

# Non-Native Erroneous Understanding Of Turkana Indigenous Deity As Naturistic And Animistic

Dr. Naila G. Napoo

Jaramogi Oginga Odinga University of Science and Technology School of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences

---

## Abstract

While A Number Of Materials Of Varying Degrees Have Been Written By Some Non-Native Authors, With Regard To The Nature And Personality Of Turkana God (Akuj), Religious Worldview And Cosmology, Very Little Research Exist On Correcting The Errors And Misconceptions Attributed By These Writers To Be A True Likeness Of Akuj; Turkana People Are Portrayed As Essentially Animists And Their God Is Nature. The Aim Of This Study Was To Demystify The Derogatory Wrong Illustrations And Concepts Of Beliefs And Practices (On Akuj) Prejudicially Labelled To Turkana People, Inaccurately Presented By Foreign Writers. To Correct These Incompatible Perspectives, The Findings Of This Study Demonstrated The Real Nature Of Turkana Indigenous Deity, Who Is Eternal, Unique, Single, Immanent As Well As Transcendent; The Everlasting Creator, Maintainer And Sustainer Of The Universe. This Was Realised By Critically Examining And Interrogating The Related Literature With Obscure And Erroneous Doctrines On Turkana Akuj As Presented By Non-Indigenous Scholars. More Importantly, It Is Only The Indigenous Turkana Person Who Truly “Knows” And Comprehends The Real Image Of Akuj, The Zenith Of Turkana Culture And Religion, Who Nonetheless Remains A Mystery, Unknown, Incomprehensible And Unexplainable Almighty To The Natives Of Turkanaland And Absolutely Elusive To Some Non-Native Researchers.

**Key Words:** Akuj, Indigenous, Religion, Sky, Universe, Nature, Animism.

---

Date of Submission: 24-06-2023

Date of Acceptance: 04-07-2023

---

## I. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method employed in writing this article is essentially secondary data analysis that focussed mainly on the sources of existing materials which were collated, analysed and explored further to provide the desired results.

## II. INTRODUCTION

Turkana County is the heartland of Turkana tribe, a Nilotic group of Kenya, an East African country. They reside in northwest of this great nation bordering the Samburu and Rendile in the East, Pokot people in the South, the countries of Ethiopia and South-Sudan to the North and Uganda to the West. Their ancestral indigenous land, *Turkan*, is partly desert and semi-arid necessitating them to live nomadic pastoralism by herding livestock in search for greener pastures for their “adored” animals to graze. The Kenyan census of 2019 recorded that “Turkana number 1,016,174, or 2.14% of the Kenyan population ... the third largest Nilotic ethnic group in Kenya, after the Kalenjin and the Luo, slightly more numerous than the Maasai, and the tenth largest ethnicity in all of Kenya.”<sup>1</sup>

Before the arrival of European colonialists in 1926 and Christianity in 1956 to *Turkan*, Turkana soil was fertile enough in producing its indigenous religious ideas and tenets. The natives lived fundamentally indigenous way-of-life, believed in their indigenous God called *Akuj*, who was worshiped following Turkana indigenous cultural and customary laws, traditional norms and taboos. The Ancestors (*ngikaram*), cosmos and other natural objects assist the Turkana people in “knowing” and worshipping *Akuj* better, and coming to a closer and better “understanding” of Him. The indigenous universe is interconnected and the Turkana indigenous person is at the

---

<sup>1</sup> Kiplagat, Sam., “No Repeat Census for North Eastern, Turkana”. *The Star*. Feb 8, 2012. Retrieved 22.04.2022, from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkana\\_people](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkana_people). Find a study of *Turkana History: Anthropological Classification and Early Documentation* in: Barret, Anthony J., *Sacrifice and Prophecy in Turkana Cosmology*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998, 42-75. The last paragraph in p. 44 gives the districts in Kenya that are the homesteads of Turkana people.

centre. Notwithstanding, there “are three main elements that make up the Turkana world, viz., *Akuj*, man and the animal.”<sup>2</sup>

The existence of *Akuj* is consciously and conscientiously “propagated” traditionally within Turkana community and its environs through their religio-cultural way-of-life, various forms of indigenous myths, tales, stories, poetic symbolism, acts of ritual worship such as songs, sacrifices, offerings, prayers and invocations.

The arrival of the “new” religions in Turkanaland, especially Christianity and Islam as well as some non-native scholars, with ineradicable prejudice, distorted the real image of Turkana Indigenous God (TIG), *Akuj*. They presented and documented that the belief of Turkana people is animistic rooted in the worship of nature as god,<sup>3</sup> and that their tribal/ethnic religion is pagan without an iota of divine transcendence and immanence.<sup>4</sup> We found that volumes of these literatures have meagre contents with

wildly misleading claims . . . . At one extreme, it has been claimed that the Turkana are dualists (Dundas, 1910) in their religious beliefs, i.e., they have two gods . . . . These sketchy and fragmentary observations bear evidence to the unreliability of the ephemeral investigator who tries to comprehend a people’s cosmology without taking time to observe and analyse carefully the indigenous world view.<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, this study presents TIG “pervades every aspect of their lives”<sup>6</sup>, the ultimate Reality, Author, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe; He is immanent and transcends the “mundane world . . . the reality that we call ‘God’ exceeds all human expression.”<sup>7</sup> Celestial bodies, lakes, rivers, stones, mountains, plants, animals and human beings, were all created by the indigenous Turkana God, *Akuj*. This is evident by the offerings, sacrifices and ritual prayers that are directed to Him, as the Creator, and as expressly taught, explicitly and implicitly, by the ancestors, elders, as well as parents. This belief is inscribed in Turkana heritage and it is traditionally guarded, preserved and orally handed over to generations by the community, led by the venerable elders (*ngikasukou*). Therefore, it is improper and not in order to equivalently aggregate *Akuj* with His creations.

We are, therefore, wholly indebted to Prof. Fr. Anthony Joseph Barret, a Keltigan Missionary Priest, a scholar and writer who loved, lived and identified oneself with the Turkana community; for his great, credible, detailed, reliable and objective research portraying the “concrete” image of Turkana people’s cosmology and theology. As expressed in his works, on Turkana culture and religion, he reiterated and insisted *upon the truth: Akuj* “is the Creator from everlasting, the eternal and only One.”<sup>8</sup> Accordingly, we begin our inquiry by studying some main religious elements that guided a few foreign writers to misconceive that Turkana religion is Animistic, entrenched in worshipping *nature as god*.

### III. The Earliest Stages Of Religious Belief Analogically Conceived To Be Turkana Indigenous Religion

#### Introduction

The Turkana people are one of the nilo-nomadic pastoralists’ tribes of Kenya, who in their indigenous religious beliefs and practices do not differ from that of other nilo-nomadic pastoralists’ family in general. However, in this section we are providing some of the distinct cardinal religious differences that are essentially Turkana, and are not common to all nilo-nomadic pastoralists’ communities, who were labelled *animists*. We would like also to record that the nomadic Turkana religion is, in its origin, fundamentally not one and the same religious entity as other Kenyan pastoral nomads “owing to the tenacity of religious belief and custom . . . of the nomadic”<sup>9</sup> that were common in the earliest stages of religious beliefs and practices. These religious theories occupy an important aspect of Turkana indigenous religion and their roots have gone deeper and stronger out of

---

<sup>2</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *Sacrifice and Prophecy in Turkana Cosmology*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998, 47.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Baile, Anne C., *African Voices of the Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond the Silence and the Shame*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2006. Also see Bryant, M. Darrol, & Mataragnon, Rita H., *The Many Faces of Religion and Society*. New York: Paragon House, 1985, 100. <https://books.google.com/books?id=kv4nAAAAYAAJ>: "African traditional religion went through and survived this type of persecution at the hands of Christianity and Islam..." Retrieved 19/06/2022 from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditional\\_African\\_religions#cite\\_ref-mol\\_1-0](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditional_African_religions#cite_ref-mol_1-0).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Garrick, B., *Essentials of Cultural Anthropology*. Boston: Cengage Learning, <sup>3</sup>2013, 268: "Later, during the nineteenth century, Christian missionaries became active in Africa and Oceania. Attempts by Christian missionaries to convert non-believers to Christianity took two main forms: forced conversions and proselytizing." Find an account of African Religions by European explorers, travellers and missionaries in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, in Mugambi, J. N. K., (ed.), *A Comparative Study of Religions*. Nairobi: Nairobi University Press, 1990 (Reprinted 1993), 35-38.

<sup>5</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 13-14.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>7</sup> Armstrong, K., *A History of God: From Abraham to the Present: the 4000-year Quest for God*. London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1993, 6. On African indigenous God as Creator see Mbiti, John S., *Concepts of God in Africa*. London: S•P•C•K, 1970, 45-55, and find the attributes of transcendence and immanence of African God in: Mbiti, John S., *African Religions & Philosophy*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 1969 (reformatted 2015), 28-35.

<sup>8</sup> Oesterley, W. O. E, and Robinson, T. H, *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin and Development*. London: S•P•C•K, 1955, 299. Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 35, found that "Every African people recognise God as One." On Turkana Monotheistic belief in God see: Barret, Anthony J., *Dying and Death among the Turkana*. Spearhead 97 (1987) 10.

