church and those members who benefit most from it.

5.7.4 Institutional level – Notions of development and activities implemented by TNJC

5.7.4.1 Churches

To date, little research exists about TNJC and development. The church leaders guided by their founder Eliud Wekesa clearly prioritized material needs as the greatest problems that the church members face. The most frequent problems mentioned being, unemployment and poverty. These two problems were seen as existential challenges in people's daily lives. During field work, it was frequently mentioned that the church is trying to respond to all the needs of their members and the communities – spiritual, economic and social. Development-related activities related to the spiritual activities included activities such as Sunday school, religious programs on community radio, praying for people and offering support during funeral services. Several church leaders understood it as their Christian duty to support their members – and often also non-members – in both areas. Moreover, the activities in these two areas are closely interrelated. Church leaders are of the opinion that 'you cannot preach the gospel to a

person with an empty stomach’ and ‘I believe that if you preach the Word it has to be made practical’. Eliud Wekesa further referred to John 13:35 where Jesus explains that people will recognize His disciples by the fact that they love each other. He added:

“And of course love is not just love. Love has to be accompanied by actions. So I think there is an interaction from what we preach to what we do. Because what we do is what we are preaching, yes: love, hope. (John 13:35)” (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

In the cooperation with faith-based organizations, international development agencies normally require development-related activities to be separated from spiritual or worship activities. This was posed for discussion with TNJC founder and liturgical leaders. While some thought that a separation would be possible or even helpful to reach more people, others were skeptical. Among the leaders interviewed two church leaders indicated that such separation would be possible and three leaders indicated that it would not be possible. The main argument against a separation according to Nasike was that:

People need both in order to have a good life the spiritual and the material need to be balanced. (Nasike, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Moreover, it was argued that in order to produce lasting effects through development interventions, it is essential to change the whole person and accompany her or him in this process of transformation. If a person does not only receive skills or a good education but also spiritual and moral guidance from the church, he or she will use these skills and knowledge for the good of others. This person’s success, hence, will benefit the community. Others pointed to a practical aspect: in many cases the church building – if the church has a building at all – is the only facility available where activities could take place. Thus a complete separation between spiritual and social activities might simply not be possible because of spatial facts.

TNJC is greatly involved in numerous activities related to the needs of their membership and the wider communities. The structure and scope of these activities vary greatly. The development-related activities of the churches are usually run by the church founder, leaders, pastors and volunteers). Specific committees for the implementation and administration of the activities are formed; few formal and professional organizational structures for development activities are put in place. Nonetheless, some activities such as savings groups and burial societies are organized by members themselves. The most common activities implemented by TNJC described are the following:

Relief related activities such as feeding schemes and donations of clothes for poor community members and homeless people are mentioned most often. This activity was relatively easy to implement among all the social activities. Even in the smaller churches where larger activities like skills training are not feasible, an activity like distribution of food can become active. However, according to the leaders:

The activity may not be considered as a development activity to outsiders, but it provides an entry point for development-related activities that may follow once the respective structures have been established. (Mikaili, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Counseling is also offered in nearly all situations of life of TNJC members. Particularly, intra-family conflicts and HIV were mentioned as most important areas of the church counseling activities. Through counseling TNJC helps the members to deal with adversities they experience in their lives. This activity is closely related with the spiritual support church members experience; however it is featured also as an institutionalized activity for members and non-members.

Even though HIV and AIDS are often still perceived as a taboo, the stigmatization of affected people continues to be a serious problem. Awareness for the impact of the

disease is very high in TNJC. The church is reported to have invited nurses to talk about health issues such as HIV and AIDS and healthy alimentation. In fact, three out of the five interviewed church leaders underlined that lack of knowledge is a serious problem with regard to HIV and AIDS and health issues in general.

