



## MODERNITY AND TUGEN CULTURE: A MISSIOLOGICAL STRATEGIES OF REACHING SECULARISED ELITE TUGEN PEOPLE OF BARINGO COUNTY, KENYA

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### Article Citation (APA)

Kigen, J., & Lagat, D. (2022). Modernity and Tugen culture: A missiological strategies of reaching secularised elite Tugen people of Baringo County, Kenya. *Journal of philosophy and religion*, 1(1), 85-92. <https://doi.org/10.51317/jpr.v1i1.323>



A publication of Editon Consortium Publishing (online)

### Article history

Received: 12.10.2022

Accepted: 13.12.2022

Published: 15.12.2022

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### Abstract

This study sought to investigate how the church in Baringo County can design its missiological strategies in the secularisation context of the elite Tugen people in the area in order to effectively carry out the requirement of the Great Commission. This ethnographic study targeted secularised elite Tugen people living in Baringo County. The Snowball technique was used to access potential research participants. Expert judgement and referral were used to access the first participant, who led us to the second participant. The qualitative interview guide was prepared, and information was sought from people that were deemed capable of providing the information needed. This research approach is based on 1 pt 3:15b, which presupposes that we should clarify terms that we use in presenting an effective Gospel of Christ, which should be applied to the Tugen culture of modernity since historical Christianity is bound with the hope of Christian worldview. The philosophical thought of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle of dialectic method of instruction and persuasion is utilised to bring more clarity to the Gospel regarding its meaning and interpretation, but affirm that the Gospel of Christ remains a unique direct revelation of God that needs no negotiation. This study uses relevant imagery that appeals to the Tugen Culture of Modernity. The empirical scientific approach is inadequate in dealing with the spiritual dimension addressed in the study.

**Key terms:** Christianity, culture, humanism, modernity, rationalism, syncretism, worldview.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The "Great Commission" that Jesus Christ gave to his disciples is still in effect to date. Christ's followers are still expected to respond to this commission obediently, by reaching every possible soul, with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Africa has been one of the leading fields of Christian mission targets. For a long time, mission strategies for reaching the African people have been related to countering the African culture and defeating practices such as witchcraft, demonic rituals, burial rituals, female circumcision, use of alcohol, polygamy, et cetera. In this sense, Africa was seen as a fertile ground for missionary conversion. Wambugu (2021) avers that since the time of the Acts of the Apostles, Africa has always been a fertile ground for the expansion of the church. William Carey speaks of Simon the Canaanite spreading the Gospel "in Egypt, Cyrene, Mauritania, Libya, and other parts of Africa." Reading Tertullian and his comments on the Early Church, one gets a picture of Africa that was 'available' and fertile for evangelisation (Carey, n.d., p. 30).

In recent decades, the influence of secularism has become a new mission challenge. Like in many parts of the world, secularism has been brought by education, power, money, and the growth of science and technology, and people who regard themselves to have them to some degree, assume that they do not need the gospel. What mission strategies are available for reaching such people? A careful examination of what Paul asserts in 2 Timothy 1:1-12 shows that the problem is not only with the target of mission activity; it is also with the mission agents. Sometimes they have fear, which hinders them from preaching to the elite. Several other ministers in the Bible were instructed to serve God without fear: Joshua (Joshua 1:9) and Paul (Acts 18:9). Fear makes mission agents feel inadequate. When ministers have fear, they will dread facing their target and will always be uneasy and incapacitated. In reality, fear enslaves God's minister from effective ministry. Apostle teaches that fear is brought by Satan and thus should be resisted. What is needed, like Joshua was told, is confidence in the Lord; something which David had and which propelled him to victory in most of his battles (Psalms 27:3; 23:4).

