

**TOWARDS AN INTEGRATION OF THE NUBA TIRA
TRADITIONAL SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP WITH THE
BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP PRINCIPLES OF
NEHEMIAH**

BY

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DECLARATION

I hereby acknowledge that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and has not previously in its entirety or in part been submitted to any academic institution for degree purposes.

Rev. Fajak Avajani Angalo Alu

20th October 2012

DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to my children: Kuku, Cani, Muji, Kajana, Abona, Arma and also to my dear wife Cici, who enjoyed reading the manuscript and encouraged me to complete it. To all the Tira grand ancestors on paternal line: Kuku, Lodi, Lalu, Ttuttu, Loco and also those on maternal line: Kaka, Kani, Kuji, Kaci and Kamu.

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It is through these 50 men and women that I was able to enter into the spiritual kingdom of the Tira world view. I discovered that it is one thing to know, and another thing to believe, and yet another thing to see, touch and taste. Those who are practically involved in these spiritual offices have a different “taste” than those who are not. Here is the theology of the Tira people, who know nothing of Christian or Muslim Theology. It is fascinating for me to encounter this knowledge.

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ABSTRACT

This study is an integration of the Tira traditional spiritual leadership with Christianity by biblical application of the leadership principles of Nehemiah. This integration provides an integral tool for church leaders to use as they seek to relate Christianity to the traditional spiritual and political leaders of the Tira communities in Sudan.

The integration of the Tira traditional spiritual leadership with that of Christianity was made possible by this research. Integration became necessary because both the traditional spiritual leadership and the religious system have profound influence upon the Tira Christians.

The Tira traditional understanding of supernatural spiritual beings as the true representatives of God for the Tira people was found to hold the Tira communities in bondage and darkness as explained by the Bible. The barrier to the success of the mission of the church in Tira communities was actually the Tira traditional spiritual leadership.

In Chapter 1, the historical background of the Nuba Tira was examined. Two books about the history of Sudan were valuable resources. Eratosthenes' textbook from 200 B.C. gave a historical description of the word "Nuba" and how the term was used by different people to describe the black Sudanese. Another source that was used in this background study was a book written in 1819 by a Swiss explorer, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, in which he defined the word "Nuba" as a term that denotes the black people of Sudan.

In Chapter 2, the researcher used the method of face-to-face interviews with selected clan traditional spiritual leaders to find out the mechanism behind the traditional organization of the Tira, their religious worldview and their theological concepts that are represented by spiritual symbols.

In Chapter 3, the research materials and data came from face-to-face interviews with the selected traditional spiritual leaders who were in charge of both spiritual and political affairs of their communities.

Chapter 4 gave a brief Christian background in Tira land. Some select church elders who were around when the Western missionaries of the Sudan United Mission attempted to evangelize the Tira communities were interviewed. The other sources of information were the two books written by missionaries who worked among the Nuba tribes and other mission booklets and articles.

Chapters 5 and 6 dealt with the exegetical study of Nehemiah's leadership principles. The major source materials were the commentaries on the book of Nehemiah: Clinton 2003 and Hedges 2005. Additional materials on leadership were also used.

The integration of Nehemiah's leadership principles with the seven foundational traditional values of the Tira beliefs was the primary objective of the research. This thesis shows how it could be done by using both biblical and traditional principles.

Chapter 1

1.0 Introduction to the Research

The idea of doing research on an integration of the biblical leadership principles of Nehemiah with Tira traditional spiritual leadership grew out of the researcher's long involvement in the Tira language and its translation. Fifteen years of work in language development, scripture use, indigenous educational materials development, and church leadership training have increasingly motivated the researcher to pursue this research. He especially felt the need to develop competent Christian leadership principles among the Tira Christians.

Over the years, it became clear to him that there was a great need for developing effective Christian spiritual leadership for the Tira Christians. Tira traditional spiritual leadership is an essential foundation that cannot be ignored, but rather needs to be integrated. For this reason, he embarked upon a research to investigate the Tira traditional spiritual leadership, with the intention of integrating it with biblical spiritual leadership principles of Nehemiah as a means of strengthening Christian leadership among the Tira Christians.

From his preliminary research, he discovered that there were numerous books and articles on various aspects of leadership principles around the world and in Africa, but not among the Tira. The works of anthropologists, social linguists, and missionaries about the Tira are fragmented; hence the need for him to undertake this research on the Tira traditional spiritual leadership and its integration with biblical spiritual principles of leadership.

It was important to do a proper investigation of the traditional organization of the Tira clans' division in order to establish the principles that govern their traditional life. Some ideas in their traditional religious worldview and their theological concepts led the Tira people to develop many symbols that were connected with certain spiritual beings. The traditional spiritual leaders based their functions and roles on seven foundational values as their primary principles:

(1) A leader's symbol of authority is being controlled by spiritual beings, through a specific object such as the god of the sun or the rain.

(2) Management of ancestral knowledge of living and non-living things, and of life and death, should be continued.

(3) Marriage is regarded as a spiritual foundation created by God and is part of God's divine plan for procreation and family continuation.

(4) Agricultural activities are ascribed to God. The elders believed that God is the one who authorized their ancestors, Kuku, the first man, and Kaka, the first woman, as the first living creatures to farm and take care of the earth. This traditional story is close to the Genesis account of creation.

(5) Funeral rites have a strong implication for the whole community. The ritual procedures are valued by spiritual leaders to be the most essential, major rites, in which both God and a dead ancestor should be honoured.

(6) Education comes through informal training that the community values and participates in. It is another foundational concept applied through the practical life-cycle pattern of every young generation. It is a model of teamwork that the community leaders use as young people go through a number of initiation rites and stages. In each rite or stage, spiritual leaders have a major role to play.

(7) A social foundational value is a combination of political and religious affairs. These two leadership roles are considered one element in the traditional worldview of the Tira. Whether handling political or religious affairs, spiritual leaders discuss, promote, control and defend social and spiritual values to ensure the safety and welfare of the community. In all these areas, spiritual leaders exercise their authority and legitimacy.

The problem of traditional spiritual leaders resisting Christianity started a long time ago when missionaries attempted to evangelize the Nuba Tira tribes in 1920. The missionaries' attitudes toward traditional foundational values and cultural leadership principles were contrary to the traditional Tira spiritual leaders' beliefs. These cross-

cultural misunderstandings created both cultural and spiritual barriers for missionaries and resulted in failure. Frustration among church leaders today in reaching the traditional spiritual leaders with the Gospel is the same as it was in the past. There is still fear and ignorance of the shadowy complexity of the traditional spiritual religious system. The emergence of the Tira leaders in those days was mainly for political integration during the pre-colonial and colonial eras, when slavery was heavily practiced. Today, leaders still consider those leaders who took their young men and girls into slavery as their enemies. Talk about God's love has never rung true in the ears of traditional spiritual leaders as they see the missionaries and the colonial masters as one and the same. Since then, religious and cultural barriers still stand as obstacles that need to be broken.

Several things could account for this situation. Primarily, there was the failure for many decades by Western missionaries and the Sudanese government to discover and understand the Tira traditional spiritual leadership's foundational values. The solution might have been an investigation of indigenous spiritual leadership, religious symbols, and foundational values in communities where leaders based their strong leadership legacy.

At the moment, the greatest need in this research was to investigate each clan's spiritual leader to find out the meaning of each symbol or sign of his spiritual influence and its importance in the community. The traditional religious worldview and the concept of how the community understands the value of teamwork, as well as their existence and relationship with their dead ancestors, needed to be fully understood and compared with the biblical model. The Tira church today needs to consider their seven foundational values in light of the Bible, in order to integrate their framework with biblical teaching. This way, barriers would be broken.

1.1 Background of the Nuba Tira in Sudan

An integration of the biblical leadership principles of Nehemiah with Tira traditional spiritual leadership has never been done. Over the last ninety years, various researchers have collected and published some materials on the Tira language as a part of wider surveys of the Nuba Mountain languages. They include Seligman, 1910; Meinhof, 1916;

MacDiarmid, 1931; Stevenson, 1956 and 1964; and Schadeberg, 1981. Basically, these works contain phonetically transcribed data that focus on lexical, grammatical, and classification issues. None claims to have investigated the Tira traditional spiritual leaders. Apart from a social linguistics survey and an anthropological investigation done by Nadel (1920:246) in which three outstanding areas were not investigated, so far no other evidence has been found of any attempt at integration. The main barriers to achieving this included the following religious complexities:

(1) The symbol of authority of a leader is being controlled by a supernatural being through a specific object. Each clan has an object which is considered to be the spiritual foundation that assigns spiritual authority. This spiritual being is assumed to be God's agent.

(2) The Tira traditional spiritual leader's philosophy of life and theological concepts are based on economic, political, and spiritual elements. The leaders claim both physical and spiritual authority in all these domains, in order to ensure safety and a good relationship with the dead ancestral spirits, who are believed to be the living dead in a land called "Kumazi" (land of the dead).

(3) The missionary's attitude toward the Tira's foundational values created religious and cultural barriers between the communities which hampered evangelism.

There was a need for all of these areas to be investigated thoroughly to resolve the issue of religious complexity in this tribe. Apart from identifying these three issues, nothing specific has been done in the area of traditional spiritual leadership of the Tira so far.

1.1.1 The Name "Nuba"

The name "Nuba," in the historical context of Sudan, is a term that has been applied to the ethnic groups living in the hills or mountains in the Southern Kordofan region of the Sudan. This group has been part of a remarkable phenomenon in Sudan's history. They are known to be a people of noble cultural pride and human dignity. The Greek anthropologist, Eratosthenes (200 B.C.), used the word Nobat to describe the "black skin"

of the indigenous inhabitants living in more than 99 hills, situated in the central Southern Kordofan, that are known today as the Nuba Mountains. The name Nuba comes from the word Nobat. A Swiss explorer, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, defined the word “Nuba” in these terms:

The name ‘Nuba’ has been given to all the blacks hailing from slave-country south of the Sennar. [It] was a name given indiscriminately to a heterogeneous group of people by those who took them to be no more than black gold, i.e. slaves. And so ‘Nuba’ became their first declaration of identity. Such an identity is a mark of oppression and marginalization recognized by all the seventy Nuba tribes. To be called “Nuba” is certainly not a status symbol among them. Yet today among the Nuba there is another identity, an interior one. To be a Nuba means to be strong, able to bear a thousand episodes of suffering and marginalization without losing one’s identity, and to be proud to survive in such difficult circumstances (1819:42).

Today, among the Nuba tribes, people identify themselves as a Nuba Tira, Nuba Moro, Nuba Laru, and so on. The Nuba are conscious of their diversity. There is no contradiction between one saying, “I am a Nuba Tira from Nuba Mountain.” Each tribe lives near a hill or a big mountain. Mountains where Nuba people are settling at the moment are identified as Tira Mountains or Moro Mountains and so on.

1.1.2 The Name Tira

According to the individuals that were interviewed, the name Tira is a distorted form of the word Littiro, which denotes the tribe whose members speak the language Zittiro. It is a term used by other tribes; the Tira people call themselves Littiro. A single person is called Ittiro. The interviewees believe that their name Littiro came from the word Ittiro-gumno or Ujigumno, which means “human-being” or literally means “black people who speak a language called Zittiro.” They believe that in the beginning of creation, the black people, to whom the Tira belong, were descended from Kuku, the first man, and Kaka, the first woman. These two ancestors were given a language called Zittiro, which is now spoken by the Littiro people, known today as the Tira. Since then, traditional songs, stories, and myths told by elders retain this belief. This is how they think they came into

existence and became part of the Nuba Mountains group.

The Tira as a distinct group are known to be one of the major tribes of the Sudan's Nuba Mountains group. The word Nuba became a term that included many ethnic language groups who speak different languages and internal dialects. The word Tira has become a tribal name, which denotes the language group of the Tira only. When using the phrase Nuba Tira, the group is identifying themselves with all other Nuba language groups that claimed the same name to be their "black" identity. Historically, outsiders refer to black people in Sudan as being Ethiopian, Kush, Nobat, Nubia, or Nubai. Sudan itself is an Arabic word, which means "the country of the black people." Linguistically, the Tira language family has been classified as a Niger-Congo language. It is part of the Kordofanian sub-family known as the Heiban group (Williamson 1989:21 and Schadeberg 198:69). In this thesis, the term "Tira" refers to this distinct ethnic group among the Nuba Mountains tribes. "The Tira" is a designate of the people that comprise the Nuba Tira. The Tira or Nuba Tira means the same group of people of the Nuba Mountains. In writing this research, Tira or Nuba Tira stands for the same people group and either name could be used without creating any problem.

Siegfried Frederick Nadel, the first anthropologist to survey the Nuba languages, describes the geographic location of the Nuba Mountains as:

... an area that covers roughly 30,000 square miles...situated in the centre and south of Kordofan, between Lat. 29 and 31 W. and Long. 10 and 12 -30' N. The Tira Mountains lie in a pattern of long ranges that form irregular, broken and massive rugged rocks, separated by broad valleys and stretches of plain. During the rainy season, the region is watered by springs, wells and waterholes, found both within the mountain ranges and at the foot of the hills. It is only during this period when there is much vegetation and densely wooded, beautiful nature, surrounding the hills and the plains. During this time, inhabitants do intensive cultivation around the hillsides as well as on the plain areas. Most of the hills are surrounded by settlements. The hills vary greatly in height and formation – with low rocky chains, alternating with high, compact massive or isolated hills rising abruptly from the plain (1920:chs1-5).

The Tira society is governed by local clan leaders who also have spiritual leadership

roles; both roles are equally recognized by the whole tribe. Each clan maintains a unique symbiotic structure that contributes to the welfare of both the immediate family and the community. The symbiotic structure of Tira society already suggests where the political unit must reside. The idea of sovereignty is that of diffuse and abstract order which is typical of societies without a consolidated system of government. The realization of common laws rests fully on the moral conscience of the group segments and on the self-help of individuals and group sections.

The boundaries that this concept of political existence describes are never obscure: they embrace the whole tribe. The definition of “friend” or “enemy” is based on the unit of the tribe. For example, raiding, plundering, and the taking of human life outside the tribe are all fair, just, and laudable. To be robbed or killed in an intertribal affair is considered part of “the luck of war.” However, the same attack on life or property within the tribe becomes a crime that is outlawed and followed by retribution. This is how the political unit presides over and governs community affairs. The common law fully rests on the moral conscience of the group. The political boundaries between the Tira and other neighbouring tribes are based on the terminology of either friend or enemy. This political morality is theologically backed by the traditional spiritual leaders. The Tira support this political morality with theological arguments.

The researcher had an illuminating discussion with a number of Tira men. “God,” one of them said, “is very angry when one Tira kills or steals from another Tira, but He is not at all angry when the Tira kill or rob outside the tribe. For example, killing or robbing an Arab is a good thing.” They said that in the past, the Arabs killed their ancestors, sold some of them into slavery, and took away most of their wealth. Therefore, what they are doing now is not a crime because they are restoring their lawful properties which were robbed and taken by force. Indeed, they believe that it is right for them to claim back their own rights through any means, that there is nothing wrong with it. The researcher asked, “Have you then a different God from, say, the Arab or other tribes?” They replied, “No, there is only one God called Elo Kamakama, which means “God the Almighty””. Again, it was, “Yet still He is not angry when a Tira wrongs or kills an Arab?” Their answer was, “No, He is not angry when we kill an Arab.”

According to the Tira's beliefs, the Tira Supreme Being is not a tribal god. He is believed to be the God of the universe, and he guides the political unity of the tribe. The political solidarity of the Tira tribe is very much a spiritually integrated system of different clans. For example, each clan's spiritual leader has a symbol of his clan as a sign of his authority. One of the clans is called "Itumbel." Its symbol of leadership is known to be Elo Kazinyen, which means "the god of the sun." The Itumbel clan claims the power of a god called "Sun" who works magic through the spear, knife, and axe. This clan claims the authority of healing wounds afflicted on human bodies. If a political or spiritual action needed to be taken in the whole Tira tribe, the Itumbel leader is the one to lead prayers. All the rest of the clans' spiritual leaders are supposed to line up side by side with the Itumbel leader during prayers. This is the picture of an interdependent structural tribe, as far as collaboration is concerned. The unity of communal life and age-grade cooperation is a socially binding factor that is supported by spiritual leaders of the clans.

In the religious system, the clan's political leader plays a dual role in the community. The spiritual leadership safeguards the destiny of the life hereafter. This is a bewildering area of the spiritual leadership dimension, where a number of different spiritual faculties are employed to keep the leaders powerful. Spirits are described as unseen beings that are in charge of different things. Each group of spirits operates in an assigned area as follows:

- (1) One group of the spirits, that operates in space, is known to be of the gods of the sun, rainbow, rain, angels, thunder and lightning.
- (2) The second group of spirits, known to be in charge of the air, includes the god of storms and winds, the god of darkness, and the god of dust.
- (3) The third group of spirits are those who operate in the areas of vitality: preventing human beings from bearing children or preventing animals and crops from being productive. Some of these spirits inhabit certain trees, mountains, and grass.
- (4) The fourth group of spiritual beings are in charge of diseases, such as blindness, nose bleeding, and miscarriages, as well as crippling or disabling diseases and mental illness.
- (5) The fifth group of spiritual beings are those in charge of prophecy, functioning as

prophets, magicians, witchdoctors, and bewitchers or those who cast an evil eye.

(6) The sixth group of spirits are those who operate in the areas of food, animals, birds, and insects.

(7) The seventh and final group of spirits are spiritual beings who operate in social areas such as encouraging misconduct or causing people to steal, commit adultery, or start wars.

It is true, as Nadel described, that “One of the old men of the clan would acquire a certain position of spiritual leadership” (1920:chs1-5). This position reflected the existence of specific forms of a clan’s religious techniques. For example, the clan called Ilumen has, as symbol of their spiritual office, a god of disease called Nyehe. It attacks humans by causing them to bleed from their noses. This clan claims the authority to heal this Nyehe. The clan also claims to possess the power of purifying the wombs of animals that miscarry frequently.

It is only old men who are considered to have acquired this experience and are thought deserving of the right to have the family leadership. Religious or spiritual skills are sometimes believed to be a magic power that pervades every domain of social life. Magic here is referred to as secret forces that possess a person and direct him to call on spirits or to produce objects by tricks or charms. The spiritual leaders have a way of distinguishing other evil powers from their own role. When they perform their religious duties (for example, making sacrifices to God), no magicians or witches or diviners are permitted to come near the place of worship. Magicians, witchcraft practitioners, and diviners are considered by spiritual leaders to be in a different domain. These groups are considered to be possessed by evil spirits that work magic through tricks. The individuals the researcher interviewed said such people were not allowed to take the leadership position of any clan.

The clan’s leadership in Tira follows the paternal line. The Tira call the clan leader “irrho,” which literally means “knife.” The Tira tribe numbers 17 to 34 clans of varying size, according to the interviewees’ knowledge. They are, on the whole, irregularly distributed over villages and hill communities, though a few clans are present in one or

two hill communities only. The majority of the clans bear names whose meanings are identical to their ancestors. For example, Kolo is the name of a man who happened to settle in one of the places in the “Tira Kaddarr Mountain” which is the homeland of the Tira people. This place is now named Kolo. Such names are also given to localities where people are living: Ttajura, Kumu, Ndurrdu, Konje, Ttimbere, Kalkadda, Manddi, and so on. The Tira homeland is known as Kaddarr which is now the name of the Mountain where people lived before they moved down onto the plain.

The taboos among the clan lead to a common foundation for the spiritual offices of leaders. The social and cultural structure of teamwork is clearly marked in all provinces of life. This is how they have learned orally from their ancestors, though today’s generation has fewer oral memories than the generation of the individuals I interviewed. In order to visualize the differences and similarities of the clans’ rituals, taboos, and symbols, the researcher has grouped all those clans that share common spiritual signs or symbols and similar ritual performances during their spiritual occasions into one group. Even though there are up to 34 clans mentioned, some clans are clearly of the same family with a slight difference of style in their rituals. The maximum distinct findings amounted to 26 clans which have distinctly different symbols. The researcher conducted interviews with the Tira clans elders as listed below:

1.1.3 The Tira Clan Elders Interviewed

1. Clan of Itumbel: *(Lala Arrnye Ttuttu, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*
2. Clan of Letterugum: *(Kumi Ajagu, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Nddurrdu, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*
3. Clan of Legejen: *(Kojo Ddiddi Aluba, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Logorr Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*
4. Clan of Lettogoy: *(Calu Murre Caca Bali, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Tturro Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*
5. Clan of Danggal: *(Cunddugu Ttabili, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Tturro, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*
6. Clan of Lettaru: *(Ngalddi, Almaddiddi, Ttuttu, Albayitti, Algadduz, 26 December 2009,*

interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).

7. Clan of Lenuli: *(Addulo Ttuttu Nyabuhuda, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

8. Clan of Lettobo: *(Kerrtin Umbila Lohogo, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain, Sudan).*

9. Clan of Ilumen: *(Lodi Ngarimo Ttuttu, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

10. Clan of Litiri: *(Kugu Calami Ngoti Orri, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.)*

11. Clan of Logosa: *(Kondinyo Nyulu Kondinyo, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

12. Clan of Lahalu: *(Loco Ttuba Ttuttu Orri, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

13. Clan of Lecahumo: *(Oman Kocolo, 3 February 2010, interviewed in Ttombore, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

14. Clan of Lohovan: *(Kiribo, Mana, Kaddum, Lotilo, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

15. Clan of Lezero: *(Anabaga Urrendde, Atta Kumi, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

16. Clan of Liha: *(Kocolo Ttima Addum Lalu, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrddu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

17. Clan of Rreme: *(Calamangga Molinggo Canu Ttuttu, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

18. Clan of Logojomarr: *(Acico Apari Coco, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Kumu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

19. Clan of Logohoval: *(Kattan Camari Conggo, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Kumu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

20. Clan of Lugumbihi: *(Abuz Kohi Kobo Ttuttu, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Kumu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

21. Clan of Lagatterri: *(Ttabili Cunddugu Kuna, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Tturro, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

22. Clan of Lenddonyo: *(Cocono Kuku Umrri Kumba, Conggo Kuku Amudda, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).*

23. Clan of Logopa: (*Anggalu Ngumi Munddu Koddi, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Kumu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
24. Clan of Loriyo: (*Kocele Ttuttu Kuku Ulotto, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
25. Clan of Ngettele: (*Kamu Ugubala, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
26. Clan of Letterrnggun: (*Kani Apranggi, 4 February 2010, interviewed in Ttombore, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)

These research interviews formed the basis of analysis in chapters 2,3,4 and 6.

1.2 The Research Problem

The problem with this study has been the difficulty of investigating the religious complexity of the traditional spiritual leadership of the Tira in order to integrate it with biblical teachings.

(1) The Tira traditional religious system is complex. Each clan has its own spiritual symbol that represents the spiritual being known as “Elo,” which means “God.” There are supernatural spiritual beings that operate through each symbol of the clan. These spiritual beings are considered to be God’s agents in charge of the well-being of each clan. The complexity in this religious system has become a barrier for the church to overcome in order to reach the traditional spiritual leaders with the gospel. The supernatural spiritual beings are manipulating spiritual leaders and the whole tribe.

(2) The majority of those who have accepted the gospel today are women and young people, but not these spiritual leaders. This specific problem needed to be investigated and a biblical model of approach to these traditional spiritual leadership values devised.

1.3 Research Questions

In this research, the researcher endeavoured to answer the main research question on how to resolve the continuing problem of integrating the traditional spiritual leadership of the Tira with the biblical spiritual leadership of Nehemiah. To put the research question in

another sense, this research sought to provide a comprehensive answer to the question, “How could the Tira traditional understanding of spiritual leadership, in particular, be integrated with Christianity through the biblical leadership principles of Nehemiah?” The Tira traditional spiritual leadership contains within it some beliefs, practices, values and symbols that need to be integrated with Christianity. There were other minor research questions that surrounded this major one, such as:

- (1) Does the complexity of the Tira’s traditional spiritual leadership style cause spiritual leaders to resist Christianity?
- (2) Could such resistance possibly be a result of the wrong approach to their spiritual traditional values?
- (3) Why does each clan’s leader have his own leadership symbol of his authority and legitimacy?
- (4) Why do spiritual leaders play a dual role, politically and spiritually, at the same time?
- (5) What barriers kept missionaries from evangelizing spiritual leaders and why does their legacy still affect the church’s mission of reaching spiritual leaders with the gospel today?

1.4 Objectives

The primary objective of this research was to integrate the traditional spiritual leadership of the Tira with the biblical spiritual leadership of Nehemiah. The secondary objectives, which would help achieve the main objective, included the following:

- (1) To determine the goal of the spiritual leader of each clan and find out the uniqueness of his role, his functions, and his theological understanding of the spiritual beings that operate through the symbols of each clan.
- (2) To determine how complex the religious system of the Tira is and why each clan has its own spiritual symbol to represent the spiritual being known as Elo (God).

(3) To suggest a biblical explanation as to why these supernatural spiritual beings that operate through each symbol of the clans are not really agents of the Supreme God of the Bible.

(4) To identify how to break through the complexity of the religious system and use that process as a bridge between the Christian church and traditional spiritual leaders.

(5) To devise a biblical model from Nehemiah's book as the basis of integrating the traditional spiritual leadership with the biblical leadership principles of Nehemiah.

(6) To identify the barriers that caused the failure on the part of the missionaries to evangelize the spiritual leaders, and how to determine which traditional leadership principles should be integrated with biblical leadership principles and which ones are to be rejected on biblical grounds.

The researcher intended to use these principles as a means of teaching Christian leaders from among the Tira in a variety of workshops, courses, and seminars. These research findings would be used as integrative principles for all the levels of workshops the church provides. All leaders of church groups—youth, adults', women's, and children's groups as well as community leaders—could benefit from these leadership principles.

The spiritual leadership principles that the researcher needed to develop from Nehemiah's model were vision, plan, management, delegation, motivation, communication, problem-solving and discipline. These biblical principles were valuable for developing Christian leadership principles among the Tira Christians because they were practical models that would help a Christian leader produce sustainable fruits of ministry among the Tira. It was also hoped that the research would provide a breakthrough to cultural and religious barriers. These leadership principles would be applied to leadership roles and a leader's relational behaviour to the Christian community among the Tira.

As an outcome of this research, the researcher intended to develop a resource training manual that would be culturally relevant, with focused training for church leaders and elders. The relevant areas for church leaders included reaching traditional spiritual leaders and training young church leaders to have a focused vision in preaching,

planning, leading worship, visitation, counselling, administration, management, delegation, communication, problem-solving, discipline and motivation. Using a teamwork ministry model in spiritual formation would help church leaders to be relevant to the community's needs.