Activities specifically targeting youth, such as music, sports, and drama and youth services are implemented by TNJC. The church offers activities aimed at young people and homeless children within the congregation and the community at large. Several interviewed leaders underlined that they try to get the young people from the streets to prevent them from taking drugs or getting involved in criminal activities – two aspects mentioned as major problems in people's lives. The focus on young people is also visible in TNJC support to education. Even though the average educational levels among members of TNJC are much lower than in other AICs and in the Mission Churches, it emerges clearly that TNJC value education highly. Bursary programmes from the local governments reach students within TNJC that in many cases have parents without an academic education (or, in fact, even with limited or no school education). A number of bursaries are given to individual students at secondary or tertiary levels. The size of these bursary programs vary from the respective supporters to individuals by the church to large-scale programs. Larger NRMs run their own churches and schools. Five of the churches surveyed individually run such institutions. Church-run schools are particularly important in rural and poor areas that lack such facilities. They provide alternatives to often poor-run government primary and secondary educational institutions. These church schools and crèches are usually open to non-members. One church leader mentioned that the majority of students at his church's primary school did not belong to his church.

Coherent with the identified need for skills, TNJC also encourage their youths to join opened training centers where skills like sewing or basic computer and entrepreneurial skills are taught. Some of the members who might have dropped out of school(maybe due to lack of school fees or early marriages) have become active in this area, for example by buying sewing machines and offering sewing courses to the church's' members.

Once in a while, the church leaders indicated that they run entrepreneurship and leadership training seminars for their members. This is particularly relevant because, as Schlemmer (2008) points out, a considerable percentage of AIC goers are and will continue to be excluded from the formal labor market. Schlemmer also notes that government programmes often do not reach them and concludes that people are left on their own and their own initiative to improve their economic situation. TNJC, therefore according to Nelima, plays an important role of:

Improving the socioeconomic conditions, not only by building networks of solidarity and trust in the communities, but also by supporting and accompanying people in their economic development.
(Nelima, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Here, TNJC is directly responding to what they perceive as the greatest challenges of unemployment and poverty. They seek to enable their members to take initiative instead of waiting for employment opportunities to come. The church members already active in formal and informal business activities are important resource persons and multipliers. The church hence makes use of these expertise's and facilitates partnerships between established business people and members trying to start a business or by facilitating intra-church networks of business owners. Three out of the five church leaders interviewed are also business owners. This relates to the connection between

the entrepreneurial act of opening a church and the entrepreneurial act of starting a business described by Schlemmer (2008).

Nearly all the interviewed church leaders indicated that their activities are not exclusive for members. Especially small-scale projects like donations (food, clothing) and counseling. The church runs outreach programmes that explicitly address people outside the congregation. Church members contact non-members to inform them about the church and its activities. Sometimes they also ask people about their problems and needs and provide help and support. Two church leaders highlighted that the congregation regularly donates food, clothing or money for school fees to the people living in the homes close to their settlements.

5.7.4.2 Religious involvement

The local authorities accused the leader of the TNJC movement in Tongaren for being blasphemous, according to the movement's history. As a result, the government destroyed their houses of worship and harassed and punished their leader and followers through arrests, incarceration, fines, and other measures. These TNJC members were under suspicion at the time for collaborating with and supporting their founder Eliud Wekesa's claims to be Jesus Christ. Most probably, this was because Eliud Wekesa was a strong religious leader who claimed that he was the incarnate Jesus Of Nazareth referring to himself as 'Jesus Of Tongaren'. He is since referred to as '*Yesu wa Tongareni*' by his followers. The members of TNJC claim that they did not view their leader as a claim of being Jesus Christ but instead according to Nanyama a member of TNJC:

He is the true promised biblical Messiah who only came to fulfill the Old Testament Prophecies. (Nanyama, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Members of the Tongaren National Joint Council (TNJC), led by Mwalimu, have been primarily Bukusu because they haven't been able to reach out to other ethnic groups in search of converts. They have been actively involved in projects supported by the government, such as the building of harambee schools, cattle dipping facilities, churches, and the planting of cash crops like coffee and tea. The majority of TNJC members in Tongaren believed that their spiritual well-being should come before all other considerations (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). According to the TNJC:

This life was only temporary, thus one should live in a way that would eventually result in salvation. (Muloli, O.I, 2022, June 9)

The church exhorts followers to raise their level of living and educate their children (Ibid). They enrolled the elderly in adult literacy programs while encouraging their children to pursue education to the highest levels. It is sufficient to say, in conclusion, that TNJC Tongaren members were more deeply and realistically concerned with their fellow members' social and spiritual wellness than political activity. The TNJC movement engaged in politically motivated social programs or government-initiated development projects with the goal of enhancing the welfare of their constituents.

5.7.4.3 Economic participation

From the neighboring communities in Tongaren, TNJC were viewed as being:

Perpetually sluggish and avoiding work. (Nanjala, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Additionally, they opted out of owning property and participating in traditional economic activities (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). They maintained their poverty because they believed in simplicity as they awaited their ascension to celestial glory and felt no need to change their situation (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Since its founding, TNJC members have emerged from self-isolation and started collaborating with the rest of society as they seek other economic endeavors beyond

basic farming methods in response to changing conditions. Murumwa a member agrees that they have been able to start up Self Help Groups that have played significant roles in their lives and of their members too. He claims:

By starting self-help projects and cooperative societies, they have actively contributed to the government's efforts to increase productivity and thereby the welfare of the populace (Murumwa, O.I, 2022, June 9).

Their belief in hard work, honesty and trust catapulted many into greater economic achievements in varied areas.

Many people gathered riches and power in the society as the elite TNJC class of 2011 emerged. Their enthusiasm for making money was evidence of how TNJC had evolved into contributing members of society. Many people in Tongaren engaged in trade activities and got along well with other people in the community. The early TNJC members' reputation for exclusivity and isolation was successfully eradicated by this transition. By 2011, the TNJC community in Tongaren had quickly caught up with the rest and built more gorgeous churches, permanent residences, and other structures, while others had relocated to urban locations in search of work and business prospects. However, despite the nation's industrial sector economic boom fueling significant urban expansion, by 2020, the majority of TNJC members had primarily remained in rural areas.

Overall, the TNJC of Tongaren, led by Eliud Wekesa, has made a significant contribution to the economic well-being of the community by valuing education and pursuing economic endeavors to reduce poverty among its members in the Tongaren countryside. Many TNJC members got interested in dairy and poultry farming, cash and subsistence farming, and commerce, while others found work in the nearby Kamukuywa and Kimilili towns and other areas.

5.7.4.4 Social integration

The TNJC movement in Tongaren largely derived from the traditional religion of the Bukusu despite being Christian in name and doctrine. The theories and beliefs of the Bukusu have had a significant influence on TNJC spirituality (Wekesa, O.I, 2022, June 9). They held the view that:

God (Were) was the Supreme Being and the Originator of Everything.
(Njukhilile, O.I, 2022, June 9)

The Bukusu culture also serves as the foundation for the TNJC's belief in prophesy, ritual uncleanness, tolerance of polygamy, and adoration of ancestor spirits. This church's explosive expansion is largely attributable to its capacity to spread Christianity in a way that respects each individual's own historical experience and cultural roots.

The family, clan, and council of elders in the TNJC framework of the Bukusu traditional system maintained coherence and stability in the society. The introduction of missionary church operations in Bukusu territory had profound repercussions that fundamentally altered and shattered the social and religious institutions of the nation. In a time when religion and culture were changing, the TNJC swiftly attracted people who wanted to become Christians but felt they could not give up parts of their traditional beliefs and practices. Therefore, TNJC presented a novel form of worship that dealt with modern problems and a complex religion that did not demand a complete rupture with the past. The TNJC movement thus gave its followers, who had to adjust to this new perspective, a new spiritual home. For the TNJC members, the significance of such a movement at the time was to:

Draw many people towards our church, and after they join, they join the TNJC community of believers. (Samweli, O.I, 2022, June 9)

Being a member of the TNJC required active engagement in all communal activities, including religious gatherings, evangelism, supporting one another with all social and financial issues, and camaraderie (Barasa, O.I, 2022, June 9). The TNJC movement addressed the need for renewal among its members by enacting certain prohibitions. The TNJC forbade the use of narcotics and alcoholic beverages; this practice gave its adherents a fresh outlook on life and a moral code that set them apart from mission Christians.

