

**An Analysis of the Monotheistic Concept of God Among the
Sukuma Ethnic Group: The Philosophical Approach of Jan
Hendricks Chenya**

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Frater Paschal Mahalagu, hereby declare that, this work is the result of my personal efforts, original and has not been submitted to any other institution for the reward of the certificate, diploma or degree.

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Date 2019
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DEDICATION

**This research is dedicated to
my great grandmother,
Helena Kengele, for the
great gift of faith entrusted in
our family.
and to my beloved sister,
Agnes Mota Edward.
May their beautiful souls
rest in eternal peace.**

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

The analysis of monotheistic concept of God among the Sukuma tribe: a philosophical approach of Jan Hendricks Chenya; is the research intended to examine, whether the Sukuma people have the concept of one God, in their traditional beliefs. The Sukuma Ethnic Group is the largest one (approximately 8.9 million people) in Tanzania, and lives mainly in rural areas in the northwestern part of the country, or near the southern shores of Lake Victoria. They are agricultural-pastoralists, whose lives focus on farming (maize, sorghum, cassava, sweet potatoes, cotton, etc.), and herding cows.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

There has been a serious discussion, if really Africans have this concept of one God in their traditional beliefs. This discussion is solved in this work, taking the Sukuma as one of the ethnic group which is found among Africans societies.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The main objective of this research is to analyze the Monotheistic concept of God among the *Sukuma* as it has been presented by Jan Hendricks Chenya. Also, this work intends to answer some fundamental questions that arise in the minds of people, whether the Africans, in a special way, the *Sukuma*, really had this monotheistic concept of God traditionally in their minds.

ORGANIZATION OF THE WORK

Our work is mainly divided into three chapters, namely: first chapter, second chapter and third chapter.

The first chapter consists of life background, works and teachings of Jan Hendricks Chenya, the first pioneer and lover of Sukuma traditional and culture in the Sukumaland especially in the 1950s.

The second chapter discusses the analysis of the monotheistic concept of God among the Sukuma. It also shows ways through which the knowledge of God can be attained by the Sukuma people. It gives out the rational proofs on the existence of God, which exists to the Sukuma people with special reference to the five ways of St. Thomas Aquinas.

The third chapter puts into practice the monotheistic religion in the detail, where different ways are explained, by showing how Sukuma People practice this concept of one God.

SCOPE AND METHOD

The main limitation of this research is Monotheistic concept of God among the Sukuma people. And our work is library based by taking much Jan Hendricks Chanya writings, as the base of our work, and in some extent, is a common experience of the researcher, as the member of Sukuma ethnic group is applied.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE RESEARCH

Hopefully, this research work will contribute in enlightening people enough to have the right ways of understanding the knowledge of one God, especially the Sukuma people and all others who seek to understand the concept of God in African context. Again, it will ruin away the notion which claims that, the Africans are religiously illiterate.

We wish now to welcome the reader into the theme itself.

CHAPTER ONE: LIFE, BACKGROUND AND TEACHING OF JAN HENDRICKS CHENYA

1.1 LIFE BACKGROUND OF JAN HENDRICKS CHENYA

Jan Hendricks was a religious priest of the Missionaries of Africa. They are commonly known as the White Fathers. As it is indicated in the necrological calendar of the Missionaries of Africa by Philippe Docq “He was born in 1902 in Netherlands in the Catholic Diocese of ‘S-Hertogenbosch. After studies at St. Charles, near Boxtel, he joined the Missionaries of Africa for Priestly formation. In the year 1932, he was ordained a priest and sent to Tanganyika province for his missionary activities as a priest.”¹ He worked as a missionary at Sayusayu and Kilulu, in the Catholic Diocese of Shinyanga. He also worked at Sumve and Bukumbi in the Archdiocese of Mwanza.

During his time as a missionary in *sukumaland*, his main effort was to understand in detail the *Sukuma* tradition and culture in all aspects. This was much influenced by his specialization in cultural anthropology, whereby he cooperated much with the indigenous people in searching for truth concerning the existence of the concept of God and other valued customs and even other historical events faced by the *Sukuma* through their life history. Showing this interest, Jan Hendricks succeeded to a large extent in leaving behind different writings concerning the *Sukuma* culture. He died on 26th October 1964, at Williamson diamond mine hospital of Mwadui Shinyanga, in Tanzania.

1.2 WORKS OF JAN HENDRICKS ON THE SUKUMA

Jan Hendricks was nicknamed *CHENYA*, meaning the achiever, due to his compassionate love to the *Sukuma* people in various aspects of day to day life. He became part of the *Sukuma* tradition and culture. He managed to write various writings on *Sukuma* tradition and culture. The major works include: *Ha kikome* and *Liwelelo*.

1.2.1 *Ha Kikome*

Ha kikome is the *Sukuma* word which means a place where people gather for sharing different ideas concerning day to day life, usually with a bunch of fire at the center. It is done in the evening after dinner at the family level. Also the word is applicable referring to any meeting which involves the discussion between individuals in a particular area; for example in a clan or village, especially when solving different disputes.

¹ Philippe, DOCQ. *The Necrological Calendar of The Missionaries of Africa 1873-2017*.