1.5 Purpose

The major purpose of this research was to achieve this very important outcome: the integration of the traditional spiritual leadership of the Tira with the biblical spiritual leadership principles of Nehemiah. The other purpose is to use these research findings as a means of establishing in the future a relevant leadership training model to help church, community, and political leaders to serve the community better. Leading this new generation into positive action would require both spiritual and political motivation. These dual leadership skills would provide an effective model to assist this generation in building up their land, their church institutions, and their community institutions. The example of Nehemiah as both a political and spiritual leader is a viable leadership model that this research sought to use in the context of the Nuba Tira of Sudan.

1.6 Methodology/Design

The researcher used two methods of research in order to resolve this research question and problem. First, he conducted face-to-face field interviews with selected community traditional spiritual leaders as the primary source of information. Secondly, he completed an exegetical study of Nehemiah's leadership principles. He also studied some of the historical books and articles written by missionaries who have worked among Nuba tribes.

This was how the researcher carried out the research:

(1) In Chapter 1, under Nuba Tira traditional leadership, the historical background of the Tira was examined. Two books about the history of Sudan were valuable resources. Eratosthenes' textbook of 200 B.C. gave a historical description of the word "Nuba" and how the term was used by different people to describe the black Sudanese. Another

source that was used in this background study was a book written in 1819 by a Swiss explorer, Johann Ludwig Burckhardt, in which he defined the word “Nuba” as a term that denotes the black people of Sudan. The researcher used face-to-face interviews with the Tira community’s leaders to find out how they defined themselves as Tira people and as Nuba Tira in relation to other Nuba tribes.

(2) In Chapter 2, the researcher used the same method of face-to-face interviews with selected traditional spiritual leaders to find out the mechanism behind the traditional social organization of the Tira, their religious worldview, and their theological concepts that are represented by spiritual symbols.

In these interviews, the researcher used two main traditional methods of sharing information in order to collect this data:

(a) The researcher organized get-together days with meals and refreshments where elders could sit comfortably (each leader with his colleagues), share information, and designate one leader to speak on behalf of the clans’ elders. This was an acceptable method that the community uses for a joint passing on of information in a democratic way. Whenever each leader said anything, he would normally ask the rest of the group to approve, add to, or revise the information. When the group responded in one voice with a strong “yes,” the information was approved to be passed.

(b) The second process the researcher used for interviewing elders was to visit in their homes those who were not strong enough to appear in public because of age or because of physical problems. This was also an acceptable way of recording information from elders. They felt honoured and respected and that they were important when one looks to them to solve one’s problem or educate one on something that deals with the spiritual, political, or cultural issues of the community as a whole.

(3) In Chapter 3, the research material came from the face-to-face interviews with the selected traditional spiritual leaders who were in charge of both spiritual and political affairs of the Tira clans.

(4) Chapter 4 gave a brief background to Christianity among the Nuba tribes. The

researcher had two ways of collecting his data. The first method was doing practical interviews with some select elders who were around when the Western mission known as Sudan United Mission attempted to evangelize the Tira community. The other sources of information were the two available books written by missionaries who worked among the Nuba tribes, including a mission booklet. Both materials mentioned the activities and the failure of missions among the Tira.

(5) In Chapters 5 and 6, the researcher did an exegetical study of Nehemiah's leadership principles. The main source material were the commentaries on the book of Nehemiah: Clinton:2003 and Hedges:2005 and additional materials on leadership as mentioned in the bibliography. These materials were available at Shokia Bible School, the SIL Library, and the Sudan Library of the Episcopal Church. All these documents were accessible for this research.

1.7 Hypothesis

The major hypothesis of this study was to prove that the integration of the traditional spiritual leadership with Christianity and especially the biblical leadership principles of Nehemiah was possible. This required a careful study of the Tira traditional religion and worldview and the application of biblical exegesis and theology to the traditional spiritual leadership of the Tira. This integration provided a bridging tool for church leaders to use to achieve a great ministry impact among both traditional spiritual leaders and political leaders of the Tira communities in Sudan.

There were other minor assumptions that this research sought to address, such as:

(1) That the integration of biblical spiritual leadership principles with those of the Nuba Tira traditional spiritual leadership would prove that the traditional spiritual leadership and religious system have profound influence upon the Tira Christians.

(2) That the Tira traditional understanding of supernatural spiritual beings as the true representatives of God for the Tira people were proven not to be so, as revealed in the Bible, but that they were the spiritual beings who hold the Tira communities in bondage

and darkness through their continuous use by their traditional spiritual leadership.

(3) That the barrier to the success of the mission of the church in Tira communities was actually a supernatural spiritual warfare that blinded and manipulated the traditional spiritual leaders and would not allow them to believe the gospel of Jesus Christ and the Bible.

Certainly, this research was exciting and rewarding as the researcher undertook and completed it.

Nuba Chapter 2: The Tira Clans and their Spiritual Symbols of Authority

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, the various clans' names and spiritual symbols that were given to the researcher during his field research were explained. The Tira clans whose elders were interviewed were as listed below:

1. Clan of Itumbel
2. Clan of Letterugum
3. Clan of Legejen
4. Clan of Lettogoy
5. Clan of Danggal
6. Clan of Lettaru
7. Clan of Lenuli
8. Clan of Lettobo
9. Clan of Ilumen
10. Clan of Litiri
11. Clan of Logosa
12. Clan of Lahalu
13. Clan of Lecahumo
14. Clan of Lohovan
15. Clan of Lezero
16. Clan of Liha
17. Clan of Rreme
18. Clan of Logojomarr
19. Clan of Logohoval
20. Clan of Lugumbihi
21. Clan of Lagatterri
22. Clan of Lenddonyo
23. Clan of Logopa
24. Clan of Loriyo
25. Clan of Ngettele
26. Clan of Letterrugun

From the interviews with Tira clan elders, an understanding of the meaning and the significance of each spiritual symbol that represented each clan's authority was gained. First, the clan's name and its spiritual symbol in the Tira language is introduced, followed by its literal meaning in English. Each interviewee has given a brief definition of his clan's spiritual symbol and its importance, that is, its basic, perceived underlying value, and why the clan believes in it. The last two clans on this list are not covered because their spiritual leaders were not available to give information until a later date.

The Tira elders believed that their tribe composed of seventeen clans, and some interviewees say forty clans, of varying sizes, including the sub-divisions of the Tira clans as indicated later. Both terms, sub-clan and sub-division of the clans, refer to a group of the family that have broken away from their main clan to form their own clan with a different leader and sometimes a changed symbol and ritual activities. The Tira clans are distributed over 30 villages and hills. The majority of the clans bear names that can be identified either as locations or ancestors whose villages are called by their names. However, there is a strong belief among the elders that the modern Tira people are scattered all over Sudan's regions.

The traditional Tira understanding of how human beings were created and how they developed into tribes and clans was narrated in different ways by the elders. This oral method of retelling their stories is the basic means the Tira have been using to pass on knowledge from generation to generation. They believe this is the only true and reliable method to preserve their culture and identity. The traditional symbols, which are the pride of each family's leader, are clearly associated with spiritual beings believed to be both God the Almighty's agents and their ancestors' agents.

The Tira describe *Elo Kamakama* (God the Almighty) as the Supreme Being who created the heaven and all that is in it and the earth with all that is under it and on it. He is in charge of all other spiritual beings, both the evil and good ones. When He is not happy with a person, He could allow him or her to suffer under the evil spiritual beings, called in Tira *uhuwo kico* (evil spirits), which are under the control of their leader, called *Umazi* (similar to the Satan known to Christians). God's agents, who are known to be good

angels, work for Him. Ancestors are believed to have direct authority over the living generation. They are believed to be able to punish, discipline, bless, or curse people as God the Almighty's mediators. This is the big difference between the Christian understanding of the true Mediator, Jesus Christ, who is the one mediator for all and saviour of all; but for the Tira, there are many mediators.

The general Tira understanding of God the Creator is not so different from Christian understanding; but it is the means of salvation that differs in their teachings. When talking to them about blood sacrifices of animals or the mediators' functions, one enters into hot debate about their theology of salvation. Concerning everything else about creation, a creator, and who is in charge, they have only one mindset; namely, that there is one God the Almighty who is in charge.

The Tira's theological and historical understanding of their existence and that of other human beings is directly connected to the oral knowledge of the worldview passed down by their ancestors. But almost all the individuals interviewed had limited knowledge of how the Tira clans came into existence. The interviewees believed and understood their concept of creation belonged to a real physical and spiritual world. All of them attributed their beliefs to their ancestors who taught them. In the Tira elders' spiritual worldview, there were main areas, identified in this study, that could be divided into specific areas where evil spirits operate. They believed the evil spirits are manipulating the whole tribe into believing several symbols that act as small gods. The activities of the spiritual beings, good and bad could be identified under seven major headings, as described by the elders in their theological views.

There are spiritual beings in charge of space, such as the gods of the sun, rainbows, rain, angels, lightning, and thunder.

The second group of spiritual beings are in charge of air in the universe, such as the gods of the storms, winds, darkness, and dust.

The third group of spiritual beings are known to be in charge of vitality, such as in human beings, animals, crops, trees, and grass, including even mountains and hills.

The fourth group of spiritual beings are in charge of diseases that affect humans and animals, such as eye disease, bloody noses, miscarriage in women and animals, crippling or disabling maladies, and mental illness.

The fifth group of spiritual beings are in charge of prophecy, such as practiced by prophets, magicians, witchdoctors, and those who give evil eyes or engage in bewitching others.

The sixth group of spiritual beings are in charge of the clans' taboos, such as prohibitions against certain foods, animals, birds, insects, trees, and grass.

The last group of spiritual beings are in charge of handling social misconduct, such as stealing, robbery, adultery, and fighting or wars.

Upon completing the reading and studying of this second chapter, one should be able to grasp the basic Tira traditional organization based upon clan system and the spiritual symbols that represent each clan's spiritual authority and leadership in the community. This is the basic foundation of their spiritual worldview, mindset, and understanding. Each symbol contains the underlying spiritual power of the authority of each clan's distinct leadership role.

2.1 Traditional Social Organization of the Nuba Tira

2.1.1 Clan of Itumbel

Symbol: *Elo kazinyen* – God of the Sun

The symbol of the spiritual office of the Itumbel clan is a god of the sun. The *Itumbel* clan is the one that claims the power of a god called Sun, who works magic through spear, knife, and axe. This clan claims the authority to heal wounds inflicted on human bodies. This clan is officially in charge of every community's worship centre, which is known as the *Lobo*. In every community there is one *Lobo*, and the Itumbel clan is the only clan that leads prayers in each *Lobo*. The *Itumbel* clan observes food taboos, which, though referring to crops, have no bearing on harvest or fertility. These people believe they must not eat unground grain, or they would fall ill and pass blood (*Lala Arrnye Ttuttu: interviewed 26 December 2009 in Ndurrdu, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.2 Clan of Letterugum

Symbol: “*Elo kezonono*” – God of Tornados

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Letterrugum* clan is a god of tornados. The *Letterrugum* clan claims the authority to release the tornado and also to cause the mental disorder of lunacy in humans. This clan claims the power to command a tornado to blow strongly against trees and houses, causing damage. If anyone has committed an offence against the *Letterrugum*, they believe they could cause the tornado to blow on the victim's properties or carry that person off in any direction until he or she is lost. This kind of a tornado is supposed to directly hit the specific house without affecting the neighbour nearby, or it could blow the person from inside the house and throw him or her out of the house. By being singled out as a victim like this, the person would know that he or she has done something wrong against the Letterrugum clan (*Kumi Ajagu, interviewed 26 December 2009 in Nddurrdu, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.3 Clan of Legejen

Symbol: “*Elo kezonono*” – God of Storms

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Legejen* clan is a god of storms. The *Legejen* possess powers similar to those of the *Letterugum*, which deal with tornados. The *Legejen* claim the authority to call upon storms to blow in their enemies' faces, believing that if anybody wants to drive an enemy's progress away from his or her direction, the *Legejen* spirit will do it upon request. Also, the *Legejen* claim the power to send a person's livestock into the hands of enemies if that person allows the animals to eat *Legejen* crops or destroy anything from their farms. Unless the offender confesses to the owner, he would suffer great loss. Their storms, even though they normally cover large areas, are believed to be prevented from doing damage to the public, but are allowed to affect only the victim who has committed the offence against the *Legejen* clan (*Kojo Ddiddi Aluba, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Logorr Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.4 Clan of Lettogoy

Symbol: “*Elo kezeberr*” – God of the Winds

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Lettogoy* clan is a god of the winds. This clan claims the power over the winds through their god who protects them and their property against others. The man in charge of these winds professes to have a direct connection with the spirit that controls the winds. If the *Lettogoy* leader would want to cause winds to harm someone, he would speak to the wind to blow from any direction and come the victim's way to carry him or her as far as he directs it. This clan believes that their god of winds could move anywhere around the world without restriction. As soon as the man in charge of these winds calls upon this god to harm a victim, they believe their god would appear within a few minutes in the form of winds (*Calu Murre Caca Bali, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Tturro Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.5 Clan of Danggal

Symbol: “*Elo kehilo*” – God of Dust

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Danggal* clan is a god of dust. This clan claims the power to cause dust to arise from the ground, sucked up by storms and strong, gusting winds. It is believed that this spirit of dust could cause the dust to roll up into a thick pillar stretching high into the sky and then surround someone’s house, in order to cause that person to confess an offence against the *Danggal*. The spirit would normally act on the demand and under the direction of a *Danggal* person. This spirit could also use dust to cause blindness or weakened eyesight in an offender. The dust could identify and single out such a person from among the people and ostracise him or her to cause torment (*Cunddugu Ttabili, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Tturro, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain, Sudan*).

2.1.6 Clan of Lettaru

Symbol: “*Elo ngon*” – God of Grain

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Lettaru* clan is a god of grain. This clan of the *Lettaru* group is believed to communicate with a god of the vitality of all living things. They claim the authority to bless the grain, causing it to multiply during cultivation. They bless or curse the womb of a barren woman to be productive or to remain barren. They claim the power to prevent birds from eating crops and the power to protect the animals of the tribe from diseases and death. This clan also claims to have power over other spirits that they believe they control, such as special stones of blessing and also *caya* (certain birds that eat crops) and *lemrrtta* (certain insects like white ants that eat grain after it is gathered in the granary). If the *caya* do not eat the grain, then the *lemrrtta* would. This atrocity happens to people who have done something wrong against the *Lettaru* people (*Ngaldidi, Almaddiddi, Ttuttu, Albayitti, Algadduz, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain, Sudan*).

2.1.7 Clan of Lenuli

Symbol: “*Elo kelome lennen*” – God of the Northern Rain

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Lenuli* clan is a god of the northern rain. The clan of the *Lenuli* is believed to be able to communicate with a god of the northern rain. This clan claims the authority to withhold rain or kill people with thunder and lightning. The magical power of this type of god can endanger peace and public order if the god holds back rainfall during the normally rainy season of farming. This clan claims to be in charge of the rain that comes from the northern part of the country, which is the early rain needed for cultivation (*Addulo Tuttu Nyabuhuda, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.8 Clan of Lettobo

Symbol: “*Elo kelome lenddilo*” – God of the Southern Rain

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Lettobo* clan is a god of the southern rain. This clan claims the power to control the southern rain, the kind of late rain or mid-season rain that falls after the rainy season is well advanced. Through this god, the clan also claims the power to remotely injure people with a spear or an axe. If someone has done anything against them, they can cause that person’s own spear or axe to harm him. The Tira believe this spirit also has the power to cause locusts to come out and devour the crops (*Kerrttin Umbila Lohogo, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain, Sudan*).

2.1.9 Clan of Ilumen

Symbol: “*Elo kenyehe*” – God of the Nyehe Disease

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Ilumen* clan is a god of the disease *nyehe*. The clan of the *Ilumen* claims the authority to heal certain diseases (called *nyehe* in Tira) that attack humans only. This clan also claims to possess the power to purify the wombs of animals that miscarry a lot. They believe that their spirit, who is in charge of the animals’

wombs, is the same spirit that gives them the power to cure the nyehe sickness. This type of sickness causes people to bleed badly from their noses. The *Illumen* man uses his healing power by blowing air into the sick person's nostrils over the span of three days. If the person does not get well, the *Illumen* man would send him or her away, believing that this is a different sickness not under the control of the spirit of the nyehe disease (*Lodi Ngarimo Ttuttu, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain, Sudan*).

2.1.10 Clan of Litiri

Symbol: “*Elo kerongo*” – God of Snakes

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Litiri* clan is a god of snakes. The clan of the *Litiri* is believed to be the snakebite curer. This clan claims the power to neutralise a snake's venom when certain snakes bite people. This god of snakes could also cause certain snakes to bite a person who has committed an offense against a *Litiri* person. They believe their supernatural magic could cause snakes to attack the offender from any direction, even inside his or her own house. The *Litiri* taboo is that they should not kill snakes. Snakes are described as “brothers” of the *Litiri*. It is believed that if there is a nursing mother in the house of a *Litiri* man and her milk drips on the floor, snakes would come and lap it up. Therefore, *Litiri* clan members must never kill or eat snakes, including pythons. It is believed that the specific magic of this clan, which keeps poisonous snakes in check and cures snake bites, would lose its power if the *Litiri* eat or kill snakes (*Kugu Calami, Ngoti Orri, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain, Sudan*).

2.1.11 Clan of Logosa

Symbol: “*Elo ngovan*” – God of Rashes and Boils

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Logosa* clan is a god of rashes and boils. The clan of the *Logosa* is believed to communicate with the spirit of a god who has power over diseases that cause rashes and boils on human bodies. This clan claims the authority

to inflict such rashes and boils on anyone who has committed any atrocity against the *Logosa* people. They have power to both cause attacks and also cure the afflicted (*Kondinyo Nyulu Kondinyo, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.12 Clan of Lahalu

Symbol: “*Elo kemuzu*” – God of Leopards

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Lahalu* clan is a god of leopards. The *Lahalu* clan claims the power of the leopard’s spirit. This clan also claims authority over certain local beans that grow every rainy season. These beans are used for making soup for *aceva* (which means “thick porridge” in English). This is the main meal in the Tira community. They have to ritually purify the beans every harvest season before people eat them. This clan claims the authority to cause leopards to come out in large numbers in the villages to attack the people’s livestock. If someone has done anything wrong against the *Lahalu*, they can direct a leopard to catch that person alone on the path or follow the offender home to devour him or her. The *Lahalu*’s taboo is that they must never kill leopards, or else some of their own clansmen would die. The leopard is described as the “brother” of the *Lahalu* clan; he would never attack a *Lahalu* or do damage to *Lahalu* property (*Loco Ttuba, Ttuttu Orri, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.13 Clan of Lecahumo

Symbol: “*Elo kettuli*” – God of Lions

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Lecahumo* clan is a god of lions. The *Lecahumo* clan claims a power similar to that of the *Lahalu* group, but they differ slightly in their rituals. The *Lecahumo* clan believes they have the authority to cause lions to kill people or merely threaten them badly enough to cause them to confess their offences. This is similar to the power of the *Lahalu*, but the methods used to manipulate the spirit’s operation are different. At any official family occasion during which rituals are performed

by their spiritual leader, one or more lions would come, in order to prove the magic and authority of this clan. Sometimes the lion would stay on the roof of the house or stay far away under a tree watching the people dancing. Their difference with *Lahalu* is that when they release lions against someone who offends them, the lions would walk to the person's house without causing any public disturbances. The lion or lions would attack only the victim. Their taboo is that they do not kill lions or eat lion's meat at all (*Oman Kocolo, 3 February 2010, interviewed in Ttombore, Kaddar, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.14 Clan of Lohovan

Symbol: “*Elo kezq̄hq̄*” – God of the Rainbow

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Lohovan* is a god of the rainbow. The *Lohovan* claim the power to stop a destructive rain at their command by speaking words and throwing up water or sand. This act is followed by a rainbow appearing on the eastern part of the sky. This clan also claims it can prevent flooding that could destroy crops or people's houses. The spirit in charge of this power could come in the form of a bird; the bird's call signals to the people that the rain is going to come soon. The people then begin clearing the lands for the new rainy season. When the *Lohovan* elders start clearing the ground, people understand that the rainy season is coming soon (*Kiribo, Mana, Kaddum, Lotilo, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.15 Clan of Lezero

Symbol: “*Elo kenyaw/uhusu*” – God of Mosquitoes/Gnats

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Lezero* clan is a god of mosquitoes or gnats. The *Lezero* claim the power to release a massive swarm of mosquitoes and *uhusu*, which are similar to mosquitoes but smaller in size. These insects bite animals and people, causing the human victims to struggle a long time with unstable emotions. These insects could also cause a severe reaction on human bodies, causing people to itch all over their bodies without relief. When the *Lezero* people are angered by the community, or if somebody has done something against them and denied it, this clan claims that they could release

these insects to cause the offender to be found by the community (*Anabaga Urrendde, Atta Kumi, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain, Sudan*).

2.1.16 Clan of Liha

Symbol: “*Elo kelusum*” – God of the Gourd

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Liha* clan is a god of the gourd. This clan claims communication with a spirit who is in charge of the traditional gourd used for serving food, water, and wine. They claim that both lines of their ancestors appeared through a mysterious gourd that a certain woman opened with a knife to make a calabash dish for serving food. When she cut it, blood came out. She then opened it slowly and found two babies inside, a boy and a girl. She nurtured them and breast fed them until they became mature and formed a new clan, the *Liha*. Since then, the *Liha* people honour the spirit that they believe has the authority to fertilise the calabash gourd. This clan does not harm the community in any way, but they honour gourds to the point that they believe there is human life in them (*Kocolo Ttima, Addum Lalu, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain, Sudan*).

2.1.17 Clan of Rreme

Symbol: “*Elo kariza ngeyinu*” – God of Confusion

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Rreme* clan is a god of confusion. The clan of the *Rreme* claims to have the spiritual power to cause people to be confused in their minds and to lose proper sight. This spirit of confusion operates under the authority of the *Rreme* clan only. If a person has done anything wrong against a *Rreme* person or has taken anything from one of them, the *Rreme* clan will call upon the spirit of confusion to deal with the offender. At their command, they believe the spirit can make people lose their minds forever or cause them to linger around villages, not recognising their own houses. Even if brought inside their own house, they still would not be able to recognise it and could refuse to enter it or stay (*Calamangga Molinggo, Canu Ttuttu, 26 December*

2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan).

2.1.18 Clan of Logojomarr

Symbol: “*Elo kelamoroz*” – God of the Blessing Stone

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Logojomarr* clan is a god of a stone used for blessing crops. The *Logojomarr* are known as the clan who blesses the crops. Their spirit encourages peaceful living among the community. Their god is known to be a god of peace that does not harm people or properties. They are very much interested in blessing people’s crops to increase the quantity of their harvest. The spirit that is claimed to be in charge of this clan does not allow them to cause harm, nor does it encourage intentional evil. This clan is known to be a peaceful one (*Acico Apari Coco, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Kumu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.19 Clan of Logohoval

Symbol: “*Elo kamoroza*” – God of Blessing

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Logohoval* clan is also a god of blessing. The clan of *Logohoval* claims the power to purify *ngona* (grain) before people start farming and when the harvest is ready. After they are threshed, the crops are blessed again before being gathered into a granary. The spirit that claims the leadership of this clan is concerned for rich harvest results and peaceful farming at the beginning of the early rains. One of the key consequences that the Tira believe would occur if the *Logohoval* do not bless the crops before planting is that the sesame plants would be destroyed. Also, any woman with a newborn baby within their own clan would have trouble as a direct consequence (*Kattan Camari Conggo, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Kumu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*)

2.1.20 Clan of Lugumbihi

Symbol: “*Elo kecabiya*” – God of Cabiya Grain

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Lugumbihi* clan is a god of a certain grain called *cabiya* in Tira. *Cabiya* is the grain normally planted first because it grows very quickly and can save people from hunger during the longer rainy season. Its stalk is full of sugar, which is also eaten. To make this grain grow well and quickly, the *Lugumbihi* have to perform a ritual blessing. Also, they believe the farmers should remain happy so that crops grow peacefully. The ritual blessing encourages people to be happy when planting and cultivating. Quarrelling is forbidden during farming periods so that the spirit of this *cabiya* god would not delay the farmers' *cabiya* from growing and yielding seeds (*Abuz Kohi Kobo Ttuttu, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Kumu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain, Sudan*).

2.1.21 Clan of Lagatterri

Symbol: “*Elo ngurez*” – God of the Sesame Seed

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Lagatterri* clan is a god of the sesame seed. The *Lagatterri* claim power over the vitality of a certain oil-producing seed of their crops called *ngurez*, which means sesame seed. The oil of these seeds is the only oil used on all spiritual occasions, together with animal fat. The *Lagatterri* claim the power to cause the sesame to grow in plenty if they ritually bless it before it is used by the person who planted it. To get this blessing, one has to be the first person to go for ritual purification before the rainy season approaches. If a person follows the *Lagatterri's* instructions, it is believed that his or her sesame crop would outgrow all others. Such an individual would also be the most blessed, and everyone would come to this person throughout the dry season for sesame seed (*Ttabili Cunddugu Kuna, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Tturro, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain, Sudan*).