A progressive explanation of the societal changes brought about by the missionary churches was provided by TNJC members, who made the Christian Gospel message understandable to the people by integrating it with their culture. By reinterpreting and rearranging parts of Christianity's doctrines and customs, the movement also made a significant contribution to the indigenization of Christianity. The TNJC movement was also successful in giving its members a sense of safety, regeneration, and hospitality that was lacking in the mission churches.

5.8 Conclusion

This chapter had an objective of interrogating the transformation practices of TNJC of Tongaren, in Bungoma County. It was discovered that the Tongaren civilization has changed as a result of TNJC. The church has changed and undergone transformation since it adopted a conservative approach to worship, diet, politics, music, and education.

CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS
OF THE STUDY

6.0 Introduction

This chapter sought to present the summary of findings of the study, conclusions based on the findings of the research objectives and the recommendations.

6.1 Summary of Findings

The study aimed at exploring the socio-religious transformation of TNJC of Tongaren, Bungoma County from the year 2011 to 2023. The broad aim of the study was to interrogate the socio-religious transformation practices of TNJC's way of worship in Tongaren Bungoma County.

Chapter One formed the basis for establishing a background of the formation of the place where TNJC was founded. It presented the background of the study, statement of the problem, aims and objectives of the study, research questions, and purpose of the study, scope and limitations of the study, theoretical framework, literature review and lastly the research methodology. The chapter paved way for understanding of the founder/leader of this church and the religious beliefs and practices of TNJC.

Chapter Two focused on geographical, social, religious and economic setting of, Bungoma County. The chapter looked at, the religious organization setting of the Bukusu in Tongaren Sub County, The social organization of the Bukusu. The chapter aimed at tracing the nature of the environment where the TNJC was founded.

Chapter Three investigates the history of TNJC in Tongaren, Bungoma County. It starts by tracing the early links of Bukusu people with the outside world, the introduction of Christianity to Bukusu land and missionary work in Tongaren. Later it explains founder

of TNJC, causes of emergence of TNJC of Tongaren, membership of TNJC, education background of the members, economic patterns of the members, relationship between members of TNJC and other religious movements. The chapter intended to trace early interactions of Christianity with the people of Bungoma County where TNJC was founded in order to trace roots for TNJC.

In the fourth chapter, the study focused on the distinctive beliefs and practices of TNJC of Tongaren, Bungoma County. In order to address this objective, the study discussed the Relationship of the Luhya indigenous worldviews such as belief in the Supreme being, TNJC understanding of Jesus Christ, worship in TNJC, rites of passage in TNJC and the concept of ritual uncleanness, ecclesiastical attires and days of worship, eschatology and lastly visions, dreams ,prophesies and revelations within TNJC.

Chapter five sought to interrogate the socio-religious transformation of TNJC and its impact to the Kenyan society. Some of the major areas of concern were changes in education, dressing, employment, diet, music and politics.

6.2 Conclusions

The study aimed at achieving the following objectives;

- i. To explore the history of TNJC in Tongaren, Bungoma County
- ii. To find out the religious beliefs and practices of TNJC of Tongaren.
- iii. To interrogate the Socio-Religious transformations of TNJC's worship and way of life within the period of its formation from 2011-2023.