In this work, Jan Hendricks gives out the culture and tradition of *Sukuma* people through myths, songs and proverbs. He obtained all these details from the *Sukuma* elders. This is clearly seen when he says; “Those elders narrated to me all things in detail.”²

Moreover in this work, Jan Hendricks managed to write different natural disasters which the *Sukuma* people had experienced through their life time history. These include: hunger and cow’s diseases. Again, he explained the origin of names of different places in *Sukuma* land saying; every village, every plain and every place has its name, he continued saying some places are named by the *Sukuma* according to their nature, thus according to the way they appear to human eyes, for example Ndob’a (Sengerema) ndob’a equivalent to *b’ulong’ho wape* [white soil]. Also other places can be named according to the nature of vegetation, such as trees, for example places like *Kakola, Mitundu, Nyamigunga, Kahama*. Others have names of animals such as: *Nyashimba, Nyambiti, Nyasubi, Nyamhuli* or by names of events happened long years ago for example, *Igab’anhilo*. Finally he concluded by giving out the general social and economic activities which were done in *Sukuma* land. Thus, in this work, the main message is the general *Sukuma* history through myths and stories.

1.2.2 *Liwelelo*

This is the second great work of Jan Hendricks in Sukumaland. The *Liwelelo* is a name which is attributed to God by the *Sukuma*, which means the Supreme Being, the Causer of everything on earth.

In this work, Jan Hendricks tries to show how the *Sukuma* people believe in this Supreme Being (God). Thus, the main message of this work is to describe the *Sukuma* traditional concept of God in detail.³ He tried to work hand in hand with the local people in the Sukumaland and came out with the conclusion that, the *Sukuma* people believes in One Supreme Being who is attributed by different names according to different functions performed by Him.⁴ Those names includes: “God, Sun, Omnipresent, Creator, Great Shepherd, Lord/Master, Omniscient.”⁵ Thus this work entirely shows the belief of *Sukuma* people especially on the one Supreme Being.

² Banamhala benabo bakani lomela na kunisombolela mihayo ya kinabuyaga ya kale. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Hakikome*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 5.

³ Cfr. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 3.

⁴ Cfr. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 34.

⁵ *Liwelelo*, Lyuba, Aliho, Ntundi, Ndemi Ntare, Seba, Mbalaga. Cfr, *Ibid*, p. 39.

1.3 TEACHING OF JAN HENDRICKS IN SUKUMALAND

1.3.1 The Concept of God as a Supreme Being in Sukuma Tradition and Culture

As it is indicated in the book of Sukuma expression of traditional religion in life “The concept of God as the Supreme Being among the *Sukuma* is varied and uncertain.”⁶ Most of the *Sukuma* people like other Bantu, believe that:

There is transcendent Being, God who is the absolute possessor of the vital force, the creator of man and the universe. Though remote, He still guides and controls His universe by allowing man to participate in the vital force. This transcendent Being is the subject of prayers and worship.⁷

Not only do they believe that this Supreme Being created the world but also they believe that this Being is above each and everybody as well as the Master of all other creatures.⁸

This concept helped much Jan Hendricks to research on it, where he found that, God who is attributed in different ways by the *Sukuma* people according to the activities performed by Him, is one. This is clearly seen when the *Sukuma people* acclaim in their common phrase “God has no master or superior or possessor”⁹ In this sense, the *Sukuma* people are not polytheistic but they believe in monotheism.¹⁰ If they were practicing polytheism their common phrase would be in plural; that is to say, Gods have no masters or superiors or possessors.

This One God in *Sukuma* tradition and culture is highly valued by all people according to their norms and customs. This concept is further developed in the acceptance that this Supreme Being is the Master of their lives.

1.3.2 The Relationship between the Sukuma and Their Ancestors

Concerning the relationship between the living and the dead, it is true that, “Every African society has ways of establishing and maintaining contact between human beings and the departed.”¹¹ This is highly seen in diverse African societies including the *Sukuma* people, where there is a permanent relationship of the living and the dead in spiritual unity.

Jan Hendricks Chenya, looking on the relationship between the *Sukuma* and their ancestors, concluded that, in *Sukuma* culture, the ancestors are of great importance and are highly respected. This tendency is clearly seen in giving names

⁶ Aloyce, BALINA *et alii*..., *Sukuma Expression of Traditional Religion in Life*, Kipalapala Seminary, Tabora 1971, p.2.

⁷ Placide, TEMPELS, *Bantu Philosophy*, Presence Africaine, Paris 1959, pp. 44-46.

⁸ Cfr. Aloyce, BALINA, *et alii*..., *Sukuma Expression of Traditional Religion in Life*, Kipalapala Seminary, Tabora 1971, p. 2.

⁹ Welelo ati na seba, ati na ntale, ati na ng'weneyo. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 7.

¹⁰ Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹¹ John, S. MBITI, *Concept of God in Africa*, The Camelot Press, Southampton 1970, p. 267.

to the new babies as the sign of honoring their ancestors. This situation makes their memory exist from one generation to another.¹² Also, *Sukuma* people believe that, “the greatest misfortune which can happen to *Sukuma* people and their families, is one resulting from one’s negligence to honour the ancestors.”¹³ This is because the main function is that “the ancestors act as intermediaries between God and men.”¹⁴ This can be seen when a *Sukuma person* is saying a prayer to God through ancestor; my ancestor I /we are asking you to grant us peace, fertility, worthiness of things, good journey and life on earth.¹⁵ They also watch over the family and grant it health and fertility.

1.4 CONCLUSION

One of the pioneers who opened the way to a positive understanding of the *Sukuma* culture in Tanzania in the 1950s was Father Jan Hendricks M. Afr. who was nicknamed as *Chenya* by the local people. Such name was given to him due to his struggle to understand the *Sukuma* culture. Despite the fact that in his time, he had a lot to do concerning his pastoral activities as one among the early missionary in *Sukuma* land, he spent much time by learning and writing altered works concerning the *Sukuma* culture and traditional. His works are open and they give room to the indigenous individuals to research on them. That is why in one of his works he says, “I give room for other scholars to find more truth about the *Sukuma* tradition and culture.”¹⁶

All of his works are in original text of *Sukuma* language; that is to say, he tried much to encourage the *Sukuma* people to love their culture and tradition.