2.1.22 Clan of Lenddonyo

Symbol: “*Elo kacoza*” – God of Anointing

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Lenddonyo* clan is a god of anointing. This clan claims the authority to anoint people and animals to prevent the miscarriage of their young. If angered by anyone, or if anyone has done anything against them, the *Lenddonyo* can call upon their god, who they believe controls vitality, to close up the vital organs in these male and female people and their animals. Their strict law of anointing holds that when a person is under their control for purification and is anointed, that person must not greet anyone on the way home until returning and entering into his or her house. Thus, the ritual is normally done at night. Their belief is that if an anointed person greets anyone on the way, the blessing of the anointing would be taken away immediately by that person. Therefore, an individual who has just been anointed in a *Lenddonyo* house must walk home silently. If the anointee meets someone else on the way, the anointee must be the one to give way to the other person on the path. If that person should offer a greeting, the anointee must not answer but keep quiet. If the greeter is a Tira person, he or she would know that the anointee is coming from the holy people of Lenddonyo (*Cocono Kuku Umri Kumba, Conggo Kuku Amudda, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.23 Clan of Logopa

Symbol: “*Elo kuwayittagalu*” – God of the “Amen”

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Logopa* clan is a god of the “Amen.” After public prayer is led by the *Itumbel* clan, the *Logopa* would nail a certain wooden representation that looks like an anchor to the ground, to confirm their final “Amen” to all the prayers offered. The clan is therefore known to provide a sort of “stamp of approval” on prayers that are offered by the *Itumbel* in the public Lobo (place of worship). It is believed that their sacred power also includes the authority to afflict anyone who has had any offence proven against them. The guilty person would run wild and become mad. This afflictive spirit can cause the person to undress completely and run around naked or to start beating

people at random. This clan also claims the power to cause a farmer's crops to multiply in great quantity. They perform certain annual rituals in the middle of the rains that are believed to secure a rich harvest for all the Tira community. This ritual is performed in the public Lobo together with the *Letumbel* clan (*Anggalu Ngumi, Munddu Koddi, 10 January 2010, interviewed in Kumu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.24 Clan of Loriyo

Symbol: “*Elo kerrpii*” – God of Quietness

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Loriyo* is a god of quietness. The *Loriyo* clan is known to be a peaceful clan among the Tira, with no specific authority claimed or any spiritual power operating on the community level. This clan maintains certain general rituals during their annual spiritual family occasions that are common among the other clans. Most of the taboos they apply are the common ones. The only significant thing is that pregnant women are not allowed to eat sesame, or the child would be destroyed. This controls the clan by causing fear in them, but it has nothing to do with other clans. This clan does not claim any authority or threaten to use any power to cause another clan to submit to their god. They depend on other clans to help them claim their rights or to expose any offender (*Kocele Ttuttu, Kuku Ulotto, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.25 Clan of Ngettele

Symbol: “*Elo ngettele*” – God of the Angel

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Ngettele* clan is a god of the angel. The clan of the *Ngettele* is the clan that claims the authority of the angelic spiritual being. This particular spirit is known to be the spirit of blessing upon human life and property. This angel is believed to have been sent by God from heaven to rescue the Tira women from delivering babies in primitive operations by appearing and showing the men how to help with natural childbirth. Before the angel appeared, the people lost many women in childbirth. They would carve out stones called aya and cut open the woman to deliver the

baby but thereby lose the mother. The angel is believed to have appeared during a time when men were about to operate on a mother who was ready to deliver, and he commanded them to stop. He came down from heaven on a special sort of throne. After he performed the delivery and showed the men what to do during childbirth, he then gave them a special stone called a *lamoroz* to use for blessing crops. This stone is normally anointed with oil and set aside. Upon request, the owner of the stone would break off a piece and give it to a person to put on his or her farm (*Kamu Ugubala, 26 December 2009, interviewed in Ndurrdu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

2.1.26 Clan of Letterruggun

Symbol: “*Elo kezengero*” – God of Madness

The symbol of the spiritual office of the *Letterruggun* clan is a god of madness. The *Letterruggun* claim the power to control certain spirits that cause people to go mad or get confused and run all over in many directions. If a person commits an offence against the *Letterruggun* and angers them, but then confesses, all would be well and good. The offender, though, would still have to go through some rituals. However, if such a person denies the offence, then the spirit of madness would attack the offender at the *Letterruggun's* demand. If they want that person to get lost completely, they would ask the spirit to carry him or her into a jungle far away in order to get lost. If they just want a confession, then they would ask the spirit to strike the person's mind with confusion, right within the village. Then the relatives would come on his or her behalf to confess to *Letterruggun* to settle the case (*Kani Apranggi, 4 February 2010, interviewed in Ttombore, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

As the researcher compared clans' spiritual offices within their cultural affinities, including clans' structures, legal systems, regulations of taboos, and inter-clan conflict resolution, it was found that in the whole Tira group, clan membership entailed restrictions on eating certain animals and birds, and they were identified by all interviewees as a clan taboo issue. However, what is forbidden in one clan might be acceptable in another. It is worth mentioning that in this community of many clans, there

are rules that apply to every Tira clan, namely, clan food taboos. The different clans are forbidden to eat the flesh of certain animals (squirrel, wild cat, a certain bird) lest they be punished with grave illness, blindness, or a crippling disease that makes the bones in the limbs very brittle, allowing them to be easily broken.

Simply killing these animals does not entail this supernatural sanction. If a Tira happens to kill a forbidden animal, he or she would leave it without touching the body and inform a man from another clan, not bound by the same taboos, so that he may take it away and eat it. They believe the taboo animal must not be cooked close to the first person's house, for should the smoke from the fire enter the person's nostrils, it would have the same effect as eating the forbidden flesh. People who sin against the food taboos, for example, children who have broken it through ignorance, could be saved from the disastrous effects by timely purification rites, in which they are made to inhale either the smoke from the ritual fat of their clan or, in some clans, smoke from some burnt hair of the taboo animal. The tribe also observes certain food rules that have no ritual or magic significance. For example, they do not eat the flesh of horses, mules, dogs, hyenas, or frogs, nor do they generally eat ants or snakes. But few people can eat python.

2.2 Traditional Religion and Worldview

How the Tira people eventually organised themselves into a tribe and clans is a very complicated history because their historical perceptions are not the same. Some people are well-versed in narrating their stories while others have only moderate knowledge. Some have a very good, logical, orderly way of telling things. Others just picked up what they thought were important facts for the researcher to know. The interviewees used specific words in describing or defining themselves as clans and a tribe. One of these words is *irrho*, which has two meanings: “knife” or “judge.” Another word, used interchangeably with *irrho*, is the word *zamarr*, which means “roots.” Yet another word is *nyisi*, which means “branch.” The last word is *ahopo*, which means “genealogy” or “descendants.” Each of the interviewees could say any of the words when describing his or her ancestor and the clan's history. It was interesting to hear that these words were repeated over and over again by the different people that were interviewed.

The Tira believe that there is one God the Almighty, the creator of heaven and earth, but He has many spiritual beings who work for Him. He rules the world through human mediators, who are believed to be the Tira's ancestors, called *iddanga lamizatte nanyu kálu yamitta* (“the living dead who have gone ahead in the land of living”). They believe that every tribe has their own mediators. This God the Almighty is believed to be the only one who is above all these small gods, so-called mediators, and spiritual beings—angels—both good and bad ones. The traditional theological mindset and concepts are normally repeated to all younger generations in the form of stories through the medium of informal education. The most common ones are creation stories.

2.3 Traditional Theological Belief

The Tira tribe has two common theological stories of creation belief that are passed on orally by the elders to the next generation. This is the basic part of their principle of faith. It would be useful to indicate certain basic concepts held by the clans that the interviewees described in their understanding of themselves through these two stories. The interviewees have specific words they use in describing their creation history and that of their ancestors.

The first word they use in defining the history of the clans is the Tira word *ujigumno*, which means human being. They believe that at the beginning of human history on earth, God the Almighty created three brothers with three colours of human flesh: black, white, and red. The use of these three colours to define a clan's membership represented a systematic order that was assigned to these three individuals. These three ancestors are said to have been given specific duties and authorities. Out of these three, many tribes and clans were born. As population expansion continued, they started splitting into many smaller groups in order to manage their families well. Thus, all the Tira clans have names and other emblems of their collective unity that the individuals assumed and adopted as rules of conduct.

In each clan, there are slightly different taboos, but there is a general rule that is applied to all the individuals in the communities on the tribal level. This is one of the interesting stories that explain human beings' creation on the basis of their colour categories. It

shows some theological clues as to the traditional understanding of how God created them. The interviewees do not have any clues regarding a climate issue that could have had an effect on the skin colour of these three ancestors.

For the sake of this chapter, let me cite one short story that demonstrates how the Tira tribe came to be, as it was taught orally by their ancestors.

2.4 How Kuku and Kaka were Created

One of the questions that was asked the interviewees was whether “*Elo*,” which means God, is both man and woman. The interviewees had two different answers to this question. Men said they believe that God is a man, and women said they believe that God is both male and female in nature. The women’s narrative went something like this: “When God started making people, he took flesh from the male god in heaven and made a man called ‘Kuku.’ Then he took flesh from the female goddess in heaven and made a woman called ‘Kaka.’” Kuku and Kaka are the only ancestors among the Tira tribe who are thought to be the first created beings. The interviewees believed that God also divided the people into two groups. He kept one group near Him in heaven and He allowed the second group to live on earth in order to take care of it. Whether the male god and female goddess in heaven were also named Kuku and Kaka, the interviewees have no definite idea and they refused any speculation as to what the names of their Kuku and Kaka parents in heaven could be. The only answer they gave was that God is their only “*Papa*.” “*Papa*” means Lord, and “*Ábba*” means Father in the Tira language.

The interviewees related also that these two groups of people were once, in the course of time, exchanged by God himself. They said that one day, one of the men in heaven near God did something against God. This offence angered God, and He decided to reverse the two populations. He brought all the people who were with Him in heaven down to earth, and He took all the people who were on earth back to heaven. Since then, God’s relationship with the people on earth has not been good. Kuku’s and Kaka’s ancestors were left on their own for many years, but they continued to fear God the Almighty. As people were left on their own, many went off in their own direction. This is how people divided into many languages, tribes, clans, and cultures. In the Tira tradition, the

ancestors gave birth to many sons and daughters. Some of them started to break away from their brothers and claimed different symbols to distinguish themselves from their other brothers. Each group of elders told this story using either the same formula or with different wording. This narrative seems to be an approximation of the story of the fall of humankind.

2.5 How Kuku and Kaka were Given Responsibility

The interviewees believed that in the beginning, the black people were from one family called “Kuku and Kaka” who were given a language called “*Zittiro*.” The white ancestor was given a language called “*Tuwetuwe*,” which means English. The red ancestor was given the language called “*Zecul*,” which means Arabic. Each of these ancestors was given a certain symbol of his authority to distinguish him from the others. The black ancestor was given “*nguhinye*” (an axe) to farm and to keep animals. The white ancestor was given “*zupa*” (a pen) to write and preserve knowledge. The red ancestor was given “*alurrce*” (money) to run a business. As each line of this ancestor continued to grow, each one took his own direction with his own family. This is how the three brothers’ descendants scattered according to this story.

From the interviewees’ narrations of their shared theological stories, it is logical to assume that the lines of the descendants of all individual clans could be traced back to a common ancestor.

In this tribe, they have ten historical, concrete names of how far back they can recall their common ancestors, five names on the male side and five on the female side. Beside each female or male system of naming, there are other names to be used along with those ten family names. For example, if a baby is the firstborn boy, he will be named “Kuku” or “Ngugu.” In addition to this name, he could be named “Lugu” or “Kuna.” For the female, if a baby is the firstborn girl, she will be named “Kaka” or “Gali.” In addition to this name, she can be named “Lakana” or “Kakali.” During religious occasions, people normally recall these ancestral names when blessing one another or wishing each other wellbeing in life. This is how they would say it: “May those of Kuku and Lalu, who have gone ahead of us to the land of ‘*Kumazi*’ (which means the land of living dead), bless you

or keep you safe.” This is how they continue to keep their traditional names.

The clans’ divisions or internal differentiation comes as the result of their population increase. Many clans break away from other major clans and form their own family leadership with a similar symbol of authority. In most cases, the interviewees believe the clans receive their direct chieftainship from the major clan’s elder.

The interviewees believed the Tira tribe is composed of three major divisions. One group professes to be descended from the original Tira speakers. The second group are those whose ancestors were abducted during wars and integrated into the Tira family by legal initiation as family members, with full rights of sonship. The third group are the individuals who decided to claim the Tira nationality. Such groups were also integrated into different family clans by legal initiation with full rights of sonship. Both of these integrated groups have completely lost their original languages and their tribal backgrounds. Their names are “Tira-nised,” and it is very difficult to trace their historical background. None of those whom I interviewed was interested in speculation. During every annual spiritual occasion they attend, they sit facing a certain direction to remind them of what their ancestors told them to do. A few people could remember some names but were not sure of their meanings. There is no need to attempt to trace the origin of these names or to speculate on their original meanings beyond what the interviewees could remember.

In general, the Tira people describe all groups similar to them in skin colour as being of their own race. However, the interviewees were uncertain into which category to place other groups outside their skin colour, such as the Arabs. In regards to Arab descendants, all the interviewees, one after another, confirmed that their ancestors told them to remember that the Arabs are a different tribe and an enemy who cannot fit into their customs or culture.

2.6 Separation of the Tira and Moro Tribe

One piece of information mentioned by several interviewees was the story of a tribe that had once been a part of the Tira family. The interviewees related that the Tira and the

Moro were the sons of the same father. The Moro was the elder son and the Tira was the second son. Their father used to be generous. After he died, his two sons continued practicing their father's culture of generosity for awhile. Sometime later, however, after each of them started families, a dispute arose because the elder son started to be greedy and selfish. Whenever a visitor would come, he would take him to his younger brother's house instead of welcoming the visitor into his own home. It was because of acts like this that a quarrel started between the brothers, and they departed from each other, heading off in different directions.

This is admittedly only one side of the story. The researcher does not know how the Moro tell their story in relation to the Tira tribe. But since the researcher's interest in this research was not the history of the tribes but the spiritual leadership of the Tira tribe, the researcher did not pursue this narrative on the side of the Moro. There were no other hints mentioned that showed the separation of these two sons. There is, however, some linguistic and morphological evidence of a historical relationship between these two tribes that the researcher discovered during his linguistic and translation studies of the Tira language.

Even though at a certain point in history some racial and ethnic diversity had occurred among the Tira community, the present generation believes that, linguistically, they are one unit. There are no cultural or social structure differences existing at the moment. The cultural makeup of the present generation is a common pattern that pervades the whole cultural life of the groups. Yet it could go deeper than merely a common system of livelihood. It is a cultural affinity that could be explained in the common environment as an adjustment of groups to their identical conditions of life.

Two concrete examples they recalled as elements that have disturbed their economic and political life throughout human history are 1) historical wars and 2) various natural disasters. These two types of calamities were the most significant throughout the history of their generations to cause their religious belief to make its strongest inroads among the Tira clans. None of the interviewees remembered historical details beyond a hundred years ago when some of them knew and spoke to their great-grandparents before they

passed away. Most of the interviewees were in their late eighties and a few were in their late fifties. All of them were denied an opportunity for education as a result of the community's philosophy of life and the political philosophy of marginalization in the country.

The psychological understanding of God's authority over nature, both living things and non-living things, is strongly integrated into their social background. In their agricultural setting, great religious ceremonies are performed at every stage of farming—from before planting through to the last celebration at the gathering of crops into the full granary. These ceremonies are to purify, sanctify, and bless every work of their hands and all their possessions.

Occasions such as marriages, births, and funerals; public wrestling; the seventeen stages of initiation to adulthood for men and women; slaves' abduction in war; the settlement of aliens among the community; official friendship oaths between colleagues; hunting trips or searches for wealth from other countries; moves to a new place within the Tira lands; any individual or community dispute resulting in reconciliation; healing from sickness; and many other practical social events, all without exception, go through stages of religious sanctification and purification. Indeed the whole tribe, so to speak, is the religious affiliate's community. Every effect on the human body, community wealth, the environment, and on space is believed to have had a cause. There must be a final solution from "*Elo Kamakama*", God the Almighty. The spiritual leader's spirit of incarnations had the historical purpose of continuing into the next generation. To operate throughout each generation effectively, leaders must be sensitive as to how they guide, according to the interviewees' beliefs.

The researcher needed more clues about the clan's divisions and felt unsatisfied with each narrative that ended abruptly. Each time he would ask more questions, but the answer he got was always, "This is the only information we know so far." The elders' conclusions led him into some silences. This limitation was a real situation with these elders, but their oral memory amused him at the same time. One of the things they keep rejecting is the word "assumption" or "speculation" about the past. Whenever the researcher turned to

specific descriptions of each clan's taboo, the interviewees would sit in groups of two or three or four to discuss and confirm their information with the one in charge. Logically, the elders of the communities maintained a high spirit of discipline in their conduct and transparency in dealing with the spiritual issues. It was more real for one to encounter the understanding of this world of spiritual beings among the Tira.

2.7 Traditional Sacred Places of Worship

There are two places where spiritual rituals are commonly carried out. These are called sacred or religious places or centres of worship. One place is in the home of the leader of each clan. In each home, there is a special place where the religious signs or symbols are kept. This is the family holy-room containing spiritual items. Other family members use the granary storage as the holy place for the spiritual things to be kept, even though the occasion might be performed in another room. Blood sprinkling is done in both places during the spiritual occasion.

The second place of worship is the community place called the *Lobo*, which is usually established under a tree in the community. In most cases, the religious rituals are performed under the tree by the community elders, under the leadership of the *Itumbel* clan, who are in charge of worship at the tribal level, as indicated in their clan's description above. Objects from animals (such as skulls or bones) that are hung on a tree or altar stones under a tree identify the site as a sacred place, and they draw respect from everyone. Nobody would sit under these sacred trees or pass under them intentionally. During the practice of prayer, only men say the prayer. When they ask God to bless a certain person they are praying for, they normally face toward the east and raise up their hands to "*Elo Kamakama*," God the Almighty. But when they are asking God to curse this person, they will turn their faces to the west, where the sun sets, saying something like, "Let this person end together with the darkness of the sun." This pattern of prayer is expected to be followed in a spirit of full unity among the worshipers. Each leader at worship would speak out with his voice; and all the rest respond: "*Papa joo nattinyare ngol ingay pi*" (Lord hear our cry).

2.8 Cultural Assimilation Among the Tira Generations

Because of direct opposition to cultural change by some young people, the expansion of the population, and the assimilation of other cultures, some spiritual leaders' power to define values in the modern Tira began to fade. Those young people and some elderly people who became Muslims or Christians stopped believing in the spiritual leaders' supernatural powers. However, there is still evidence of nominal belief from both groups. During serious cases such as sickness or barrenness, where there are no quick religious solutions, some believers, including their denominational leaders, decide to go back to their traditional spiritual leaders' advice or search for a quick, magical healing from physical, spiritual, economical, and psychological problems. This indicates that most of these types of believers are only nominal Christians or Muslims.

The influence among the present Tira generation of the Arabic culture or Islam, as well as Christianity, is a clear indication that the cultural assimilation that occurred hundreds of years ago had made some clans lose or give up their more superficial religious traits such as extended family integration within their immediate family. Marrying of cousins, which is traditionally prohibited, has been practiced by the Tira Muslims. At present, this assimilation would likely increase from the influence of both religions, even though there is strong resistance arising within the present generation against the philosophy of abandoning the Tira culture in favour of Arabic culture.

I have personally witnessed cases of nominal faith in rural areas. The spiritual leaders who hold the duties of their families based their philosophy of faith upon their ancestors. This had become a spiritual formula of the spirits that work through objects they use as a means to reach God the Almighty and the spirits of their ancestors. All the interviewees believed that the symbols they have are given as a means of protecting themselves from other harmful human beings and evil powers. Yet not everyone in each clan is believed to have the same faith; that is why the authority is passed on to one elder, chosen at a certain period in life, to lead the clan when there is a vacancy. It is to this person, to his prayers, that God would listen. This is the theological foundation of how spiritual faith is inherited and passed on to the successor.

2.9 Summary

The researcher's main intention in classifying the clans according to their spiritual symbol of authority was to find satisfactory criteria on which to base these divisions as specified by the interviewees. These criteria revealed some truth about the basic relationships among the clans. There is a clear clue from the division of the clans that helps to distinguish which clans are of the same family. There is also a clue of a common kinship structure among the Tira clans in the naming of their children. The system of reckoning descendants through paternal lines is identical throughout the whole tribe.

The study of the clans' spiritual offices reveals a communal philosophy of religion that is connected with economic and political life. These two domains are guarded by their religious, psychological, and social beliefs. All the elders I interviewed mentioned that their spiritual office exists for the purpose of protecting their well-being and their properties. They believed these are the most important elements that need help from the supernatural powers and especially from the spiritual being called "*Elo Kamakama*," which means "God the Almighty." As a result of this belief, each of the clans has a family religious sign or symbol that signifies the spiritual relationship to the ancestor, as indicated in the division of the clans, who passed down that sign or symbol to them.

The clans, in the Tira understanding, are never conceived of as completely separate, disconnected units. Rather, all of these clans represent segments that are well-defined and often interdependent sub-units of the larger society. It is within this bigger grouping that essential clan rights and obligations developed the clan section. This conclusion is based on the cultural relationship from common origin within the data I have recorded from the interviewees' oral history received from their ancestors. It is possible for one to speculate further, but my interviewees were honest, and none of them would easily agree to speculation, their answers were always a definite "yes" when they were sure of the answer or "no" when they were not sure of the answer.

From this interview, it can be concluded that the Tira spiritual worldview areas that are identical could be divided into specific major areas where the spiritual beings' hierarchies are revealed: The spiritual beings in charge of space fall under these hierarchies, god of

the sun, god of the rainbow, god of rain, god of angel and god of lightning or thunder. The second group, the spiritual beings in charge of the air in the spiritual realm are: winds, storms, darkness and dust. The third group are the spiritual beings in charge of the vitality of the living things and the non-living things operating through: human beings, animals, crops, trees, mountains and grass. The fourth group, the spiritual beings in charge of certain diseases, operate through specific areas, such as: blindness, bloody noses, miscarrying, crippling or disabling and madness of minds and confusion. The fifth group of the spiritual beings in charge of oracles from the supreme being, 'God the Almighty' are specific people: prophets, magicians, witchdoctors and evil eyes or bewitchers. The sixth group of the spiritual beings in charge of the clans' taboos operate through: certain foods, certain animals, certain birds, certain insects. The seventh spiritual beings that are in charge of social misconduct operate in these areas: stealing, robberies, adulteries and fighting or wars.

The significance of this traditional background will enhance the general understanding of the entire thesis for the reader to observe that the Tira cultural and environmental context of spiritual and natural understanding has been affected both supernaturally and physically.

The spiritual environment also provided many learning activities especially in the areas of religion and its associated beliefs; explanation of several mysteries of life including relationship between life and death; how death came into the world, existence of several types of spirits; the place of ancestors (i.e. the living death) in human life, the concept of the universe; the nature of man (both spiritual and material) and of man's relation with the unknown world of spirits.

The reader would understand from the findings of this data that this community maintained its own worldview from inherited knowledge of the creation. Closely associated with the spiritual world was the world of nature i.e. of animals, birds, plants, rains, winds, and the associated mysterious forces of the universe. Through the activities of cattle rearing, agriculture, hunting, religious practices and worship etc, people were afforded opportunities to come face to face with nature and thus to develop harmony with

it.

This foundational knowledge cannot be ignored if the gospel of Christ is to reach the heart of the leadership of this community. The first missionaries heartily tried to reach this needy people but failed due to the cultural barriers and the fear of the unknown forces which had been operating through the clans' spiritual symbols of authority.

Chapter 3: Tira Traditional Spiritual Leadership

3.0 Introduction

On completing the reading and studying of this chapter, one should be able to grasp the major traditional core values and concepts of the Tira community. These traditional core values are the foundations of religious faith, philosophy and worldview of the Tira leaders. The Tira traditional spiritual leadership could be seen in seven major spheres of life that are rooted in three main domains: economic, political, and spiritual.

The spiritual leaders claim both physical and spiritual authority in all these domains in order to ensure safety and good relationships with the dead ancestral spirits, who are believed to be the living dead in the land called *Kumazi* in Tira. *Kumazi* is believed to be one common place where all the spirits of the dead people are kept by God.

The Tira traditional spiritual leaders exercise leadership roles in the following areas: the use of the spiritual symbols of authority; knowing how to manage ancestral knowledge about life; the procreation issues of marriage; the knowledge and skills of agriculture; the proper honouring of the dead during funeral activities; the method of passing on education to young people; and providing dual leadership in political and religious affairs. Their political and religious roles should be reflected in all of these areas. This comprehensive approach to the totality of the Tira life is similar to the leadership style of Nehemiah in the Bible.

3.1 Definition of Traditional Spiritual Leadership

The individuals during the preliminary interviews gave the following definitions of a leader in their traditional understanding: A leader is a man or woman called *imuz*, meaning a spear; *zaz*, meaning a way; *ta*, meaning a head; or *nanyu*, meaning a front. Leaders must be sharp like a spear in their leadership skills. They have to lead the way by example. They are described as a human head because they carry all their people's problems on their heads and should be brave enough to die for their people. They are called *nanyu*, meaning a front, because they must be on the front line in everything the community does and should be the first to give directions in all situations. The Tira leaders' inspirations and insights are said to come from the ancestors who are believed to be *iddanga lemittu lananyu*, which means, "the living dead who have gone ahead in the land of the dead."

3.2 The Core Values of Traditional Spiritual Leadership

3.2.1 Spiritual Symbols of Authority

The core values of the traditional spiritual leadership are found in the seven major areas of the Tira life. These are the main foundational values that the clan leaders had identified. The first and foremost of these values—mentioned by each interviewee—is the spiritual symbol of authority of a clan leader which is controlled by a supernatural being. Each clan has an object or a symbol considered to be the spiritual foundation that possesses a certain authority or power. These spiritual symbols of authority were presented in Chapter Two.

The spiritual beings that work through these objects are believed to be God's agents. When leaders assume their leadership position, the Tira believe power is manifested in them that reflects the power inside the object and brings a spiritual compliance to the leader's will. These spirit beings impose their supernatural powers over the clan leaders and the communities. They have great influence over the Tira life. These spirit beings are the small gods who mediate between the dead ancestors, God, and the Tira leaders. This is where the traditional leadership authority lies. Each spiritual leader assumes the

traditional and legitimate leadership authority with spiritual competence that is passed on by a deceased leader. The clan leader uses his authority to perform spiritual and social duties for the well-being of the community.

3.2.2 Management of Ancestral Knowledge

The clan leaders are the managers of the inherited knowledge about life and death from the ancestors which is passed on to younger generations. The passing on of this inherited knowledge about life and death is one of the leadership foundations of the Tira. It is a kind of knowledge that is learned by experience through an informal model. Information is transmitted by the dying elder to his successor, in most cases. The new leader is then considered to be an important resource that will keep the reputation and the strength of the deceased predecessor. This is what gives the clan importance among the other clans. The previous leader becomes the spiritual pillar of reference that keeps the new leader serving diligently. It is therefore important, in the Tira belief system, for the spiritual leaders to appease the indwelling spirits, so that the spirits will give them inspired management skills to apply to spiritual and political matters. In each clan, only one person receives a leadership position at a time.

The principles which the traditional spiritual leaders follow in the areas of managing ancestral knowledge are passed on orally throughout their daily lives and include the following principles of faith and belief:

(1) There is a living God, the creator of heaven and earth and all that live on it. The creation is understood as simply having been made by God the Almighty. This God is everywhere in Spirit. He created three types of human colour: black people, white people, and red people. Each of these three races was given a symbol. The black people were given an axe. The white people were given a pen and the red people were given money.