<sup>9</sup> Oesterley, W. O. E, and Robinson, T. H, *ibid.*, 3.

which emerged a misconception from non-native authors with a belief that Turkana indigenous religion is *animistic* and their deity is *nature*. Mbiti affirms that the outsiders employed certain inaccurate and misleading terms that were referred to African religions. He says:

Other terms employed to describe African religions include *Dynamism*, *Totemism*, *Fetishism*, and *Naturism* .... These and the previous terms show clearly how little the outside world has understood African religions .... But the fact remains that African religions and philosophy have been subjected to a great deal of misinterpretation, misrepresentation and misunderstanding. They have been despised, mocked and dismissed as primitive and underdeveloped .... In missionary circles they have been condemned as superstition, satanic, devilish and hellish. In spite of all these attacks, traditional religions have survived; they dominate the background of African peoples, and must be reckoned with even in the middle of modern changes.<sup>10</sup>

### **Naturism**

In religion, naturism is the worship of nature by human beings by personifying some natural objects or the seasons of the year. It is a belief that natural phenomena embodied divinities or are animated with supernatural powers or spirits .

The term *nature* was inherited from the Old French word *nature* which had its roots derived from the Latin term *natura*, referring to the innate disposition or essential qualities of an object. In antiquity it literally meant “birth”.<sup>11</sup> And in ancient philosophy, the word

*natura* is mostly used as the Latin translation of the Greek word *physis* (φύσις), which originally related to the intrinsic characteristics of plants, animals, and other features of the world to develop of their own accord.<sup>12</sup>

Understood in a broader sense, nature is the universe or the physical world, world’s physical phenomena and life in general; the opposite of artificial creations. Correspondingly, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) defined nature as an

all-encompassing divine entity inherently known to us in our unfettered innocence, rather than as merely a component of a world ruled by a divine, separate being learned by us through passed-on teachings in our experience.<sup>13</sup>

In the mythological narratives of various peoples of the world, nature-myths have played critical roles amongst various cultures and religions in answering the most difficult questions of life; such as the origin of life and death, the reality of after-life or the living-dead, the problem of suffering, good and evil. From the early stages of human culture, there were myriads of nature-myths that were identified with direct representations of natural phenomena. For instance, McCoppin teaches that

Creation myths from myriad cultures recognized that life arose from natural elements, inextricably connecting human life to the natural world. Nature as portrayed in myth is unpredictable and destructive but also redemptive, providing solace and wisdom. Mythology relates the human life cycle to the seasons, with spring, summer, fall and winter as metaphors for birth, adulthood, old age and death.<sup>14</sup>

According to some nineteenth century scholars of religion, such as Max Müller (1823-1900),

the great symbols of the religions of the world were personifications of natural phenomena like the sun, moon, stars, sky, winds, rivers, plants, animals, rocks and the seasons of the year. These scholars argued among themselves about which force of nature was primary in the concerns of early religion. Some, among them, maintained that solar myths were the ones which were most important. According to them, primitive rituals and myths were primarily concerned with man’s relation to the sun.<sup>15</sup>

In the divine-personification of natural phenomena, some communities worshipped nature, *naturism*, in their respective religio-cultural and historical traditions. Nonetheless, for the Turkana people, *Akuj* “is an *eketiron* (one who makes something to go straight or direct) or an *eketian* (“one who does something,” from the verb

---

<sup>10</sup> Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Harper, Douglas., *Nature. Online Etymology Dictionary*. 23/9/2006. Retrieved 21/11/2022 from:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature#Notes\\_and\\_references](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature#Notes_and_references).

<sup>12</sup> Retrieved 21/11/2022 from: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature#Notes\\_and\\_references](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nature#Notes_and_references): “An account of the pre-Socratic use of the concept of φύσις may be found in Naddaf Gerard.” “*The Greek Concept of Nature*”, Suny Press, 2006, “and in Ducarme, Frédéric; Couvet, Denis. *What does ‘nature’ mean?* Palgrave Communications. Springer Nature.” 2020 6(14). “The word φύσις, while first used in connection with a plant in Homer, occurs early in Greek philosophy, and in several senses. Generally, these senses match rather well the current senses in which the English word *nature* is used, as confirmed by Guthrie, W.K.C. *Presocratic Tradition from Parmenides to Democritus* (volume 2 of his *History of Greek Philosophy*), Cambridge UP, 1965 .... The word is dealt with thoroughly in Liddell and Scott's Greek Lexicon Archived March 5, 2011, at the Wayback Machine.”

<sup>13</sup> Retrieved 27/12/2022 from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: <https://www.amazon.com/Nature-Original-Ralph-Waldo-Emerson/dp/1544172133>.

Emerson drew upon material from his journals, sermons, and lectures. The lengthy essay was first published in Boston by James Munroe and Company in September of 1836 ... (Emerson, Ralph W. *Nature*. Boston: James Munroe and Company, 1836).

<sup>14</sup> McCoppin, Rachel., *The Lessons of Nature in Mythology*. Jefferson: McFarland Publishers October 29, 2015. Retrieved 21/11/2022 from: <https://jcf.org/resources/the-lessons-of-nature-in-mythology/>.

<sup>15</sup> Mugambi, J. N. K., (ed.), *op. cit.*, 1990 (Reprinted 1993), 12.

*akiitare*, “to do”). Above all, *Akuj* causes things to be cool.”<sup>16</sup> The findings, of this article will, therefore, relay explicitly that Turkana God has never been *nature* and that creation is the witness to the truth that *Akuj* is the Creator of *nature*, and their intrinsic or innate religious responsibility, of worship, is rendered to *Akuj* alone.<sup>17</sup>

### **Animism**

Etymologically, *animism* stems from the Latin term *anima* which refers to attributing a living spirit, life, soul or breath to animate and inanimate beings, natural environmental features and objects of the universe. That they essentially possess life, personality with souls and are naturally pervaded by spiritual beings, and they embody life principle as well, hence “the nature-dwelling spirits”<sup>18</sup> in everything (which resulted to be god or gods). It also refers to the belief in the spiritual entities such as the divinities, demons and spirits that order and animate the natural world. The proponent of animism is a British anthropologist scholar Sir Edward Burnette Taylor (1832-1917). In his book *Primitive Culture* (1871) he attested that animism is a doctrine and all religions are animistic.

Oesterley elucidates that there are “more outstanding objects with which Animism can best be illustrated. These comprise:

a) Trees. b) Streams, springs, etc. c) Stones, rocks, and mountains.”<sup>19</sup>

In this article we are not concerned with a detailed religious accounts of the theories of animism and naturism concepts, as constituent components of the earliest stages of the origin and development of religions from the primitive mentality that echo far back to extreme antiquity period, but specifically on various selected animistic and naturistic stages that were regarded by outsiders to be TIG.

### **Totemism**

As an advocate and proponent of totemic studies, Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) teaches that totemism in religion is a practice which takes a natural emblem or symbol, such as animal or vegetation to be venerable symbol of that particular clan, society or community.<sup>20</sup> Mugambi adds that totem

indicates kinship lines or membership in a given clan .... Totemism then is a complexity of ideas, practices, legend, fears, and kinship patterns which refer to the connection of human beings and animals or plants. It is the practice of taking a particular natural object or animal and making it the symbol (totem) of a particular social group or clan.<sup>21</sup>

And Mbiti enlightened that

Clans are normally totemic, that is, each has an animal or part of it, a plant, a stone or mineral, which is regarded as its totem .... The totem is the visible symbol of unity, of kinship, of belongingness, of togetherness and common affinity.<sup>22</sup>

Korobe delineated that some Turkana

clans may be associated with particular animals, or ochre e.g. Ngilobol lu a egete, Ngisalika lu a egete, Ngiponga lu a emunyen, Ngiponga lu a egete, but unlike, for example, the Pokot or Marakwet, who have animals as clan totems, it is the emacar – the ‘clan-marks’ that serve as the clan totem/emblem for the Turkana and not the animal.<sup>23</sup>

Intermittently, the understanding of totem is conflated or confused with moiety, and they are treated as identical. Socially and basing themselves on colour (*ngajul*) of animals (especially the victim of sacrifice), Turkana universe and ritual groups are divided into two moieties: the Mountains and Leopards as established by Barret:

All Turkana males are born into one of two groups or alternating moieties that cut across other institutions like “territorial sections” (*ngatekerin*), “brands” (*ngimacerin*) and the groups that distinguish themselves by cutting the *apol* (*fasciae latae* muscle) differently. The word for Mountains (*ngimoru*) is really the same word as for hills; in fact, hills might be a better translation. The real word for stones is *ngamoru* and is feminine noun. The

---

<sup>16</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 81. Also see *The creation and origin of man* in: Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 90-93. And on the study of *The Creation and Original State of Man* see Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1970, 162-170.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. Barret, Anthony J., *ibid.*, 85-90.

<sup>18</sup> Mugalu, J., *Philosophy, Oral Tradition and Africanistics*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995, 71.

<sup>19</sup> Oesterley, W. O. E., and Robinson, T. H., *op. cit.*, 6.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Trenkwalder, H., Sumerisch-Babylonische Religion, in: Figl, J., (Hg.), *Handbuch Religionswissenschaft*. Religionen und ihre zentralen Themen. Innsbruck-Wien: Tyrolia-Verlag, 2003, 118-139. Also see: Durkheim, E., *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, trans. J. W. Swain. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976, 206; quoted from Momen, M., *The Phenomenon of Religion: A Thematic Approach*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999, 54.

<sup>21</sup> Mugambi, J. N. K., (ed.), *op. cit.*, 1990 (Reprinted 1993), 14.

<sup>22</sup> Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 103.