The influence of modernity on humans has hardened souls, making it difficult for them to accept Christianity. Yet, the church must continue its 2000-year-old assignment to reach all people. Secularisation has made some of the Tugen people of the Baringo community feel that they do not need the gospel of Jesus Christ because they already have the answer to life problems: science and technology. Both Christianity and civilisation (education, hospitals, science and technology) were brought to Kenya, particularly to the Tugen people, by the White (Mzungu) missionaries and colonialists). Most African communities accepted or rejected Christianity and scientific/education development as a package. What is puzzling is that some Tugen people have appeared to have accepted education and science and used it as a reason not to accept Christianity, creating a new missiological strategy quandary.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The first piece of work to be reviewed is that of McGrath (2005). He asserted that atheism might have run its course, and now the time is ripe for religion to regrow. The future, according to McGrath, is that of a religious world rather than a godless one. The age of modernity, of atheists such as Sigmund Freud and the proportion of secularism, is gradually being replaced by a world of religion and God.

According to Kavulavu (2014), the missiological strategy of the Church of God among the Idakho community in Western Kenya was to educate them first in the secular world, hoping that this would give them employment, money and power. The missionaries understood that the people that had power and

education would easily become Christians. In the long run, these educated elites became teachers/evangelists in their area and even created Christian villages to become centres of influence. Christians would move from their original homes and inhabit the Christian village, where all members would live as brothers and help each other with their needs. The other people who did not become Christians were hardened and hated both the missionaries and the Christian religion: according to them, Christianity had alienated them and given the power to the Christians. This did not change, even after they accessed education and power through other ways. They continued to express their disdain for Christianity and became hardened and unreachable.

Koontz (2019) argues that the challenge of evangelisation in the post-modern world is the lack of absolutism. It is a world of no black and no white truth: only grey thinking. It is also a world of democracy and community; the peers influence decision-making. People value community. Recently, many people have been turning to the internet to find meaningful social interaction and connections. It is in this community that people find fulfilment and guidance for decision-making, and it is in this community that members are hardened against Christianity.

In his article, Adoukonou (2021) discusses the need for a modern church to be tuned to resolving challenges arising due to the influence of modernity, which blocks a constituency of potential converts from ever becoming open to the gospel. Modernisation and post-modernity have caused apostasy in the West and are also beginning to cause apostasy in Africa. Bishop Adoukonou observes that the sliding away of Christianity out of Africa, and the growth of the number of people who are not converted, may have been caused by the Christians themselves, whose lifestyles have left non-Christians unattracted to Christianity. Firstly, there could be a group of people who have been discouraged by the cases of the faithful Christian fighting for access and control of the church power. Practices of ethnicity, corruption and syncretism may also have caused the non-Christian community to loathe Christians and, by extension, the Christian religion. In Europe and America, the cause for relegating Christianity to the periphery was brought about by both the eradication of the Christian basis from the national constitutions and the reduced references to it in public and social life. Religion was totally removed from the school curriculum, and the practice of proselytisation was criminalised.

Bishop Adoukonou further observes that there has been a move from outside to influence Africa to free itself from Western Imperialism and from Judeo-Christian prophets. According to the Bishop, this has been a misrepresentation of the facts and juxtaposing Christianity and colonialism as though they were the same thing. He notes that the push to alienate Africa from the West has resulted in a 3 'M' theory (militaire, merchant, missionary), where Africa is to reject the force that comes with Western military, merchants, and missionaries. This, according to Bishop Adoukonou, is in total disregard of what actually transpired in the evangelisation of Africa: missionaries were honest in their efforts to reach Africans and were not attached to the colonial administration, whose intentions were to harvest the mineral deposits available in the continent. According to him, a careful examination of the history of colonial/missionary relations shows that they were not always in agreement about the fate of Africa and Africans, as indicated here:

The history of the Slave Trade, the slave route and, particularly, triangular commerce comprehends a document, the Code Noir (1685), whereby King Louis XIV — the "Sun King" and a politician, was a signatory. This legal document states in art 44 that: "the slave is a movable commodity". Nevertheless, for the missionary who went there to proclaim the

# Journal of Philosophy and Religion

gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ, slaves were also human beings who were created in God's image and likeness and who deserved the sacrifice of young apostolic lives to make known that in Jesus of Nazareth, God loved humanity, the whole of humanity to the point of folly and that in Jesus Christ himself, a universal brother, humanity too was able to respond with equal folly. The history of salvation is extended in missionary history. While the soldier and the merchant did violence to Africa, stripped it and left it for dead, as on the way to Jericho, the Gospel missionary, a historical figure of the Good Samaritan, went there to care for it, to raise it and to re-establish it with its dignity and responsibility, on the road of a history to be built together, as a history worthy of God and worthy of the new man which in his turn the African has become. (Adoukonou, 2021)

