INTEGRATION OF AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION AND CULTURE IN CHRISTIAN WORSHIP IN AFRICA WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE METHODIST CHURCH OF KENYA IN MERU COUNTY, KENYA

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Declaration and Recommendation

Declaration

I, Mukindia Hellen Kagwiria, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted either in part or wholly to this or any other University for the award of another degree.

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Recommendation

This thesis has been submitted for examination with our approval as University supervisors.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late mother, Evangeline Maringa Mukindia, for laying a firm foundation for my education.

To my beloved husband Wilfred Orina whose sacrifice, inspiration, patience, encouragement and professional advice were instrumental to the completion of this work.

To our children Pavine Bosibori, Linda Muthoni and Elvis Nyambati who on many occasions missed motherly love and presence during the course of my postgraduate studies.

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ABSTRACT

The Methodist Church of Kenya (MCK) has been in Meru County since 1912 and there is evidence to suggest that African Methodist converts have continued to stick to some African traditional religious beliefs. The main objective of this study was to examine the integration of African Traditional Religion (ATR) and culture in Christian worship among the MCK members in Meru County and address the relevant theological issues involved. The study used the MCK Church as a case study. The study was informed by Emile Durkheim's functionalism theory which is a sociological view of religion emphasizing its usefulness to the society. The theory posits that what has no function ceases to exist yet some aspects of ATR have been integrated in worship among MCK adherents. Six churches were purposively selected to participate in the study. From each church, nine respondents and six members of the clergy from the Circuit Headquarters were purposively selected to participate in the study bringing the total number of respondents to 60. The data was collected using questionnaires, structured interviews, checklists, and church observation schedules. The collected data was analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The findings of the study revealed that ATR and culture still play an important role among the MCK members in Meru County. As such, many aspects of ATR and culture have been integrated in Christian worship in Meru County. The African converts to Methodism have not abandoned ATR and aspects of syncretism were evident in the MCK worship and religious practices. On the basis of these findings, the study recommended that Christian life and doctrines should be reformulated in the patterns of each and every culture in order to make Christianity durable in Meru County. The modern Christian leaders should strive to make Christianity strong and permanent by allowing African and Christian culture to blend so as to meet the spiritual needs of Christians and give solutions to some of their problems. The researcher suggests that a similar study should be carried out in the MCK in other counties in Kenya to establish whether the findings apply to other areas to enable generalization of the results of this study. In addition, a study of this kind should be carried out in other Christian denominations in Meru County to establish the extent to which other denominations have incorporated aspects of ATR in their worship. The findings of the study will contribute to the current academic concern for evolving an African Christian theology.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ATR: African Traditional Religion

MCK: Methodist Church of Kenya

PCEA: Presbyterian Church of East Africa

OI: Oral Interview

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The Christian missionaries from Europe and America penetrated the interior of Kenya either shortly before or simultaneously with colonial occupation in the nineteenth century. They introduced different Church procedures and traditions imported from overseas and the Africans inherited them without understanding their background and meaning. However, Africans who traditionally are religiously notorious (Mbiti, 1969) realised that Christianity was not fulfilling all their spiritual needs and they have therefore often included aspects of their traditional religion in Christian worship. Despite the strong resistance towards this move by the missionaries, many aspects of African Traditional Religion (ATR) and culture have been integrated in Christian worship since then yet Christian leaders have done little to recognise it.

The missionaries came to Kenya in large numbers after the establishment of the British East African Protectorate in 1895 and the granting of the Royal Charter to the British East African Company in 1899 (Kerre, 1999). This enabled the Christian missionaries to move with freedom and sense of security as law and order had been established. The building of the Kenya-Uganda railway also facilitated the movement of the missionaries to attractive areas in the interior. From 1895, the missionaries competed to occupy the interior of Kenya and they divided the country according to missionary spheres of influence. Kerre further notes that between 1912 and 1945, there was stiff competition among different missionary societies. Each one of them wanted to establish as many mission stations as possible and be able to convert many people. It was at this time that the Methodist Church missionaries moved to Meru and established a mission at Kaaga. However, at the cultural level, the Methodist Missionaries in Meru region did not find it important to study and understand the values and ideas cherished by the Ameru. The Methodist missionaries established their strongholds among the Meru people, who enthusiastically received and accepted their interpretation of the gospel. To date, the Methodist Church is predominant among the Meru people.