<sup>23</sup> Korobe, B. L., *Turkana Kinship System and Social Structure: an Analysis of the Family, Patrilineage, Patriclan, and Phratrie*

*Organization*. Journal of African Interdisciplinary Studies, (2021) 5(10), 99 – 136. Retrieved 26/06/2022 from:

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355875492\\_Turkana\\_Kinship\\_System\\_and\\_Social\\_Structure\\_an\\_Analysis\\_of\\_the\\_Family\\_Patrilineage\\_Patriclan\\_and\\_Phriatric\\_Organization](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355875492_Turkana_Kinship_System_and_Social_Structure_an_Analysis_of_the_Family_Patrilineage_Patriclan_and_Phriatric_Organization).

word for Leopards is *ngirisae*, but the animal leopard is *eris*, while the man Leopard is *erisait* .... The word for a stone is *amoru*, but the man who is a Mountain is *emorut*. However, their basic roots are the same. If the father is a Mountain, then the son is a Leopard and *vice versa*. Whatever one is at birth, one remains. A wife joins the moiety of her husband but their male children become their opposites; female children belong to moiety of their parents until marriage. Illegitimate males belong to the moiety of their maternal brothers.<sup>24</sup>

A totem is not worshipped as a God or spirit but is believed of having sacred and spiritual significance to a particular society, tribe or clan as an emblem with venerable peculiar spiritual characteristics. Oesterley attests that

Totemism is connected with an impersonal conception of life. A group of men allied with a group of animals. There is nothing personal, nothing individual, in their union ... if it finds likeness between them .... Man did not picture himself as lord of creation .... He did not sever himself in thought from other living creatures; he was only a part of a great community. He felt himself closely united with a kind of animal living in his neighbourhood and coming in touch with him. It was no accident that he associated himself with one or other species. Totemism has its various sides – religious, magical, and social.<sup>25</sup>

A totem has its own significant characteristics with essential ingredients of “religious, magical, and social.” In attributing the fundamental qualities of a totem, Oesterley indicates that

The complete proof of early totemism in any race involves the following points: (1) the existence of stocks named after plants and animals; (2) the prevalence of the conception that the members of the stock are of the blood of the eponym animal, or are sprung from a plant of the species chosen as totem; (3) the ascription to the totem of a sacred character, which may result in its being regarded as the god of the stock, but at any rate makes it to be regarded with veneration, so that, for example, a totem animal is not used as ordinary food. If we can find all these things together in the same tribe the proof of totemism is complete.<sup>26</sup>

Totems unite particular race, tribe, and clan by common kinship and they are believed to have descended from common ancestry. However, there are peoples who are non-totemic.

### **Ancestor-Veneration and the Cult of the Dead**

Some western scholars have misunderstood and attributed indigenous African reverence, veneration, fellowship, relationship, ritual and cult of the dead/ancestors to be the *worship of ancestors*. For the Turkana tribe it is “blasphemous” to worship the ancestors. Worship is exclusively reserved for *Akuj* because

the assimilation of the rites for the dead ... never happens that the spirits of the dead are conceived to be gods .... To speak of gods as ‘deified ancestors’ is to use an expression which covers some ambiguity of thought.<sup>27</sup>

Explicitly, Oesterley continues teaching that the belief in the life-after-death is found in all communities in the world. He says:

The belief in immortality, or at least in life of some kind hereafter, seems to be ingrained in human consciousness; it is doubtful whether any race of men, even the most backward, are without some ideas of an after-life, which is taken for granted. “If there is any natural knowledge of human immortality,” writes Frazer, “it must be acquired either by intuition or by experience; there is no other way.”<sup>28</sup>

Turkana indigenous people believe that when a venerable and honoured elder dies, the physical death is not the end of his/her life but a continuity of it in the “life-after” death, as an ancestral spirit. This idea was also expressed by James G. Frazer (1854-1941). Over the first three lectures he demonstrated that

the notion of immortality as not the belief in an endless life, but rather the idea that after our existence as human beings we continue to exist in another form. The persistence of the soul after the death of the body is essentially the main idea that Frazer investigates here.<sup>29</sup>

*Akuj* and *ngikaram* (God and ancestors) belong to the good spirits who have “the interest of the people at heart.”<sup>30</sup> The *ngikaram* are the spirits of the “living-dead”<sup>31</sup> who were morally upright, honest, reputable and venerated indigenous leaders, parents or forefathers of the family, clan or tribe; they were also good, virtuously noble, and righteous while still alive. It is believed by the Turkana people that the ancestors made

---

<sup>24</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 67-68. See also “Moieties and Their Emblems” in pgs. 72-75. In Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 54, we find that “mountains and hills are generally regarded as sacred, and are given religious meaning.”

<sup>25</sup> Oesterley, W. O. E., and Robinson, T. H., *op. cit.*, 14.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 17-18. See a concise and detailed account of Hebrew belief in: *The After-Life: Second Stage of Belief* in pgs. 243-253.

<sup>29</sup> Retrieved 07/01/2023 from: The Gifford Lectures: Over 100 years of Lectures on Natural Theology. <https://www.giffordlectures.org/books/belief-immortality-and-worship-dead>. Frazer, James G., *The Belief in Immortality and the Worship of the Dead, Volume I (of 3): The Belief Among the Aborigines of Australia, the Torres Straits Islands, New Guinea and Melanesia*. London: MacMillan Company, 1913.

<sup>30</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 123.

<sup>31</sup> Find a detailed account of African indigenous beliefs in “*The living-dead* in: Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 81-89. Also see: Magesa, Laurenti, *African Religion: The Moral Traditions of Abundant Life*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998, 144-148.



them who they are. They gave them their brands, their “laws” (*ngitalio*), their ritual; they gave them cattle, wives, children and tradition.<sup>32</sup>

*Ngikaram*, therefore, are the spirits of the prominent and celebrated ancestors who were virtuous parents or grandparents and were actively engaged in “the life of their community before death”. They include:

“sacrificer-prophets” (*ngimurok*), and “venerable elders,” (*ngikasukou*) who have been outstanding in life for advice on raids and the coming of rain, together with the end of drought. Those who have been notable in preventing and curing disease, all become “ancestors” (*ngikaram*).<sup>33</sup>

Mbiti found out that foreigners degraded the religions of the ‘savage’ peoples by outrageously downgrading them to the mere level of *ancestor worship*. He fearlessly countered such negative criticism by asserting that

Many books speak of ‘ancestor worship’ to describe African religions . . . but it is wrong to interpret traditional religions simply in terms of ‘worshipping the ancestors’ . . . ‘Worship’ is the wrong word to apply in this situation; and Africans themselves know very well that they are not ‘worshipping’ the departed members of their family. It is almost blasphemous, therefore, to describe these acts of family relationships as ‘worship’. Furthermore, African religions do not end at the level of family rites of libation and food offerings. They are deeper and more comprehensive than that.<sup>34</sup>

Ancestors are the departed, the living-dead, who are not in the realm of “it”, “thing” but “people” who were part of the family members and tree (genealogy). In fact they share food with the living and their

names are called upon for help during sacrifices, and their graves become *loci* of “pilgrimage” in times of serious problems. The *ngikaram* are welcome supporters when dealing with *Akuj*. The Turkana elders sacrifice animals at the graves of *ngikaram*, so as to “make them happy” (*akitalakar*) and win their favor. “Pieces” (*nginerin*) of meat are put on the grave.<sup>35</sup>

And

Children get a lot of illnesses and reason for this, according to the Turkana, is that they constantly pick up food that falls on the ground. They refuse to share with the ancestors, therefore, the *ngikaram* afflict them with illness.<sup>36</sup>

Turkana perform the cult of the dead as a fundamental ritual of keeping “in touch with their surviving relatives”<sup>37</sup>, which signifies the continuity of family unity and social relations with the departed, who continue to play their honourable noble duties of being the head/leader, benefactors, protectors, defenders and guardians of the family, clan or tribe.

It is also noteworthy mentioning that the performance of ancestral ritual or cult of the dead by the Turkana people is not to be negatively perceived, by the outsiders, to be the practice of necromancy; i.e., of tapping the powers of witchcraft, sorcery or black magic in general, by reanimating the departed to foretell/predict the future events through spiritual communication with them.<sup>38</sup>

### **The Sacred Tree**

A sacred tree is a **tree which is considered to be sacred, or worthy of spiritual respect or reverence**. Such trees appear throughout world history in various cultures including the ancient Greek, Hindu mythology, Celtic and Germanic mythologies. They also continue to hold profound meaning in contemporary culture in places like Japan (*shinboku*), Korea (*dangsan namu*), India (bodhi tree), and the Philippines, among others. Tree worship is core part of religions which include aspects of animism as core elements of their belief, which is the eco-friendly belief that trees, forests, rivers, mountains, etc have a life force (‘anime’ i.e. *alive*) and need to be conserved and used in a sustainable manner.<sup>39</sup>

Sacred trees have existed in the diverse religions, cultures, civilizations and histories of mankind from time immemorial to the contemporary era. They have developed, shaped and formed a unique socio-cultural and religious intimate relationship with human beings. For instance, they have been made to be “structured” revered places of worship, where an Ultimate Reality manifests oneself and the religious community communicates and has personal encounter with “It”, “Him” or “Her”.

In the polytheistic tendencies of Hebrew Religion, as contained in the Hebrew Old Testament (OT) teachings, the worship in the ancient and early Semitic faith,

---

<sup>32</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 123. Details of Turkana belief in the *ngikaram* (Ancestors) are dealt with in pgs. 123-130.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>34</sup> Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 8-9.

<sup>35</sup> Barret, A. Joseph, *op. cit.*, 1998, 124. Find a concise and detailed account on the *ngikaram* in pgs. 123-130.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 126. Also see “*akidep ngikaram* i.e., picking the ancestors” in pg. 81.

<sup>37</sup> Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 8.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. Oesterley, W. O. E, and Robinson, T. H, *op. cit.*, 21-22.