¹² Cfr. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, pp. 7-24.

¹³ Aloyce, BALINA, *et ali...*, *Sukuma Expression of Traditional Religion in Life*, Kipalapala Seminary, Tabora 1971, p.7.

¹⁴ John, S. MBITI, *Concept of God in Africa*, The Camelot Press, Southampton 1970, p. 267.

¹⁵ Isamva lyane nalikulomba / tulikolomba utwenhele mhola, buzubuku, busabi, lugendo lwa wiza na bupanga hasi tuhanga. Cfr. Aloyce, BALINA, *et ali...*, *Sukuma Expression of Traditional Religion in Life*, Kipalapala Seminary, Tabora 1971, p. 8.

¹⁶ Giko lulu badugije kwilonga basomi bangi abo bayidebile mihayo milebe na milebe kunikila unene, ulu bilonga abali giko, bakubeja no. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Hakikome*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1959, p. 5.

CHAPTER TWO: PHILOSOPHICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MONOTHEISTIC CONCEPT OF GOD AMONG THE SUKUMA

2.1 THE CONCEPT OF THE EXISTENCE OF ONE GOD AMONG THE SUKUMA

The concept of one God among the *Sukuma* is varied and uncertain. This is due to the reason that, the *Sukuma* people are divided into four groups according to the locations they are found. These four parts differ in climatic conditions. The climatic conditions determine the activities which are performed by the people in each part of the *Sukumaland*. The four groups include “the *Sukuma* of north, the *Sukuma* of south, the *Sukuma* of west and the *Sukuma* of east.”¹⁷

The people from these four places within the *Sukuma* tribe have different activities which are specific to that place. Farming, animal husbandry, hunting and others, are among those activities. Every part has its own way of asking for assistance from the Supreme Being. This Supreme Being has vital forces which assist people to achieve their needs.¹⁸

The Supreme Being is one, and He is portrayed differently by the *Sukuma* people, according to the activities which are performed by Him. This concept of one Supreme Being: God among the *Sukuma* is shown in *Sukuma* literature, songs, stories, prayers, myths, and other cultural ceremonies. If you ask an old *Sukuma* about his creator he can answer without hesitation: “*Liwelelo* or *Likube* or *Libangwa* created me.”¹⁹ All these names are attributed to the same God. And if you continue to ask him to tell you whether there is one or many gods who created things, the answer would be: “There is only one creator.”²⁰ From this explanation, one should agree that the *Sukuma* people believe in one God who is the source of all creatures in the world, though He is given many names by the *Sukuma* people due to His power. This is affirmed by John Mbiti when he says:

African people do not consider God to be a man, but in order to express certain concepts, they employ anthropomorphic language and image about him as an aid to their conceptualization of him whom they have not seen and about whom they confess to know little or nothing.²¹

One should understand that the names attributed to God by the *Sukuma* are many, and one should not be confused; all of them are attributed to the same God

¹⁷ Basukuma ba sukuma, basukuma ba dakama, basukuma ba ng’weli na basukuma ba keya. John, M. MASUHA, *Masimulizi Juu ya Wasukuma*, T.M.P Press, Tabora 1963, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸ Cfr. Placide, TEMPELS, *Bantu Philosophy*, Presence Africaine, Paris 1959, p. 37.

¹⁹ Liwelelo likanisumba, likube nulu libangwe. Aloyce, BALINA, *et alii...*, *Sukuma Expression of Traditional Religion in Life*, Kipalapala Seminary, Tabora 1971, p. 3.

²⁰ Ntundi wise ali umo kwiike. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 46.

²¹ John, S. MBITI, *Concept of God in Africa*, The Camelot Press, Southampton 1970, p. 91.

who has great power and He is the reasonable living force.²² This has its origin in the *Sukuma* culture where, a single person can be given more than one name. Searching the truth about monotheism among the *Sukuma* ethnic group, Jan Hendricks was told by a *Sukuma*:

A person can be named many names. One of my comrades from Bugumba, at birth was named Ndalaha by his maternal grandmother, and Nyarugenda by his grandfather, again was named Kanzaga by his paternal grandmother, when he grew up he was a dram dancer and named Shagembe by his audience and finally was baptized Joseph. Therefore he has five names; Ndalaha, Nyarugenda, Kanzaga, Shagembe and Joseph, but he is still a single person.²³

This idea also is applied to God by the *Sukuma*, thus, names attributed to God are many (more than one hundred) but still one God. The following are the examples of names attributed to one God in relation to his activities among the *Sukuma*; *Liwelelo*; this is a name of praise to God who formed the universe and the earth. It implies that the whole world and the sky are indications of his almighty power. *Lyub'a* (sun); Gives light to people, God comforts his creatures.

Limalunde (the clouds); during sacrificial cult for rainfall, people ask “*Limalunde*” because clouds belong to him alone and He is Him alone who can cause and bring rain to them.

Ntundi/ Nsumbi (Creator); God is the one who is above all things. Such name is used when one describes God as the Maker of all things especially the admirable things like lightning.

Ndimi (Shepherd); Among the *Sukuma*, the shepherd is the one who keeps, feeds and protects his livestock. This pastoral life has caused people to call God the shepherd, thus He leads and protects us always.