(2) There are angels who are God's messengers, called in Tira *Nyittele Nyelo*, "the angels of God." He sends them to communicate his will to both the living and the dead. They have authority to send back the dead ancestors to speak to the leaders.

(3) There are bad spirits called *lemazi* in Tira. The spiritual leaders should know how to deal with them. These spirits can cause bad things to happen to people as punishment from God.

(4) There are spirits of the living dead. These spirits are in charge of the living generations. They operate through the spiritual leaders. The spiritual leaders should know how to walk in purity before them and do everything in accordance with the traditions established by the ancestors.

(5) There is a judgment day for the wicked people who have sinned against God the Almighty and the dead people. At that time God will switch the people from earth with the people from heaven. People believed that God will turn the world around, as narrated in chapter two in the story of the creation of *Kuku* and *Kaka*. This will also be a resurrection day. The spiritual leaders should warn all the people against doing evil deeds, and they should be examples themselves of doing good deeds in their daily lives.

(6) Human life is precious. The principle of protecting human life is in accordance with their ancestors' beliefs. If a human life is taken away in an accidental killing by another human being, it must be replaced by a human life. This community believes in life-exchange as a ransom. If someone kills someone in the community, the family of the murderer would seek peace with the family of the deceased by giving them a live child to replace the lost one. This process has to go through several stages and through spiritual leaders who are in charge of the two clans, and it often includes other spiritual leaders, too. After the period of mourning is over, the process of ransom begins through sacrifices, prayers, reconciliation, and both families eating together, and then the handing over of a girl or a boy, depending on the one that was lost. If the family of the murderer do not act in this manner then the family of the deceased would seek revenge from that particular clan. Some families would accept the murderer himself if he or she is still young. Thereafter, the cycle of life continues as normal.

3.2.3 Marital Values as the Divine Plan of God

Marriage between men and women is the third spiritual foundation accredited to God's divine plan of procreation and continuation. A marriage is required to go through proper religious stages supervised by spiritual leaders in each clan. The spiritual leaders see to it that the model of cultural loyalty to elders is ensured and done properly by families. Young people have no rights to participate in official matters concerning marriages. They have to watch, listen, and follow all processes diligently. Celebration in each stage until its completion is done by the elders. The processes of a new family are all learned in silence, until the young people enter into this institution officially; then they have legal rights to participate in decision-making. Everything before that is handled by the elders.

Sometimes harmful traditions such as forcing a girl to marry a man against her will or forcing a young man to take a dead brother's widow and many other such practices are carried out without any of the young people challenging them. This is how the leaders make the young people accountable for upholding the testimony of their clans and ancestors when they enter into any family responsibility. It is here where leading others in the family or community becomes an exciting experience for young people. On the side of the elders and their spiritual leaders, they seek the characteristics of a family leader whose ability to select suitable wives for future generations is properly rooted in oral training and a developing philosophy of life. Because of this qualification and potential, management of marriage is done by elders and blessed by spiritual leaders of different families.

Young people are expected to learn the art of managing themselves, including such elements as self-discipline, management of time, management of leisure, care of their minds, identification of personal abilities, and the way they should care for their bodies. It is assumed by spiritual leaders and the elders that young people would develop the skills of planning, leadership, organization, and control through the imitation method, that is, by watching their elders and copying them day by day and year by year until elders declare a young boy or a young girl a full man or a full woman on their wedding day.

3.2.4 Agricultural Values in God's Plan

Agriculture is the fourth spiritual foundation that is ascribed to God. The elders believe that God is the one who has authorized the ancestors, Kuku and Kaka from the creation, to perform religious feasts during each stage of farming until harvest time. There are strong taboos that are adhered to by spiritual leaders and elders of each family throughout the clans. The cultural understanding of this concept is that it follows a pattern expressed in physical forms in every stage of agricultural work and its local arts.

Everyone is expected to have a farm of some kind, and it must include the keeping of animals. Any person without this wealth is considered an abnormal person, someone who is under a curse. The traditional belief is that either people have plenty or at least enough to provide for their family without depending on others. If they don't have this status, they are believed to have a problem with the spirits of their ancestors. Several spirits are thought to be involved in different clans in different ways and in their direct properties such as animals, food in general of all kinds, lands, mountains and rivers. Some of those spiritual leaders who are in charge of certain foods among the communities do play an important role in purifying the foods.

Agricultural festivals, rites and rituals are held seasonally where communities deal with agricultural matters, including raising all kinds of livestock. This is one of the areas of wealth where the Tira believe several spirits play prominent roles in the community. The value of family prestige is fully expressed in agricultural products and livestock they possess. A successful celebration or ritual on every occasion in the family or community, either joyful or sorrowful, depends on how many agricultural products and livestock each family has accumulated.

3.2.5 Funeral Values Destined by God and Ancestors

Funeral values and ritual procedures are believed by spiritual leaders to be the most essential stage in which both God and the dead ancestors are honoured. It is one of the most sensitive spiritual foundations administered by the spiritual leaders in each family. It is during this time when the spirit of fear and hopelessness ruling every family member is

seen. The role of the spiritual leaders and elders in each family becomes very important. Several rituals are performed in order to ensure the continuing relationship between the deceased and the family. Special inquiries are done through spiritual leaders to examine the cause of a death and establish some reasons for it. The cultural, moral, and ethical practices undergo further examination at this time.

Even though the tribe believes in life after death, what happens after death is feared because it is unknown. There is great limitation among the elders in this area. Cultural control measures are believed to be led by the living dead, who discipline the living generation on different issues that are not properly religiously grounded. It is therefore the duty of the spiritual leaders to pass on every bit of knowledge they receive concerning any culturally relevant regulations about their spiritual duties to the family and the community.

3.2.6 Informal Educational Training Framework

Informal educational training is another foundational concept. It is done through a practical life-cycle pattern for every young generation. Young people go through specific religious initiation stages, mentored by spiritual leaders. The conceptual framework in an indigenous education is a philosophy of imitation that is ascribed to the ancestors and carried out by elders and spiritual leaders. Young people are involved in this process in order to learn the necessary and culturally relevant skills.

The children are made to go through stages of dependence upon their elders in order to discipline them mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It is assumed by the elders that this experience of dependence is fundamental to building the effective leadership skills that elders are seeking to develop among the younger generation before they enter into the stage of a decision-making group. The elders introduce each stage of change with a special ceremony that gives the young people a recognition of the knowledge which they have learned up to this point. The end of each stage must be proactive to create a sense of anticipation in the young people of reaching the last stage of manhood or womanhood.

The informal education method of training is based on the principles of community social life, order, and the religious mindset in which the traditions have been believed throughout many generations. The spiritual leaders and the elders are trusted as experts in the following areas to educate the younger people about the ethics of their beliefs:

(1) A man is the head of the family, and all the properties, including his family, are under his leadership. Each family leader should be loyal to the spiritual leader of his clan and honour the symbol of his clan's authority through the spiritual leader of his clan. It is here that the harmony of the family leaders' obedience makes their clan very respectable.

(2) A woman is measured by the standard of a man and his role. She is highly respected and valued when she produces children for her husband. However, sadly enough, she has no inheritance either from her father, brothers, children, or husband. Her share is within the rights of the family with whom she is living.

(3) Every man and woman should go through seventeen stages of initiations in order to be perfect spiritually and socially. All spiritual leaders and family leaders are to educate the young people practically, after going through all the stages themselves successfully and peacefully with no hesitations or force from anyone. It is only when the young people go through every stage to the last that they will be considered as perfect spiritually, politically, and socially, and be free from any insults and challenges from the members of their generation.

(4) Every man or woman must be married in order to be considered a fully normal human being in the society. Marriage is considered sacred; that is why it is only the elders' business to choose a wife for a husband—even against his will. Marriage between blood relatives is forbidden among all the clans from both family lines. Marriage should be between a man and a woman only in order to be acceptable to God and the ancestors.

(5) The absence of children in a family is a very disgraceful situation that could cause the couple to be disqualified from the meaning of 'marriage' as being traditionally understood to be a means of procreation. Therefore, such couples should seek out advice or healing from the religious people or even ask a magician to tell them the reason why they are not

producing children. Marrying a second wife is an acceptable principle in order to remove this disgrace from the family. In some cases, divorce is allowed, but very rarely, according to the spiritual leaders. Levirate marriage is practiced in this society in order to keep the name of the deceased brother on the family lists of the ancestors. This means that a man has to take his dead brother's widow to be his legal wife. If he is already a married man, this too is well and good for him to have two wives. If he is still a young man yet to be married, still he could go ahead and get his own wife too. The children of a widow are normally named after their deceased father. This is why the young man must get his own wife so that his name is also kept through his children's line.

(6) Disciplining children in the community is to be practiced equally by all elderly people. No family will defend their children alone. Children are all punished when found doing wrong or fighting with each other.

(7) Adults' quarrels are dealt with in public directly by the spiritual leaders, and reconciliation is done in the public ground. No one should attack another Tira and run away. Elders would declare public fights between the quarrelling adults or youth. Stick fights are used during public fights. Spiritual leaders should be peacemakers in such situations.

(8) The widows, orphans, and the elderly in the community should be attended to by their own relatives. No beggars or poor people are allowed to be seen in public, nor should they be allowed to move from place to place. Each leader must ensure that those groups of people are cared for by their own family members or relatives. This must be done in order to avoid a public curse on the community or that particular family line.

(9) Every clan must observe the food taboos and sacrifice requirements very closely. This is the responsibility of the spiritual leaders and every family leader. Spiritual leaders are careful that the ancestors are not provoked by negligence of the family taboos, and every official family occasion must be accompanied by animal sacrifices. This is an important area where each spiritual leader plays a prominent role through the sprinkling of the blood and the purifying of the whole clan and their relatives. The principle of sitting is observed, too: men sit separately with their age group; women the same; and the young

people also. In this way the young people learn the practical order of doing things in society, namely, through imitation.

(10) During the onset of puberty, at the age of thirteen, girls are placed together under the care of the elderly women of their clans to be trained in the family issues pertaining to their future married life. Boys are trained at a different age when they are entering into a certain period of their initiation called *Agava Ngace* in Tira. It is the stage of breaking age group or transition age period when they exit puberty and become men or women.

3.2.7 Solidarity in Political and Religious Affairs

The area of political affairs is an area where the community members are jointly led by the spiritual leaders through religious sacrifices to ensure the safety and the welfare of the community. It is one of the strongest foundations for the concept of spiritual leadership solidarity. When action must be taken on the community level, tasks are assigned to clans or family groups to be completed. This is how the people show serious commitment to the decisions made by the spiritual leaders at the *Lobo*. A *Lobo* is a place of worship where sacrifices and prayers are offered for anything at the community level. Most of the other sacrifices and prayers are offered at the family level by each clan's spiritual leader or by the elders who have been given a certain authority.

When the spiritual leaders join together in public prayer for the affairs of the community, the people look to them as an authoritative group that decides matters of well-being with God on their behalf. For their part, the leaders demonstrate their authority through concern for the community needs. To ensure that their prayers are answered, they have to display a sense of concern about the spiritual renewal of everybody—especially the young people, who sometimes misbehave in the community due to their ignorance. It is therefore important for the leaders to work in the mainstream or in the centre of the spiritual line, in order to ensure spiritual solidarity among themselves and also to ensure that their covenant with God remains pure and wholly acceptable to their ancestors and God.

3.3 The Role and Function of Traditional Spiritual Leadership

The role of the traditional leaders is to maintain a high standard of spiritual discipline between the people, their ancestors, and God. Their overall decisions on the family issues and the communities make a significant impact on the community's life and destiny. Their role and function are dual in nature in that the leaders must perform rituals and sacrifices on all seasonal occasions, but they also have to be active politically. In legal matters, they function as judges, in religious matters as priests, and in political matters as politicians and national leaders. In agricultural issues, they function as agricultural experts; in sickness, they function as doctors. In all these roles, all the clans' leaders work in conjunction with each other.

The leadership style used here is teamwork. It is an interdependent cultural mentality. All issues are discussed in a group. When decisions are reached, each leader will take a part in implementing the item discussed, either through the family line of the clan, if it is something concerning the clan, or as a group of leaders in each village, if it is something at the community level. When this happens, the leaders' authority and legitimacy become legally binding and must be feared and honoured by all the clans.

3.4 The Traditional Spiritual Leadership Style

The leaders practice two styles of leadership: interdependent and independent. Both styles are acceptable and are used at different levels, according to the elders' beliefs. For example, each Tira hill community has its own *Lobo* where sacrifices and prayers are performed by the elderly men of the local clan section of the Itumbel. The same ceremony may also be performed independent of any time schedule, such as to cure barrenness in a woman of any clan at her home; this ceremony would be performed independently by a single leader.

The leadership style of both the spiritual and political systems, from the perspective of

the elders, is the same. The symbiotic structure of the Tira society of each clan described in Chapter two suggests where the political unit must reside. The realization of the common law rests fully on the moral conscience of the group segments and on the self-help of individuals and group sections. The boundaries that this concept of political existence describes are never obscure: they embrace the whole tribe (or nearly so). The Tira Supreme Being, though not a tribal God, still appears here as the epitome of the tribe's political unity. The political solidarity of the Tira tribe is strongly buttressed by a three-fold ring of co-existent systems of integration. Political action, clan interdependence, and communal life and generational cooperation all refer to, and bind together, the same group.

3.5 Authority and Legitimacy in Traditional Spiritual Leadership

The interviewees believed that a spiritual leader's authority and legitimacy in the traditional context is received through a dying elder or a vision or dream. A deceased ancestor has the authority to appoint, through a dying elder, a new leader for the clan. Such authority and legitimacy is honoured by sacrifice, where the spiritual being in charge of this clan will manifest its presence on the new leader, sometimes with the actual evidence of a clear sign of approval. For example, if the new leader assuming command is from a clan of a storm and wind god, he could call storms and winds to come near the house where something is taking place, but in a calm way without destroying anything or touching the neighbours' properties. Immediately, storms and winds would appear. Everyone will know that these are gods of storms and winds who have come to welcome a new leader.

3.6 Summary

From the information contributed by the spiritual leaders concerning their beliefs and understanding of their role as community leaders, both in political and religious affairs, the researcher arrived at this conclusion: The functional education implied that what was learned was meaningful, relevant to life, and productive in terms of the contributions it made to the welfare of the individual and the group. This is as it should be, because the

education that a society provides for all its members must, as an ultimate purpose, prepare individuals to live and function positively in their society.

In such an educational system, to learn is to live usefully and happily with oneself, one's community, and with one's society. This is the major principle on which all learning activities are based. The end result of this principle is that at the end of the learning experience, the individual is expected to be able to do something and not just to know it. That is, the outcomes of learning alone are not enough. To be functional, what is learned must be reflected in practice, in performance, and in what a person can do as an individual and as a member of a family, a community, or of society as a whole. The leaders who are born and brought up in this context base their knowledge on the experience of their elders and their ancestors. This is where their leadership values are rooted and founded.

The definition of a leader in the traditional concept is simple, defined by active nouns that are easily understood by everyone. The core values of traditional spiritual leadership are not too complex to understand. The symbol of the authority of spiritual leadership is a supernaturally envisioned object. The spiritual leaders are careful in managing their ancestral way of preserving knowledge about life and death. Part and parcel of this experiential leadership system has to do with specifically defined areas such as marital issues, agricultural values, and funerals—all with their proper stages that need to be observed in order to appease the dead ancestors.

The method of indigenous education, which is an informal way of training children by imitation both in the family and public issues, must be carefully performed by the spiritual leadership. The political and religious matters are uniformly duties of the same spiritual leaders who are bound by one accord. The role and dual function of the spiritual leaders' traditional leadership bind the whole tribe together, and their authority and legitimacy are clearly community-centred, stemming from their own experiential knowledge.

This traditional background to the entire thesis is significant for the reader in understanding the sociological component of the interchangeable culture and leadership

philosophies of this tribe. On the other hand, this component also embraces the customs, traditional institutions, rules, and patterns of interpersonal behaviour. To mention but a few, political organization, clan, and lineage are reflected in the patrilineal descent relationships that are all part and parcel of the social aspects of a traditional culture led by the elders and spiritual leaders of this community. From the point of view of the setting of the traditional leaderships' mindset, the value of culture represents what society cherished and therefore is part and parcel of what is worthwhile for one who wants to minister among this tribe, by learning a methodology of passing on education of what is considered good by the leadership of this community.

This background should be taken into consideration by the reader because it serves as an orientation gateway to enter into the spiritual and political worldview of this tribe. Besides its social orientation just highlighted above, the value of indigenous education was also reflected in its service orientation by the ancestors whom the leaders of this community greatly honoured in their duties. While the social orientation was manifested chiefly in the humanization of the individual, the service aspect reflected the practical implications of the social orientation. A sense of group loyalty, approval and devotion to the ideal was reinforced by a strong sense of obligation firstly to the service of the family, the neighbourhood and the community throughout one's life, and secondly rendering service to the status of social maturity that is indebted to the living dead.

The background of this chapter will help church leaders to use the biblical leadership principles of Nehemiah as a means of strengthening Christian leadership among Nuba Tira Christians. The traditional organization and principles of faith that govern their lifestyle, religious worldview and their theological concepts are based on symbols that represent the authority, not only of God but also of ancestors, of divine knowledge, of agricultural activities, funeral rites, education life-cycle of informal training, political and religious solidarity affairs. All of these are important subjects that could cause strong cultural barriers to any mission work if not taken into account.

It is important for one to take note of the Tira identity in relation to other Nuba tribes. The background serves to clarify the important theological myth of creation and historical

development in regard to population of human race. It will lead the reader to understand the traditional concept of salvation which this research intended to address and thus help those who want to reach the leaders of this community with the knowledge of Christ as their personal saviour through special revelation as opposed to their traditional knowledge of general revelation of salvation. There is a limit to the concept of general revelation in this tribe. The special revelation needs to be integrated through the Nehemiah model of leadership to pave the way for this salvation to reach the spiritual leaders.

The understanding of the worship and sacrifices, that points to the importance of death and one's destiny after life, needs to be integrated with the Biblical view – that the eternal destiny of the soul is not in the hands of the dead ancestors. The biblical doctrine of death and eternal destiny is that it is in the hand of God and it cannot be achieved through spiritual beings whom the leadership of this tribe believed to be various symbols. Once one has read chapters two and three, one has the basic understanding of the conflicting theological, cultural and socio-political forces which affect the spiritual leaders' lives and beliefs.

Chapter 4: Christianity in Nuba Land

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presented the Western missionary approaches to the Tira people. For this reason, the research did not examine the growth and development of Christianity in Nuba land.

Ideally, after completing the reading of this chapter, the reader should be able to understand the cultural and religious barriers that hindered the growth of Christianity in Nuba land during the missionaries' era. Friendly activities and well-designed programmes will have a successful impact only when one gives proper consideration to the culture's attitudes and Christ's attitudes. Building appropriate, relevant, and culturally acceptable relationships will help to win the spiritual leaders' support. To develop local Christian leaders among this community, a culturally acceptable context needs to be seriously

considered. It would be effective to apply the traditional leadership principles to subjects that are identified as core values in Chapter Three. In this way, one could understand better the principles of faith, belief, and social conduct of this community; this would yield some helpful results. It would indeed pave the way for Christ's mission of salvation to take its course among this community.

It is unfortunate that the earlier missionaries tried to ignore the community's authorities and instead turned their attention to the young people when they faced opposition from the elders. However, frustration continued to mount in their hearts. Their legacy is remembered as having no impact and bringing no change in any lives in this community. Their cultural and religious attitude towards the Tira culture affected the interpersonal relationships between them and the spiritual leaders. The missionaries' concept of developing Christian leaders was deeply rooted in a Western culture and faith. This was a mindset that did not seek to adopt new ideas, but that was seeking to impose its own ideas on the Tira people. Indeed, some missionaries saw the need for developing Tira Christian leaders as an important goal to be attained, but unfortunately the mission of evangelism failed due to cultural barriers.

The spiritual forces were not challenged, but left in their strongholds. Several elders whom I interviewed, eyewitnesses who are still alive today, raised my morale and motivation to believe that there is a need to integrate Christian and traditional leadership principles. Achieving this goal is a possible way forward to break through with a new way of reaching these community and spiritual leaders with the gospel of Christ's salvation.

4.1 Missionary Activities, Programmes, and Legacy

The mission of a missionary was understood differently by the missionary pioneers who landed among the Nuba tribes in those days—which is not surprising as the term “mission” itself has various connotations and applications. The writers of the book, *Mission in African Christianity* by A. Nasimiyu-Wasike and D.W. Waruta, have drawn our attention to their definition of the terms “mission” and “missionary,” and each of these terms needs to be understood in the context of each person's situation:

The term mission is a vast enterprise made up of many kinds of missions and activities which are carried on cross-culturally by many kinds of Christians. From the biblical revelation, mission is completely relative to salvation history. It contains a positive call of God, which is affirmatively manifested in each particular case, individually or collectively. It is also biblically connected with the vocation of God sending one out. It is a mission of proclamation, fellowship and service—kerygma, koinonia and Diakonia. It is the foundation seen from the first chapter of the Acts of the Apostles where the Apostles proclaimed the Gospel, founded Churches and were engaged in diakonia. Mission is also defined as unity and as indigenization or inculturation of the Gospel. (Wasike and Waruta: 1993:1).

As one imagines, one can empathize with their fear and mistrust of the traditional spiritual leaders' feelings during the days when they first saw white people landing on their land and settling among them. The missionaries brought their own culture and culturally designed activities and programmes to reach the Tira community with the message of salvation. It was indeed a positive calling for the missionaries to travel thousands of miles to come to Africa, but their cultural attitudes and language barriers greatly hindered their mission among the Nuba tribes. They failed due to their method of approach to the community. They did not know how to show respect to the elders in authority in order to win them. As a result, their mission was met with a strong, resistant spirit from the traditional spiritual leaders.

To begin with, it is important to recognize the message of the first letter, written in 1920, from a field missionary officer, Mr. K.J. Nobbs, to the board of his mission, which was then called, "*Sudan United Mission*." In this letter, he wrote that the Nuba Tira people were the next tribe to be reached:

You will be glad to hear that work will commence in Tira. This is an extract from a letter from the Field Superintendent of the Sudan United Mission, Mr. W. J. Lunn. God willing, Mr. and Mrs. Langridge are to begin a settled work among the Tira people. Mr. and Mrs. Hicks, as well as Mrs. Nobbs and myself, have had spasmodic contacts with this interesting and needy people, and the following "scene" will, I trust, make them more than a name to you. The Tira Nuba is but one of a hundred tribes in the Sudan among whom the Sudan United Mission is working. Other "Fields" still lie beyond; provinces of Moslem and

Pagan people, but mostly Moslem, still without a single messenger of the Gospel of Christ. These people are laid on the hearts of our missionaries. The mission awaits the response of young men and women who hear the call of Christ, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature” Nobbs (1920:1).

What a wonderful letter! It is informative. The missionary activities, programmes, and legacy among the Tira have been remembered by some of the individuals that were interviewed. The activities were divided into several programmes: language learning and translation of the New Testament, evangelization, education, agriculture, health work, and carpentry. These programmes, by their nature, were all good and relevant to the marginalized community of the Tira. Unfortunately, due to cultural and religious barriers encountered by missionaries in those days, nothing was accomplished; not even one of those goals in their program was attained. The legacy of their failure is still there today.

The missionaries left cultural and religious barriers unchallenged. Their attitudes towards traditional spiritual leaders were negative. An eyewitness named Kaluka Aluga, one of the elders, related a scene of meeting with the first missionary in his home area:

When I was a child during the missionaries’ era, one of the missionaries tried to gather children to teach them. I was one of them. This *Tuwetuwe* “white man” could not shake our hands as small children in those days. He would throw some dates or sweets on the ground for us to collect and eat from afar, like feeding chicks. We were wondering about this white-skinned human, and he was also wondering about our black skins. It was all like a fun. He feared us, and we also feared him (Kaluka February 2009).

The missionary wanted to bring these children up with the hope that one day some of them would become church leaders. However, his concept of developing Christian leaders among Tira failed completely. He came with a Western leadership mentality of well-organized programmes, but he did not succeed with these. This was not because he did not know how to do them but because of cultural barriers. He came with faith, but found people who already had a faith. He came with a spirit of ministry but found spiritual forces already influencing the people’s spirits. This was a spiritual war that required tactics of a spiritual warfare.

4.2 Missionary Attitudes Toward Traditional Spiritual Leadership

In relation to cultural barriers, one cannot rule out the possibility of differences between human nature's attitudes, the way one perceives things from his or her cultural background and spiritual attitudes that continue to be reflected through our ministry for the Lord. It is helpful to look at what Titre Ande said in his book, *A Guide to Leadership* when he described these characteristics, nature, and spiritual attitudes as he experienced them in his leadership position:

A disciple who is called to leadership needs to have the right attitude. If, as we have said, a disciple is a servant, then an attitude that is necessary is a servant attitude. There are many ways in which this attitude is expressed. The best example of a servant attitude is that of Jesus Christ, as Paul recorded when he wrote to the church at Philippi (Philippians 2.5). "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" Ande (2010:42).

The missionary described earlier missed Christ's servant-like ministerial attitude. This could have included simple things such as learning the language and taking on some of the good cultural core values discussed in Chapter Three, including the principles of faith and the prevailing etiquette for social conduct according to ethical rules of interaction within the community boundaries. The mission failed because the approach of the ministry was in a totally Western style.

The goal of the early Christian leadership plan for the Nuba Tira could not be attained because the mission strategy failed to evangelize the group's spiritual leaders first. Anything they tried to do failed. It would have been easier if they had used some indigenous methods of passing on training through key community leaders. Instead, however, their hope was to get small children educated, evangelized, and trained to become community leaders with a new Western ideology that was contrary to their traditional way of living. This was a difficult process because they did not have leadership's support on their side.

4.3 Missionary Concepts and Development of Christian Leaders

The problem of the old missionary leadership concept among the Tira is that it failed to investigate the traditional spiritual leadership's use of religious symbols, due to a fear of things unknown. The missionaries, on the whole, found it difficult to integrate one single community's values. They did not understand the method of teamwork the leaders used in training or in passing on information. This would have been a relevant model to use to establish relationships with the leaders. If they would have attempted to integrate some of the Tira values, there could have been a breakthrough in some areas.