<sup>39</sup> Retrieved 04/01/2023 from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred\\_tree](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacred_tree).

was also offered under green trees .... Green trees—strictly speaking evergreen trees—were believed to be the abodes of these fertility deities whose presence in them made them sanctuaries.<sup>40</sup>

Culturally as well as religiously, Turkana indigenous Sacred Tree(s) must be a living one with branches and green leaves, not dry wood(s). Green branches of a living Tree, e.g. of the “*esekon (Salvadora persica)* or some other cool tree”<sup>41</sup> denote, inherently, the existence of life, its own independent life and not animated by a supernatural being or spirit. Similarly, these holy plants are not the abode of Turkana God.<sup>42</sup>

The sacred indigenous Tree of the Men, is a place where Turkana tribe or elders congregate, led by a credible and upright initiated Turkana veteran patriarch, the chief officiator (*ekecicon/akecicon* = celebrant) of the *akiriket*, assemble for public traditional worship, celebrate and perform rituals, sacrifice (e.g., for serious sickness, rain, raids) as they communicate with *Akuj* and the ancestors. According to Barret, at the “The Sacred Semicircle”,<sup>43</sup> or a “Blessed shade”<sup>44</sup> the symbolic attributes of altar is a heap of leaves from the indigenous sacred/cool tree(s).

The most known sacred place to the Turkana people is the *akiriket*, traditional sacred semi-circle. It is a sanctified place where public rituals and sacrifices are performed. The sacrificial meat will be put on the traditional “altar”, as soon as the ritual animal is slaughtered, and afterwards when its flesh has been roasted (a roast). The roast must be put on the “altar” immediately when it is ready.

The *akiriket* is considered so be so sacred that anything that happens “accidentally” to be found in or within it is highly respected. Novelli attested that

Nothing can be actually touched of the things existing in the places of the ‘ngakiriketa’, not even serpents moving there can be killed, because everything in it is considered sacred, in consideration of what usually goes on there. These places, in fact, are exclusively used for ritual celebrations and are linked with past generations, since it is there the fathers and forefathers of the present *Turkana* used to convene for their religious-political activity. In each one of these places are still extant the trees under which each generation-set used to seat in a semicircle.<sup>45</sup>

The Sacred Tree, is an extraordinary special communal focal point of meeting between the spiritual and the material worlds. Its holiness is derived from the presence of *Akuj* and the ancestors on top of it. One of the most significant feature that notably qualifies and gives The Tree its sacredness is the strong belief attached to it, that:

On top of the tree under which the elders sit, God himself is believed to descend in order to listen to their petitions during the litanic prayer of the ‘agata’, with which the elders intercede, with God on behalf of their people. Ceremonies accompanying the meeting are rich in symbolism expressing the needs of the people and answers given them by God.<sup>46</sup>

Under the revered Tree, the intercessions, divination and mediation of the diviners and the elders, as directed by *Akuj* (e.g. in a dream), are done on behalf of themselves and the whole Turkana community through the litany of prayers, sacrifices, offerings and other petitions to God. Therefore, The Sacred Tree of Men is primarily used for worship. This religious act gives the place its sacredness it deserves, worthy of *socio-religio* reverence.

The socio-religious functions that are performed under the Sacred Tree of The Men, involve precisely detailed application of ritual observances corresponding to indigenous rubrics, as well as strict adherence and accuracy of rituals’ traditional laws and customs.

The sacred places are principally and specifically under the control and management of the traditional Prophets, diviners and elders of Turkana community who have undergone Turkana initiation rite of passage known as the *asapan*. Women, uninitiated and children are forbidden by the taboos, traditional and customary laws to intermingle with the elders (at the Sacred Tree of Men), during the celebration of the ritual. They must remain “outside” but at the periphery of the *akiriket* and actively “participate” in its socio-religious functions.<sup>47</sup>

It is of paramount importance to note that wherever the Turkana congregate under The Tree for prayer, community function or to sacrifice, they must face the East (*kide*); a place of origin, life, and blessings and where all *cool things* (good ones) come from.

---

<sup>40</sup> Oesterley, W. O. E, and Robinson, T. H, *op. cit.*, 59.

<sup>41</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 125.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. Oesterley, W. O. E, and Robinson, T. H, *op. cit.*, 5-12.

<sup>43</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *Dying and Death among the Turkana Part II*. Spearhead 98 (1987) 28-29.

<sup>44</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *English Turkana Dictionary*. Nairobi: Macmillan Kenya (Publishers) Limited, 1988, 16. Also see “tree of the men” in pg. 82.

<sup>45</sup> Novelli, B., *Karimojong Traditional Religion: A Contribution*. Kampala: Comboni Missionaries, 1999, 57-58. *Turkana* is our own addition, replaced Karimojong; Historically at one point before separation, Turkana of Kenya and Karimojong of Uganda were from one source of origin, one people (tribe), with one culture, belong to one *Ateker*, spoke same language and practiced same religious beliefs and practices.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 147-148.

### **Namorutung'a Sacred Human Stones**

Overlooking Lake Turkana and situated at about 20km from it stand The *Namorutung*, along Lodwar-Ka'alokol road. These are mysterious prehistoric standing rocks believed to be sacred human relics of Turkana indigenous ancestral landmark. It

is an archaeological site ... dating to the Pastoral Neolithic. *Namorutung* means "people of stone" in the Turkana language (*Ngaturkana*). The site was originally believed to have been created around 300 BC, but recent excavations have yielded an older radiocarbon sample dating to 2398 +/- 44 years BC.<sup>48</sup>

Jens Finke brands *Namorutung* as the "Dancing Stones" because of the traditional historical "dance-songs" and the legendary mythology associated with it. He conveys that

Turkana legend has it that once upon a time, there were no stones here at all. One fateful day, a small tribe of people were dancing on the site. Perhaps they looked strange, or had an unusual way of dancing, for when a group of strangers happened upon them (presumably the first Turkana to arrive here), the dancers pleaded with them not to laugh. The strangers, however, were unable to do so, and burst out laughing, upon which the dancers were turned to stone.<sup>49</sup>

*Namorutung* is characterised by stone Pillars comprising of large boulders with small cylindrical clusters. Following Turkana traditional indigenous culture of placing stones on or besides the grave(s), at *Namorutung* small stones are put on top of larger ones or anywhere within the site of *Namorutung* by people visiting it as a sign of religious respect and reverence to the ancestors. Jens Finke adds:

Immediately visible are about ten one-metre-high stones, almost perfectly cylindrical, some tilted over, others fallen completely. There appears to be a vaguely east-west direction in their alignment, though that's not at all clear .... Some of the larger upright and tilted stones had, when I visited (in late 1998), small rocks placed on top of them. Traces of several circles of small stones are also evident. Around the site (within a radius of fifty to two hundred metres) are a number of very clearly defined rock mounds or cairns overgrown with yellow grass, some of them clearly delineated by a girdle of larger stones.<sup>50</sup>

At *Namorutung* the natives and foreigners alike cogitate on the undescrivable religious innate union between the world of ancestral spirits and the "visitor" to the site. *Namorutung* rekindles and awakens the unconscious religious instinct of the sense of awe before the sacred; incomprehensible awe inspiring mysterious intuition, mystical and fascinating myths and legends that are being narrated from one generation to the next.

From time immemorial, the history, story, tales and myths surrounding *Namorutung* are traditionally recounted and transmitted orally by Turkana parents, grandparents and Turkana tribe at large. The story of this sacred site is lived and relived and remains very alive and relevant to Turkana community in the contemporary times. And Turkana unceasingly pay homage to them by making pilgrimages individually and collectively, thus strengthening the unity and respect to their traditional, ancestral, cultural and religious history.

The story of *Namorutung* can be compared and contrasted analogically with the one found in the Hebrew Bible, the OT narrative in the book of Genesis; the wife of Lot who did not adhere to God's commands, as indicated in these verses:

The command was given, "Flee for your life! Do not look behind you, nor stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, lest you be swept away. While fleeing, Lot's wife turned to look back, and was turned into a pillar of salt."<sup>51</sup>

God's wrath was set upon Sodom and Gomorrah because of their immoral lusts on His Angels. So he wanted to save Lot and his wife from this deadly wrath of destroying these cities and

The sun rose over the horizon just as Lot was entering Zoar. Then Yahweh rained down on Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire of his own sending. He overthrew those cities and the whole plain, with all the people living in the cities and everything that grew there. But Lot's wife looked back, and was turned into a pillar of salt.<sup>52</sup>

---

<sup>48</sup> Hildebrand, Elizabeth A., Shea, John J., & Grillo, Katherine M., *Four Middle Holocene Pillar sites in West Turkana, Kenya*. Journal of Field Archaeological. (2011) 36 (3): 181-200. Retrieved 16/07/2022 from: Kubiak, M. (1982). "Eclipse at Namoratunga". *The Observatory*. 102: 211. See [https://dbpedia.org/page/Kalokol\\_Pillar\\_Site](https://dbpedia.org/page/Kalokol_Pillar_Site).

<sup>49</sup> Finke, Jens, *Traditional Music and Cultures of Kenya: The Dancing Stones of Namoratunga*, 2000-2003. Retrieved 16/07/2022 from: <http://www.bluegecko.org/kenya/tribes/turkana/articles-namorutung.htm>. Finke claims that, a detailed account on *Namorutung* is covered by Professor Craig Wheeler's riveting site, *Ancient Astronomy in Africa*.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*. Find out why Turkana people place "green branches of the *esekon* (*Salvadora persica*) or some other cool tree on the grave" of an ancestor in: Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 125.

<sup>51</sup> Retrieved 17/07/2022 from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, Title: **Lot's wife**: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lot%27s\\_wife](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lot%27s_wife).

<sup>52</sup> Gen. 19: 23-26. *The New Jerusalem Bible*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1965, 39: "A popular explanation of some oddly shaped boulder or column rock-salt."



#### IV. Non-Native Erroneous Understanding Of Turkana God

##### Introduction

With biased and unfounded evidence, the concept of the indigenous *Akuj* or religion of the Turkana people has been designated, identified, labelled and presented by “the outside world”, without tangible or concrete factual evidence, with a multiple of erroneous and fallacious concepts as found in this section of our study.