Bronk (2012) gives the meaning of secularism from the Western perspective. He observes that for Western modernity to be understood as secular, it means that the church is distinguished and separated from the state, and even more conspicuously, the side-lining of religion from the state and from public life; something which relegates religious belief in God to the periphery, making people to be atheists. Beyers (2014) observes that scholars such as Emile Durkheim understood the constant pull between the sacred and the profane, the holy and the common, religion and secular during the Enlightenment period. The profane was used to denote the secular. During this time, the prediction was that modernisation and rationalisation, in the context of technology and science, would mean the end of religion and the church. According to Clowney (1958), secularism is a philosophy of life and a way of living, which denies the Holy, the Ultimate, and the Sacred; in more explicit terms, it denies God.

There is a need for a rational defence and justification of the Christian faith to be applied to the Tugen culture of modernity so as generate an intelligent and reasonable thoughtful Christianity so as to substantiate the false understanding of the Christian faith; hence a philosophical conceptual framework should be applied to reach the adherents of modern Tugen worldview. The approach of our research is based on 1pt 3:15b, which presupposes that we should clarify terms that we used in presenting an effective Gospel of Christ to the Tugen culture of modernity as "historical Christianity is bound up with hope ..." (Christ in a Pluralistic Age by John B. Cobb, JR, The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1975, p.14. This hope is not limited to one particular worldview. The research is intended to present an intelligent and scholarly approach.

The philosophical Thought of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle on the dialectic method of instruction and persuasion, to some extent, will be utilised to bring more clarity to the Gospel in regards to its meaning and interpretation of the Gospel, but affirm that the Gospel of Christ is a self-disclosure or direct revelation God that needs no negotiation "It worth noting that Good Christian peaching is dialogical ...it engages the minds of listeners and speaks to them with relevance: (Scott p.60). Another excellent example is that of Job, "I will question you, and you shall declare to me " (Job 38; 40:7); Jesus attended the temple listening and asking Questions (Lk 2:48). St. Paul took three years in Thessalonica arguing from the scriptures, explaining and proving the death and resurrection of Jesus, and some of the listeners were persuaded ( Act 17:1-4) as well. As in Athens and Ephesus used an argumentative approach (Act 17:17; z18:19; 19:8-10);

## 3.0 METHODS

This ethnographic study targeted secularised elite Tugen people living in Baringo county. The Snowball technique was used to access potential research participants. Expert judgement and referral were used to

access the first participant, who led us to the second participant. The qualitative interview guide was prepared, and information was sought from people that were deemed capable of providing the information needed.

## 4.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Greeks understood salvation as "an actively dynamic act in which gods or men snatch others by force from serious peril, whether perils of battle and of the sea, judicial condemnation or illness. Hence in Greek literature, doctors, philosophers, judges, generals, rulers and especially the emperor are numbered among human saviours" (p.101). The highly educated Tugens tend to coin salvation with freedom, the absence of hindrance, restraint, confinement, repression... not enslaved, not imprisoned, unrestricted, unrestrained, unhampered, etc.

The Tugen culture of modernity tends to believe in humanism, where man is the measure of all things, but we need to appreciate the sentiment from Paul that God, the creator, the sustainer of life, the Lord of history, as well as Immanuel, that God with us. Hence, man's need for salvation remains a fundamental principle. It is a deceptive concept and a suppression of God's truth of a vacuum in man that cries for God to assume that God today is not speaking to the Tugen cultured persons of modernity (Acts 17:22-32'; Roms 1:18,20, 21, 25. 28; 2: 1; 3: 19). In the Tugen cultured persons of modernity, Jesus Christ needs to remain the source of all existence, God, the true light enlightening every humanity and dispensing darkness (John1:1-5).