Mbalaga (Omniscient); God knows everything. *Seb'a* (Lord/Master); God is the one who leads others due to His power.

Therefore in this sense, the *Sukuma* people are not polytheistic but believe in monotheism. This is clearly shown when Jan Hendricks who says, “The *Sukuma* says, there is only one God and not two or many gods.”²⁴

2.2 WAYS OF KNOWING ONE GOD AMONG THE SUKUMA

²² Cfr. Placide, TEMPELS, *Bantu Philosophy*, Presence Africaine, Paris 1959, p. 37.

²³ Munhu adugije kwirikwa mina mingi. Namhala ng'wichane wa bugomba, aho akabyalwa, wilekwa Ndalaha na mamaye, hangi wilikwa na kukuye lina lingi lya Nyarugende, hangi wilikwa lina lingi na mamaye kibyala ise Kanzaga, lya mbina winikwa shagembe nose ubatishiwa Yoseph. Echene ana mina atano: Ndalaha, Nyarugenda, Kanzaga, Shagembe na Yoseph. Na hene atali munhu umo duhu. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 39.

²⁴ Basukuma bakahayaga giki aliho Mungu umo wike bati babili nulu bingye yaya. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 57.

The knowledge of God has been a serious problem among different philosophers, from Ionian age, to the medieval period, where different thinkers came up with the solution on how man is able to grasp the knowledge about God.

God is to be known in experience at all, because the knowledge of God is capable of development, and no man could wish to begin again at zero.²⁵ Thus among the *Sukuma* people, the knowledge of God who is the Supreme Being, passes from one generation to another. It is there where, we find that, the early knower of God worshiped him under the guise of sun, moon and stars; of earth and heaven; of spirits and ancestors.²⁶ These acts give courage to the *Sukuma* to pass this system of belief from one generation to another in the course of time due to all good things which God has and still is doing to them in their lifetime. Speaking broadly, there are two distinct phases where God is apt to be known among the *Sukuma*. These includes, traditional way and through life experience.

2.2.1 Tradition

This is a common method which is found almost in all African cultures. When one is born in a certain culture, he/she is commonly known that one must adapt to all norms and customs of the place. Such situation qualifies him/her to be called the member of that particular culture.

On the knowledge of God in traditional manner, the *Sukuma* people manifest their body of beliefs in God who is all powerful and who never fails them in the hour of their greatest need. They trust Him that He brings them rain. He deliver them from trouble. He accepts their prayers and sacrifices. He gives to them children, and so on.²⁷ Concerning knowledge of God among African traditions, Mbiti further says:

African people are not spiritually illiterate, but the word faith in its technical sense seems something foreign to them. To assert, however, they have no faith in God, would be absolute nonsense, and there are no atheistic in traditional African societies.²⁸

From this point of view it is evidently that the *Sukuma* people encounter with the knowledge of one God, through tradition in their lifetime. This is shown by the common *Sukuma* proverb which says: “The words of an older person should not be undermined but should be observed seriously.”²⁹ Thus all the traditional beliefs a *Sukuma* inherits from his ancestors, are highly observed including the knowledge

²⁵ Cfr. William, E. HOCKING, *The Meaning of God in Human Experience: A Philosophic Study of Religion*, Yale University Press, London 1912, p. 229.

²⁶ Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

²⁷ Cfr. John, S. MBITI, *Concept of God in Africa*, The Camelot Press, Southampton 1970, p. 34.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

²⁹ Mate ga ntale gatakilany’hiwagwa; tutizogema kulikaneja mihayo ya bakulugenji bise. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Hakikome*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 47.

about the Supreme Being, God.

2.2.2 Life Experience

This is a means through which the *Sukuma people* encounter with the knowledge of God. This is through one's life experience on challenges, other life difficulties and all the goodness of life that one encounters. All these help one to realize that there is a super human who can control all these bad things from happening, and also can allow making one continue to experience all the goodness of nature. Concerning this experience, Balina and his friends say:

Concerning life experience of man, his whole existence is under God's power. God provides for the things he made, so that their existence can be maintained and continued, he provides life, rain, health, fertility, and other necessities for man's existence.³⁰

Therefore, all these factors make man know God through experience of one's life.

2.3 SUKUMA RATIONAL PROOFS ON THE EXISTENCE OF ONE GOD: A THOMISTIC APPROACH

As it is shown in the beginning of this chapter, the *Sukuma* have ways through which they can express their idea about the existence of one God, though it is based much on the natural measurement. Despite the natural measurement concerning the knowledge of God, there is the existence of rational ways through which the Sukuma people comprehend the knowledge of one God. The Sukuma rational proofs look similar to the five ways of proving the existence of God by St. Thomas Aquinas. We shall use the five ways of St. Thomas as the representative ways through which the Sukuma can rationally prove the existence of God.

St. Thomas Aquinas uses the opposite approach to that of St. Anselm, who began his proofs or arguments with the idea of perfect being, "that which no longer can be conceived."³¹ Like the Sukuma, who depend on the sense perception in acquiring the knowledge of God, St. Thomas Aquinas affirms that sense experience is the foundation of knowledge from which he built up his arguments in demonstrating the existence of God.

The chief characteristic of all sense objects is that, their existence requires a cause. Every object or event requires a cause that is something that human intellect knows as the principle.³² Aquinas' demonstration of God's existence relied primarily on the sense objects and only secondarily on the notion that the existence

³⁰ Aloyce, BALINA, *et alii...*, *Sukuma Expression of Traditional Religion in Life*, Kipalapala Seminary, Tabora 1971, p. 6.