According to Nthamburi (1981), the movement that would become the Methodist Church began in the mid eighteenth century as a movement within the Church of England. A small group of students including John Wesley, Charles Wesley and George Whitefield formed the movement on the Oxford University campus. The group focused on Bible study, methodical

study of scripture and living a holy life. Other students mocked the group by calling it the "Holy Club" and the'' Methodists'' for being overly methodical and exceptionally detailed with their Bible study, opinions and life style. Eventually the "Methodists" started individual societies or classes for members of the Church of England who wanted to live a more sacred life. Over the years, the Methodist Church, like many other protestant denominations, has seen a number of divisions and mergers and has been able to spread to many parts of the world.

The Methodist church in Kenya was started in 1862 by a group of missionaries who were sent by the United Methodist free churches of Britain. The missionaries established the first mission station at Ribe, about forty kilometers North of Mombasa. Dr. Ludwig Krapf, a German Lutheran who worked under the auspices of the church missionary society (Anglican), introduced the Methodists to the area. A pioneer missionary, Thomas Wakefield worked in the coast opening up a number of mission stations at Ribe, Mazeras and Lamu among others. The MCK spread from Ribe mission station to the rest of the country. The Methodist church ceased to be the Methodist missionary society in 1955. On 7th January 1967, the MCK became an autonomous body from the British Methodist church conference. The first indigenous MCK church in Kenya was opened in Nairobi in the same year. This was the Charles New Church in Jericho. With the new conference, the first presiding Bishop Ronald Mngongo was appointed, with Lawi Imathiu as the secretary of the conference. Later on, districts were formed with district synods meeting annually. From here, MCK has managed to spread to many parts of Kenya and with missions in Uganda, Tanzania Democratic Republic of Congo and recently South Sudan. Mr. R.T. Worthington opened the first mission station at Kaaga in Meru in 1912.

Over the years, the MCK has witnessed tremendous growth and initiated various community-based projects aimed at reducing poverty, disease, illiteracy, general human suffering and empowering the marginalised groups in the communities to take charge of their lives. These projects include mission and evangelism, education, health, disability empowerment, women fellowship, youth and junior Sunday and church development.

The Methodist Church of Kenya (MCK) along with the Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) forms some of the major Christian denominations in Meru County (Nthamburi, 1981). Apart from preaching the gospel, the MCK has embarked on various developments in the Meru region especially in the medical and education fields. Among the most outstanding achievements are the Maua Methodist hospital and the Kenya Methodist University. Inspite of the many achievements by the Church in the Meru region, the actual response of the Meru people to the gospel has not been studied and there is evidence that the Methodist converts have not abandoned ATR. The intention of this study was to investigate and unearth aspects of ATR and culture that have been integrated in Christian worship in the Church such as music and dance, African dressing, traditional offerings, sacrifices, taboos, traditional circumcision, weddings, concepts of God and ancestral spirits among others.

The missionary effort was directed towards drawing converts away from traditional life to adopt what missionaries thought was proper, civilised and Christian expression of the new faith. The Africans who had accepted Christianity were expected to adapt themselves to the new thinking, new values and beliefs. They were expected to change from a religion that was based on the individual's self-awareness, wholeness of life and relationship to environment to one based on foreign doctrines, dogma, and creeds. The missionaries, in their zeal, preached against everything African (Bahemuka, 1983). Traditional African dances were said to be evil and immoral. Traditional clothing was called pagan and the African belief system was denounced as outright evil. Bahemuka has observed that to the missionaries, African culture and religion was not only uncivilised but was also harmful to the development of the Africans. The African Christian therefore was not only expected to change his beliefs but he was being asked to change his personality to become a new man in Jesus Christ.

The Meru people are deeply religious and one of the roles of *Njuri Ncheke*, a traditional council of elders, is to ensure that the religious cultural heritage of the Meru people is not diluted. This explains why the MCK converts have retained most of their traditional beliefs and customs. The Meru religion is not found in any sacred writing or Holy Scriptures. It is found in the rituals, ceremonies and festivals of the people. The Meru people like to celebrate life. They celebrate events like birth of a child, naming, initiation and harvest festivals. The circumcision rite for example enjoins the initiates to their ancestors through the pouring of blood in a traditional shrine. The Meru religion is also found in the sacred places and

religious objects like charms mostly given by the medicine men. Their religion is also found in their music and dance. A lot of Meru music and songs deal with religious ideas and practices (Mbiti, 1969). The religious rituals and ceremonies are always accompanied by music, singing and sometimes dancing. Music gives outlet to the emotional expressions of religious life and it is a powerful means of communication. Sacrifices and offerings constitute one of the commonest acts of worship. Prayers, invocations, blessings and salutations are also acts of worship. The majority of prayers and invocations are addressed to God, and some to the living dead and divinities many of whom serve as intermediaries. Divinities are directly below God in the traditional hierarchy of beings according to the Ameru understanding of the spiritual world. They are sometimes regarded as semi-gods. According to traditions told orally to the author by the Church elders, *Mugwe* is the traditional divine leader who is believed to be the community's deliverer, one who led them from their original homeland called *Mbwaa*, to their present Meru land. It is in view of the above background that an investigation of aspects of ATR and culture that have persisted in the MCK in Meru County became the concern of this study.