##### *Akuj* is a Remote and Unpredictable God

This sub-title confirms the existence of a mysterious Turkana God; that *Akuj* exists but as “unpredictable” deity. A popular Turkana myth which answers and expounds on the natural religious phenomenon that led *Akuj* who, initially, lived nearer to the people but He was “moved” to heaven, when He was struck by women, teaches briefly that:

Long ago, probably during the time of *Ngipaalajamu*, the heavens were very near to the earth – they were within a spear’s throw. Then there was much rain in Turkana. Rain fell every day ... the people complained ... The women then, in answer to the problem, got “shaped” sticks (*ngiregesin*) and with them pushed (*akijukar*) “heaven” away from near the earth until it was as high up as it is now ... God stopped talking with the people. He was far from them .... *Akuj* thereafter speaks to the Turkana through “mediators.”<sup>53</sup>

This myth teaches that “originally heaven and earth were ... close together ... God was close to men”<sup>54</sup> but when *Akuj* was “hit” by unruly women he withdrew from being close to the earth, human habitat, and “moved far” to heaven.<sup>55</sup> From then henceforth, the Turkana people experience his mysterious powers and feel his effects through different ways;

God’s goodness is felt or noticed in his acts of averting calamities, punishing those who contravene rituals, supplying sufficient rain, and providing health and fertility to the people.<sup>56</sup> cattle and fields.<sup>57</sup>

That when *Akuj* “went far away” the Prophets through various rituals and sacrifices must “bring” him “back”. So understood, some authors misconstrued the terms *Akuj went far away and He must be brought back* to the people by the Prophets, to imply that the Turkana God is unpredictable. For instance, Jens Finke asserts that:

With such an unpredictable God as *Akuj*, it pays to be forewarned. This is the work of various diviners and prophets known collectively as **emuron**, who are able to interpret or predict *Akuj*’s plans through their dreams, or through other means such as the reading of a sacrificed animal’s intestines, tobacco, “string”, gourds and stones, and most famously through the tossing of sandals, whose configuration when fallen back to earth can be interpreted (*akiteyen*; “caused to know”) as a sign .... In all cases, it is the emuron’s role to relate what *Akuj* wants to communicate with the Turkana.<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, Gulliver alleged

that the Turkana high god – who is male – “can usually only be induced to act in human affairs by special sacrifice, and is by no means to be depended upon.”<sup>59</sup>

One could wonder: Has *Akuj* really something to do with the Turkana people or after creating them, He withdrew and left for a very far distant unknown place, where He is not “depended” upon in life? When calamities or catastrophes affect the Turkana people, they sacrifice to *Akuj*, is that a sign of “forewarning” Him? Is He a God whose divine functions are limited and bound under the mercies of human beings? Suppose all the Turkana Prophets die, will that be the end of communication between *Akuj* and the Turkana people? Does *Akuj* have essential attributes or nature that can uniquely distinguish Him from “His creation and which make Him not only the genesis but also the sustainer of all things”?<sup>60</sup> Is *Akuj* omniscient, eternal or almighty as per the Turkana people’s beliefs and practices are concerned?

In answering Gulliver, Barret defended sharply the Turkana against this false teaching, heretical in nature. He reiterates that

---

<sup>53</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 79-80.

<sup>54</sup> Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 50.

<sup>55</sup> Heaven is translated in Turkana language thus: *kidiama* (above, up); *nadis* (in the sky, in heaven); *nakuj* (in heaven; home of God) by Barret, Anthony J., *English Turkana Dictionary*. Nairobi: Macmillan Kenya (Publishers) Limited, 1988, 92. Find *The separation between God and man* in: Mbiti, John S., *ibid.*, 94-97. Also find how originally heaven and earth were close together and their separation under a sub-title *God, natural objects and phenomena* in pgs. 50-56.

<sup>56</sup> Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1970, 35.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 35.

<sup>58</sup> Finke, J., *Turkana Religion and Beliefs – Traditional Music & Culture of Kenya*. Retrieved 16/07/2022 from:

<http://www.bluegecko.org/kenya/tribes/turkana/beliefs.htm>. Find photographs of Turkana indigenous healers diagnosing the cause(s) of sicknesses in: Pavitt, N., *Turkana: Kenya’s Nomads of the Jade Sea*. London: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1997, 78-81.

<sup>59</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 100-101.

<sup>60</sup> Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 29; also find *God’s Providence and sustenance* in pgs. 40-42, and *The Goodness of God*, in: Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1970, 34-36, esp. pg. 35, discloses that “God is the Author and Maintainer of all,” and on *The Providence and Sustenance of God*, see pgs. 56-70.

“*Akuj*’s acts are always just,” Natuba told me. “It is men who cannot be depended upon. If men respect *Akuj*, the ancestors and their Turkana neighbours, then *Akuj* will not punish them.” The Turkana absolutely disagree with Gulliver’s position, which is: “*Akuj* is by no means to be depended upon.” The Turkana hold that if the sacrifice is carried out as it is supposed to be, then it will bring about its effect *ex opere operato*, i.e., by the very fact that the rite is carried out correctly. Sacrifices fail to be efficacious only when there is some human error, and this can be an intention as well as an external act.<sup>61</sup>

These narratives portray the unique essential part that *Akuj* plays in sustaining His creatures.<sup>62</sup> He is at the centre of Turkana way-of-life, religion and all other religious ritual activities, especially, sacrificial ones.

We also observed the unique inter socio-religio relationship that exists between *Akuj*, the Prophets and the Turkana people. When one goes deeper to understand these personal interrelationships, then one would not erroneously attribute that the TIG is *an unpredictable God*. A Turkana wonders how one could attribute *Akuj* to be *unpredictable*, who is humanly made active by the Prophets, yet he is the One who calls “away” one among them to the noble duty of being His Prophet: “*Akuj* “takes away” a potential *emuron* – a very important act in human affairs – without any intervention.”<sup>63</sup> He is the one who gives the Prophets the powers of prophecy and divination, and through them his message(s) is further conveyed to the people!

In order to “understand” the God of the Turkana, one ought to know who *Akuj* is and His godly deeds, Turkana history, culture, religion and worldview, and especially the active roles played by the *ngimurok* (the Prophets, sacrificer-prophets, diviners, and also medicine men/women and witchdoctors). *Akuj*

can only be understood within the context of Turkana theology and, specifically, within the ambience of “prophecy” (*adwaris*) and its sub-elements, viz., utterance, word, vision, ecstasy, bitterness, dream, perspicacity, vocation (to call away), transportation (to be carried away by *Akuj*) and prediction.<sup>64</sup>

All over Africa, people have their own respective religious understanding and experience of the universe. Some belief, just like the Turkana, that there is a connection and relationship between God, human beings and the universe. While the earth is the home of human beings, the sky embodies celestial bodies, and therefore, it is not empty; it has a “population” and “The stars are the fires burning in these homes.”<sup>65</sup>

### **Akuj is the Sky**

The sky is a creature of *Akuj* which “cannot be separated from heaven, and heaven cannot be separated from God; the object points to its Creator, and thoughts about the Creator point towards the heavens and the sky.”<sup>66</sup> The following dialogue between a Catholic priest and a Turkana elder draws distinct differences between *Akuj* and the sky:

*Is not Akuj the sky ... where the sun shines during the day,  
and the moon and stars shine during the night? Asks the Father.*

*No. The sky is another. Akuj is different ....  
You can see the sky, but you cannot see Akuj. Answers the elder.*

*Who created all things and the animals?  
Akuj*

*The sky?  
No. Akuj. He is the creator whom nobody can see ....*

The difference between the sky (*akuj*) and this Power coming from the sky is not in question for the elder, even if we are far from having a fairly acceptable explanation of who, or what is this ‘*Akuj*’.<sup>67</sup>

Accordingly, A. J. Barret found that Juxton “Barton (1920-21)” was extremely erroneous when he contended that

“no trace of religion or future state has been noted” among the Turkana; “a word for a supreme being, *Akuj*, is given, but there is no further idea, and the word also means ‘above’.”<sup>68</sup>

The same belief is asserted by John S. Mbiti who claims that “the Turkana word for God, *Akuj*, means ‘(of) Up, above.’”<sup>69</sup> Jens Finke inaccurately sums up by stating that *Akuj* is “the sky itself.”<sup>70</sup> Hence, for both of them, *Akuj* and the sky are *one and the same thing; no difference of the two*.

Conversely, in searching for the etymology of the term *Akuj*, we discovered that the Turkana are very particular and definite in explicitly pointing out the distinction between *Akuj*, *akuj/adis*, and *kuju*: God, sky and

---

<sup>61</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 101.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), pgs. 93-94 on *The original state of man, and God’s provision for him*.

<sup>63</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 101.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 92. Esp. pgs. 91-92.

<sup>66</sup> Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 51.

<sup>67</sup> Novelli, B., *op. cit.*, 11-12.

<sup>68</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 14.

<sup>69</sup> Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 51.