Dialoging the Gospel of Christ creates a personal relationship with humans and helps to know others as well as to be known by them since all humans have "sins and pains and frustrations and convictions" (Scot.p71). Dialogue is a mark of humility, sensitivity, authenticity and integrity as we listen to others who also listen to us. The highly educated Tugens do embrace an empirical scientific approach and focus less on a spiritual dimension. However, as the Church approaches sharing the Gospel with them requires an open-minded discussion, listening to each other desiring to learn and for instruction for "the living God of the biblical revelation himself enters into a dialogue with man... speaks but listens...asks questions as seen in the garden of Eden, 'where are you?'

The highly educated Tugens have a wrong misconception of salvation. We need to reconstruct the doctrine of Salvation since salvation to them is equated with psychophysical health and socio-political liberation structures. The findings indicated that we need to present the defence of the Gospel in a way that we need to realise that the highly educated Tugens should realise that "man's essential trouble is his rebellion against God and his need for salvation... (Christian Mission in the modern world Inter-Vasity Press, Illinois, 1975 by John R.W. Scott, p59).

The saving grace of God can lead to psycho-physical health (mental and physical), which could be affected by natural means or supernatural means, hence bringing relief to the sufferer's mental, spiritual, emotional and physical well-being, but these acts cannot be equated with the fullness of life or eternal life (John 10:10) which is offered by Christ which is the Good News (Gospel), a process to be attained by resurrected bodies. To be saved (Greek- Soteria) is where sinful humanity who rebelled against God is reconciled back to God or put right with God by Christ's ultimate atonement (Act 4:9,12) on the cross by grace through faith alone. This position of salvation is echoed by John R.W Scott who sees healings as signs of Christ establishing the kingdom of God and his loving-kindness. Yes, good health could be an aspect of

# Journal of Philosophy and Religion

salvation, but not the ultimate. Indeed psychosomatic medicine environmental factors can lead to stress (p.85). The Gospels allude to Jesus's healing ministry by the use of the Greek word *Sozo*, but always pointing out that such deliverance is by faith, "your faith has made you whole" (Mark 5:34;10:52; Luke 7: 49-50; 17:19). Scott notes, "sin is a chronic inward moral disease, which no human being can cure, and if we turn to human remedies we shall not improve but rather get worse. So let the sinner put out the hand of faith...."

The concept of community needs to be applied in reaching the highly educated Tugens with the Gospel of Christ, where Christians should join together with other people in the community, identify with them and together tackle some important social issues. Bridge-building through friendship and entertainment through a relaxed discussion is intended to move towards a searching group and to generate self-confidence to avoid any kind of thereafter leading them to the Christian faith. The biblical perspective to salvation is didactic- teaching the truth, which is the divine element of biblical revelation. The Old Testament presents a broad term for salvation, "deliverance out of some imprisonment into spaciousness through the saving intervention of a third party in favour of the oppressed and in opposition to the oppressor" (p.101). This thought encompasses rescuing a city from a besieging army, rescuing a nation from a foreign regime, and rescuing the poor from injustices or from personal calamity (Pp101-102). In the Old Testament, we find God's saving acts. He rescues the Israelites from the Egyptian oppression of himself (Exodus 19:4).

In the New Testament (Didactic- teaching the truth: the divine elements of biblical revelation), the blood of Christ ransomed men to God Revelation 5:9). This denotes a kind of liberation since ransom denotes a consideration paid or demanded the release of someone or something from captivity (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/ransom>). In this case, liberation as salvation denotes being liberated from God's just judgment on sin who declares all humanity sinful and guilty before God and the remedy for liberation and reconciliation and justification of sinful humanity[unworthy impurities or substances] to a righteous God is a ransom from Christ atonement (Romans 3:23; 1:16-18; 3:24-26; 8:1-3). This divine element of the biblical revelation of salvation by grace through faith is what gives validity to the truth of the Gospel, which is God's truth to be taught as the sole source of salvation that needs no negotiation. This is a position echoed by Scott, who asserts that "God's love sent his own dear son to appease his own holy wrath against sin...but also adopt us into his family. Our judge becomes our father, and the Holy Spirit himself enables us to cry to him, 'Abba, Father', ...indeed his children... no longer slaves, but sons, 1 John 2:2; 4:10; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:4-7 " (p.103). In our missiological strategical findings, we affirm that attaining social-political justice is an aspect of salvation, but the true biblical meaning of salvation is in the Christ saving work on the cross received by grace through faith alone.