The Meru people are attached to their traditional world-view and related practices as developed over time. Beliefs, values and ideas related to their traditional worldview constitute an essential part of the Ameru being for they shape their day-to-day thinking and conduct. Religious practices are functional to them as they governed the morals and values of the community that ensured continued communal solidarity. Religion came in to restore order, peace and harmony when the community was involved in crisis such as diseases, epidemics, wars and natural disaster. In the treatment of diseases, diviners and magicians offered psychological services to patients. It was a combination of sacrifices, offerings and all forms of prayers in the community. Their world-view and religious beliefs were based on their experience of the natural world. The purpose of their worldview and religious beliefs would be summed up in the words of H. Monteforce (1975) that in the face of apparent chaos and frustrations in the world, we want to be able to see that the universe makes sense. We need our focal point and our security without which we are people spinning helplessly and hopelessly through a fearful void.

Mugambi (1989) has noted that African responses to Christianity have been diverse. Some people have uncritically and unconditionally accepted the prejudiced missionary teaching. Others have formed their own Independent churches in which they interpret the Christian faith in accordance with insights that accommodate traditional African thought. There are others who have rejected Christianity altogether, considering it alien to and incompatible with the African heritage. Owing to the confusing proliferation of Christian denominations and the rise of materialism, other people have chosen to take an indifferent stance towards Christianity and other religions preferring to live according to the dictates of contemporary materialistic society.

The MCK administration is a four tier system (Nthamburi, 1981). First, there are conferences that are held in all the various branches. This is usually done in honour of John Wesley who held his first conference in 1844. Hence, the Conference Journal and the subsequent printed minutes provide information on top level administration and stationing of the ministers. Secondly, are the District Synods that meet twice a year. They publish reports of the district activities, much of it in statistical form and providing names of district officers and their several committee members. Thirdly, there are the Circuits that hold their meetings quarterly, two meetings in particular. One meeting is for local preachers and the other for general administration of the Circuit. Minutes of these meetings are considered important and are preserved. Fourthly, the local church is administered by a selected group of officers responsible for both the fabric of the building and the spiritual welfare of the members.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Christian missionaries who brought the gospel to Kenya wanted African Christians to be totally changed by the gospel. Everything the African believed in had to go in order to make room for the new, western Christian way of thinking. Through baptism, an African was supposed to die to the old life so as to be born to the new life. The gospel of salvation, love and peace centred on Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity has inspired many African converts to change their lives. However traditional religious ideas remain in their consciousness and practical living superimposed and sometimes modified by Christian teachings. Inspite of the many years of Methodism presence in Meru County, African converts in the MCK have persistently integrated aspects of ATR and culture in their worship. Yet, there are no academic studies to explain this situation hence the need to collect relevant data and fill this knowledge gap.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The study was guided by the following specific objectives.

i) To assess the aspects of African Religion and culture that have been integrated in Christian worship in the MCK.

ii) To establish why the African converts to Methodism have not abandoned ATR and culture.

iii) To explain aspects of syncretism in the Methodist Church of Kenya in Meru County.

iv) To examine relevant theological issues with regard to the encounter between ATR and Christianity

1.4 Research Questions

The study addressed the following questions:

i) What aspects of African traditional religion and culture have Methodist converts in Meru County integrated in their worship?

ii) Why are African converts in the MCK reluctant to abandon African traditional religious beliefs?

iii) How are aspects of syncretism incorporated in the MCK in Meru County?

iv) What are the relevant theological issues with regard to the encounter between ATR and Christianity that need to be addressed?