The missionaries saw some of the traditional cultural rituals practiced during initiation occasions that broke their hearts, and they tried hard to reach this needy people with the message of the gospel. But the spiritual battle was poised against them. Some later missionaries in 1930 looked for adults to use for reaching the Tira community, as was recorded by Mr. Keith Black in his recent book, *Saints and Patriarchs*:

For some months we had been burdened for the Tira people. As part of our orientation we had been taken to watch a ceremony at Tira Denga. A woman specialist cut a pattern all over a man's body. She used a thorn to pluck up the flesh and then cut a flap under which she placed a dollop of mud so that, when the wound healed it would leave a raised lump. We discovered later that this cicatrising was common among most of the tribes and that young women had a pattern of diamonds cut on their bodies a month before their first child was born. Our hearts went out to those people at Tira Denga as we saw the darkness of their hearts.

Tira was one of the biggest Nuba tribes and although Bruce and Sheila Langridge had worked among them for a time there were very few converts. But God had not forgotten them. Here and there he had His hand on people like Ugriba, who, in utter despair following the death of his children, threw himself into the raging river. As a huge tree trunk bore down upon him he cried out to God, "if there is a God." The next thing he remembered was regaining consciousness on the riverbank. He hurried to Kauda and found Ngatabe, an elder in the Otoro Church who explained the Gospel to him. A new man in Christ, Ugriba returned to his home village in Tumbula and built a place of worship. When

the people destroyed it he rebuilt it. That happened several more times before others committed their lives to Christ and the Church began to grow Black (2001:50-51).

Ugriba's experience was closer to the concept of developing a leader, but unfortunately he was not one of the spiritual leaders of the day, nor was he a man of influence. Yet he went ahead and tried to build a church with little knowledge about Christ. This could have resulted from some of the methods earlier missionaries had used. The idea of developing local leaders was now in progress as the burden continued to weigh on the missionary's heart each year. Yet the concept of developing local leaders was still shallow because it was governed by a totally Western method of developing Christian leaders, not the Tira methods of training leaders.

The dream and vision continued to mount in the heart of the missionaries who were full of love for Christ to reach the sinners. The challenge of developing the Tira Christian leaders became more of a reality in their plans.

4.4 The Emergence of Early Nuba Tira Christian Leaders

The emergence of the early Tira Christian leaders was envisioned by the field missionary Mr. J. K. Nobbs in the second part of his letter to the Sudan United Mission in which he wrote:

The answer to the foregoing is a Mission Station among the Tira. This is a first priority. The W. L. Mills' Memorial Bible School may move either to Kauda or some place in Tira where the young men, many of whom we hope will become evangelists, will be able to assist the Missionaries in evangelising these Tira Nuba. New workers, for whom we thank God, have gone to the Field or are in Training. Accommodation for them is taxed. Everything points to the time being ripe to open this new Mission station among these Tira people. Time is not on our side. Every year lost means that Islam gains in influence among these needy people. Without allowing our existing work to suffer, we must endeavour to open up this projected work of God among the Tira. The means by which to accomplish this is the outstanding need. We look to God, believing that if the young lives have been given, accepted, and sent out, that the financial needs for the building and establishing of this station will be forthcoming. Will you ask yourself before God if you cannot assist by

gifts to make this vision a reality? Will you give these Tira people a place in your heart to make this a reality? Will you give these Tira people a very real place in your prayers? (Nobbs 1920:14).

After reading this part of the letter, the question still remains to be answered: “What barriers kept missionaries from evangelising the spiritual leaders, and why does their legacy still affect the church’s mission of reaching spiritual leaders with the gospel today?” What a wonderful vision that was seen by this man who had a longing heart to develop spiritual leaders among the Tira almost a hundred years ago! Whenever I read his letter, I weep as I look at the Tira community today. His vision is still far from being achieved. After many years, there is today one little Bible school started just five years ago by one church. The church’s desire and vision today are indeed itching with the burning question, “How do we make Tira Christian leaders?” The missionaries saw the needs clearly but could not achieve it. Indeed, the research question still stands.

The answer lies in the methodology the missionaries used. The whole mission failed because they did not have the blessing of the spiritual leadership’s support. The missionaries were indeed thinking about the young men who would hear the call to be trained. This is a good strategy, but in a situation such as this, in a tribe that values their elders’ system and way of doing things, it did not work, and the result has been fatal to this day. If the missionaries had won the support of the traditional spiritual leadership, today the Tira people would have had hundreds of Christian leaders. Yet it is not too late to find out the mechanism for reaching this tribe. This research will shed more light on the means of reaching both the spiritual leaders and the community.

4.5 The Problems of the Missionary Leadership’s Methods in Nuba Tira

One of the problems of the missionary leadership’s method during their presence in Nuba Tira land was that they did not know how to move forward with the mission when they found resistance from the elders and spiritual leaders of the community. Even though they had a good training program for training young men to be future evangelists and leaders of the Church among the Tira people, they were not aware of ways to overcome the

difficulties with the older leaders. The missionaries did not have a good relationship with the spiritual leaders and elders. They tried to form relationships with the children and young people instead. They failed to show respect in order to earn the right to be heard. Seeking approval from the spiritual leaders could have helped them to move forward with the mission.

The second problem was that the missionaries did not realize they were fighting a spiritual battle. Satan wants the church to remain weak. They did not understand the culture, the language, or the Tira methods of training and passing on new ideas, and this weakened the church.

The third problem was that the missionaries lost patience when they met strong resistance from the spiritual leaders and elders; some of them left and went back home. In order to break through these obstacles, one needs to fit into the cultural context first, through persistence in prayers and faith.

A fourth problem was related by one of the interviewees, Ismail Emiliyo, in his testimony:

“When one of the missionaries, whom two of us were serving as our chief had ordered us to do, found a Tira bright nugget gold found in Kaddarr Mountain, he and his wife packed up early in the morning, and without saying good-bye to us, left us. We stayed till overcome by hunger, and we went home to our partners to eat, then later reported to the chief what had happened” (*Ismail Emiliyo, interviewed 10 Jan 2010 in Ndurrdu, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

To this day, in the mind of Emiliyo, this missionary was just hunting gold and riches from their land. That is another reason for the failure of the mission.

The need for integrating the Tira traditional spiritual leadership principles with Christianity could still be met today, if the church reconsiders the new findings from these elders and leaders of the Tira clans. Integrating tradition with Christianity is the goal of this research. It would open the door for a successful Christian mission among the Tira.

4.6 The Need to Integrate the Nuba Tira Traditional Leadership Principles with Christianity

In order to motivate the spiritual leaders and elders of the Tira to listen to the Gospel message, it is important to consider the traditional leadership principles of faith, belief, and social conduct found among the Tira.

The best method of integrating the traditional leadership with Christianity is what Philip E. Morrison the author of the book, *The Multi-Church Pastor*, suggested:

- Captivate their hearts and minds by addressing things that matter to them
- Earn their respect by demonstrating godly character
- Win their trust by delivering on your promises
- Clearly and convincingly communicate your purpose: to serve them
- Facilitate their enduring focus on a compelling vision
- Offer them a concise, significant, and challenging role in the fulfilment of the vision
- Support them with resources, guidelines, encouragement, and rewards
- Describe your reasonable performance expectations of them
- Lead by offering captivating ideas, persuasive words, and an inspiring example
- Always place the needs of the people above the needs of the program
- Provide generous praise: selflessly and genuinely deflect credit to the entire team
- Celebrate each small win along the path to ultimate victory Morrison (2004:59).

It is important that the core values of the traditional spiritual leadership be integrated as suggested by Morrison. Talking about God among the Tira is not a problem. From this research, there is enough evidence to show that the Tira are religious. They are aware of the spirits, evils, wrong, and right. They have a highly ethical social and moral order that is well rooted in their traditions, beliefs and worldview. It would be advisable for the church mission to re-examine their leadership, spiritual and social principles of life. Chapter Three discussed the obstacles that need to be overcome in order for integration to

work.

The traditional principles of faith, belief, and social conduct, by themselves, form a pattern similar to several truths found in the Bible. These are profound teaching creeds that this community maintained throughout generations that could be supported by many teachings in the Bible. Chapter Six makes references to such teachings that suggest the possibility of integration between some Tira traditions and the Bible. When lessons are developed integrally the elders and spiritual leaders would have the motivation to listen to the gospel and might accept its teachings.

4.7 Summary

In this chapter, the cultural perspectives and the mindsets of Western missionaries and that of the Tira traditional people greatly differed. Missionaries' attitudes toward traditional spiritual leadership negated their godly activities and programme. Even though the missionaries learnt the local language for the translation of the Bible and preaching, evangelization, education, agriculture, health work, and carpentry, these were not good enough, because of the failure to integrate.

It is noteworthy to mention that no human society is without education, and no education is without a culture that it helps to support. Though missionaries came with a well-defined programme, their programme failed to fit into the Nuba Tira society. The evidence shows that no one can master a culture without understanding its content.

The concept of developing Christian leaders for the Tira missed its mark. The missionaries' problem of not understanding the Tira leadership principles is not an eternal ideology that could not be corrected. Instead, it is a lesson to be learnt in this research. It is clear from this end that a society's culture represents its survival mechanism.

The researcher's conviction in working through this chapter is to show that the only way to move forward is to integrate the traditional Tira spiritual leadership principles with Christianity. From this chapter, the researcher shows that cultural and religious barriers could be overcome through a good method of integration. The Tira cultural and religious

beliefs, ideas, attitudes, and sentiments of various kinds constitute the spiritual and social aspects of their culture and life. For Christian missionaries today to succeed in their mission among the Tira people, they need integration. They need to understand the seven spiritual symbols of authority of all the Nuba Tira clans as discussed in Chapter Three. The missionaries need to understand the beliefs and values that govern the Tira society as an important inherited ancestral knowledge and to develop appropriate biblical teachings that would attract the elders and spiritual leaders to listen to the Gospel message. It would have been important to establish a relationship with elderly people and seek their wisdom and support in order to win their confidence.

From the research findings, it became necessary that an integrative method be developed so as to avoid the missionary pitfalls. This is to integrate the traditional Nuba Tira spiritual leadership principles with those of the Bible, with specific reference to those of the book of Nehemiah.

Chapter 5: Nehemiah's Leadership Principles

5.0 Introduction

This chapter developed Nehemiah's leadership principles which were used to address the Tira traditional spiritual leadership principles. Nehemiah's leadership principles are also biblical leadership principles. These Biblical leadership principles are to become the means of both addressing and integrating the Tira traditional spiritual leadership principles. The primary task of this chapter was to develop Nehemiah's leadership principles that could be integrated with the Tira traditional leadership principles. In Nuba Tira land today, there is a great need of a new spiritual leadership that could take the Tira people beyond both their traditional setting and the poor and feeble approaches of the pioneering missionaries. The new spiritual leaders of the Tira should be able to use Nehemiah's leadership principles to develop and transform the present Nuba Tira people and land. For this reason, it is important that this chapter develops and outlines the basic integrative leadership principles of Nehemiah.

The first impression one gets after reading the thirteen chapters of the book of Nehemiah

is that in Nehemiah we see a clear picture of a visionary and influential leader who believed in God's power to overcome his enemies. As soon as Nehemiah heard the troubling report from his homeland, his concerns revealed the character of a man who was sure of his spiritual and political authority and of his duties towards his country and his people. He showed the effective leadership principle of a man who valued planning. He started with spiritual authority as a primary power base that could make a holistic change in the society. He took upon himself the responsibility of praying, fasting, and confessing on behalf of his nation. He acted as a civil and spiritual leader, sensitive to the leading of God's Spirit in his life. He took the initiative to manage the building project of his own city, Jerusalem.

Secondly, Nehemiah was a man who valued teamwork with the other community leaders of his society. He exercised this skill to help others contribute effectively in the mission of rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. He teamed up with them himself, as an overall manager, and then delegated responsibilities to various community leaders to get tasks accomplished.

Thirdly, he was also a man with a spirit of motivation that made a dynamic change. He was able to motivate the whole community in the face of the daily challenges of threats from their enemies. He knew how to energise people in the overall process of moving them toward his final objectives. He maintained a good principle of communication; he could tell people understood his language of communication very well because he could see them carrying out their duties well.

Fourthly, he was able to solve his community's spiritual and social problems through the principle of discipline. He maintained a long-term goal in his plan that people would come back to worship God after the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall. He desired a continual renewal in the society.

Exegetical study of the book of Nehemiah was undertaken as means of identifying the most important and relevant principles of leadership that could be integrated into the Tira traditional spiritual leadership as outlined in chapters two and three.

5.1 Exegetical Study of Nehemiah's Leadership Principles

Looking closely at the structure suggested by Clinton's studies, one sees a pattern of the progressive development of Nehemiah's leadership plans that are applicable at the end of this research. In his definition of a leader, Clinton has this to say:

We define a leader as a person with God-given gifts and a God-given responsibility who is influencing a specific group of God's people toward God's purposes for the group. The central thrust of our definition of a leader is influencing people toward God's purposes. Nehemiah does that over and over (Clinton 2003:19-48).

As far as the exegetical study of Nehemiah's leadership principles is concerned, the summary of the entire book of Nehemiah in Clinton's commentary is applicable and can also be adapted to address the Tira traditional spiritual leadership. His opening remarks are concise and suitable for this chapter. In his major division of the analytical study of the book of Nehemiah, he arrived at what he calls the major source of leadership values and principles as practical lessons that are applicable to today: cross-cultural leadership. Clinton says:

... the Bible is a major source of leadership values and principles and no more wonderful source of leadership values and principles exists than the Bible. It is filled with influential people and the results of their influence—both good and bad. Yet it remains so little used to expose leadership values and principles (Clinton 2000:10-11).

In his commentaries, Clinton summarised the book of Nehemiah in a very helpful way which was based on the main leadership principles that could be found among different cultural settings in the world. Indeed, the Nuba Tira is one of those tribes that could be reached by using Nehemiah's leadership principles. Such integrative leadership principles are found in Chapters 1-13 of his book.

5.1.1 Chapter 1 - Nehemiah received direction to rebuild Jerusalem

Chapter 1 reveals Nehemiah as a person who had concern for God's purposes for Jerusalem. He was not afraid to share his emotional state with the king. He was a man of

spiritual disciplines. He prayed and he fasted. Leaders who finish well exhibit spiritual disciplines in their lives. God assigned to Nehemiah a restorative and renewing work—to move His people out of shame and disgrace through the restoration of the walls and gates of Jerusalem, the restoration of civil order and proper leadership, and the renewing of the people spiritually.

5.1.2 Chapter 2:1-7:3 - Nehemiah organized the rebuilding of Jerusalem

In Chapter 2:1-7:3, Nehemiah refers to the vision as plans God had put in his heart for Jerusalem. In verse 7:5, he writes that God gave him the idea. The vision and goals came from God. From Clinton's summary, the following points describe Nehemiah's knowledge of organisation skills as a leader.

Leaders receive a vision from God and it sets before them challenges that inspire their leadership. Nehemiah had heard from God. He understood God's purposes for Jerusalem and its inhabitants. He then went to influence the king and seek his permission and provision for the work the Lord had put in his heart. This is central to Christian leadership—to influence followers toward fulfilment of God's purpose for the group. Nehemiah had a position of responsibility, a position requiring the trust of the king. Nehemiah had prayed for God's help before he stated his request.

Nehemiah was also aware of the power of networking. Even though he was frightened, Nehemiah sensed the right moment to petition for assistance. Nehemiah had credibility with the king from his previous service, and the king trusted him. Nehemiah asked for help from influential people along his journey, governors of provinces and the manager of the king's forest. The king granted this request. Nehemiah gave the credit to God.

Ownership is critical when bringing about change. Nehemiah demonstrated that he understood this. He inspired leaders and followers from a wide range of people. They included religious leaders, political leaders, and merchants, as well as common people. Nehemiah seemed to be aware of the power of affirmation. He identified people by name and groups by name. Followers who are affirmed by leaders tend to follow those leaders.

A leader who can share the credit with others will get more done than one who holds onto that credit for himself or herself. When Nehemiah cultivated the religious leaders in his long-range plan, he envisioned more than just rebuilding the defences of Jerusalem. He was interested in bringing about spiritual renewal as well. So he cultivated the religious leaders.

5.1.3 Chapter 7:4-10:39 - Nehemiah organized reforms

In Chapter 7:4-10:39, the conflict first described in Chapter 2 has now intensified. It moves from anger to intimidation to the development of a plot to attack the workers and destroy their work. Leaders respond to opposition in several ways: some deny that it exists; some hope it will take care of itself; some get angry and blow up at the source of the problem. Nehemiah, on the other hand, took the opposition to the Lord in prayer. His first response was prayer. Leadership is complex, problematic, difficult, and fraught with risk; this is why inspired leadership is needed. Like Nehemiah's wall-building, much of the work of ministry is dusty, exhausting, and depleting. It takes place where people line up side by side with tools and weapons in hand, take action, and persevere.

The people worked with all their heart, in part, because their leader—and God's presence with their leader—inspired their hope and courage. Nehemiah maintained motivational behaviours; task behaviours that facilitated accomplishment of the vision, relational behaviours that addressed interpersonal dynamics, and inspirational behaviours that motivated followers toward fulfilment of the vision. Inspirational leadership includes encouraging the faith and perseverance of the followers and modelling the reality of God's intervention in their lives. Nehemiah's heart for God's honour and his belief in the vision itself were part of what enabled him to persevere. He inspired courage in the hearts of the people and pointed them to hope in God and in what God was doing. He gave God the credit for deliverance from their enemies. He prayed. God heard and answered. The workers and the work were spared, and even moved forward, in the face of conflict and opposition. The powerful presence of God in Nehemiah's life and ministry was clearly seen by the people.

Leadership is not about prominence and prestige but about serving the people and

purposes of God. Nehemiah believed that he was ultimately accountable to God. His belief shapes his convictions and behaviour. Nehemiah takes the lead and modelled the way for his people. He was a leader with integrity, a leader who himself lived in support of the vision. Nehemiah was deeply conscious about financial integrity. Nehemiah laid the foundation for renewing religious fervour among the people. He appointed men of character as administrative leaders over Jerusalem, and he appointed worship leaders. Nehemiah set the standards concerning guards and security. Regular watch schedules were to be set and kept. He also set in place leadership—military, civil, and religious.

5.1.4 Chapters 11-13 - Nehemiah organized the continuation of reforms

In Chapter 11, we see that leaders had to personally learn and respond to the holiness of God in order to have an effective ministry. Leaders are people of influence, and in religious circles they should be people who model the way others are to follow. Here Nehemiah stationed leaders at the front of the procession, leading the way in the worship celebration of God's goodness to His people. The grand public celebration, complete with choirs, instruments, singers, and sacrificial offerings, stirred the hearts of the people and moved them to great joy. God was at work in the restoration of His people to their homeland. Nehemiah provided inspirational leadership that moved the people to courage and hope (Clinton 2000:17-47).

5.2 Identification of Nehemiah's Leadership Principles

5.2.1 Vision

From reading the book of Nehemiah, it is clear to see that vision develops through an idea that the Lord puts in a person's heart or mind. McCain, in his book called 2 Models of leadership for the Kingdom, describes the vision in this context as a motion that moves a person inside his or her mind as a thought:

Every movement, project, or organization starts with an idea. Sometimes this idea comes while reading the Bible, during prayer, during a sermon, while talking to a friend or while

doing something totally unrelated to the idea (McCain 2000:2-3).

Nehemiah wrote about how the idea to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem came to him. The vision was born as a result of two things: information from home and his prayers. Before Nehemiah had a report from Hanani about the survivors and the situation of the city of Jerusalem, he had concern in his heart. He then asked his brothers about the well-being of his people, the land, and God's house, the temple.

The report made him weep, mourn, fast, pray, and confess the sins of his people and his own sins. Nehemiah envisioned the problem, accepted the blame, and decided to take action himself to restore this lost relationship between God and his people. He saw the need for taking up the project of rebuilding the city himself. He asked God to grant him favour from the king, and he spoke to the king on behalf of his country and his people. This is characteristic of a man with a vision.

5.2.2 Planning

Looking at planning from Nehemiah's perspective, we see that as soon as his vision was made clear in his mind and in his heart, after praying and fasting, he took some time to work out his plans for how to face the situation in his country. As Tidwell put it, that develops through a particular situation:

Effective practitioners as well as scholars of leaders and leadership often rank planning as the most basic and essential skill for effective leadership. Planning usually begins with certain assumptions. It involves the gathering of information. It includes identifying and describing possible problems. It calls for consideration of options for solution. It demands making decisions today which will shape realities tomorrow. Planning must be definite while remaining flexible to changes which might later arise. Planning draws upon most of the other skills leaders use. One must plan for planning itself, and to communicate plans. One must plan for the planning to be accepted. Then there remain the implementation dimensions (Tidwell 1985:204-205).

Indeed Nehemiah knew that he could do nothing without the king's permission and blessing. Remarkably, though, while he was with him every day, he waited for four

months for the right time before raising the subject with him, and then only after the king inquired about his depressed appearance. This gave him a natural opportunity to raise the issue with him.

Planning ahead, Nehemiah had his plans ready in his mind before the king asked him what he was going to do. He set the time frame of the project he was going to undertake. He assessed the security situation well and asked the king to give him letters of recognition on the checkpoints. He secured army officers from the king's palace to accompany him on the mission. He secured the cavalry for carrying the building materials. When he reached Jerusalem, he stayed for three days, just getting a feel for the place. On the third night he took a tour of the city alone. He did these things in order to evaluate, think, and plan. Just as he had carefully planned before approaching the king, he also wanted to plan very carefully before approaching the people of Jerusalem.

5.2.3 Management

The third vital principle of Nehemiah is the skill of management. It is the ability of one who possesses the skills of managing community affairs spiritually and politically. Having vision, goals, and plans is good, but vision, goals, and plans alone will never accomplish any task. There must be implementation and management of the vision, goals, and plans. In Nehemiah's style of leadership we see a combination of both of these gifts operating in his life. Nehemiah used a biblical approach to meet his people's needs. Rush, in his book, *Management: A Biblical Approach*, defines management in terms of using authority and power to serve those under the supervision of a manager as follows:

Management is meeting the needs of people as they work at accomplishing their jobs. As the manager gives himself to serving the needs of those under him, he will make a happy discovery. People will voluntarily, eagerly, and continually meet his needs in return, 1 Kings 12:7 (Rush 1983:13).

Nehemiah took on the management of the project himself. He made sure that all the necessary supplies were made available: the resources for building, for the physical needs of the workers, and for the security and protection of the workers and their families. He

went around the city himself and did the actual on-site assessment of the situation and the damages that were done to the city. This allowed him to build his credibility with the local leaders who were then in leadership positions in Jerusalem and the surrounding areas. In his managerial skill, he chose a few leaders to impress the vision upon after carefully assessing the situation.

5.2.4 Delegation

One of the essential qualities of any successful leader is the ability to delegate authority. As McCain put it: “The leader must have the ability to allow others to do work under his general supervision” (2000:93-98).

We can definitely see Nehemiah’s ability to delegate. He was able to delegate the work of his building project by assigning each leader to his own family group to do a specific portion of the wall-building, according to their abilities. He organized people into a strong working force with a plan to simultaneously work on all the portions of the wall allocated to them. He then continued providing materials and physical supplies for the workers. Indeed, delegating is a skill that effective church administrators use well. Rush makes this point even more clearly when he says about delegation:

It is the entrusting of a task to the care or management of another. Good delegating matches the assignment with the abilities of the person who receives the assignment. It also carries with it the freedom to act—the authority to carry out the assignment (Rush 1983:208).

Nehemiah knew that he could not build the entire wall around the city of Jerusalem by himself. He knew how to select people and give them responsibilities. A good leader gives those under his supervision the opportunity to develop their own skills to do their work. A good leader will give his subordinates several duties to carry out. Nehemiah’s teamwork style enabled him to bring forth fast results in the work of rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem.

5.2.5 Motivation

Nehemiah used his principle of delegation well in order to get the work done within his timeframe. It is significant to see that the following principles in Nehemiah's leadership could become the mark of a man with the spirit of motivation. Indeed, what distinguishes a leader from an ordinary individual is the intensity of his or her vision. The vision has to be a motivating force within. Nehemiah maintained fully this principle of motivation. Lee defines motivation as a driving force that can be found in a situation where a person's interests are captured through his or her desires directed toward different things. According to Lee, motivation could be:

Materials—focused on financial gain, or gain in kind. They can also be emotional—focused on the approval of others or status, or being made into an idol. But the only effective motivation for leadership is visionary—focused on a driving conviction about the goal to be reached (Lee 2000:14-17).

Nehemiah took action by motivating the whole society, especially the leaders, to work courageously for the welfare of their children and wives and to fight for the land. He encouraged them with the word of God that God's hand was going to fight on their behalf if the people took their ground and stood firm and faced the challenges the enemies were using to threaten and weaken their faith during the work of rebuilding the city. Nehemiah's spirit of motivation created in people the courage to move toward the destiny of the ownership of their land and the importance of the project they were undertaking. The people felt the needs and concentrated with dedication to defend their land and rebuild it.

5.2.6 Communication

One of the principles clearly seen in Nehemiah's leadership is good communication skills. When he received a report from his homeland, he questioned his brother about the condition of Jerusalem. He knew how to draw out information from others. McCain defines communication as follows:

Communication is one of the single issues that is essential for leadership and that most

often causes problems for leadership. Leaders who cannot or do not communicate effectively will not be successful leaders. Leaders might have the greatest ideas in the world but if they cannot communicate them, they will have few followers. They may be brilliant and hard workers, but if they can not interact with people they are not good leaders (McCain 2000:111).

The principle of communication seen in the life of Nehemiah here is confirmation that any successful leader would be a good communicator. Nehemiah definitely had the skill of communication. His communication was well understood by his community; that was why they continued carrying on with their work day and night with determination. He was able to challenge his enemies on the spot with bold responses, and he made it clear in his writing that they were liars and that God would prove it by accomplishing the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem. He assured his people and their enemies that the project he was carrying out was more important than anything else because it was a godly mission.

5.2.7 Problem-solving

Nehemiah was a good manager who was able to solve a community problem. If one has created a good plan and has properly oriented the people about what needs to be done, all that remains for the leader to do is to solve the various new, unanticipated problems that arise. If a person cannot deal with the pressure that comes from working with these unforeseen problems, then he or she will never be a great leader. As McCain commented:

Most problems leaders face fall into two general categories, Internal and External. Internal problems are those problems which are from within the organization, from those who supposedly are friendly. Secondly, the External problems Nehemiah faced primarily had to do with his enemies who tried several different approaches to confuse him and his people in order to stop the project of building (McCain 2000:119).