It concludes that, there is a deep history of TNJC in Tongaren, Bungoma County. We have a variety of religious beliefs and practices of TNJC of Tongaren. Within the period of its formation from 2011 to 2023, the TNJC's has transformed Bungoma's way of life. The study concurs with the SMT that through social movements, NRMs are

formed by people who feel deprived of their rights and hence bring forth changes. These transformational changes in areas like embracing formal education, seeking medical attention, political and economic empowerment, to name a few, have raised the TNJC's living standards. Finally, the TNJC has had an impact on Kenyan society both favorably and badly because it has played and will continue to play a crucial part in the society.

6.3 Recommendations of the Study

In order for us to have a better society through the church as the Body of Christ, this study makes some suggestions basing on the objectives of the study.

1. Among them the study recommends that, before any church is established, there must be clearly stated objectives why the church must be founded and registered. The reason the founder wants to establish the church and how the church would be able to contribute to the lives of the worshippers both physically and spiritually and also how would the church to be founded contribute to area or community where the church is sited. Therefore, some legal reforms should be made on the registration of churches to prevent future emergence of harmful\ill- intended NRMs such like the GNIM that is linked to the Shakahola Massacre. This might in turn help to avoid suspicions that may arise from the challenges of the society through accusations.
2. The study noted that the members of TNJC inclusive of their founder are treated with malicious intent and with suspicion by the government. This might be due to their extreme activities and their beliefs, practices and teachings. The study therefore recommends that the society should be aided in understanding other religions and their practices\ belief systems because they inform their Identity,

give them a sense of belonging and history. This might in turn help to prevent religious intolerance

3. The study also recommends that NRMs should be given an opportunity to promote more socio-religious transformations. At first, the TNJC movement was derided and even mocked since some of its members refused to shake hands, ate food cooked in regular cooking oil, refused to cast ballots, and refused to take their kids to school. Its original isolationist approach and obstinate refusal to cooperate led to increased social disdain. Nevertheless, due to the movement's ongoing development, this has changed. Despite these flaws, the TNJC movement has adjusted and undergone modifications in response to the demands of the times to stay relevant in a shifting world. As a result, the church has continued to draw members from other mainline western Christian denominations as well as the young, old, elite, and ignorant. The movement need to be considered a phenomena because it affects the past, present, and future. It reacted against some historical facets, namely the Bukusu customs. Despite its shortcomings, the TNJC movement in Tongaren satisfied the people's needs and ambitions by aiming for a meeting with the present and the past.

The TNJC movement's future depends on the realization that everything is changing quickly in the globe. They are torn between upholding traditional values and modernity's dynamic global culture. The TNJC's character will continue to be shaped and determined by how and to what extent it negotiates continuity, identity, and change in the context of globalism. Its growth must be analyzed in terms of its connections and relationships with the larger global context, as well as its capacity to examine and compromise with more extensive external influences and global forces. This research

was crucial in demonstrating how the TNJC movement has undergone modifications and transformations similar to social movements.

6.4 Theoretical Contributions

The findings of this study added to the literature on matters the emergence of NRMs. It generally focused on the Socio-Religious transformation of TNJC of Tongaren, Bungoma County. Similarly, the study also focused on the following specific objectives:

First, the study extended its limited research on exploring the history of TNJC in Tongaren, Bungoma County. This study was among the first to look into the emergence of the TNJC especially from a scholarly point of view. Through this objective, the study was thus able to explain the different mechanisms through which NRMs emerge.

Secondly, No previous study to the best of the author's knowledge has explored the beliefs and practices of TNJC. Therefore the study focused on exploring the church's beliefs and practices with reference to other New Religious Movements. However the study's findings showed that the TNJC's beliefs and practices differ greatly from other NRMs on many issues. However among their beliefs and practices are their emphases on prayer.

Thirdly, Existing research on the transformation practices of TNJC's worship and way of life since its inception in 2011 has primarily been focusing on the life of the founder more than the church in general. Therefore, this study was able to interrogate some of those transformation practices within the members and the church in general.

Lastly, one of the specific objectives of the study was to investigate the impact of TNJC in the Kenyan society. This is one of the earlier studies to assess the impact of this particular church to the Kenyan society at large.