1.5 Justification of the Study

The case of MCK was relevant to the study based on the fact that its membership comprises mostly of middle aged and old people who greatly value their traditional religious beliefs, attitudes and practices. Religion is the strongest element of culture and exerts probably the greatest influence upon people's worldview and life. The selection of Meru County for the study was prompted by a number of factors. Being the researcher's home background, her familiarity with the language and Meru cultural and religious set up enhanced better management of the study. The researcher's awareness of the existence of syncretism between Methodism and ATR motivated the study. These factors combined to make Meru County a suitable area for the study. The study findings are significant based on the following grounds. The study provided data on the place of ATR in Christian worship in the MCK. This information would assist African Christians to appreciate ATR so that it becomes a vehicle of spreading the gospel and give way for reconciliation of ATR and Christianity. The study

would add new insights to the existing knowledge and ways of accommodating ATR in Christianity based on the fact that African Christians cannot afford to delink from the rest of the community or their own cultural past. The findings of the study would help modern clergy and pastors to enrich their sermons so as to meet the spiritual needs of modern Christians. The study findings would also be an eye opener to the modern Christian leaders and the clergy on the relevant theological issues they need to address. By pointing out gaps in the existing studies, the findings would stimulate enthusiastic researchers to undertake a similar study.

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

The following were the assumptions of the study.

i) That African Methodist Christians have integrated aspects of African religion and culture in their worship.

ii) That African converts to Methodism in Meru County have not abandoned ATR.

iii) That there are aspects of syncretism in the MCK.

iv) That there are relevant theological issues with regard to the encounter between ATR and Christianity that need to be addressed.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

Despite the fact that ATR has continued in all Christian denominations in Kenya, the study was limited to Meru County. The main area of focus was Imenti South District which is one of the districts of Meru County. Most of the Churches in this study were in the rural areas. This is because the District is geographically designated as a rural area. The findings of the study may not apply to Methodist Churches found in areas classified as urban in Kenya. Data was collected from the Methodist Churches. The education levels of most of the people in the region are low, a factor which made it difficult for them to respond to questionnaires and interviews. This problem was addressed by using knowledgeable assistants who facilitated efficient communication by helping them understand the questionnaire. Another challenge the study faced was that not many studies on ATR have been done in this particular part of Kenya. Consequently there was shortage of relevant literature. This problem was addressed by referring to sources of information in other areas including those from other parts of Kenya and countries and then applying them to the current study. Equally the MCK is on record for strict observance of Meru traditional culture and religion. There was reluctance and non-cooperation among some respondents as some religious beliefs and practices are

associated with taboos. However, the researcher was able to build rapport with the respondents which made them free to open up. Consequently obtaining relevant information for the study was challenging. The problem was addressed by intensive examination of secondary sources of data and also the role of other Churches found in the area

1.8 Operational Definitions of Terms

Gospel: The message of salvation, love and peace as contained in the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as recorded in the first four books of the New Testament.

Culture: The customs, beliefs, art, music and all other products of human thought made by a particular group of people of a particular time.

Inculturation: The idea of inserting the Christian church into the African cultures.

Incarnation: Allowing Christianity to be born into the African cultures so as to make Jesus Christ appear in all his splendor to people of each culture.

Indigenization: The idea of making Christianity to fit into the African cultures.

Methodism: The belief of a Christian group which follows the teachings of John Wesley who insisted on a methodical study of the Bible.

Syncretism: Is the practice of mixing up beliefs and practices from different religions which amounts to double mixture in worship and loyalty.

Njuri Ncheke: The Ameru traditional council of elders which serves as the traditional government and the custodian of Ameru traditional religious beliefs and practices.

Mugwe: The traditional spiritual leader of the Ameru.

Church: A body of Christian believers professing the same creed and acknowledging the same ecclesiastical authority.

Worship: The ceremonies, prayers or other religious forms by which the love and devotion to God is expressed/ collection of activities that are carried out during Christian services.

Integration: To join to something else so as to form a whole.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the work done by other scholars on ATR and culture in relation to Christianity. The purpose of reviewing work done by other scholars was to confirm suspected gap in knowledge as regards aspects of ATR and culture in MCK in Meru County. It categorizes the review into early studies to 1989 and recent studies from 1990 to the present. In addition the chapter discusses the theoretical framework which guided the study

2.2 Early Studies on African Traditional Religion and Christianity to 1989

Mbiti (1969) has observed that the form of Christianity brought by the Western Missionaries made no attempts to incorporate the ancestors, medicine men, religious specialists, African music and dance into the Christian faith. He affirms that the kind of music developed is supposed to suit the local situations. He further observes that worship in mission churches is simply dull for most Africans. The hymns are sung to foreign tunes with little rhythm and without bodily movements like clapping the hands or twisting the loins as a religious expression. According to Mbiti, the Christian missionaries did not allow Africans to relate their own cultural and religious heritage to Christianity. They made an African convert become a Christian by cleaving to the new order introduced by the missionaries rather than by working out his salvation within the traditional African set up.