³¹ Samuel, E. STUMPF, *Philosophy: History and Problems*, Vanderbilt University, New York 1989 (1994)⁵, p. 181.

³² Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 181.

of these sense objects requires a series of finite causes and ultimately a First Cause known as God.³³

On the other hand, it is the same concept which exists among the Sukuma, thus, their knowledge concerning God come to mind when they encounter with things which make them reflect on the existence of the Supreme Being, God. The Sukuma people say; “God is the creator of all things including the human being and other creatures, and he has been there through all eternity, he has no father or mother.”³⁴

2.3.1 The First Way: Argument from Motion

Concerning the motion as one and the most argument for the proof of the existence of God, the Sukuma people say: “God makes us move from one place to another to find our daily needs and also moves other things.”³⁵

On the other hand, St. Thomas does not find it necessary to explain here in detail what sort of motion or change we are to think about. The first thing we notice about an existent is that it is moving or changing; the knowledge of an existence is first of all the knowledge of that which is moving, and this makes an ideal starting point for a proof of an existence which is an act of existing.

Thus the motion or change of an actually existing thing is the subject matter or the data of the First Way, and it is this that must be philosophically, that is, metaphysically, explained. Now because we are, as metaphysicians, interested in ultimate causes, it will not suffice to have the meaning of a moving thing provided only by physicists, that is, by the sort of causes that fall into their field of inquiry, which are only a series of intermediary causes whose causal power needs explaining. We need the understanding of the philosophy of a being; in this case, the philosophy of the moving or changing being considered as such.³⁶

The argument of the First Way is being laid out in several ways. In surveying the different layouts offered by different interpreters, first we find that those who are well equipped with metaphysical groundwork lay it out differently than those who are not like.

In this case we are going to analyze the progression of motion as depicted by St. Thomas Aquinas. We shall, therefore, follow the layout of the argument that is understood in the context of existential metaphysics.³⁷ As such the argument has four propositions: firstly, some things in the world are moving or changing. Secondly, everything that is moved (changed) is moved (changed) by "some

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

³⁴ Welelo alitundi wa shinhu jose, Welelo litatundilwe, liti na ise na nina, ng'wei ali ntundi wa shinho jose. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 46.

³⁵ Likatwinhaga nguzu sha kushiminza na kwicholela nsabo. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

³⁶ Cfr. ARISTOTLE, *Physics*, VII, 1, 242a, 50 – 65.

³⁷ Cfr. Anthony, KENNY, *A New History of Western Philosophy: Medieval Philosophy*, Vol. II., Clarendon Press Oxford, New York 2005, p. 290.

other." Thirdly, because "some other" is a parse or proper or existential cause, it must be unmoved if motion (change) is to be explained in a properly philosophical way. Fourthly, there must be a mover (changer) that does not move (change), and this all understand to be God.³⁸

With regards to this, Aristotle has had a lot to say that everything that is in motion must be moved by something. For if it has not the source of its motion in itself it is evident that it is moved by something other than itself, for there must be something else that moves it.³⁹

In the world, we can see that at least some things are changing. Whatever is changing is being changed by something else. If that by which it is changing is itself changed, then it is being changed by something else. But this chain cannot be infinitely long, so there must be something that causes change without itself changing. Aquinas uses the term "motion" in his argument, but by this he understands any kind of "change", more specifically a transit from potentiality to actuality. Since a potential does not yet exist, it cannot cause itself to exist and can, therefore, only be brought into existence by something already existing. Thus Aquinas in the *Summa Contra gentiles* puts this forward, thus:

Everything that is moved is moved by another. That some things are in motion for example, the sun is evident from sense. Therefore, it is moved by something else that moves it. This mover is itself either moved or not moved. If it is not, we have reached our conclusion namely, that we must posit some unmoved mover. This we call God. If it is moved, it is moved by another mover. We must, consequently, either proceed to infinity, or we must arrive at some unmoved mover. Now, it is not possible to proceed to infinity. Hence, we must posit some prime unmoved mover.⁴⁰

Also the Sukuma use the term *kahелеle* as the word motion used by St. Thomas. For them: "God puts all things in motion, protects them, and makes them move but himself does not move."⁴¹

2.3.2 Second Way: Argument from Causality

Cause and effect are apparent in the universe. Everything that occurs is caused by something else. All events are dependent on some other occurrence or thing in order to make them happen. A thing cannot be the cause of itself, or else it would never come to exist. Logically, this chain of causation cannot be infinitely long, or nothing would ever have come to exist in the first place. Therefore, there must be

³⁸ Cfr. ARISTOTLE, *Physics*, VII, 1, 242a, 50.

³⁹ Cfr. ARISTOTLE, *Physics*, VII, 1, 241b, 35.

⁴⁰ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, XIII, C. 3.