This study employed the Social Movement Theory (SMT) that supports the explanation of emergence of NRMs. The SMT has been found to be a compelling theory for understanding the growing interest in proliferation of NRMs. Charles Tilly and Sydney Tarrow agree that there is a strong link between the process of development and proliferation of NRMs. These social movements are usually at the forefront in the manner in which the NRMs transform into the religious public spaces hence mobilize support of their members. They argue that although the founders of NRMs rarely have significant political powers, they often contribute largely to social movements that aim to promote peace or human rights as well, as moral and religious ethics.

Hence, based on the SMT, the study intends to ascertain the relationship between religious ideologies, institutions and wider movements for social change. These movements have utilized Christian teachings as a source of inspiration in movements for human rights and social justice. NRMs particularly TNJC have thus used their teachings as a source of collective identity in the face of oppression in the missionary churches.

6.5 Areas of Further Research

Although the TNJC movement has changed, there are still some features that have not changed, hence the researcher avoided drawing any general generalizations that would lead to speculation. However, the researcher believed that there was still much to be learned about the TNJC society, including funeral customs. In summary, it is important to note that the TNJC community exemplifies the resolve and creative originality of an

African religious movement by remaining stable in the midst of a crowded and contentious religious environment where western Christianity has successfully erased African cultural and religious beliefs in favor of foreign ones. The TNJC church will need to recover its prophetic calling, nevertheless, which dares to look ahead and take a step of confidence in it. In the context of a world that is changing drastically, it is necessary to relearn a refined definition of what it means to be a member of the TNJC.

Finally, there is need for further research into the theological aspects of this church. This study did not for instance exhaust certain concepts which inspire the teachings in the TNJC such as sin, prophecy, salvation, discipleship and the concept of the 'Church' should be studied as a contribution towards a further assessment of this church and other prophet-healing movements.

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I. PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Oral Sources

List of Informants

	Name	Gender	Approx. age	Place of Interview	Year of Interview
1.	Barasa	M	53	Tongaren	2022
2.	Wekesa	M	41	Tongaren	2022
3.	Njukhilile	M	39	Tongaren	2022
4.	Lucia	F	28	Tongaren	2022
5.	Kataka	M	32	Tongaren	2022
6.	Topisatar	F	29	Tongaren	2022
7.	Matumbai	M	32	Tongaren	2022
8.	Murumwa	M	35	Tongaren	2022
9.	Nanjala	F	29	Tongaren	2022
10.	Makona	M	43	Tongaren	2022
11.	Mukire	M	29	Tongaren	2022
12.	Nasike	F	30	Tongaren	2022
13.	Nanyama	F	27	Tongaren	2022
14.	Mikaili	F	26	Tongaren	2022
15.	Muloli	M	37	Tongaren	2022
16.	Sumbayi	M	30	Tongaren	2022
17.	Nelima	F	24	Tongaren	2022
18.	Maria	F	23	Tongaren	2022
19.	Wanjala	M	36	Tongaren	2022
20.	Samweli	M	27	Tongaren	2022
21.	Key respondent 21	M	49	Via phone	2023
22.	Key respondent 22	M	53	Via phone	2023

NB\ All the names used in this research is pseudo- names.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I: Interview Guides

Interview guides for Clerical leaders

The Founder

1. Who is Eliud Wekesa?
2. How did the term Yesu wa Tongareni come into being\ the motivations?
3. The followers of Yesu wa Tongaren have been referred to in different names?
Do we still have names like Watu wa Yesu wa Tongareni?
4. What is the difference between Dini ya watu wa yesu wa Tongaren and other believers?
5. Explain briefly the structure of the church?
6. Why robe and of what significance is it?
7. Any symbol used and their significance
8. What is your view on the bible on the reincarnation of Christ?
9. what are your teachings on eschatology?
10. Concept of sickness. What is COVID19 to you?