In Chapter 4:9-18, Nehemiah's strategy was to deal with the physical threats from his people's enemies. He posted guards at strategic places. It showed the enemies that the Jews were prepared for any problems. It also showed the workers that they would be protected. Both of these safeguards are equally important in leadership. He assured the

people that God was with them. Whenever our people begin to get discouraged in doing God's work, that is the time to remind them of God's sovereignty. Like Nehemiah, the leader needs to keep people's attention on the positive and not the negative.

Problem-solving was Nehemiah's goal. He was a man of wisdom and integrity. He possessed the ability and the courage to solve community problems, both external and internal. He was a practical man; when a problem arose he cried out to God in prayer first. His life was surrounded by spirituality and the warmth of his faith in God. He was a man of generosity both in resources and the sharing of knowledge. He maintained a high spirit of purity and dealt with the roots of the problems with focus. He was a man with the ability to discern spirits that manipulated situations to discourage his people or himself. He could respond to his enemies in tough language without compromise and make sure that his own leaders and the people heard his response to their enemies. He made sure that the poor people in the society were equally served and as well protected as the rest.

5.2.8 Discipline

No leader can be truly effective without being able and willing to discipline and correct those under his supervision. Nehemiah, though very supportive of his people when they had problems, was very unafraid and willing to discipline them. Discipline, in Nehemiah's leadership, was seen to be a good principle because he applied it properly to meet his community's needs. For instance, when he saw some leaders were misusing the facilities, failing to fulfil their responsibilities, and violating God's Word, he took effective measures to discipline them.

Another issue Nehemiah dealt with was the leadership of the Jewish people in regard to the grain that was supposed to be given to the Levites. The various portions of grain and other food items that should have been given to the Levites had not been given to them. This had so discouraged the Levites that they had all abandoned their responsibilities in the temple and had gone back to their individual farms. He disciplined all the officials and community leaders who were misbehaving in the community. They were doing a lot of injustice to their own people or compromising with the foreigners on important things

such as the use of the temple properties, entering into mixed marriages, shifting from using their language, and worshipping the foreigners' gods, who led many people to sin against God. He made clear to all community leaders that the disgraceful situation that fell upon the land and the people was a result of these sins they had committed. In his reforms, he showed that he was a man who upheld the cultural identity of his ancestors by keeping his language. With respect to religion, he reinforced the reading of God's law, which was to be read to all, young and old, in order to restore spiritual discipline to those who had messed up and divorced God's law from their lives. Those who had disregarded the law were rebuked by Nehemiah directly.

5.3 The Need to Integrate Nehemiah's Leadership Principles to the Nuba Tira

5.3.1 Nehemiah had a holistic vision

Nehemiah's eight principles are important for reaching the key people of the Nuba Tira. In order to break through to the spiritual leaders and elders, it would require a radical rethinking of ministry. Instead of focusing on young people alone, church leaders should have a holistic vision that concentrates on the leadership of the community as well. The pastors must be convinced that their responsibility is to include elders in their major plans, instead of liaising directly only with the young members in regard to community welfare. Nehemiah won followers from all kinds of important people in authority, beginning with the king Artaxerxes to Ezra and to other civic and religious leaders of his community, especially those who worked with him to rebuild the wall. The traditional cultural barriers have affected evangelism among the Nuba Tira because of traditional leadership style. They have strong personality, position in the community, or power and influence that affects the decisions and direction of the community. It is therefore important for the church leaders to follow Nehemiah's pattern of ministry in the community. They should have clear vision, skills in planning, management, delegation, motivation, communication, problem-solving, and discipline.

5.3.2 Winning local leaders' confidence

In considering leadership values, the question is, “Why is there a need to apply Nehemiah leadership’s principles in Nuba Tira land?” The leadership principles and the methodology of Nehemiah are culturally relevant and applicable in Nuba Tira land. Nehemiah led his people through their own leaders after winning their confidence. He gave the people the ownership they deserved in their own context. Ownership is critical when bringing about change. Nehemiah demonstrated that he understood this. He inspired leaders and followers from a wide range of people, including religious leaders, political leaders, and merchants, as well as the common folk. Nehemiah affirmed followers. This is one of the important factors that need to be considered by the church leaders in order to win local leadership support among the Nuba Tira.

5.3.3 Affirming leaders

Among the Nuba Tira, whenever leaders are affirmed by name in what they are doing, the community tends to give attention to and follow those leaders. Nehemiah was interested in bringing about spiritual renewal as well, so he cultivated the character of the religious leaders. They played a big part in the actual spiritual renewal. The Nuba Tira have a covenant with their ancestors and God through sacrifices and rituals, and keeping the tenets of the taboos and norms. In order to break through these spiritual and social factors, church leaders need to use Nehemiah’s leadership principles to connect with the clan leaders and elders.

5.4 Summary

Clinton’s summary has made the whole book of Nehemiah not only an interesting tool but also an applicable one with many useful cross-cultural materials for teaching. Nehemiah introduced himself as a man of clear vision and an influential leader, a man with spiritual and political authority with duties toward his country and his people. He proved himself to be a leader who knew how to plan, manage, delegate, motivate, communicate, solve problems, uphold discipline, and remain spirit-led. Such principles are vital in any modern society, including the Nuba Tira. The biblical principles of the

book of Nehemiah could be greatly used in training church leadership in Nuba Tira land. Nehemiah also gives biblical principles on how to integrate biblical teachings and Christianity with the Tira traditions. In this research, its primary goal was to present a brief definition of Nehemiah's leadership principles that could be used by Christians in Nuba Tira land. In a different setting, these biblical principles could be further developed and applied beyond this basic outline in this thesis.

In Chapter 1, Nehemiah received direction from the king to rebuild Jerusalem. This would match with the lessons the church leaders need to receive about direction from the traditional spiritual leaders on how to approach the Nuba Tira spiritual matters. Likewise in Chapter 2:1-7:3, organising to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, church leaders need to organise the community along the traditional way in order to have an effective ministry. Just as Nehemiah, in Chapter 7:4-10:39, organised reforms within the traditional system, the church needs to use the Nuba Tira traditional system. Finally, as in Chapters 11-13, where Nehemiah organised for a continuity, there should be a long-term plan to create the desired Christian impact in the Nuba Tira land that would break the cultural barriers against Christianity.

The next chapter takes up the need for a general integration of the Nuba Tira traditions with biblical teachings. The integration of Nehemiah's leadership principles should fit into a Christianized Nuba Tira. For this reason, it became imperative that a Christian analysis of the Tira traditional symbols of authority and taboos be undertaken in the next chapter as a means of integration the Nuba Tira traditions with Christianity.

Chapter 6: Integration of Nuba Tira Traditions with Christianity

6.0 Introduction

The previous chapter showed how biblical principles of leadership of Nehemiah could be integrated into Tira church leadership. In this chapter, the major focus was on how to integrate the Tira traditional religious beliefs, values, symbols, taboos, practices, rituals, ceremonies and festivals with general biblical teachings and Christianity. The previous chapter was on bringing biblical teachings on leadership to bear on the Tira traditional principles of leadership, while this chapter was on bringing the Tira traditional religious beliefs, values, symbols, taboos, practices, rituals, ceremonies and festivals into biblical teachings and Christianity.

Christian consideration of cultural matters would make a great difference in Christian presentation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in Nuba Tira land. The traditional spiritual leaders and community elders paid close attention to things that are culturally relevant. One of the objectives of this research was to integrate Christian leadership principles with that of the Nuba Tira traditional leadership principles as derived from the traditional symbols of authority. The leadership role of Nehemiah in the Bible provides a leadership model that the Nuba Tira Christian leaders could use in integrating the traditional leadership principles of the Nuba Tira into Christianity. It was on account of meeting this contextual need that the researcher made extensive interviews with the clan elders in Nuba Tira. This chapter narrated and analysed the research outcomes with these clan elders. See the list of the clan leaders that were interviewed at the end of the chapter.

The integration of the traditional leadership principles focused on the seven symbols of authority which provided the traditional foundational religious and social values of the Nuba Tira as described in chapters two and three. By integrating the traditional worldview with the biblical worldview, this should transform the traditional beliefs and values in the light of Christianity. In this case, Christianity becomes a transforming agent that engages the Nuba Tira traditions and worldview. This chapter showed how Christian and biblical values engaged the Nuba Tira traditional religious beliefs, values, symbols,

taboos, practices, rituals, ceremonies and festivals. The integrative analysis in this chapter is also a critique of the missionary approach which failed at examining the nature of traditional beliefs, values, practices, taboos and ceremonies and festivals. If Christian leadership in Nuba Tira land is to be effective, it should take this chapter very seriously. The traditional leadership principles as derived from the symbols of authority of each Nuba Tira clan need to be integrated into Christianity.

These interviews brought out very clearly the Nuba Tira traditional spiritual leadership based upon the spiritual symbols of authority. These traditional spiritual leadership principles are explained along with the ways in which they could be integrated into Christianity.

6.1 Nuba Tira Traditional Leadership

Nuba Tira traditional leadership had been defined already. However, there is a need to state very briefly what it means in this chapter as applied to the spiritual symbols of authority in Nuba Tira land. Leadership is the function of a leader. And a leader is one who carries out leadership. A leader is called *imuz* (spear); or *zaz* (way); or *ta* (head); or *nanyu* (front). A Leader should be like a spear in his leadership. He has to lead the way as an example of the proper spiritual and physical life for the younger generation to follow. He is described as a human head because he carries all people's problems on his head and is also brave enough to die for his people. He is called *nanyu* because he leads in the front and gives directions.

The Nuba Tira leaders are believed to receive inspirations and insights of leadership from the ancestors who are believed to be *iddanga lemittu lananyu* (the living dead who have gone ahead in the land of the dead). In Nehemiah's case, he received inspirations and insights directly from God and not from the Jewish ancestors. Nehemiah was able to integrate the political and the spiritual in his role as a leader. Church leaders, just like Nehemiah, should be able to integrate the political and the spiritual as found in the Nuba Tira traditions. But inspiration and insights of leadership should come from the Almighty God as revealed in the Bible. Wisdom comes from Jesus Christ who is the Wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:18-19, 30). And power comes from the Holy Spirit who is the

Power of God (John 14 and 16). Traditional spiritual leadership presents many implications for integration as fully examined in this chapter. Chapter Two had discussed the clan's spiritual symbols of authority. But in this chapter, their spiritual leadership implications are examined one after the other.

The church leadership principle of integration as advocated in this chapter is based upon the leadership model of Nehemiah. Nehemiah was able to successfully integrate the spiritual and the political. The clan structure of the Nuba Tira was organized by integrating the spiritual and the political. The clan symbols of authority demonstrate the spiritual aspects, while the positions of the leaders and elders demonstrate the political. The Nuba Tira leaders and elders were able to integrate the spiritual and the political as Nehemiah did. But missionary Christianity that came to Nuba Tira land failed to evangelize effectively the traditional spiritual leaders because they did not integrate the spiritual and the political as Nehemiah did. For the church to have an effective outreach, ministry and impact among the Nuba Tira, the principle of integrating the spiritual and the political needs to be adopted. There is a need of understanding the Nuba Tira traditional concept of leadership.

6.2 Traditional Leadership and Symbols of Authority

The leader's symbol of authority is the basis of understanding the traditional concept of spiritual and political leadership. This symbol of authority as held by the leaders and elders integrates their spiritual and political roles. Chapter three showed how the leader's symbol of authority is controlled by spiritual beings, through a specific object such as a god of the sun or of rain. A leader's authority is controlled by the supernatural beings through a specific object (symbol) as discussed in chapter 3. Each clan had an object (symbol) which is a spiritual being that possesses and dispenses authority to the leaders and elders of the clan. Each leader has a spiritual foundation in the symbols for his leadership. Leadership cannot exist without a spiritual foundation. For this reason, the Nuba Tira have a traditional spiritual leadership which needs to be integrated with the Christian spiritual leadership as found in the person of Nehemiah in his leadership role and style.

The Nuba Tira traditional spiritual leadership is also rooted in their cultural worldview. It is a foundation that is extremely important and requires that the leadership of the church pays great attention. If the church is able to integrate this traditional spiritual leadership as Nehemiah did, this would create an understanding between Christians and the Nuba Tira people, especially the traditional leaders. This also would strengthen Christian leadership authority among the Nuba Tira people.

The Nuba Tira live in clans and each clan has its own spiritual symbol of authority and role among the Nuba Tira as explained in chapters two and three. This chapter, however, explained how to integrate both the clan and its spiritual symbols of authority into Christianity. The roles of both the clan and its symbol of authority are stated very briefly. What is not compatible with Christianity is also stated very briefly.

6.3 Integrating Spiritual Beings in Charge of the Sky

This section describes how to integrate the various spiritual beings or symbols of authority of the various clans of the Nuba Tira into Christianity. Each clan is called by the name of its own symbol of authority. These symbols represent spiritual beings or gods.

The spiritual beings in charge of the sky are:

Itumbel, the god of the sun, the god of the angels,

Ohovan, the god of the rainbow,

Ittubo, the god of the rain and the god of lightning and thunder.

From the description and definition of each clan and its spiritual symbol as discussed in Chapter Two, it was clear that these beliefs were strongly backed by spiritual beings that dominated the traditional religion of the Nuba Tira.

The *Itumbel* clan leads the Nuba Tira in the worship of *Elo Kerilasa* (God the creator) and makes the people to understand that He is the Almighty God. In addition, the Nuba Tira believe in *Itembel* the god of the sun whose main responsibility is protection. He is the god of protection. He helps the Tira specially when an enemy attacks any Nuba Tira community. An *Itumbel* elder usually performs a ritual of dealing with enemies. A

successful ritual would inflict a lot of death among the enemies and rescue the Nuba Tira community.

Besides *Itumbel*, the Tira also believe in a chief angel called *Ugubala*. He is the messenger of God the Almighty. He came in human form with his heavenly seat called *arri*. Elders believed that when he came he stayed in the house of an *Itumbel* clan and later got married and become part of *Itumbel* clan to this day.

The elders narrated that one day God sent *Ugubala* to show the Tira community how to deliver a baby and how to make fire from certain wood called *iboz* in order to make hot porridge for a delivered mother. The myth says that before *Ugubala* came, many men lost their wives during delivery. They used to cut a mother with a stone called *aya*, take out the baby and let the mother die. But now *Ugubala* had rescued many women by showing men how to help women in labour to deliver safely. The *Itumbel* clan believes that their grandfather was called *Ugabala*.

The Tira believe that *Ugubala* is also in charge of both southern and northern rains, rainbow, lightning and thunder with a number of angels working under his authority. *Ugubala* has authority to inflict fire and blessings of rains for the wellbeing of the common people. The four clans, *Itumbel*, *Ittubo*, *Inuli*, and *Ohovan* do perform general ritual prayers together, led by an *Itumbel* elder with another three elders standing beside him, each in support of the other in their supplications to God.

For these gods to operate actively, blood sacrifice of specific animals must be done by the elders. It is a taboo for a clan to eat some animals. The good relationship between the clans and the ancestors, God and the gods are maintained by these rituals. This belief holds the Tira people in a spiritual bondage of fear. Even though these spiritual symbols have been a great value and significance to the Tira people, they are spiritual beliefs that are contrary to the Christian faith. For Christians, their only spiritual guide similar to that of *Ugubala* or *Itumbel* is the Holy Spirit. He is the Spirit of God who guides, teaches and directs Christians to follow the path of God. God Himself is the direct protector of Christians and not *Ugubala* or *Itumbel*. Just as Nehemiah did in the Bible Tira Christians should learn to depend upon God and the Holy Spirit and not the sun or angels. In the

Bible, angels are only God's messengers and they had no any continuous dealing with human beings, apart from being only sent to minister to human needs. But with the Tira traditions, these spirit beings were believed to be in charge of all phenomena in the sky. The power to control the heavens and the sky rests only in the hands of God the Creator.

All these traditional beliefs in *Itumbel*, *Ittubo*, *Inuli* and *Ohovan* with the following practices are contrary to the Christian faith: sprinkling of blood to the sun, looking for a sign showing a red sun, making of a circle sign on the ground, inflicting death on others through rituals, ritual of killing people with lightning or thunder, controlling of northern rain by *Ittubo* clan, southern rain by *Inuli* clan and killing people by a rainbow strike by *Ohovan* clan. These beliefs and practices should be discouraged. The spirits that are in charge of doing these things, are not God's angels, but agents of Satan. There is no mediator between God and human beings, except Jesus Christ 1 Timothy 2:5. 'For there is one God and one Mediator between God and human beings, who is Christ Jesus.'

However, the Tira have some teachings about the sun, the moon and the stars that are quite similar to those of the Bible. The Bible teaches that God created the sun (Gen 1:14-19). The Tira have a similar story of creation. God created the sky, the sun, the moon and the stars and put them in their respective locations. He gave to each its own duties: For the sun He commanded it to work during daytime only and that it should follow its given road when going about its duty. For the moon and the stars they were commanded to appear at night only and they should follow their respective paths and assigned locations. This traditional teaching is similar to biblical teachings of creation and it should be encouraged and be integrated into Christian teachings. The traditional symbol of *Itembel*, the sun, can be modified and made compatible to biblical teachings on God's creation of the sun.

The second example of the traditional spiritual symbol that is similar to the Bible is *Ohovan*, the rainbow. The biblical rainbow appeared in Genesis 9:8-17. The Nuba Tira story of *Ohovan* was narrated by the elders of the *Ohovan* clan. After God had created *Kuku* and *Kaka*, the first grandparents, they gave birth to many children. As they continued to spread around the earth, they became disobedient to God the creator, *Elo*

Kamakama, who had created them. This act made God angry with the generation of *Kuku* and *Kaka*. God then decided to kill all the people and their animals on earth and make new people. But He found one of the sons of *Kuku* and *Kaka* called *Umele* who was a good man who followed his grandparents' rule. God talked to him to have an agreement with him to continue to be in charge of the good generation through his children. God protected *Umele* and his family from the big flood of the water which He sent to destroy all the earth.

After God had finished cleaning the earth His anger cooled down. He told *Umele* to make a clean sacrifice. Then God made the *Ohovan*, the rainbow in the sky with three colours and told *Umele* that this is going to be your *urrddun*, the covenant. Whenever I send plenty of waters on earth again and I see this rainbow I will not kill all people again. And whenever you are walking and the rain starts falling on you before reaching home, just take ashes from the fire you had cooked with and throw it up into the sky, the rainbow will appear and the rain will stop.

This *Ohovan* story is similar to biblical teachings. Though the Tira has a different name than the Jewish name Noah, there is similarity in the concept which cannot be difficult for the Tira Christians to understand. Although the *Umele* clan had a different spiritual meaning attached to this *Ohovan* with a yearly ritual performance, yet the common traditional teaching is similar to the biblical narrative about the story of Noah and the flood. This traditional spiritual symbol of *Ohovan* can be integrated into Christianity. This can strengthen the Tira Christians and may attract the traditional spiritual leaders and elders to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The good traditional beliefs of the Tira could be integrated into Christianity, such as: the Almighty God who is the creator of all things. He created the sun, the moon, the stars, rain, animals, human beings and spirit beings. The Tira Christians could strengthen their biblical beliefs by emphasizing what is similar in traditional teachings to that of the Bible.

All the clan leaders and elders are involved in animal sacrifice to the spiritual symbols or gods which represent them before God. This blood sacrifice is a foreshadow of what is to

come, the once and for all sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross as stated in Hebrews chapters seven to ten. The clan priesthood in charge of worship is similar to the Jewish priesthood which was replaced by Jesus as the only Mediator between God and man. The Nuba Tira clans no longer need blood sacrifices or the clan priesthood as all these have been replaced by Jesus Christ through the cross. These spiritual beings as guide and helpers have been replaced by the Holy Spirit as stated by Jesus in John 14 and 16.

The traditional Ugubala, the messenger of God has been replaced by Jesus Christ who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6) and the Holy Spirit who is the Comforter and the Teacher. By incorporating the Itumbel clan's idea of Ugabala, Christianity in Nuba Tira land would look more indigenous and not foreign in both traditional understanding and the leadership system.

6.4 Integrating Spiritual Beings in Charge of the Air

The spiritual beings in charge of the air are controlled by various clans:

the *Letterugum* clan in charge of tornados;

the *Legejen* clan in charge of storms;

the *Lettogoy* clan in charge of winds; and

the *Danggal* clan in charge of dust.

As discussed in Chapter Two, the Tira based their understanding of the work of these spiritual beings through the clan symbols of authority. They believe that these spirits have ability to operate in the air. There is a clear difference between the sky and the air. The air is considered as blowing winds, while the sky is a solid flat wide stone that God had fixed above the earth and it is part of God's home. Some spirits operate on the sky and some operate through trees, mountains and rivers. People are not allowed to go to some of these places alone or at night, fearing that they could be attacked by the spirits. They actually call these spirits 'people' of mountains or trees or rivers. These spirits could

attack people and because of this, they are feared.

The authority of *Letterugum*, *Legejen*, *Lettogoy* and *Danggal* clans is also important to all other Nuba Tira clans. They contribute to the welfare of the whole community. Each symbol is used as a means of protection of the clan and as well of a wider community. The four clans have much in common in their rituals and sacrifices. Each of them has a significant role that is common to all the Nuba Tira leaders and elders. For example elders of the *Letterugum*, *Legejen*, *Lettogoy*, and *Danggal* clans narrated the role of their clans and gods as follows:

Letterugum clan claimed that they could cause mental disorder or lunacy in humans. The clan has the power to command a tornado to blow strongly against trees and houses, causing damages to their enemies, whenever attacked or harmed. This is done through a special ritual and sacrifice and calling upon the dead ancestors, *iddanga ilay nanyu*, (those who have gone before us to the Land of *Kumazi*, land of waiting or paradise, good place near God).

Legejen clan claimed the authority to call upon storms to blow in the faces of their enemies. If anyone would want to drive an enemy away from his or her direction, the *Legejen* spirit would do it upon request. Ritual and sacrifice are usually offered to God and the ancestors so that the spirits would help the victim out of trouble. *Legejen* elders believed that their winds come from the northern direction. If the winds blow from a different direction that one is not the sign of their god.

Lettogoy clan claimed the power over the winds through their god who protects them and their property against others.

Danggal clan claimed the power to cause dust to arise from the ground, sucked up by storms and strong winds. It is believed that this spirit of dust can cause the dust to roll up into a thick pillar stretching high into the sky and then surround someone's house, in order to cause that person to confess an offence against the *Danggal*. Ritual and sacrifice are obligatory to God and the ancestors in order to motivate the spirits to help the victim. These spiritual phenomena are important to the clan elders as they continue to serve their

communities in their spiritual duties.

All the elders of these clans agreed that all their gods contribute to the protection and wellbeing of the whole Nuba Tira communities against their enemies. But if one is innocent and someone tried to harm or threaten one with a ritual, nothing would happen, instead the ritualist might be harmed by the same evil. The elders believed that their gods are just and upright. They also believed that they themselves are also disciplined by the spirits of the ancestors that are in charge of their symbols should they make a mistake.

These four clans are believed to have angelic spirits. They bring blessings, protection and justice to the people. The elders believed that during family occasions, their particular symbols of authority do appear in a small way near the place of the occasion as a sign of assurance of ancestors' blessings. When such a thing occurs, it is meant for peace and not destruction. Whenever it happens, an elder would sprinkle water over the symbol as a response of greetings to the ancestors who come to greet.

There are some traditional spiritual beliefs about these symbols of authority of the four clans that are contrary to Christianity. A belief in the powers to call upon the spirits in charge of their symbols through the dead ancestors to inflict destruction on their enemies is contrary to biblical teachings. The Bible is against such practices (Leviticus 19:31; Deuteronomy 18:11).

Secondly, they are all bound to make certain sacrifices and rituals in order to access this power. Thirdly, their clans are forbidden to eat some animals as a taboo to their gods, who work through the dead ancestors. Fourthly, there is a strong spiritual and physical fear that if sacrifices and rituals are not done annually, some sicknesses, deaths and losses can occur in their clans. These are the traditional beliefs and practices that the Tira Christians are to avoid as their teachings are contrary to biblical teachings. Just as Nehemiah did in evaluating the spiritual state of his people, the Tira church leaders should be able to assess the spiritual state of their people and rid the Christian communities of such harmful traditional religious and social practices.

However, there are some traditional beliefs about the spiritual symbols that are

compatible with Christianity. The Tira believe God created all natural things including tornados, storms, winds and dust. Secondly, they believe that God had put angels in charge of all the different elements of creation: some are in charge of people, the sky, the heavens and the earth. Nothing exists without *Elo Kamakama*, God Almighty. They do not believe that those spirits are more powerful than God the creator. They are just God's agents put in charge of nature by Him. The basic problem of the Nuba Tira traditional beliefs is in the area of intermediaries. Between God and the people are those intermediaries as listed above which the Bible rejects as there is only One Mediator between God and man, who is the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Timothy 2:5).

However, the principle of justice among the Tira is what could be incorporated into Christianity. In traditional belief, everyone must face the consequences of his/her actions. If one tells lies or harms an innocent person, the gods or the ancestors mete out punishment for committing a sin that is not acceptable to God the creator. The recognition of the presence of various spiritual forces can bring the traditional Nuba Tira to accept the spiritual solutions to the problems of life that Christianity offers. They are like a school master that leads them ultimately to Jesus Christ.

There are many Tira spiritual symbols that are mentioned in the Bible that could be the contact points of leading the Nuba Tira to Christianity. Storms, winds and dust are mentioned in the Bible (Matthew 8:22-27). Jesus calmed the sea storm and quieted the raging winds. It shows that Jesus has power and authority over nature. And His power is by far much greater than that of the clan leaders and elders. Secondly, in Exodus 8:16-19, the Lord God told Moses to strike the dust of the ground in order to challenge Pharaoh's authority. The *Legejen* clan leaders have to perform some rituals in order to stir up dust, unlike Moses who was only commanded to strike the dust. Such aspects can help Tira Christians to see that God the creator has power and authority over the dust. The Tira traditional spiritual leaders need to know that God and Jesus Christ have direct power and authority over nature and the spiritual and supernatural forces that seem to control nature. Even though the Tira traditional people believed in God, the Supreme Being, they also believe that God had entrusted the care of human beings into the hand of spirit beings. These spirit beings tended to occupy a prominent place in Tira rituals, sacrifices and

worship. The Tira Christian leaders have a great task of removing the space that these spirit beings occupy that is between God and the Tira people. This spiritual space can be replaced by Jesus Christ, the Mediator and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, protector, Sustainer and Provider.