⁴¹ Mungu akahelaga shose, akashilang'hanaga, akalonjaga kajile ka banhu ali nyangalula. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 48.

an un-caused thing that causes all other things.⁴²

This argument is not related to time or a sequence of events. Rather, it considers the fact that, all things are dependent on something else for their existence. In other words, the second of Aquinas' way for proving God's existence is based on the fact that, all effects are caused by some other events, which in turn, they are effects of some other causes. But this chain of causality cannot be infinitely long, so there must be some un-caused cause.⁴³ With this argument of causality, the Sukuma people say without hesitation: "God was not created, He is the cause of all things and He has no father or mother."⁴⁴ That is to say, God is the Cause. Just as the First Way is concerned with the passivity of beings, the Second way is concerned with their activity. Both ways are concerned with causality; the first with the recipient of causal action, the Second with the agent of causal action. What gives rise to the inquiry of the Second Way is the fact that there is actually, in existence, a cause whose actuality as a cause here and now needs explanation. St. Thomas' states his argument this way:

... Proceed to infinity. This is so because in all ordered efficient causes the first is the cause of the intermediate and the intermediate is the cause of the ultimate (whether the intermediate are many or only one), but if a cause is removed, the effect is removed. Therefore if there was not the first in the order of efficient causes, there will not be the ultimate or the intermediary. But if in efficient causes the order proceeds to infinity, there will not be the first efficient cause, and in this way there will be neither the ultimate effect nor the intermediary efficient cause, which is openly false. Therefore it is necessary to posit some first efficient cause, to which all give the name God.⁴⁵

2.3.3 The Third Way: The Argument from Contingency

Nothing we observe in the universe is necessary; nothing needs to exist, in other words, things in this universe depend on something for their existence. Renard suggests the following syllogism for the above argument:

If all existing beings were corruptible, in the supposition that this world is eternal, at a given moment everything would cease to be and nothing would exist today. But the conclusion is false. Therefore, the antecedent must be false. Consequently, we must posit a necessary being whose necessity does not depend upon another.⁴⁶

We often observe things that cease to exist, falling victims to death, destruction, or decay. Eventually, all non-necessary things cease to be. But, if it were possible

⁴² Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 2, a. 3.

⁴³ Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *On God and His Creatures*, III. C. 2.

⁴⁴ Basukuma bakahayaga giki, Liwelelo litatundilwe, liti na ise na nina ng'wei ali tundi wa shinho jose. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 46.

⁴⁵ THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 46, a. 2

⁴⁶ Renard, HENRI, *The Philosophy of God*, Milwaukee 1951, pp. 39-40.

for everything to cease to exist, and if there has been an infinite amount of past time, then all things would have already ceased to exist.⁴⁷ With this, the Sukuma people have a beautiful phrase concerning the necessity of God: “God never perish, He is always there.”⁴⁸ Their argument on that God never perish, and He is always there, shows how necessary God is. This shows vividly the fact that there must be one thing that cannot cease to exist, one thing that must necessarily exist. There must be one thing that is non-contingent, that is, its existence is not dependent on anything else.

In other words, Aquinas’s third argument or way to prove God’s existence is that, if everything were impermanent, eventually everything would cease to be. Therefore, there must be at least one thing that must, necessarily, exist (one non-contingent thing): God, the Necessary Being.⁴⁹

2.3.4 The Forth Way: The Argument from Perfection

This is the way which gives reason for the Sukuma people to continue in respecting God. They usually say: God is absolute goodness because it is His nature for Him to be good. He shares that goodness with us through giving material possessions such as wealth, good harvest, knowledge and all the goodness of the universe is from him.⁵⁰

Every trait we see, in every object, is compared to some standard: health, morality, strength, and so forth. The fact that we instinctively see degrees in these areas implies that there is some ultimate standard against which to judge that property. And all comparative properties share a common sense of “perfection.” This means that, there must be some ultimate standard of “perfection” from which to judge all other properties. Those objects cannot be the source or definition of that property in and of themselves.⁵¹ From this point of view, the Sukuma people find out the names to attribute God, who is considered to be all perfect. And these attributes which are given to God are of standard quality, which other human being can be attributed to.

In other words, this fourth argument in favour of God’s existence points out that, in order to speak of “goodness” or “power,” the Sukuma people have an absolute standard against which to judge those terms. With this the Sukuma go hand-to-hand with St. Thomas who affirms that, there must be some other thing from which

⁴⁷ Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 2, a. 3.

⁴⁸ Liwelelo linyandekwa, linyang’wilekerwa litanahalijo. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 49.

⁴⁹ Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 19, a. 8.

⁵⁰ Cfr. Liwelelo liza ng’horo, lyoyi likatwinhaga busabi, buponi, bumani na wiza pye bho muse fumelile kule welelo. Cfr. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 64.

⁵¹ Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 2, a. 3.

they ultimately derive that characteristic of goodness and power among creatures. Thus, God is the Ultimate Standard.⁵² Also concerning the perfection of God, the Sukuma people say, “God never make mistake, He is always perfect”⁵³

2.3.5 The Fifth Way: The Argument from Purpose

The last Way is concerned with ends, or goals of natural agents as agents. The causality that is involved here is final causality. Many things in the universe “drive” toward a particular end, not random results. Magnets “drive” to seek metal or to align their poles. Seeds “drive” to become adult plants, not animals. This regularity, as opposed to randomness, is a sign of purpose or intention or intelligence. However, magnets and seeds as such have no intelligence of their own. Therefore, their “drive” must be the result of some external intelligence setting or fixing or designing their behavior.⁵⁴ In some means or mechanism, all purposes and functions must originate in some intelligent entity.

In other words, Aquinas’s fifth way for proving the existence of God involves the fact that inanimate matter and energy do not exhibit intelligence or purpose. When we see something unintelligent that appears to have some specific purpose or that fulfills some purposeful role. We must assume that thing has been given that purpose by some other intelligence. Ultimately, this leads to God, the Grand Designer. With regards to this, the Sukuma people conclude by saying that; God has no beginning; He lives eternally, generation after generation, He will be there always.⁵⁵ This is in the fact that all things borrow their real being from a certain source; this source is what we call God.