<sup>70</sup> Finke, J., Turkana –Religion and Beliefs. Retrieved 16/07/2022 from: <http://www.bluegecko.org/kenya/tribes/turkana/beliefs.htm>.

above<sup>71</sup> respectively. They simply state their stand that is intelligibly clear without ambiguity, contradiction and erroneous confusion of God, the sky and above. They distinguish the sky from *Akuj*; the sky (*akuj, adis*) is visible; it is seen by everybody, and yet nobody has ever seen God. Therefore,

they are adamant in saying that there is no confusion between *akuj-sky* and *Akuj-Power*, because, while the sky can be seen by everybody, nobody has ever seen this Power. And again, they give to *Akuj-Power* attributes, like: 'ekazuban' (creator), 'ekayaran' (giver of life, genitor), 'papa' (father, pater), 'ekatubon' (judge), and many others, which they will never dream to give to *akuj-sky*, because of their human, personal connotation.<sup>72</sup>

The Turkana people know that *Akuj* exists and they empirically experience Him as a Power (*Akuj-Supernatural Power*) which no one has ever seen. *Akuj* is, therefore, for the Turkana people a spiritual divine, Supreme Being, God.<sup>73</sup>

There is no doubt, the Turkana believe "*Akuj* lives in the sky, and when people are good or offer acceptable sacrifice, s/he sends thunder and rain."<sup>74</sup> Human beings have domiciled places of residences; apartments, houses made out of natural or artificial materials. I suppose there is no time whereby a human being has been a house, a place of living or a building which is his/her home. I may say, e.g., that is my house, my home where I live (with my family members); I will not become that particular building (house) of mine. Likewise, *Akuj* is not the sky and the sky is not *Akuj*.<sup>75</sup>

When one looks up at the sky (*kidiama na kuj/nadis*), it is evident that one sees a number of visible celestial bodies: the sky itself that hosts the sun, planets, moon, galaxies, comets, asteroids, meteorites and other heavenly bodies. There above, one also sees clouds that are essential to life on earth; clouds provide precipitation such as rain - when it rains, it falls down coming from *the above*, stemming "from the sky."<sup>76</sup> The Turkana people believe that whatsoever affect them and their lives here on earth in mysterious ways have their origins from the sky. Hence for them, there above exists a Supernatural Power that gives (*ainakin*) rain, life and makes the celestial bodies exist in their respective places. Moreover, without this divine Power they could not receive rain and they cannot live. This Power is the owner and the source of blessings (in the form of rain, for example) that the Turkana people receive on earth. This Power is incomprehensible, not fully known and it is mysterious. Consequently,

people might know some of His activities and manifestations, but of His essential nature they know nothing. It is a paradox that they 'know' Him, and yet they do not 'know' Him; He is not a Stranger to them, and yet they are estranged to Him; He knows them, but they do not know Him. So God confronts men as the mysterious and incomprehensible, as indescribable and beyond human vocabulary. This is part of the essential nature of God.<sup>77</sup>

Therefore, we arrive at the conclusion that the identification of *Akuj* and the sky as one and the same thing comes from the foreign general thinking of grouping all Africans to be the same people, with same cultural background, mentality and religion.<sup>78</sup> Nonetheless, some African people have some related way of life and belief systems leading to some foreign authors to think that all Africans are the same. For instance, some Kenyan people take the sky and God to be one and the same thing. They have no clear distinctions like the one found in Turkana religious belief as the following findings confirm:

The Turkana have separate words for sky and God, and this distinction is not so clear in other Nilotic Languages, e.g., the Marakwets (Kipkorir: 1973), where *asis* can mean sky or supreme power. The Turkana speak of grey animals being like *Akuj*; they resemble *Akuj*; so like works upon like. The sky where *Akuj* has his/her home is grey or blue and the stars at night are night-fires burning in the different "homes" (*ngawiyeyi*) .... *Akuj* has "homes" (*ngawiyeyi*) and animals in the "sky" (*nadis*).<sup>79</sup>

Having a separate name of God and sky disqualifies the Turkana people to be included among other African peoples who do not distinguish the two beings. At the same time, we would like to draw attention to the fact that *Akuj*, though "lives" in the sky, He is not withdrawn from the Turkana active daily lives. Therefore, he is not a sky-god who "at some point came to stand for what is "highest" in religious life, most sacred, and yet for that reason far removed from public life."<sup>80</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> For the Turkana people, above is usually the source of the river or up.

<sup>72</sup> Novelli, B., *op. cit.*, LVI-LVII. Also see: Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 90-92; esp. pg. 91 last paragraph.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. *Ibid.* See the findings on *Akuj* under the Chapter Title: *Cosmology And Theology* in: Barret, A. Joseph, *ibid.*, 76-104.

<sup>74</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *ibid.*, 85.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Novelli, B., *op. cit.*, 10-19. Find a detailed study on *Social Division and the "Home"* as well as *The Village* of the Turkana in: Barret, Anthony J., *ibid.*, 64-67.

<sup>76</sup> Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 49.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 34

<sup>78</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, 6-10.

<sup>79</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 91-92.

<sup>80</sup> Chemery, P. C., *Sky: Myths and Symbolism*, in: Eliade, M., (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*. Vol. 13. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987, 345-353.

### **Akuj is Either the Stars or the God of the Stars**

We have just seen Turkana understanding of *Akuj* who is distinct from the sky (*adis*, the heavens). Nonetheless, Jens Finke insinuates that: “For the Turkana, the ‘above’ is a world divided between ... God of the Stars ... and Nipen or Ngiapan (spirits).”<sup>81</sup> According to Finke, Turkana *kuj* (above, north) comprises solely of the deity of the stars and spirits, specifically the evil ones (*ngipian*). On the contrary, the Turkana themselves know *Akuj* is a sovereign Supernatural Being who “emits” omnipotent Supreme Power from the sky (e.g. the “giving” of rain), the home of the stars.

In the religious history of mankind, the fascinating heaven, with its celestial bodies, has contributed to the tremendous growth and development of religions and its culture and history. It “has given rise to a great many myth, rituals, and monuments.”<sup>82</sup> The traditional mysterious heaven of the Turkana people, the celestial sphere, especially the stars, are manifestations of “this big God who is spotted (*Akuj na ti meri na*)”<sup>83</sup> or *Akuj na meri* (starry or spotted heavens). The reason of calling God as “the starry *Akuj*” stems from the gorgeous sky as reflected in the marvellous arrangements of the glorious heavens, especially the shining rays produced by the stars and planets.

In addition, “*Akuj* is called the “spotted god” because of the resemblance between *Akuj* and a nebulous rain-bearing sky. *Akuj* lives in the sky.”<sup>84</sup> For the Turkana people, grey, the colour of the nebulous is sacred and “cool like a sheep” (*emeseke*). All things that bear grey, greyish colour are sacred because grey is the colour of *Akuj*. Likewise, the “home” of *Akuj* has blue and grey as its colours. Since they are associated with *Akuj*, they are sacred colours.<sup>85</sup>

It is a general belief amongst African peoples that

God created the heaven as He created the earth. Heaven is the counterpart of the earth, and it is considered by African peoples to be the dwelling place of God.<sup>86</sup>

Furthermore, Mbiti adds that

Like the heavens, the earth has many natural objects and phenomena, and various concepts associate them with God or give them other religious meaning. The heaven and the earth are depicted as the first things that God created.<sup>87</sup>

### **The Turkana People Pray to the Moon**

Lunar festivals were common to all the peoples of antiquity, but they were more especially observed among the Semites; so far as these latter are concerned the earliest form of worship of the Moon is to be sought among the ancient nomadic Arabs. For peoples who had reached an agricultural stage of culture the sun necessarily played the leading *rôle*; but not so for those who were still in the nomadic stage. Owners of flocks and herds, who wandered over the measureless tracks of steppe-land, moved mostly by night because of the heat during the day; to them, therefore, the moon was of paramount importance; and since all the Semites were at one time nomads, the moon was originally their chief deity. Further, as a god, whenever the moon first appeared in the skies (i.e. at every “new-moon”) its appearance was hailed with joyful shouts ... “festival shouts.”<sup>88</sup>

The writer explicitly expresses that in the ancient times, in the antiquity, the *new-moon* was truly worshipped by the Semites, for instance the nomadic Arabs, in a feast called *New Moon Festival*. This worship could have been facilitated by the fact that humanity had no control over celestial bodies which were to them unknown and mysterious.

In the history of mankind, the moon has played a very significant role in shaping and giving directions to human life. Its romantic light and the changing phases have tremendously affected, shaped, changed and directed religion, culture, history, civilization and the course of events of human beings: seasons, worship, life, fruitfulness, death, calendar, and time.<sup>89</sup> Likewise, its romantic cool light appeals to the human senses, influences life, and sentimentally brings people closer to one another. In some parts of the world, it still determines the performance of essential rituals such as the rites of passage,<sup>90</sup> women’s menstrual circles, eases child’s birth and it is also the source of hope of the sick because they believe it brings and restores healing.

<sup>81</sup> Finke, J., Turkana –Religion and Beliefs, *op. cit.*

<sup>82</sup> Culiari, I. P., Sky: The Heavens as Hierophany, in: Eliade, M., (ed.), *op. cit.*, 13. See also pgs. 343-345.

<sup>83</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 92. Find a detailed study of African God, *Heavenly Objects and Phenomena* in: Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1970, 129-143.

<sup>84</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *ibid.*, 85.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 90-92. Cool (*elilim*) means for the Turkana people: with blessing and good. Turkanaland is a desert, it is always hot. Therefore hot things are not good, they are associated with evil. Find “to be cool like sheep, rain-bearing clouds or *Akuj*” in pg. 85, second last sentence.