6.5 Integrating Spiritual Beings in Charge of the Grains

The *Lettaru* is the god of grain and is controlled by the *Lettaru* clan. This god maintains the vitality of all living things, and especially the blessings of the grains. Secondly, he blesses the wombs of women to be productive or curses them to be barren if the gods are not happy with her or if she has done something wrong. Thirdly, they can prevent the *caya* birds from eating crops. Fourthly, they can protect animals from diseases and death through purification and ritual. Fifthly, they can prevent *lemrrta*, certain insects like white ants from eating grains in the granary. All these are the roles played by the *Lettaru* clan.

The *Lettaru* clan makes sure that the living things are productive and protected from diseases through some purification rituals and taboos. The Nuba Tira value the *Lettaru* rituals because they are concerned with the fertility and productiveness of their women and animals. Marriage without production is not marriage, but a curse. Animals that do not increase are a sign of a curse. If *caya* birds continue devouring the crops, this is also a sign of a curse. The role of the *Lettaru* clan is like that of a redeemer, said one of the *Lettaru* clan elders. The clan is like a doctor of women and animals.

However, there are some traditional beliefs about this spiritual symbol of authority that are contrary to Christianity. The *Lettaru* clan claims to have the power to prevent diseases from killing people or animals, yet many animals and people die. There is a belief that a *Lettaru* ritual can protect people from death. One of the *Lettaru* clan elders commented that death is from God and when it comes no ritual can stop it. This shows that the *Lettaru* ritual is limited in fighting death.

The *Lettaru* clan elders believed that grain is one of God's common graces given to all men. They also believed that the *Lettaru* ancestor was given the responsibility of blessing

the grains for all the Nuba Tira people so that they could multiply. The concept of living things created by God to multiply and increase is found in Genesis 1:27-28. Similarly, the biblical concept of caring for creation is also found in the *Lettaru* clan. They are responsible for production and multiplication as God told Adam the first man. Disobedience to God brings about God's curses upon the people. In Deuteronomy 27 and 28 the Bible listed a number of curses that included drought, famine, barrenness, locusts and infertility. Prosperity from God is dependent upon the obedience of His people.

The traditional value of the *Lettaru* belief that can be incorporated into Christianity is the protection of crops, livestock, and the fertility of the wombs of women. The concept of human and animal multiplication on the earth is in agreement with the biblical teaching in Genesis 1: 28-29. Secondly, the traditional fight against crop eating insects and the idea of abundant grain harvest relate to the biblical concepts of God's blessings upon the crops, livestock and the wombs of women. The traditional ideas of blessings of farm lands and the crops for abundant harvest, the blessings of marriages and the wombs of women and invoking God's protection over the communities and the people is an essential belief and value. Christian prayers and thanksgivings, which replace the traditional rituals that are offered to the *Lettaru* god, are to be offered to God.

6.6 Integrating Spiritual Beings in Charge of Mental Health

The *Letterrugun* and *Rreme* clans have similar roles in Nuba Tira as narrated by the elders.

The *Letterrugun* clan causes and heals madness;

The *Rreme* clan causes and heals confusion in the mind.

Both clans deal with mental sicknesses. Their role in the community is to heal madness or mental confusion. The spirits cause madness on a demand to harm someone. As narrated by the elders in chapter two, the victim could be thrown into confusion in order to lose direction or get lost in the bush.

These two clans have rituals of healing the diseases or sending away the enemies who

might come to attack the villages. The purification rituals could drive away the enemies by causing them to be confused or make them to lose their way back home. They may end up in the hands of their enemies or wild animals may devour them.

The *Letterrugun* and *Rreme* gods could help the clans fight their enemies and win victories. If someone keeps on getting confused, it is possible a wrong had occurred or that one might have eaten something from *Letterrugun* or *Rreme* gods without their permission. The *Letterrugun* and *Rreme* clans have taboos that, if broken, invite severe punishment.

The traditional beliefs of the *Letterrugun* and *Rreme* that are contrary to Christianity are the power they have to cause mental disease, madness and confusion. The rest of the Nuba Tira clans live in fear of these two clans. Christianity does not invoke madness, confusion or mental disease in people but brings them into both spiritual and physical wholeness and health.

In Deuteronomy 28:28 Moses told the Israelites that the Lord God would afflict them with mental madness, blindness and confusion of mind on account of their sins. This verse is very close to *Letterrugun* and *Rreme* beliefs. The *Rreme* clan elders claimed to have spiritual power to cause people to be confused in their minds and to lose sight and *Letterrugun* clan elders claimed the power to control certain spirits that cause people to go mad or get confused or run all over the place. In this case, these two clans have taken the place of God who directly punishes His people who sin against Him. This act of God's curse upon His people is not meant to be carried out by human beings, but only by God. These acts of the two clans share in a wickedness which God condemns.

The Bible has shown that evil spirits could cause people to be mad or confused. The activities of the two clans amount to wickedness and evil. Disobedience to God could invite punishment or a curse.

However, disobedience to God can incur punishment or a curse. The *Letterrugun* and *Rreme* clans' role of healing mental illness and confusion could be incorporated into Christianity through Christian prayers of healings, deliverance and mental wholeness.

The church could establish a prayer and healing ministry to replace the traditional roles of the *Letterrugun* and *Rreme* clans.

6.7 Integrating Spiritual Beings in Charge of Wild Animals

The *Lecahumo* and *Lahalu* clans have similar roles in Nuba Tira as narrated by the elders.

The *Lecahumo* clan causes lions to kill people and livestock;

The *Lahalu* clan causes leopards to kill people and livestock.

The role of these two clans among the Nuba Tira is to protect the animals from the lions and the leopards. The Nuba Tira keep animals and they value them very much. They use them for consummation of weddings and sacrifices. No occasion or ritual is done without shedding of blood. The Nuba Tira elders respect the *Lecahumo* and *Lahalu* clans because of their roles of protecting the livestock.

The traditional Nuba Tira believe that the gods of *Lecahumo* and *Lahalu* protect their animals from other animals and raiding groups. The *Lecahumo* and *Lahalu* clans perform the annual ritual of the protection of the animals on behalf of the whole Nuba Tira communities. The people can go to them to ask for rituals of protection from the lions and the leopards. The gods of *Lecahumo* and *Lahalu* are feared and respected by all the clans because of the presence of the lions and the leopards. The Nuba Tira people make sure that they keep good relationship with the *Lecahumo* and *Lahalu* clans.

The elders of these two clans believe that they have the power to call upon lions and leopards to kill people or animals. This belief and practice is contrary to Christianity. Christianity does not encourage the harming or killing of people by any means.

There are passages in the Bible that use the symbols of a lion or a leopard (Revelation 5:5). Jesus Christ is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah. In Revelation 13:2, John saw the beast that resembled a leopard but had feet like those of a bear and a mouth like that of a lion. The images of Leopard and Lion represent authority and power. But in the traditions of the Nuba Tira, the *Lecahumo* and *Lahalu* symbols represent the spirits that work

through the Lions and the Leopards. The elders of these clans believed that the spirits only possess these animals when they do their rituals and sacrifices. The traditional invoking of spirits to possess the animals for harm is contrary to biblical teachings. These acts and rituals are in themselves evil.

In the Bible, the symbolic use of the lion or a leopard refers to authority and power that relates to kings or rulers. But ultimately, all power and authority belong to God and His Christ. The Nuba Tira Christians can point their people beyond the symbols of *Lecahumo* and *Lahalu* to the final authority that God has vested in Jesus Christ. Paul and Peter in the Bible talk about Jesus reconciling us with God and also taking our infirmities and healing all our diseases (Ephesians 2:14-18; 1 Peter 2:24; Psalm 103:3)

6.8 Integrating Spiritual Beings in Charge of Vitality

The spiritual beings in charge of living things, such as: human beings, animals, crops, trees, and grass are *Logojomarr*, *Logohoval*, *Lugumbihi*, *Lagatterri* and *Lenddonyo* as discussed in chapter two. The elders of these clans claimed that they own these symbols and gods. They believe that everything around them is religious, that there are bad spirits and good spirits who fight one another in order to live among the humans and cause trouble to man, animals, crops, trees, grass, mountains, and hills. These clans have similar rituals, sacrifices and taboos. The common traditional belief about vitality is very importance to these clans and their symbols and gods.

The *Logojomarr* clan has the role of blessing the crops and farm to produce in planting.

The *Logohoval* clan has the role of blessing and purifying the farms, crops, harvests and storage.

The *Lugumbihi* clan has the role of blessing the consumption of the first Cabiya crop in September.

The *Lagatterri* clan has the role of blessing the *ngurez*, sesame seed.

The *Lenddonyo* has the role of blessing and anointing people and animals for fertility and

production.

The roles and values of these four clans and their symbols of authority revolve around the things that the Nuba Tira community value so much: the blessings of prosperity for human beings, animals, crops, trees, farms and grass. God values and blesses the humans so that they can continue to live and multiply on earth. Animals are highly valued for their multiple uses. A blessing and ritual stone is usually thrown among the animals and the farm fields for higher yield. Sacrifices are offered to God and ancestors and for marriages. Grains and crops are used for spiritual offerings to God. They are either burnt or boiled and thrown to heaven for God or down for the ancestors. Wine is also offered along with animal and grain offerings. Trees are valuable goods. Wood is used for burning sacrifices and building of houses and shelters. One of the trees that was shown by the *Ugubala* angel for making fire is still valued today. Grass is also used for spiritual purposes. Some grass is used for making ritual fires. Grass is also used for building houses. Some roots of trees and grass seeds are used in healing rituals. All properties and possessions are usually purified by the clan elders for their protection.

The *Logojomarr* clan uses *Lamoroz*, a ritual stone for blessings. It is an anointed stone and is usually set aside in a place called *angana yenyirrada*, a house of spiritual things. It is a special stone that can be broken piece by piece and given to each person who comes for crop blessing. As an anointed stone, it is used for blessing people and the crops to increase in production.

There are some aspects of the beliefs and practices of these four clans that are contrary to Christianity. For example, *Lugumbihi* clan believes that for *Cabiya* to grow well a ritual and a sacrifice must be performed. It is the same with the *Lagatterri* clan. For sesame to grow abundantly, this has to depend upon their ritual and sacrifice. The *Logohoval* clan fear that their women with babies could be destroyed if the sesame ritual and sacrifices are not done properly. All these traditional beliefs and practices focus on using the local gods and spirit beings and the ancestors and not God Almighty. The fear of curses upon the produce of the farms, crops and women is what drives the people to the gods of these four clans. The clan taboos strike fear into the people lest they fail to observe them. The

fear of breaking taboos dominates the life of the people.

However, there are some traditional practices that are compatible with Christianity as narrated by the clan elders. *Logjomarr* clan has a *Lamoroz* stone that is used for blessing the people, animals, farms and crops. This stone actually means that which is being set aside, the anointed thing. Jesus Christ is called the Christ, which means the Anointed One. Jesus Christ can be called in Nuba Tira the *Lamoroz*, the Messiah, the Christ, the Lord. The Bible also uses the imagery of a stone to represent Jesus Christ. Jesus is called the Rock, the Chief Corner Stone. The Bible talks a lot about precious stones, especially in the Book of Revelation (2:17; 21).

The traditional concept of blessing human beings, animals, farms and crops is very similar to the accounts of the Bible where God blesses His people by making the women, animals and farms to yield plentifully, for example, Joseph's and Pharaoh's dreams. Jesus' parables in the Gospels. The *Lugumbihi*, clan has the idea of giving one tenth which is the head that belongs to God. The *Lenddonyo* and *Lagatterri* clans use the concept of anointing which is also similar to that of the Bible. The anointing oil was used to anoint prophets, kings and leaders (Exodus 30:22-33, 1 Samuel 16:11-13).

Christianity in Tira land can use some of the symbols of authority of these clans that are compatible and that could also enhance better Christian understanding among the Tira.

6.9 Integrating Spiritual Beings in charge of Diseases

As discussed in chapter two, the clans of *Ilumen*, *Litiri*, *Logosa*, and *Lezero* have common rituals and sacrifices in regards to the symbols of authority. Elders of these clans believe that their spiritual beings can heal some of the diseases that attack human beings through rituals and sacrifices. They also believe that some of these afflictions were thought to be a punishment from God through the dead ancestors when the people break the taboos. These common diseases include blindness, poor eyesight, bleeding noses, miscarriages, disabilities, mental illnesses and snakebites.

The Tira traditional beliefs about each category were received from the ancestors. The

Ilumen clan can cure *nyehe*, a disease which causes people to bleed badly from their noses. Secondly, they also claimed to be able to open animals' wombs.

The *Litiri* clan cure snakebites, while the *Logosa* clan cures skin rashes and boils. The *Lezero* clan have the power to release swarms of mosquitoes and *gnats* which are similar to mosquitoes that bite both humans and animals.

The *Ilumen*, *Litiri*, *Logosa* and *Lezero* clans have gods that can heal diseases and can also inflict them on people. Victims normally visit the elders of the clans in charge of specific diseases if they know their sickness is inflicted by a particular clan.

These clans have a significant role of bringing physical and mental healing to the Nuba Tira communities. Each clan would offer rituals and sacrifices of purifications on demand. Elders perform these religious practices in public as a sign of protecting the community.

A *Logosa* elder, before performing his ritual, would ask for confession first. A person would be asked to examine himself well and confess any hidden sin. Confession is said to speed up the process of healing. First, pain would decrease, then the wounds would dry out gradually. The elders can inflict sickness or cure it. So there is a sense of owning the sickness through their symbol of their god of rashes and boils. Christianity does not teach people to own rashes and boils to afflict others when they are wronged by them but to forgive and love them. The idea of owning something to harm or cure pain is quite common among all these clans said the elders of *Logosa*. The clans fear and respect each other because of their special authority among the Tira tribe given by their god. Some of the traditional beliefs and practices about the symbols of authority of these four clans are contrary to Christianity. Christians are not supposed to inflict diseases on people or claim to heal diseases in the manner described by the elders of the clans. In Christianity, it is the Holy Spirit who heals. But Christianity does not teach people to own diseases, or to afflict them upon others when they are wronged by them, but to forgive and love them. The idea of owning something and using it to harm or bring cure is common among clans. Each clan fears the other and respects them because of the authority that each clan has among the Tira tribe.

However, the symbols of authority of these clans are found in the Bible. The *Lezero* clan can release a swarm of mosquitoes or gnats upon humans and animals. These same symbols are found in the plagues of the book of Exodus. God told Moses to strike the dust of the ground to release the gnats (Exodus 8:16-19). The snake symbol of the *Litiri* clan can be compared with the children of Israel who murmured against God in the desert and God sent venomous snakes among them to bite them and many died (Numbers 21:4-9). The *Logosa* clan deal with rashes and boils as in Exodus 9:10 and Deuteronomy 28:27. Christians can use these symbols to introduce Christian teachings and beliefs to the people Tira. The traditional beliefs in diseases and the healing practices provide Christians with a great opportunity of establishing a powerful healing ministry among the Tira. Church leaders need to use traditional symbols and illustrations that can be used to introduce Christianity and biblical teachings.

6.10 Integrating Spiritual Beings in charge of Prophecy

The Nuba Tira grouped the spiritual beings in charge of prophecy into two groups. The first group are those in charge of godly prophecy and the second are the magicians, witchdoctors, those with the evil eye and bewitching spirits. This second group prophesy to people about things that affect their daily lives. They manifest their authority upon people by using the names of their dead ancestors.

6.10.1 The Good Spirits

The clan of the *Ngettele* is a sub-clan of the *Itumbel* clan that has a symbol of authority of an angelic being *Ugubala* who blesses the humans and property. He was the one sent to help the Nuba Tira men on how to help the delivering of women in childbirth. Prophecy comes through him also. He warns people of any danger or coming blessings from God. This angel does not need people to sacrifice or do ritual or purification for him in order for him to come for them or do something for them. He comes at any time by the authority of *Elo Kamakama*, God Almighty, without the need or help of spiritual leaders.

The good spirits or the angelic group of spirit beings are the most valued by all the clans. They bring good news from God to the people and also warn them of good or bad things

to come.

6.10.2 The Bad Spirits

The bad spirits as listed above cause problems to the communities and are attributed to *Umazi*, Satan. These bad spirits are also believed to be those of the dead people that come back to life to possess some people or use some people to cause problems in the community. There is no specific clan that was appointed to be in charge of the bad spirits but elders believe that the spirits can come through any person in any clan. The clans of *Lettogoy* and *Rreme* are said to be the custodians of the bad spirits. No one likes anyone who identifies with these bad spirits.

Some of the traditional beliefs about *Lettogoy* and *Rreme* are contrary to Christianity. It is believed that if a person from *Lettogoy* or *Rreme* clan looks at a breast-feeding woman or a cow feeding its young, their milk would turn into blood. So also is the belief and practice of the evil eye. The evil activities of the bad spirits are contrary to the teachings of the Bible and Christianity.

The reference to angelic activities in the Nuba Tira traditions is similar to that of the Bible. The Bible states that God sent an angel to Abraham in the form of man similar to the Nuba Tira story of *Ugubala* who came in the form of a human being and spoke in the Nuba Tira language and instructed the people on what to do with a woman in childbirth and also on how to make fire. Jesus Christ, as sent by God to redeem humanity, is like the angel *Ugubala* whom God sent specifically to help the Nuba Tira people.

The belief of the Nuba Tira in good and bad spirits reflects the concept of good and evil in biblical teachings. Evil is to be shunned, while good is to be upheld. The Bible is a good resource for teaching biblical morality and ethics to the Tira people.

From the foregoing, it is observed that spirit beings, gods, or symbols of authority dominate the religious and communal life of the Tira people. They exercise control over both humanity and the environment. The well-being of the Tira people has been entrusted to these symbols of other gods. The Christian leadership of the Tira has to examine the

influence and the powers of these spirit beings on the Tira people and develop a Christian theology of well-being that can replace that of Tira traditions which are not compatible with Christianity and biblical teachings. This requires a spiritual leadership of Nehemiah that could penetrate into the heart of the Tira traditional life and transform it.

From the controlling powers of the spirits, the next issue to be treated is the social controlling power of taboos and rituals.

6.11 Taboos and Rituals of the Nuba Tira Clans

Taboos are the forbidden behaviours and practices in Nuba Tira land. When broken, the rituals of sacrifices and purifications are required for the cleansing of both the persons involved and the community or land. The Nuba Tira communities are bound by different types of taboos as narrated by the clan elders. Each clan has its own unique taboos and rituals which do not affect the others. The elders believe that the spiritual forces in control of the different taboos and rituals are controlled by the dead ancestors. The taboos and rituals operate in accordance with the traditional norms as set by the ancestors. The Tira taboos and rituals are also intimately related to the controlling spirits with their symbols of authority. The taboos and rituals kept by each clan are closely related to the controlling spirits of the clan. Such controlling spirits demand sacrifices and purifications, should a person break the taboos. The taboos represent the do's and don'ts, the moral and ethical codes, while the rituals represent the means of cleansing, purification, forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration.

Taboos are the moral and ethical codes that guide conduct, behaviour and social practice. For this reason, the morality of the traditional Tira would be different from that of Christianity and the Bible. This is where a good Christian leadership of the type of Nehemiah is greatly needed in Tira land that would integrate the Tira taboos and rituals into Christianity and biblical teachings.

The nature and practice of the Tira clan taboos and rituals are described in the following sections. Most of these taboos and rituals are not compatible with Christianity and biblical teachings.

6.11.1 Itumbel taboo and ritual

The *Itumbel* clan has three significant taboos: unground grain called *cabiya* in Nuba Tira, burial heat and the swearing on iron. The common belief interpreted by their elders is as follows: *Cabiya* grain represents human blood. All the *Itumbel* clan must go through a specific *Cabiya* ritual every September when this *Cabiya* is expected to be eaten during the new harvest season among the Nuba Tira. Those who do not go through this ritual would pass bloody stools which would lead to death, unless an elder purifies the victim. The burial heat represents human life. All *Itumbel* clans forbade their dead to be buried under the hot sun. Their belief is that some of their family members would die, if people sweat too much during the burial.

Finally, swearing on iron represents immediate death. The *Itumbel* use two iron tools for making people swear on their innocence: a spear and an axe. If an individual is suspected of a crime or has been falsely accused, both the accuser and the accused would be made to swear to death, using a spear or an axe by laying their hands on the object. Whoever is innocent would not be affected after swearing of his or her innocence on the object. The guilty person who would deny his or her wrongdoing, would be killed by the iron weapon. If the guilty person confesses his or her sin, the *Itumbel* elder would perform a ritual called *agovoco ngaw nge*, which involves purification with water to cleanse a person as a sign of pardon.

6.11.2 Letterrugun taboo and ritual

The *Letterrugun* have four significant taboos: storms, the healing of wounds, ‘lunacy storms’ which are a certain kind of storm that causes death and ‘sinister grain’ which is a certain kind of red grain believed to cause death to the *Letterrugun* people only. The *Letterrugun* believe that storms represent the presence of their ancestors as spirits. The *Letterrugun* expect their ancestors to appear through storms to greet them or defend them against their enemies during times of war.

Regarding ‘lunacy storms’ and ‘sinister grain’, the elders believe that they represent their ancestors’ shadow. It is therefore believed that no one should eat grain grown by the

Letterrugun clan, because it would cause lunacy leading to death. The power of healing wounds is another belief that *Letterrugun* elders claim. The wounds are said to represent bad luck that comes upon a person, for example, kicking a stone with your foot, or falling on something and hurting yourself, or something biting you or even cutting yourself with a knife or an axe. The elders believe that such accidents are a result of bad luck brought by a curse. There are many events which elders claim to be the result of bad luck. When a victim comes for this kind of wound healing, a *Letterrugun* elder would perform a special ritual, then blow into his or her nostrils with his mouth two or three times, after which the victim would be healed sometime during the week. The breath represents wind.

Finally, the clan's taboos do not allow them to invite people to eat or drink their beer, if they are having a special feast to do with a taboo issue. Also their farms should not be close to other farms due to their 'sinister grain' which people fear would cause lunacy.

6.11.2 Lettaru and Logopa taboo and ritual

The *Lettaru* and *Logopa* clans have three significant taboos: funeral rites rituals, the healing of a barren womb in humans and domestic animals and the purification of grains to yield their fruit in plenty. The two clans believe that funeral rituals represent the generational link between their dead ancestors and the living generation. Funeral rituals should be properly done and honoured. If not, animals and humans would be affected by an incurable sickness leading to death. Secondly, a barren womb represents a curse over a generation of that particular family. The elders believe that human beings and animals should produce and increase in plenty on the earth. Therefore, the elders believe that any marriage without a child is not a marriage, it is a curse from God or the ancestors, due to a mistake or some sin committed by the parents or the couple themselves, against God or the ancestors. So the elders do everything possible to see to it that rituals are performed for both the humans and the animals affected by this curse, so that their wombs function normally.

Finally, the elders of these clans also believe that they can perform 'grain rituals' for those whose crops keep failing to yield in plenty. The owner of the farm is asked to take a handful of grain in a little calabash used for planting, so that the *Lettaru* and *Logopa*

elders can pray over it and bless it before he or she starts planting. The elders claim that the *Lettaru* ritual is responsible for the quality of the grain. If the ritual is not well performed, the grain would remain small and not grow. The *Logopa* ceremony, in which both elders also participate in supporting each other's prayers, follows in two days' time. This ritual is concerned with the quantity of the crops. The elders say that they can also do this ceremony in the middle of the rainy season as a blessing to secure a rich harvest for all the Nuba Tira community.

6.11.3 Lenuli taboo and ritual

The *Lenuli* clan has two significant roles to play in regard to their taboos: stopping rain and striking with lightning. Elders of this clan believe that rain represents blessing over a generation. However they also claim that they have the full authority to stop this blessing from falling on the land, if anyone has done anything wrong against someone e.g. stealing something from them and denying it. The elders have to perform a special rain ritual, in order to stop the rain or delay it, so that the suspect would be found or would confess. This is the first peaceful method they go for before applying the second one. If the suspect would not show up during the general community public announcement made by the elders, then the elders would jointly compensate the *Inuli* man with the worth of the object lost, stolen or destroyed. Then they would pass on all their prayers of curses upon the guilty person who is not known.

After this the *Inuli* man would perform the second ritual of lightning to strike the guilty person. Normally, he has two options: either to kill him or to ask for a lightning strike that would make the guilty person faint so that he would confess. Both of these punishments are severe and are seen by everyone in the village. In the case of a lightning strike, the family or relative of the guilty person would pay for the expenses of the first ritual. Then the *Inuli* man would perform a ritual for the guilty person to recover. After the guilty person recovers and has spoken all the needed confessions and shown repentance, the elders would do a final purification ritual in which the person himself would pay the cost if he is an adult. The *Nuli* believe that their lightning can also affect their own *Nuli* people if any commit a crime against anyone in his or her own clan and

denies it.

6.11.4 Litiri taboo and ritual

The *Litiri* clan has one significant role in relation to their taboo. They claim the authority to cause snake bites against their enemies. Elders of this clan believe that snakes represent their brotherhood, the link to their ancestors. In their taboo, they are not allowed to kill or eat any snake at all. If they do, they would lose the authority to keep snakes poisonous and to heal any snake bitten victim. So they call snakes the brothers of *Litiri*. They believe that when there is a nursing mother at home, she has to express her milk on the ground for a visiting snake to come and lap it up.

Victims who are bitten by snakes come to *Litiri* to be healed through special rituals that elders perform or the *Litiri* snake poison sucker performs. The *Litiri* snake poison sucker normally cuts a small wound on the place of the snake bite, then starts sucking out poison from the victim's body several times with his or her mouth and spitting it out. After this operation he would then insert a small horn and repeat the procedure. The elders of *Litiri* believe that their *Litiri* snakes can also bite and affect any *Litiri* person who denies a crime against another *Litiri* person or who comes to seek help from a *Litiri* elder against his or her enemy. On demand a *Litiri* elder would perform a special ritual for ushering snakes in from the forest to attack or kill an enemy. Elders believe that some snakes are not under their control, and therefore, they fear those types of snakes themselves and might not heal their poisons too.

6.11.5 Lettobo taboo and ritual

The *Lettobo* clan has four significant taboos. They are not allowed to practice: killing a lion or a wild-cat and subsequently eating them, eating new pepper, but are allowed to cause locusts to devour crops or strike people with lightning like the *Nuli*. The elders of *Lettobo* believe that both animals represent their ancestors' link with the present generation. It is therefore important for *Lettobo* elders to make sure that none of their relatives are involved in any activities like killing lions or wildcats and eating them or eating new pepper. Elders believe that new pepper represents death through a certain

sickness that attacks only a *Lettobo* person.