2.4 CONCLUSION

Indeed, this chapter carries the doctrines of St. Thomas Aquinas on the arguments or the proofs for the existence of God. Those five ways, are also experienced by the Sukuma people in different ways. From the first argument ascending to the last one, we saw consecutively that, God is the principle Cause of motion. He moves all things but Himself is unmoved.

In the second way we saw that, God is the principle cause of all things while Himself is uncaused. Moreover in the third way, God is the necessary Being that His existence is the same as His Essence.

⁵² Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *On God and His Creatures*, I, C. 38.

⁵³ Liwelelo lithubaga yaya, hama lile linyangalula. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 42.

⁵⁴ Cfr. THOMAS AQUINAS, *Summa Theologica*, I, q. 2, a. 3.

⁵⁵ Welelo wa wikalo wa bulunge, buya na buya, wilale gwa gwa, muyaluko na myaluko. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 65.

In the fourth way, God is the only Perfect Being in the fact that He is not swayed by anything outside Him. Lastly, the fifth way expresses that, God is the Purpose of all things. He is the reason of an existence of all things.

Those rational proofs on the existence of one God have the truth. They also exist among the *Sukuma* people in an understanding of One God. Thus, the *sukuma* people believe and know that all things have one cause who caused them to exist in the world. They also, say that the creator of all things makes or gives power to other things to move, and He is the perfect Being who contains all the goodness and all other beings depend on Him. That is why, Jan Hendricks says; “The *Sukuma* say: God was not created, he has no father or mother and he is the creator of all things.”⁵⁶ Again, they say, “God makes us move from one place to another to find our daily needs and also moves other things.”⁵⁷ Moreover, they say, “God never make mistake, he is always perfect.”⁵⁸ And, lastly, *Sukuma* say, “God never perish, he is always there with no end.”⁵⁹

Now from this cultural and traditional view, it is true that the *Sukuma* people believe in one God, who is the cause of everything. He is the mover of all things in the universe. He is the necessary Being, who is the most perfect of all beings. He is always there in all eternity. All this chapter can be summarized with a *Sukuma* common phrase which says: “*Weleleo ali umo uyo aliwandyo na ng’halicho yise*” that is, God is one who is our beginning and our end.

CHAPTER THREE: THE PRACTICE OF MONOTHEISTIC RELIGION AMONG THE SUKUMA

The practice of monotheistic religion among the *Sukuma* may be formal or informal, regular or extempore, communal or individual, ritual or un-ceremonial, through words or deeds. All these are done towards one God whom they believe to be their Supreme Being.

3.1 SACRIFICE AND PRAYER

Like other African people, the *Sukuma* practice sacrifice and prayer as the commonest act of worship. The term worship is nicely defined by S. Mbiti as “the act of turning to God.”⁶⁰ Thus, the *Sukuma* people turn to God through sacrifice

⁵⁶ Basukuma bakahayaga giki, Liwelelo litatundilwe, liti na ise na nina ng’wei ali tundi wa shinho jose. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 46.

⁵⁷ Likatwinhaga nguzu sha kushiminza na kwicholela nsabo. *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁵⁸ Liwelelo litahubaga yaya hama lile linyangalula. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

⁵⁹ Liwelelo linyandekwa, linyang’wilekerwa litanahalijo. *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁶⁰ John, S. MBITI *Concept of God in Africa*, The Camelot Press, Southampton 1970, p. 178.

and prayer.

There is a distinction between sacrifice and prayer as follows; sacrifice is used where animal life is destroyed in order to present it or part of it to God, or to supernatural beings or the departed ancestors who are considered as intermediaries between man and God.⁶¹ Such act in Sukuma traditional religion is known as *shitambo*. It is publically done and celebrated in rare occasions among the Sukuma.⁶²

The main reason of making such *shitambo* [sacrifice] in their traditional religion is to appease the angry spirits or ancestors who act as mediators between them and God. On the other hand, sacrifice acts as an act of worship to God whom the Sukuma people regard or implicitly consider as the fundamental cause of their life.

Again, one should understand that there is no sacrifice without prayer. It is through prayer, the Sukuma people communicate to God through their ancestors who act as bridges to reach God.⁶³ Everyone prays when he/she finds necessary to do so.⁶⁴

On the necessity of prayer to any member of Sukuma tribe, especially on the practice of monotheistic religion, Balina and his fellows in their book on Sukuma expression of traditional religion, conclude by saying;

The sukuma's attitude towards God cannot in anyway be minimized. They believe that, God alone has full power over all of their doings in all times. Consequently, it is their duty, especially when in need, to ask God to grant them favour so that they may be happy and prosperous in their daily life⁶⁵

3.2 THE RESPECT GIVEN TO ONE GOD BY THE SUKUMA

The respect which is given to God by the Sukuma people is highly of great value. Their knowledge about God depends on the manner with which they can only form concepts, which can be intuitive, or abstract, that is, immediate/direct communication, and mediate through other objects, respectively.

The wonderful thing in the Sukuma tribe is that, the respect that is given to God is mainly based on the perfectness of God in all things He does to all human races. This is commonly shown by one of the Sukuma phrase; *nshikanhu ali welelo wike na atiho munho uyo alinshikanu giti welelo* [only God is perfect, there is no any person who is perfect like God]. Thus, the first way of respect that is given to God is through attributing Him with names which place Him in the highest position,

⁶¹ Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 179.

⁶² Cfr. Aloyce, BALINA. *et alii...*, *Sukuma Expression of Traditional Religion in Life*, Kipalapala Seminary, Tabora 1971, p.20.

⁶³ Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p.44.

where in those attributes no any creature can qualify to be attributed.