<sup>86</sup> Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 50.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>88</sup> Oesterley, W. O. E., and Robinson, T. H., *op. cit.*, 128.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. Hutter, M., Mond, in: Betz, Hans Dieter (Hrsg.), *Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart 4 (RGG4): Handwörterbuch für Theologie und Religionswissenschaft. Band 4.RGG<sup>4</sup> 5 (2002) 1437-1438.*

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Wernhart, K. R., Ethnische Religionen, in: Figl, J., (Hg.), *ibid.*, 263-264. For Wernhart, the Rite of Passage (*Rites de passage*) are finding their ways to the so-called Religions of the Revelation through Inculturation of the sacraments. Figl gives the spiritual and the saving aspects

In Syria and Palestine the moon, as the Heavenly Bull, was associated with the good production in agriculture and flocks. The fertility of these animals were attributed to the effectiveness of the **god moon**.<sup>91</sup> In Haran<sup>92</sup> of the Hebrew Bible, it is reported that people worshipped the moon and this practice continued certainly into Islamic times. Jeans Rhys Bram observes:

The lunar year to which the Muslims adhere was not established until 631 CE, when Muhammad made his last pilgrimage to Mecca. There he proclaimed that year should consist of twelve lunar months and that intercalation should be forbidden.<sup>93</sup>

The Liturgical calendar of the Christians reveals that the moon helped to form the most essential season that is central to their worship: the Easter mysteries which had/have their importance attached to Jewish Passover feast. Bram explains that the:

Early Christians attached importance to celebrating Easter at the time of the Jewish Passover but agreed that Easter should fall on a Sunday. In the third century Christians began to frame lunar calculations for themselves ... The final conditions arrived at in the West are that Easter must be kept on the Sunday after the paschal moon (the calendar moon whose fourteenth day falls on or after the vernal equinox), reckoned from the day of the new moon inclusive.<sup>94</sup>

Therefore, in the diverse splendid religious, cultural and mythological histories of mankind, the moon was believed to be a deity, a god and ruler of the world. Contrary to these religious practices whereby the moon is personified as a female or male deity, the Turkana people have absolutely not elevated the moon to the highest level of the divine being, *Akuj*. To the Turkana, the romantic bright light of the moon brings joy and happiness to the people; they passionately dance, marry, merry, celebrate and feast in a rare personal intimacy and closeness to one another.<sup>95</sup>

The ritual prayers that the Turkana people “direct” to the advent of the new-moon (the New-Moon Prayer Rituals) when it first appears in the West, require a closer investigation, in order to arrive at its correct indigenous belief and practice; the first appearance of the new-moon, the crescent, has a profound socio-religio implications to the Turkana. Though they do not make sacrifices and offerings to the **new-moon**, one apparently sees the Turkana “praying” directly to it, asking it for some life’s necessities; e.g. good health, wealth of animals and begetting healthy children.

But if the **new-moon** is not their *chief deity*, why do the Turkana families “pray” directly to it, is it a god? Do they offer acts of worship, such as adoration, to it?

The new moon is a mystery and has a deeper socio-religio significance to the Turkana people; there in heaven by *Akuj* and ancestors, it “dies” and “resurrects” after three days (of its death). It is the only heavenly body that the Turkana people associate with “life” and “death”, dying and coming back (rising) to life. The Turkana community pay no religious attention to the “dying” moon, but to the just “resurrected” **new-moon** that is visibly seen in the West at night, after the sun set, comes with glorious news from the “land” where it disappeared to: the land of *Akuj* and the ancestors. When it returns back to the sky, the people greet it prayerfully with joy and celebrations on its earliest manifestation in the heavens. Turkana believe that the **new-moon** brings blessings and hope of fulfilling their desires and wishes in life. In the “earlier times the appearance of the new crescent was often greeted with joy as a return of the moon from the dead.”<sup>96</sup>

Nonetheless, the aid of contemporary fundamental scientific and technological discoveries, e.g., telescopes and spacecraft (e.g., NASA’s Lunar Reconnaissance Orbiter), human beings have explored the precincts of the moon and discovered that no life can exist on it and its space is vacuum and that it has no light of its own but it reflects the light of the sun.<sup>97</sup>

## V. Reflections On The Turkana Indigenous Religious Understanding Of The Universe

According to the Turkana belief, the whole world, the universe, though mysterious to them, is a creature of God. He created (ordered) the sky with her stars and all other celestial bodies, the sun, the earth, the moon, the clouds, rain, rivers, lakes, mountains, valleys, plants, human beings and animals. Therefore, they are all related to one another as creatures. By the very fact that the whole universe, has its origin in God, the Turkana people view it from a religious perspective; it is for them a *religious universe*.

---

of the Rites of Passage in: Figl, J., Christentum, in: Figl, J., (Hg.), *ibid.*, 424-426, and towards inculturating the Roman Catholic Liturgy is described in: McCabe, J. V., *Gesture and Inculturation*, in: Liturgy Towards Inculturation. Spearhead 92 (1986) 12-16.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Uehlinger, C., Mond, in: Betz, Hans Dieter (Hrsg.), *ibid.*, 1438-1439.

<sup>92</sup> In Hebrew Bible, Haran is a name of a person as well as of a place or city as found in: Gen. 12: 4-5; 11:26-32. Find more examples from Hebrew Bible that depict humanity worshipped the moon (and Sun) in Deut. 4:19, 17:3; Jeremiah 8:2; 2 Kings 23:5.

<sup>93</sup> Bram, J. R., *op. cit.*, 83-91

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Barret, Anthony J., *ibid.* 90-92, esp. pg. 91.

<sup>96</sup> Bram, J. R., Moon, in: Eliade, M., (ed.), *op. cit.*, 10, 83-91. Find “the moon is “dead”” in: Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 91.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. Koslowski, P., Natur and Technik in den Religionen, in: Figl, J., (Hg.), *op. cit.*, 804-816.



It is of no interest to the Turkana people to know or to struggle to explain the material that God used in creating the universe. Postulated concretely: creation is a mystery only known to *Akuj* alone. That is why they present the creation narrative through myths. For them the important thing is, *Akuj* created the world by *ordering* it to come into existence. Therefore, creation of the universe *ex nihilo*, as a fundamental doctrine in the Abrahamic religions, has its own understanding in *Akuj* Himself.<sup>98</sup> Therefore, in search for creation *ex nihilo* from the traditional or indigenous perspective of the Turkana people, would be impractical, imprudent and illogical. However, the meaning of creation *ex-nihilo* could be found in their traditional mythical teachings and in the ordinary traditional religious beliefs with an understanding that *Akuj* ordered the universe to come into existence, *independently of human consciousness*.

The sky is a creature of *Akuj* that embodies all the celestial bodies, and it is believed to be solid in nature and a “village” (*ereh*) of its own kind. This celestial village has its connection to the earth through the horizon. The clarity of the village is seen at night when the sky is clear, as it is typical of Turkana desert. In darkness or at night-time, one is able to see “fire burning” (the stars) in heaven just as the Turkana themselves burn/light fire here on earth. It is at night that “the shining stars are seen as fires lit in the myriads of compounds forming the big village”,<sup>99</sup> with people and their animals. During the day the sun shines, they have light, and at night the moon and the stars provide light from the “second earth”. Therefore, “the obvious answer is in front of their eyes day and night.”<sup>100</sup>

The reflection of the humanly incomprehensible sky and all its contents, the life on earth and all its joys and sufferings, catastrophes, mountains, valleys, animals, plants, rivers and the waters of the lakes, desert, sand and soil, rocks and nature in general are the prerequisites that led the Turkana person to contemplate deeper and wondered: *who made them?* The rationale of the Turkana people come from the reflections on their own limited nature as human beings. They are well-aware that their anthropomorphic capacity cannot create the universe, and moreover they die. Their limitations are visible since they have no total control over their own lives, which are also mysteries. They see their own beloved ones die and the most disturbing question to the Turkana person is: How did the universe and life on earth emerge? Why death? Where do the dead people go to? Is there life after death? Why suffering?

Hence their weak human potentials, experiences and abilities have no control and authority over nature, life, suffering, sickness and death. They see human beings are powerless in front of the mighty celestial bodies which have their origin in heaven; natural phenomena, lightning, roaring thunder and rain, eclipses, light and darkness. They arrived at the belief that it is a Supreme Power, *Akuj*, who is the Causer of animate and inanimate beings.<sup>101</sup>

Further, on reflecting on their own world and the universe, emerged the connection between the life on earth, the natural world and the supernatural one. The incomprehensibility of these two worlds (the natural and the supernatural), make the universe become a mystery and the supernatural world poses a greater mystery due to its divine character with the sky that embodies the entire mysterious beings; i.e., the sky and her extraterrestrial objects and other natural phenomena such as rain, storms, thunder and lightning, wind, storms, eclipses of the sun and the moon, ‘falling stars’ etc.

Like any other African people, these mysteries surrounding the cosmology and the universe of the Turkana people, are explained by employing indigenous beliefs and practices, rituals, tales, symbols, proverbs, legends, and myths. The African indigenous

history and pre-history are dominated by the myth. There are innumerable myths all over the continent of Africa explaining items like the creation of the universe, the first man, the apparent withdrawal of God from the world of mankind, the origin of the tribe and its arrival in its present country, and so on.<sup>102</sup>

Consequently, amidst these mysteriousness “*Akuj* is at the centre of all ritual activity and, especially, all sacrificial activity”<sup>103</sup> and the Turkana man is at the centre of natural and the supernatural occurrences that affect him directly or indirectly, notably those that appear to threaten their lives. For example, celestial movements, when it rains especially that pours accompanied with lightning and thunderstorms, during drought and other natural phenomena, all these affect the same Turkana person. In turn he interprets them religiously because they are extraordinary and go beyond his human limitations and understanding.<sup>104</sup>

What strengthens the religious perspective of the Turkana universe is the belief that *Akuj* “dwells” in the sky. But the background idea about the abode of God, does not end in the physical sky; *Akuj* transcends all the ordinary, human and natural phenomena: “God lives” and He is bigger than nature. However, they cannot ascertain

---

<sup>98</sup> On the study of *God as Creator* see Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1970, 45-55.

<sup>99</sup> Novelli, B., *op. cit.*, 9. The big village consists of e.g. the Nebulae Magellani; the moon’s halo (*awi a elap*, moon’s kraal); the constellation of the Great Bear is the elephant hunted by three warriors (*Ngirematom*) and their small dog.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 80-81.

<sup>102</sup> Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 22.

<sup>103</sup> Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 79.