The preaching of the Gospel is the good news of salvation, thus as Christians, we affirm that salvation is God's free gift of liberation from God's just judgment on sin and setting one free from self-centeredness (Romans 5:2-11; Mark8:35) to offering service to God and humanity, yet still, salvation is a process of gradual transformation of justification, sanctification and glorification. The ultimate goal of salvation is glorification. To reach the ultimate goal of salvation requires certain kinds of efforts (2 Corinthians 3:18; Philippians 2:12-13; 1Peter1:5, 9 2:2; Roms 13:11). The ultimate goal of salvation includes redemption and transformation of our bodies (Romans 8:23-25). Scott says this is 'when rid of all limitations of our flesh-and-blood existence...free to devote ourselves without reserve to God and to each other (pp. 107-108). Liberation concepts: Humanisation, development, wholeness, and Justice are desirable goals for humanity,

pleasing to God the creator; hence, Christians should actively get involved. The God of the Bible created all humanity hence a God of justice, and hated injustices of whatever kind and dictatorship or tyranny (P.91).

The Church should uphold or advocate for social and political responsibilities (politics, economics, sociology, community health and development) in an ailing society; hence the Church in Mogotio-sub-county is encouraged to stand against anything that dehumanises humanity so as to attain a better living environment, changed dehumanising structures and create a better creation. The struggle against social and political is for the creation of a single new humanity is God's gift through Christ's death and resurrection given to those who have personally put their faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:15,16; 2Corinthians 5:17). The problem of humanity is located within the spheres of social and political structures: hunger, neo-colonialism, economic deprivation and exploitation, political dictatorship/oppressive regime, and living in the slums. Social and political structures of liberation are supported by the Bible but should not be equated with the biblical concept of salvation. Biblical Christianity presents a clear distinction between those in Christ and those who are not, the works of the Holy Spirit and the works of the flesh (Galatian 5; Romans 8:9; 1 John 5:12). Social and political structures of liberation are supported by the Bible but do not institute the salvation that God offers to the world through faith in Jesus Christ. Indeed God is the God of the entire cosmos, the creator, the God of common grace, the God of justice, and the God of reformation, which is connected with structures, but God's missiological position is more on persons (Covenant relationship of God to humanity, redemption, saving grace, justification, regeneration, etc.) rather than human-created structures.

It should be stated in affirmative terms that no human structures or personality cult can affect God's intended salvation, which is only alluded to Christ, who effects salvation through the justification by grace through faith as well as the giver of eternal life (Ephesians 2:8; John 3:16). The starting point of salvation should not be either psycho-physical health or from Social and political structures of liberation, but primarily salvation or freedom is from the inherent sinful humanity or from rebellion against God that Christ provides in his death and resurrection, which through faith. The primary intention of God should be settled first, then move forward on settling the psycho-physical health as well as Social and political structures of liberation that dehumanises humanity, an offence to man's dignity which finds numerous biblical support (Exodus 2:3;14 and 15;19 Amos 9:7; Like 4:18; Colossians 4:1; 1 Corinthians 7:20-24 ). This position agrees with the view held by Scott that the Liberation affirmed by Jesus should be squarely attached to echo the signs of the kingdom of God [spiritual liberation] since to be poor includes "the pious whose hope and trust were in God"... That, "the salvation of Christ gives to his people, is freedom from sin in all its ugly manifestations and liberation into a new life of service, 'until finally, we attain the glorious liberty of the children of God"(p.98-101).

## 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

We need to start with the right premise so as to attain the correct truth of a people's worldview. Hence, our understanding of humanity should begin with God, who will guide his creation in absolute truth. Scott notes that "Nothing dehumanises more than rebellion against God or humanises more than a reconciliation to God and fellowship with God" (p.105)

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