The church leaders

1. How do you understand Yesu wa Tongareni?
2. So far how many churches are there?
3. Are there differences in TNJC based on territorial differences, e.g. the churches in other areas?
4. What are some of the beliefs and practices that TNJC prescribe to?
5. Some of the beliefs are strictly unique to TNJC e.g. why do THE followers refuse to greet people by shaking of hands?
6. What are the different sub- sections of the TNJC?

7. What are the differences between the different groups mentioned above? Are these differences, doctrinal, religious, or administrative?
8. What is the attitude of TNJC towards education? Is the attitude the same for girls and boys?
9. What is the attitude of TNJC towards dressing for both sexes? (Colors and shapes, as far as the Kanjus are concerned)
10. What is the attitude of TNJC concerning food? What are the does and don'ts concerning food? (Fat, tealeaves, meat).
11. Concerning meat, is it true that TNJC do not buy meat from butcheries?
12. Can members eat meat from any animal? Say a camel, pig, and rabbit?
13. How is marriage conducted over time? Do they allow polygamy? Starting from the choice of a marriage partner.
14. Help us understand the conduct of baptism.....choice of a name and how baptism s conducted.
15. Circumcision for boys and girls? How do you do it?
16. Concerning the sanctuary, is it divided? Explain? Can anybody enter in any part of the church?
17. Today, has the movement transformed in any way, explain some changes that you have observed among the church members.
18. On business can you practice any kind of business?
19. What is the attitude of TNJC concerning politics? E.g. vying, voting, and Campaigning, HOW is your relationship with the state?
20. Songs and dances for TNJC have also changed? Expound

Appendix II: Focused Group Discussion Guides

Focused group discussion group guides for Men, women and youths

Men/ women/Youths

1. Were you baptized in TNJC?
2. Are both your parents“ members of TNJC?
3. As a youth what are some of problems have you encountered?
4. How were these problems solved?
5. In the church do we have a special place for the youth/men/women?
6. Do the youth/men/women hold any position of responsibility in the church?
7. How is the leadership structure, do you feel left out in any way?
8. Do you face any forms of discrimination as a woman/ man/ youth of TNJC?
9. What are the colors of your Sunday worship attire?
10. If yes, do they touch on leadership or organization of the church?
11. What is the attitude of the youth towards education?
12. Back at home do you eat all types of food?
13. Perception of outsiders regarding them.

Community Leaders

1. Are there any changes you think are introduced in the TNJC?
2. Are there observable changes occurring in the church?
3. Today, has the movement transformed in any way, explain some changes that you have observed among the church members in institutions like marriage and education.
4. How is their relationship with non-members. Do you think they are inclusive and welcoming?

Appendix III: Consent Letter

Moi University

Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW

I am Masters Student of the Department of philosophy, theology and Religious Studies of Moi University Kenya. I am conducting a research on the below named topic: *History, practices and Socio-Religious Transformation of The New Jerusalem Church of Tongaren Sub county, Bungoma County Kenya (2011-2023).*

As a leader in TNJC, would you be able to share your views on these important issues with me?



I would like to assure you that the information you will share with me in the interview will be confidentially and anonymously treated and will be used solely for the purpose of the study.

I would also like you to participate voluntarily. There are no compensation benefits for participating in this study. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any stage if you so wish.

Thank you for the assistance.

Levin Wanaswa.

Appendix IV: Research Permit From NACOSTI

Republic of Kenya
National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation
Ref No: **893518**
RESEARCH LICENSE
Date of Issue: **06/June/2022**

This is to Certify that Miss. LEVIN NAMIKOYE WANASWA of Moi University, has been licensed to conduct research in Bungoma on the topic: THE HISTORY AND TRANSFORMATION OF THE NEW JERUSALEM CHURCH OF TONGAREN, BUNGOMA SUB-COUNTY, KENYA. for the period ending : 06/June/2023.
License No: **NACOSTI/P/22/18071**
Applicant Identification Number: **893518**
Director General
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