Hence, these attributes which are given to God are entitative and operative attributes; Entitative attributes are those which necessarily result from God's very being or entity. While operative attributes are those which result from the divine nature in so far as it is the principle of God's actions and operations.⁶⁶

The following are the examples of entitative attributes of God by the Sukuma people:

Liwelelo litab'onagwa [simplicity of God]. This is one of the fundamental respect that is given to God, the Sukuma people say: "There is no trace of composition in God's essence, thus, God is purely spirit, he cannot be touched or divided into parts because he is incorporeal"⁶⁷ Thus God is simple, perfect one without any composition or division and without any possibility to undergo any changes.

Welelo ali ng'wiza ng'horu [kindness of God]. This is the way which gives reason for the Sukuma people to continue respecting God. They usually do say; God is absolute goodness because it is His nature for Him to be good. He shares that goodness with us through giving material possessions such as wealth, good harvest, knowledge and all the goodness of the universe is from him.⁶⁸

Liwelelo lib'ulungakele [God is eternal]. Eternity is opposed to time, which is applicable only to changing things which are incomplete and dependent. On this, the Sukuma people say: God has no beginning; He lives eternally, generation after generation He will be there always.⁶⁹

Nyanhalemelwa [Omnipotence]. For God to be omnipotence means; He is able to do all things without any other factor to avoid Him.⁷⁰ That is to say, there is nothing which cannot be done by God.

Concerning the respect which is given to God due to His operative, the following few aspects are included;

Welelo ali ndimi ntale [God is the great keeper and the guardian of His flock]. The Sukuma people regard God as their great shepherd. Thus He is the one who takes care of them in all their doings. That is why they say, God takes care of us like a shepherd of goats.⁷¹ The term goat is used by the Sukuma people for showing that in their life as animal keepers, goat is one of the very delicate animals. Goats

⁶⁶ Erasmus VENET, Philosophy of Religion, Classnotes, Unpublished, Ntungamo Major Seminary 2019.

⁶⁷ Liwelelo litadimagwa, lite na mimba gwa kuding'wa nulu kubabashiwa nulu kubutwagulwa mapingili mapingili. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 62.

⁶⁸ Liwelelo liza ng'horu, lyoyi likatwinhaga busabi, buponi, bumani na wiza pye bho muse fumelile kule welelo. Cfr. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

⁶⁹ Welelo wa wikalo wa bulunge, buya na buya, wilale gwa gwa, muyaluko na myaluko. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁷⁰ Welelo adugije shose, atiho uyo aduguje kunemeja. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

⁷¹ Welelo akadulang'hanaga gete ng'horu jakwe. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 65.

need much attention in taking care of them. Therefore, God as *ndimi ntale* [great shepherd] takes care of us with the highest care, even more than that of goats.

Welelo ali ntundi/ nsumbi wa shinhu shose [God is the Creator]. This concept of God as the creator is not new among the African traditional religion. On this, Mbiti in his book *The Concept of God in Africa* says;

All African peoples consider God as creator, making this the commonest of the works or activities of God. The concept is expressed through saying directly that God created all things, through giving him the name of creator (or its equivalent), and through addressing him in prayer as the creator or maker.⁷²

In this, the Sukuma people join with other Africans on affirming that God is the Creator of everything including human beings. This is seen in one of the Sukuma phrase that says; our Creator is one and not two.⁷³

3.3 CONCLUSION

In all respects, the Sukuma traditional religion is built up on the faith to one God. This is vividly seen through their day-to-day life, especially in the act of praying, where in this moment of prayer, the main motive always is mainly to honor God, the Supreme Being and the causer of their life, and venerate the ancestors, who are regarded as the intermediary between God and human being.

The Sukuma acknowledge God implicitly as their maker on whose will their human existence is to be over adjusted. These attitudes, which are basically fundamental, are traditional acts of prayer as the practices of the existence of one God, are manifested by asking God to grant what they need for the betterment of their lives on the Earth. Thus, the traditional acts of praying to God and the ancestors are deeply regarded by the Sukuma as assured means in faith to obtain human prosperity and union with God and the ancestors.⁷⁴

GENERAL CONCLUSION

We can conclude by saying that, the knowledge of the Supreme Being, does not require any force to understand it, this is because; the knowledge of God is primordial knowledge which every human being acquires, as long as he/she possesses intellect. Every human being starts by using his faculty of rationality by

⁷² John, S. MBITI *Concept of God in Africa*, The Camelot Press, Southampton 1970, p. 45

⁷³ Ntundi wise ali umo wike bati babili yaya. Jan Hendricks, CHENYA, *Liwelelo*, Nyegezi, Mwanza 1960, p. 46.

⁷⁴ Cfr. Aloyce, BALINA, *et alii...*, *Sukuma Expression of Traditional Religion in Life*, Kipalapala Seminary, Tabora 1971, p. 30.

reflecting on the causality of all creatures in the world, by the help of natural light of reasoning.

Therefore, Africans are traditionally philosophers. This is clearly seen in their critical way of thinking and answering questions concerning all the cosmic problems including the existence of God, the *totius causa*. Not only do they believe that this Supreme Being created the world but also they believe that this Being is above each, and everybody, as well as the Master of all other creatures.

Lastly, we have discovered how people have an intimate relationship with God, the Supreme Being. This is seen when they agree that, God is one and unique principal cause and the end of everything in the universe. Again, in this work, we have received and learnt most precious cultural beliefs of the Sukuma tribe, which really must be kept and respected as resources for identifying them.

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