<sup>104</sup> On Turkana belief in the power of *Lightning and Its Relation to Akuj* see Barret, Anthony J., *op. cit.*, 1998, 92-97.

exactly the place where God dwells the way they can precisely identify, in the sky, where some stars and planets are located and the direction in which they routinely orbit annually around the Sun (by planets) and Earth (by the Moon).<sup>105</sup>

Since the celestial bodies “live” with *Akuj* in the sky, they are His “partners”. These “companions” of God (the celestial world) aid in “revealing” the “mind” of God to humanity: who He “is”, His “secrets” and what He “wants” from the people. The wisdom and power of *Akuj* is partially discovered through the universe that God “communicates with man.”<sup>106</sup> The close and intimate relationship between the Creator and the heavenly bodies, as seen from the traditional point of view of the Turkana people, has led some outsiders to misinterpret the indigenous religious understanding of the world, theology and cosmology of the Turkana people.

Henceforward with retrospective and prospective confidence, focus and hope that the researchers will avoid falls, unfounded and wildly misleading claims on Turkana Theology, worldview and way of life. Each religious culture has its exclusive way-of-life, character and interpretation of heaven and the heavenly beings. Thus, when one (authors, writers) writes or interprets an aspect or religion of the other people other than his own, one should account on all the fundamental aspects that sum up that particular religion. Selecting certain aspects from the whole religion distorts and confuses the true face and representation of other peoples’ religious beliefs and practices.

To sum up this work, on the Turkana view of the universe, the words of Mbiti should suffice to be our reference guide:

In our survey we have shown that in their traditional life African peoples are deeply religious. It is religion, more than anything else, which colours their understanding of the universe and their empirical participation in that universe, making life a profoundly religious phenomenon. To be is to be religious in a religious universe. That is the philosophical understanding behind African myths, customs, traditions, beliefs, morals, actions and social relationships.<sup>107</sup>

## VI. Conclusion

Ultimately, the findings of this work have vividly demonstrated that the belief of Turkana tribe, is not animistic rooted in the worship of nature as god, as presented and documented by certain non-native authors. Nature is not their God, and likewise they do not worship it, but rather *Akuj* who manifests in nature. From eternity *Akuj* is only One, single, unique, eternal and He permeates politics, religion, culture and all other aspects of the lives of the Turkana people. Turkana Ancestors, venerable elders, religion, culture, indigenous oral tradition and history are fundamental “records” that have all exhibited, echoed, proclaimed and established that *Akuj* is *eternally One God, the Creator of the universe*. This attainment of “sublime height of conception” of the unfaltering belief is validly engraved, permanently sealed and stamped in the hearts and way-of-life of Turkana indigenous people.

Finally, the supernatural nature, omnipotence, immanence, transcendence, uniqueness, oneness, greatness and personality of the Creator *Akuj* are summarily reiterated and proclaimed in the following words of the great OT Prophet, Ezekiel, thus:

Before Me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after Me. I, even I, am Yahweh; and beside me there is no saviour .... I am Yahweh, and there is none else; beside me there is no God . . . I am Yahweh, and there is none else. I form the light and create darkness; I make peace, and bring calamity; I am Yahweh that doeth all these things .... For thus saith Yahweh that created the heavens; he is God, that formed the earth and made it; he established it, he created it not in vain, he formed it to be inhabited; I am Yahweh, and there is none else .... As the Creator of all, the cosmic forces are to Him but small and insignificant.<sup>108</sup>

## VII. Recommendation

We recommend foreign investigator(s) to carry out a detailed research on the essence of Turkana religion or indigenous belief (such as *Akuj*, ancestors, spirits and the natural world), culture and cosmology by comprehending and taking their time to observe and thoroughly analyse the data of Turkana indigenous world view.

---

<sup>105</sup> On the study of *God, natural objects and phenomena* (as manifestations of God) see Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 50-56.

<sup>106</sup> Find the Biblical verses that portray Creation as a part of God's general revelation; affirming *Nature testifying God's existence* in NT Romans 1:19-20; the affirmation of *The Universe Giving Testimony on God as the Creator* in OT Psalm 8:3-4; and the verses that emphasize *God's general revelation in creation* in OT Psalm 19: 1-6 and NT Romans 1: 18-21.

<sup>107</sup> Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 258.

<sup>108</sup> Oesterley, W. O. E, and Robinson, T. H, *op. cit.*, 300. See *The eternal and intrinsic attributes of God* in: Mbiti, John S., *op. cit.*, 1969 (reformatted 1915), 29-35, esp. pg. 31 on *God's immanence and transcendence*.

### **Bibliography**

- [1]. Abram, D., *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2010.
- [2]. Armstrong, K., *A History Of God From Abraham To The Present: The 4000-Year Quest For God*. London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1993.
- [3]. Baile, Anne C., *African Voices Of The Atlantic Slave Trade: Beyond The Silence And The Shame*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2005.
- [4]. Barret, Anthony J., *Dying And Death Among The Turkana*. Spearhead 97 (1987).
- [5]. *Dying And Death Among The Turkana Part II*. Spearhead 98 (1987).
- [6]. *English Turkana Dictionary*. Nairobi: Macmillan Kenya (Publishers) Limited, 1988.
- [7]. *Sacrifice And Prophecy In Turkana Cosmology*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998.
- [8]. Betz, Dieter H., Browning, Don S., Janowski, B., & Jüngel, E (Hrsg.), *Religion In Geschichte Und Gegenwart: Handwörterbuch Für Theologie Und Religionswissenschaft. Band 4 (Rggg4)*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007.
- [9]. Ducarme, F., & Couvet, D., "What Does 'Nature' Mean?" *Palgrave Communications*. Springer Nature. (2020) 6 (14).
- [10]. Durkheim, E., *The Elementary Forms Of The Religious Life*, Trans. J. W. Swain. London: George Allen & Unwin, 1976.
- [11]. Eliade, M (Ed.), *The Encyclopedia Of Religion*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1987.
- [12]. Farber, Paul L., *Finding Order In Nature: The Naturalist Tradition From Linnaeus To E. O. Wilson*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000.
- [13]. Figl, J., (Hrsg.), *Handbuch Religionswissenschaft. Religionen Und Ihre Zentralen Themen*. Innsbruck: Tyrolia-Verlag, 2003.
- [14]. Garrick, B., *Essentials Of Cultural Antropology*. Boston, Massachusetts: Cengage Learning, 2013.
- [15]. Harvey, G., *Animism: Respecting The Living World*. London: Hurst & Co., 2005.
- [16]. *The Handbook Of Contemporary Animism*. London: Routledge, 2013.
- [17]. Hildebrand, Elizabeth A., Shea, John J., & Grillo Katherine M., *Four Middle Holocene Pillar Sites In West Turkana, Kenya*. *Journal Of Field Archaeological*. (2011) 36 (3) 181–200.
- [18]. Hornborg, A., *Animism, Fetishism, And Objectivism As Strategies For Knowing (Or Not Knowing) The World*. *Ethnos: Journal Of Anthropology*. (2006) 71 (1): 21–32.
- [19]. Kipkorir, B. E., & Welbourn, F. B., *The Marakwet: A Preliminary Study*. Nairobi: East African Literature Bureau, 1973.
- [20]. Kiplagat, S., *No Repeat Census For North Eastern, Turkana*. *The Star*. Feb 8, 2012. Retrieved 22.04.2022, From Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkana\\_People](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkana_People).
- [21]. Korobe, B. L., *Turkana Kinship System And Social Structure: An Analysis Of The Family, Patrilineage, Patriclan, And Phratric Organization*. *Journal Of African Interdisciplinary Studies*, (2021) 5(10), 99 – 136.
- [22]. Lamphear, J., *The Traditional History Of The Jie Of Uganda*. London: Oxford University Press, 1976.
- [23]. *The People Of The Grey Bull: The Origin And Expansion Of The Turkana*. *The Journal Of African History*. (1988) 29 (1): 27–39.
- [24]. *The Scattering Time: Turkana Responses To Colonial Rule*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992.
- [25]. Magesa, L., *African Religion: The Moral Traditions Of Abundant Life*. Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 1998.
- [26]. Mbiti, John S., *African Religions & Philosophy*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers Ltd, 1969 (Reformatted 1915).
- [27]. *Concepts Of God In Africa*. London: S•P•C•K, 1970.
- [28]. McCabe, J. V., *Gesture And Inculturation*, In: *Liturgy Towards Inculturation*. Spearhead 92 (1986) 12-16.
- [29]. Momen, M., *The Phenomenon Of Religion: A Thematic Approach*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1999.
- [30]. Mugalu, J., *Philosophy, Oral Tradition And Africanistics*. Frankfurt Am Main: Peter Lang, 1995.
- [31]. Mugambi, J. N. K (Ed.), *A Comparartive Study Of Religions*. Nairobi: Nairobi University Press, 1990 (Reprinted 1993).
- [32]. Naddaf, G., *The Greek Concept Of Nature*. Albany: Suny Press, 2006.
- [33]. Novelli, B., *Karimojong Traditional Religion: A Contribution*. Kampala: Comboni Missionaries, 1999.
- [34]. Oesterley, W. O. E., & Robinson, T. H., *Hebrew Religion: Its Origin And Development*. London: S•P•C•K, 1955.
- [35]. Pavitt, N., *Turkana: Kenya's Nomads Of The Jade Sea*. London: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1997.
- [36]. Ralph, Emerson W., *Nature*. Boston: James Munroe & Co. 1836.
- [37]. Robbins, L. H., & Lynch, B. M., *Namoratunga: The First Archeoastronomical Evidence In Sub-Saharan Africa*. *Science*. 19 May 1978. 200 (4343): 766–768.
- [38]. Tylor, Edward B., *Primitive Culture*. London: J. Murray, 1871.
- [39]. Wansbrough, H (Ed.), *The New Jerusalem Bible*. London: Darton, Longman & Todd Ltd, 1985.