Regarding the locusts, the elders claim that they have the authority to cause locusts to devour the crops of their enemies, if their crops are destroyed by enemies first or they can use lightning to make the perpetrators confess, if they want them to live. Elders claim that their special authority with lightning comes from the southern rain in the middle of the rainy season, when the crops are about to yield their seeds. The elders have to perform special rituals to release locusts or lightning according to the demand of people who need Lettobo rituals against their enemies or directly for their own revenge against their enemies. In both rituals sacrifices are made.

6.11.6 Lahalu taboo and ritual

The *Lahalu* clan has two significant things in relation to their taboos: leopards and new beans. The elders of *Lahalu* believe that a leopard represents the link to their ancestors' spirits. The *Lahalu* clan should not kill leopards or eat them. If they did, their own clansmen would die. They also describe a leopard as being a brother to the *Lahalu* clan. As a brother to the *Lahalu*, they believe that he would never attack a *Lahalu* person or his animals. Leopards are expected to appear during any *Lahalu* occasion in the evening hours around the house where the occasion is taking place.

After the elders give them some meat, they depart in silence back to the forest without touching any domestic animal in the village. The elders also believe that a leopard can escort a *Lahalu* person on their way at night if he or she would be walking to a distant location.

Secondly, regarding the eating of new local beans called *nguzuman* in Nuba Tira, every harvest season in the month of September *Lahalu* mothers have to perform a special ritual of purification for all their family members before eating the new beans. If they do not perform the ritual, many of their family members' stomachs would swell up and they would die if they ate the new beans. Also, the beans would be damaged. It is therefore important for the *Lahalu's* elders to purify the beans and perform the proper rituals.

6.11.7 The following clans have the same taboos

The following clans have common taboos and perform similar rituals: *Lohovan*, *Lezero*, *Liha*, *Rreme*, *Logojomarr*, *Logohoval*, *Legejen*, *Lettogoy*, *Lugumbihi*, *Lenddonyo*, *Logopa*, *Lagatterri*, *Loriyo*, *Ngettele*, *Letterrnggun*, *Logosa*, *Lecahumo* and *Lettajiri*. They have four significant things in regards to their taboos practices: squirrels, wild-cats, honey-badgers and a certain tiny long-tailed bird called *tterrmba* in the Nuba Tira language. Regarding the three animals and this one bird, the elders of these clans explain that all of them represent the knees of their ancestors.

Individuals in all the above mentioned clans are not allowed to eat any of these nor touch them. The elders believe that if a dog kills any of the three animals, the owner of the dog should report to another person from another clan who is not governed by these taboos, and tell them to go and take the animal and eat it. The elders believe that the meat and smoke of these animals and this bird would affect the knees of any individual who either eats or smells the smoke of the roasted meat. People are advised to sit opposite the smoke whenever any of these taboo animals or *tterrmba* is being roasted near their place.

In some cases, innocent children who have eaten these taboo animals or *tterrmba*, would be purified by the fat of a he-goat or a ram in the case of the *Lezero* clan. The *Lenddonyo* clan has one extra thing they are not allowed to eat. That is, they should not eat or kill a young she-goat nor drink its milk. If they do, all domestic animals of the tribe which are in milk would die or their young would die. The other clans are not bound by this extra *Lenddonyo* practice.

6.11.8 The following two clans have matching taboos

The *Danggal* and *Ilumen* clans have one significant thing in their taboos: the purification of graves. The elders of these two clans believe that graves are the home of their ancestors who have gone ahead to the land of *Kumazi* which in Nuba Tira means a land of spirits. This is the land where all the spirits of the dead ancestors are waiting for judgment day. Graves represent the first place where dead ancestors stay in order to direct the affairs of the living generations through the elders. The elders are supposed to keep

their taboos and all the traditions in line with their dead ancestors.

The elders believe that if they do not perform the grave rituals and purifications, the crops would fail. Secondly, the spirits of their ancestors would not be happy with the present generations. So the elders would make sure that the proper rituals and purifications are performed, though each clan has its own little separate rituals that they also carry out when a person passes away. The *Danggal* and *Ilumen* elders take on themselves the responsibility of purifying the graves. The grave rituals and purifications are performed once a year.

6.11.9 Traditional spiritual values beliefs

The traditional spiritual values and rules of all the clans were stated very clearly by the elders to be obligatory customs and traditions which should be practiced and followed. As a principle of moral conscience and practice, the elders believe that this is of significance. The elders of all the clans have the same general understanding about the taboos of each clan. One common value is the concern they share about people's health. Everyone agrees that there is a grave illness that causes people to become blind and another illness in the knees that causes a person to either become crippled or that breaks their limbs. These are commonly known diseases that the elders put much emphasis on when speaking about a clan's taboos, though there are other sicknesses too. The elders believe that these two occur as a result of someone being disobedient to their clan's taboos.

6.12 Traditional spiritual beliefs and Biblical Teachings

The traditional spiritual beliefs regarding forbidden animals and a certain bird, which are not to be eaten by some clans, is similar to the dietary laws of the Hebrews in the Bible as taught by Moses in Leviticus and Numbers. The Mosaic taboos forbade the eating of certain animals and birds like pigs, dogs, and vultures which were considered to be unclean. The biblical concept of clean and unclean animals set the dietary laws of the Hebrews. However, the Nuba Tira taboos did not follow strictly the Mosaic dietary laws. They forbid certain clans of eating certain animals which are taboos to them but not the rest of the clans. The most common animals mentioned by all the elders as taboos for

certain clans are: lions, leopards, squirrels, wildcats, honey-badgers and the little bird called *tterrmba* in Nuba Tira. The reasons for the taboos as narrated by the elders is that these animals are clearly connected to their ancestor's authority and physical or spiritual relationships between the ancestors and the animals. The Mosaic dietary laws of the clean and unclean animals and birds were applied uniformly which covered the entire Hebrew nation. On the contrary, the Nuba Tira taboos were selective as some clans are not affected by these taboos. They eat such animals and even touch them. It is therefore clear that the meaning of these symbols and others are quite contrary to Christian teachings.

The concepts of Nuba Tira dietary laws or taboos, marriage and sexual laws are similar to those of the Old Testament Hebrews even though they differ somewhat in some areas. Leviticus 11:1-30 mentions several animals and birds that are found with the Nuba Tira. Some animals are domestic and others wild. The Tira people of course have different reasons for eating some and not others based on their taboos. The Bible called these animals clean and unclean while the Tira people call them holy and unholy animals. It is important to compare the first list in Leviticus 11:1-30 with that of the Nuba Tira.

6.12.1 Animals on the land

They are camels, coneys, rabbits and pigs. All these animals are forbidden in the Bible, but are acceptable to the Nuba Tira who eat them apart from some Muslim men who avoid eating pigs. There is no special taboo that forces them to avoid eating any of these animals.

6.12.2 Birds of the air

They are eagles, vultures, the black vulture, red kites, any kind of black kite, any kind of raven, horned owls, the screech owl, the gull, and different kinds of hawks, the cormorant, the great , the osprey, the stork, any kind of heron, the hoopoe and the bat. These birds are forbidden to the Hebrews, but not the Nuba Tira as all these birds are found in the land.

There is no taboo connected to these birds among the Nuba Tira.

6.12.3 Insects

They are locusts, katydids, crickets, or grasshoppers: All these insects are forbidden to the Hebrews, but the Tira people eat locusts and grasshoppers, especially women and children. Some men also eat them but it is very rare. The other two are not eaten. There are no taboos attached to them.

6.12.4 Animals that move on the ground

They are the weasel, the rat, any kind of great lizard, the gecko, the monitor lizard, the wall lizard, the skink and the chameleon. All these mammals are forbidden to the Hebrews. The Nuba Tira only eat the rats. The rest are not eaten, even though there are no taboos attached to them. The Nuba Tira elders think that these are poisonous mammals.

6:12.5 Marriage and sexual laws among the Nuba Tira

The Nuba Tira elders have strong traditional marriage and sexual laws that are very similar to that of the Hebrews as found in the book of Leviticus 18:1-23. According to the elders, the traditional laws governing marriage and sexual practices can be classified into five basic areas.

1. Marrying close blood relatives is forbidden on both the maternal and paternal lines of the ancestors from the mother's side and the father's side. Children are not allowed to marry or to be married to any one of their blood-group. For example, there should be no marriage between cousins, nieces, aunts and uncles. It is a taboo and is forbidden. Marriages are decided by the elders and must be in line with tradition so as to make sure that the taboos are not broken.

Sexual relations are also forbidden on the basis of blood-group relationship. However, elders believe that some incidences among some clans have occurred. Elders call such tabooed sexual practices as a blood curse. They believe that such people are cursed by their ancestors and God. The elders call such sexual taboo violators as people with a dead conscience.

2. Having sex before marriage is forbidden between engaged couples. It is a disgraceful act. Virginity is highly valued among the Nuba Tira. Young men and girls are highly encouraged to be disciplined.
3. Levirate marriage is allowed in the paternal family line between brothers. For example, when a brother dies, his living brothers can inherit the wife or wives. The elder brother would have the first opportunity or younger brothers should the older one declines. All children that are left by the deceased and those who are born after him, are called by the name of their deceased father. The elders believe that in this practice, the name of the deceased would remain alive among the present generation. In the case of younger brothers who are still to be married, they can go ahead and marry their own wives while still taking care of their deceased brother's family too.
4. Marriage is between a male and a female only. Sex with any animal or between a male and a male or between a female and a female is forbidden.

In the case of a raped virgin girl, mature and ready to be married, the man is fined heavily and forced to marry the girl if the relatives accept him. If not he would be fined and imprisoned. The elders say such a man would be highly disgraced and would find it difficult to be accepted by the community. Usually such people go far to other neighbouring tribes to get a wife over there. Normally, songs are composed against their behaviour, which makes some of them move to the neighbouring in-laws of a different tribe to live in order to cover up their shameful life. Others do come back to live among the Nuba Tira community, when they get old and no longer feel the shame of their offences.

6.13 Spiritual beings in charge of social misconduct

The Nuba Tira elders also described the spiritual forces that lead people to become immoral, corrupt and misbehaving. Elders believe that such spirits are full of wickedness and bad desires. They keep tempting people to steal, commit adultery, and fight wars. Elders believe that such spirits are destined for destruction and those who are their agents would face the same destiny. No clan claims to have any relationship with such spirits based on their symbols of spiritual authority and their traditional practices among the Nuba Tira.

The elders believe that such spirits have the ability to live or move anywhere they want. According to them, such spirits live among the mountains, big trees, and rivers. The significant thing is that they possess a place. When people go there or sit there, they are attacked by such spirits at a certain time of the day or night. Some elders believe that such spirits belong to those people who died as sinners and do not have a permanent place to stay, therefore, they wander around looking to find a resting place. There is a common belief as explained by the elders that not everyone is attacked in this way, but some people with bad luck happen to become victims of such spiritual attacks. But people who are possessed do not have control over themselves nor do they have the free will to act or liberate themselves from such attacks. It is their relatives who normally perform rituals or sacrifices on their behalf.

The traditional spiritual belief about these spirits is that no specific clan claims to have any symbol that represents this group of spirits. Spiritual leaders do not claim authority to call upon these spirits in order to harm someone or to bless. So it is clear that these spirits are outside of their clan's authority and taboos. The description given by the elders shows some concepts that are contrary to a Christian understanding. The elders say that in their experiences of dealing with such spirits, some individuals seem to be agents of these spirits only when they are possessed.

The elders believe that the spirits that cause spiritual misconduct are cursed and destined for destruction by God and their ancestors. The point they are making here is compatible with biblical teachings. There are many biblical examples that talk about these

disobedient spirits. For example in Galatians 5:19-20, there are several sins listed including those mentioned by the Nuba Tira elders in regards to these corrupted spirits. The Bible says that those who commit these sins would not inherit the kingdom of God. In 2 Peter 2:1-22, it says that these are spirits who have lost their place in heaven. Their eyes are full of adultery and never stop sinning. They wander around like stars which have lost their place in space. And Ephesians 6:10-20 talks about the different types of spiritual forces that operate in the heavenly realm. These passages have similar descriptions that are compatible with the Nuba Tira traditional understanding about this particular group of corrupted spirits.

The traditional spiritual belief and value that the Tira clans can bring into Christianity, that can strengthen Christians, is the teaching about avoiding sins such as adultery, stealing and fighting. Such sins are punishable by Nuba Tira elders and they are also punishable in biblical teachings.

6.14 Summary

In light of the whole research, having now investigated the background of the historical understanding of Nuba Tira themselves, their worldview, including their religious worldview, and how their leaders understood the concept of leadership in the context of their ancestors' belief, it could be concluded that what the missionary's activities failed to accomplish, could now be achieved with a new way of understanding the Nuba Tira as a particular people with a deep cultural understanding of the physical world and spiritual world.

The integration of traditional leadership values as outlined in this chapter is the key factor that would help church leaders to get to the root of the cultural belief. In order to identify how to break through the complexity of traditional religious systems, it is relevant to use a bridging process that the traditional spiritual leaders used. It is important for the Tira church to use an indigenous foundation as a bridge to penetrate through these religious systems. The foundational value is a combination of political affairs and religious solidarity. These dual leadership roles are considered as one element in the worldview of the Nuba Tira. Whether handling political or religious affairs, spiritual leaders should

discuss values that are relevant to the people. In all these areas, spiritual leaders should exercise their authority and legitimacy.

The elders' definition of leadership principles conveys a typical leadership that is both spiritual and political in its worldview. It is clear that elders receive their inspirations and insights of leadership from their ancestors, but in the case of Nehemiah, he received his inspirations and insight directly from God. He was able to integrate the political and the spiritual as found in the Tira tradition. Church leaders just like Nehemiah should be able to do the same in the Nuba Tira context. The Nuba Tira social structure is organized by integrating the spiritual and the political. The clan symbols of authority represent both the spiritual and political aspects. Missionary Christianity failed to understand this and consequently failed to integrate it. The Nuba Tira church would have impact among the Tira by integrating the principles of political and spiritual leadership. The leaders' symbol of authority is the basis of understanding the traditional concept of spiritual and political leadership. Leadership cannot exist without a spiritual foundation. It is culturally rooted in their worldview. The essential goal of this research is understanding how to integrate the symbols of the spiritual beings by getting to the root of the traditional spiritual belief and thus understanding the spiritual concepts that made the spiritual leaders resist the gospel.

What is compatible and not compatible has been briefly stated as clear examples of how church leaders should integrate Nuba Tira good cultural values in their church ministry in order to attract the leaders to listen to the gospel. And what needs to be avoided was also stated in terms of its incompatible usage within the Christian faith. The role and the significance of each clan's taboos were briefly stated. The taboos are the core sources from where the elders derived and upon which they based their interpretations of moral laws and religious beliefs.

Integrating the traditional worldview with the biblical worldview is the means of transforming the traditional beliefs with Christianity. This chapter showed how Christianity could be contextualized by integrating traditional values with biblical values that are coherent in context.

It was on this account that the field work of these findings, the extensive interviews with the elders of the various clans of the Nuba Tira, was necessary. Traditional knowledge derived from these elders formed the basis of this research.

Chapter 7: Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, it is good to recall the primary objective of this research which was to integrate the traditional spiritual leadership teachings of the Nuba Tira with biblical teachings. In chapter one this research identified seven basic traditional foundational values which constituted the life of the Nuba Tira: The leader's symbol of authority is based upon the philosophy of spiritual beings, the management of ancestral knowledge as connected with the ancestral beliefs and taboos. Marriage rites and agricultural activities are ascribed to God who gave this knowledge to Kuku and Kaka, the Great Ancestor. Funeral rites are valued by spiritual leaders in honour of their ancestors. Education and informal training are valued as a life-cycle of learning through personal and group experiences. This learning process is the foundation of traditional leadership. Traditional leadership philosophy is based upon integrating the spiritual and the political.

Chapter one laid the foundation of the complex Nuba Tira religion and traditions. The Nuba Tira have many religious symbols of authority as associated with each clan in Nuba Tira. Each clan leader is being controlled by a spirit being through a specific symbol of authority. The historical facts of the Nuba Tira were clearly identified and presented.

The research briefly presented and critiqued the historical failure of Western missionaries a hundred years ago. This failure was due to their personal attitudes which negated the traditional values of the Nuba Tira. The negation became a barrier that hampered evangelism and advance of Christianity in Nuba Tira land. The researcher's use of Nehemiah's leadership principles and the method of biblical integration of the traditions of the Nuba Tira were the means of addressing and correcting the failure of missionary Christianity in Nuba Tira land.

The spiritual beings behind the symbols of authority as used by the clan leaders were identified by the researcher to be in ranks and in different spheres of jurisdiction. They

only offer superficial solutions to the felt needs of the Nuba Tira. These spiritual symbols of authority are rooted in the beliefs and traditions of the Tira to which Christianity offers an alternative in Jesus Christ and biblical teachings. This research did not throw away the Nuba Tira traditions as missionary Christianity did, but sought to integrate what is compatible with Christianity and biblical teachings.

Chapter Two presented the Nuba Tira organizational structure and their leadership philosophy based on the spiritual symbols of authority of the clan. This the researcher did by having face to face interviews with the clan legal leaders. It was clear from this investigation that the traditional leadership derived its inspirations and insights from their ancestors.

There is a strong connection with ancestors in regards to the inherited knowledge about worship, cultural practices and political duties in general. There is still a high cultural resistance from both young and adults in retaining their cultural identity and language. The spiritual symbols of authority would continue to be an identity of Nuba Tira. However, the meanings of some spiritual symbols would not affect individuals directly due to their new Christian faith. However, the significant thing that would clearly remain in several generations to come, is that those spiritual symbols would still be influential.

In the Third Chapter, the significance of the traditional core values of the Nuba Tira was clearly presented. These traditional core values formed the foundations of the Nuba Tira traditional religious faith and are part and parcel of the philosophy of traditional spiritual leadership. The traditional spiritual leadership combines both political and spiritual roles as Nehemiah did. The traditional leaders had their theological beliefs and abilities rooted in the spiritual symbols of authority. They are very knowledgeable in the ancestral arts about life in the areas of marriage, agriculture, funeral rites, education and religious affairs. Any outsider who comes to live with the Nuba Tira needs to establish proper relationships with the elders and win their support, otherwise the mission would fail as missionary Christianity did as pointed out in Chapter Four. The missionaries failed to understand the cultural values which are based on the seven spiritual symbols of authority identified in chapter one.

There were clear language, cultural, religious and leadership barriers between the missionaries and the traditional elders. They failed to use appropriate relevant culturally acceptable models in their attempts to win the leaders' confidence, trust and support. They failed to understand the principles of traditional faith, belief, and social conduct of the Nuba Tira. Their philosophy of developing Christian leaders was deeply rooted in Western culture. As they developed their relationships with young people, their frustrations continued to increase as the interpersonal relationship between them and the traditional elders widened.

In response to the failure of missionary Christianity, the researcher developed an integrative approach in Chapters 5 and 6. Nehemiah's model of leadership was developed. His dual leadership style combined the political and the spiritual and the seven leadership principles. Nehemiah's style of leadership resembles that of the Nuba Tira clans leaders. The Nuba Tira church leaders need to use these biblical leadership principles to develop and transform the present Nuba Tira society, as Nehemiah did in his generation.

The researcher's desire is that the church leaders would imitate Nehemiah's character as a visionary and influential leader who used both spiritual and political leadership skills to rebuild his land and the spiritual life of his people. This was achieved by retaining his cultural identity. Any success in applying Nehemiah's principles of vision, planning, management, delegation, motivation, communication, problem-solving and discipline, would depend on the art of integrating these biblical leadership principles with the Nuba Tira traditional teachings, in relation to their taboos and beliefs as presented in Chapter Six.

Chapter Six is an interpretation of the theological understanding and the relationship of the spiritual and physical world based on the Nuba Tira ancestral knowledge. In this chapter the researcher presented clear practical examples from the elders' interpretations and insights from each clan in regards to their spiritual symbols of authority and taboos. The answers to the research questions about the religious complexity of the Nuba Tira's traditional religion have been identified in the interpretations of the clan leaders of the

spiritual symbols of authority and taboos.

The researcher's goal was to integrate both biblical teachings and traditional teachings to each other. Traditional beliefs, values and taboos were examined in the light of their compatibility or incompatibility with Christianity.

The Nuba Tira religious worldview is based on the inherited ancestral knowledge. The integration of different clans' spiritual symbols that are compatible with biblical teachings would make a positive impact among Tira Christians.

The clan leaders received the inspirations and insights of their leadership from their ancestors, but Nehemiah received his directly from God. Church leaders need to receive their inspirations and insights from the Holy Spirit in order to have an impact in their ministry. The clans' spiritual symbols of authority represent the spiritual and the political. What missionaries failed to investigate has now been investigated by this researcher.

The findings of this research contain useful information which could help the church in Nuba Tira land. The church could challenge the false understandings of spiritual beings and their symbols of authority and harmful traditions. The biblical principles of Nehemiah are leadership principles that young Christian leaders could learn and use.

This research has proven that the religious complexity of the Nuba Tira as claimed by some previous researchers has now been analysed and made public through this research. The spiritual beings thought to be God's agents are proven to be Satan's agents in the light of biblical teachings. They are the biblical fallen angels who work against God and humanity including the Nuba Tira.

This research has great value as its findings and insights could be extended to any ethnic group in the world that relied upon the wisdom and knowledge of the ancestors.

Recommendations

Due to the limitation of space in this research, the following areas were left to be dealt with in a different research.

1) The descriptions of all the elements of each clan's spiritual symbols of authority which are used during the rituals of purification, sanctification and worship, need more space and elaboration.

2) The traditional system of marriage is complex and interesting which needs a separate study to cover all the elements involved.

3) The fear of death and the living dead are areas that need separate studies in order to cover the following areas:

(a) The living still seek counsel, advice, direction and assistance from the living dead.

(b) The dead appear to the living in dreams, visions, fire and bodily form.

(c) The living dead speak in human language so that the living can hear their voices with their own ears.

4) Nehemiah's leadership principles could be developed as a teaching manual for Christian leadership among the Nuba Tira church leaders. This objective could be achieved based upon the outcome of this research. Furthermore, it is important to state here that this is how the researcher intends to use the value of this research:

(1) Giving the current church leaders a relevant leadership model to use in reaching the traditional spiritual leaders in the community with the good news of salvation. The foreseen impact would be to combat the marginalization mentality. Parents would be encouraged to enroll their children in the formal education system at the available schools, to build a better future for their own generation, because they would become the future leaders. Such a dual-role training model would shape their skills to be effective at both the community and national level.

(2) Convincing the current church leaders that the study of the book of Nehemiah is an important undertaking because it contains a clear picture of the characteristics of an influential leader who believes in God's power to overcome barriers. Nehemiah had elements of both spiritual and political authority over his country and his people. He was an effective leader who valued spiritual authority as a primary power base that makes a

holistic change in the society. He acted as a civil and spiritual leader who was sensitive to God's Spirit leading his life.

(3) Showing the current church leaders that Nehemiah's model has great value if integrated with that of the Tira. The Tira church leaders, given the context of Sudan, need to have the motivation of Nehemiah. Nehemiah inspired determination in people to boldly take ownership of their land and to face the challenges of life courageously. This model of Nehemiah's spiritual leadership would be used as a model for the lives of the Nuba Tira Christian leaders.

(4) Nehemiah's model of spiritual leadership would be used to build a strong political and educational base for the Nuba Tira communities. The Nuba Tira church leaders need to have a biblical training model that would appeal to traditional spiritual leaders. The bridging models would reveal weaknesses and strengths of informal indigenous ways that are harmful barriers. Nehemiah's leadership model would be applicable in the Tira context. He acted in both political and spiritual roles to motivate the whole community into action.

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The Nuba Tira Clan Elders Interviewed

1. Clan of Itumbel: (*Lala Arrnye Ttuttu. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author, in Ndurrdu, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
2. Clan of Letterugum: (*Kumi Ajagu. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author, in Nddurrdu, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
3. Clan of Legejen: (*Kojo Ddiddi Aluba. 10 January 2010. Interviewed by the author, in Logorr Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
4. Clan of Lettogoy: (*Calu Murre Caca Bali. 10 January 2010. Interviewed by the author, in Tturro Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
5. Clan of Danggal: (*Cunddugu Ttabili. 10 January 2010. Interviewed by the author, in Tturro, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
6. Clan of Lettaru: (*Ngalddi, Almaddiddi, Ttuttu, Albayitti, Algadduz. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author, in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
7. Clan of Lenuli: (*Addulo Ttuttu Nyabuhuda. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author, in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
8. Clan of Lettobo: (*Kerrtin Umbila Lohogo. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author, in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
9. Clan of Ilumen: (*Lodi Ngarimo Ttuttu. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author, in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
10. Clan of Litiri: (*Kugu Calami Ngoti Orri. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author, in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
11. Clan of Logosa: (*Kondinyo Nyulu Kondinyo. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author, in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
12. Clan of Lahalu: (*Loco Ttuba Ttuttu Orri. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author, in Ndurrdu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
13. Clan of Lecahumo: (*Oman Kocolo. 3 February 2010. Interviewed by the author, in Ttombore, Kaddar, Nuba Mountain. Sudan.*)
14. Clan of Lohovan: (*Kiribo, Mana, Kaddum, Lotilo. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the*

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15. Clan of Lezero: (*Anabaga Urrendde, Atta Kumi. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author; in Ndurrddu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

16. Clan of Liha: (*Kocolo Ttima Addum Lalu. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author; in Ndurrddu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

17. Clan of Rreme: (*Calamangga Molinggo Canu Ttuttu. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author; in Ndurrddu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

18. Clan of Logojomarr: (*Acico Apari Coco. 10 January 2010. Interviewed by the author; in Kumu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

19. Clan of Logohoval: (*Kattan Camari Congo. 10 January 2010. Interviewed by the author; in Kumu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

20. Clan of Lugumbihi: (*Abuz Kohi Kobo Ttuttu. 10 January 2010. Interviewed by the author; in Kumu Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

21. Clan of Lagatterri: (*Tabili Cunddugu Kuna. 10 January 2010. Interviewed by the author; in Tturro, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

22. Clan of Lenddonyo: (*Cocono Kuku Umrri Kumba, Congo Kuku Amudda. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author; in Ndurrddu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

23. Clan of Logopa: (*Anggalu Ngumi Munddu Koddi. 10 January 2010. Interviewed by the author; in Kumu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

24. Clan of Loriyo: (*Kocele Ttuttu Kuku Ulotto. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author; in Ndurrddu, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

25. Clan of Ngettele: (*Kamu Ugubala. 26 December 2009. Interviewed by the author; in Ndurrddu, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

26. Clan of Letternggun: (*Kani Apranggi. 4 February 2010. Interviewed by the author; in Ttombore, Kaddarr, Nuba Mountain. Sudan*).