In another book, Mbiti (1975) acknowledges that African culture is part of the Africans' rich heritage. It has influenced Africans cultures and given them their world view. Mbiti further observes that it is impossible for this African heritage to be completely wiped out even by modern changes. As long as there is trace of African culture, it will also have some of African religion. He also argues that the continuation of African rural life will ensure the survival of African religion. African religion will continue to exist among people whose life is still tied to the land and traditional culture. In addition, Mbiti affirms that some aspects of African religion will die out partly through modern education and partly because of urban life. He says that there is need to remember that African religion is complex and even if certain aspects of it die out, other aspects will survive and many of them will be changed or transformed to meet the needs of the changing time.

From the review of Mbiti's studies above, it is clear that African religion cannot be said to be better or worse than other religions. It is simply the religious system which African forefathers developed in response to their life's situations. ATR gives them satisfactory answers to their problems, quenches their religious thirst and has helped them to find an integrated and meaningful interpretation and understanding of the universe. The current study attempted to establish what ATR has to offer to a modern Christian contrary to the views held by the critics of ATR. The study unearthed the traditional religious aspects that Christians in the MCK have retained and how functional the aspects are to their spiritual life.

Shorter (1973) has observed that true religion is man-centered. It does not alienate man from himself but fulfils him and directs him towards his right end. He says that true religion promotes brotherhood and co-operation. Therefore, it is directed towards man in a community and harmonizes with the aims of African socialism. He advocates for a stable and homogenous Church structure which accommodates both Christian and traditional values. Shorter warns that until there is a place in the world Church for an African theology, African rights and for Church structures of African inspiration, an African Christianity will never be a reality. Shorter's study is generalised to all cultures and may not give a true picture of the Church situation in Meru County. This study made an attempt to identify religious aspects that are of value to the Methodist Christians in the County and those that can be incorporated into Christianity so as to promote development and fulfillment of human beings in their contemporary communities.

Bulmann (1982) contends that beneath it all, there is the African's deeply religious pre-disposition. He says that the African sense of God on whom he knows and is completely dependent is the light that guides him in his life. The writer observes that the African does not simply believe in God and the spirits of his ancestors but he lives in the full sense of the term under the eyes of the creator, the hidden cause of all other causes. Any one denying this would not be considered normal in Africa. He says that a forced initiation into Christianity produces semi-Christians who have indeed accepted Christianity outwardly but have merely superimposed it on their former style of life without harmonizing the two. Bulmann's study, though making significant contribution towards understanding the African concept of God and spirits, is not focused on the specific beliefs and practices that make Africans deeply religious. This has compelled the researcher to study the African religious beliefs and practices retained by Methodist converts in Meru County. Hence the current study findings

would contribute new knowledge towards understanding religious beliefs and practices currently found in the MCK in the County.

Bahemuka (1983) has observed that the strength of the African Christian is that Western societies with their cultures have enriched him/her. The writer faults the missionary style of presenting the gospel of Jesus to Africa, in which the African was not only expected to change his/her beliefs but was also being asked to change his/her personality to become a new individual in Jesus Christ. According to the author, this call to newness was in a way enslaving since the African was not allowed to bring his/her culture with him/her to enrich him/her. The author argues that as long as the African can sift the chaff from the grain, accept what is advantageous to him/her and leave out what is of no advantage to him/her, he/she will be enriched. In accepting and adopting Western religion, the African has learnt how to utilize the knowledge of the physical environment to help him/her achieve his/her goals. The writer seems to concede that Christianity has only added something new to an already religious African. Bahemuka's study is generalised to all cultures of Africa. Furthermore, the study does not bring out aspects of ATR that make Africans religious. Consequently the extent to which aspects of ATR have influenced Christians is not clear. The current study was therefore an effort to put together information that one could use to identify aspects of ATR that the African converts in the MCK had retained and compare it with what is actually happening in the real life situation in the Church.

As a matter of fact, no one can usefully expose the righteousness of the Bible to African Christians without serious consideration of their world view, cultures, religion and their histories. Waliggo (1986) has argued that the incarnation of Jesus which made him become a perfect man while remaining perfect God will always remain the clearest guiding principle for inculturation. If the only begotten son saw it fit to enter the reality of humanity in full in order to save mankind from sin, then the more reason is there for his Church to do the same in every culture so as to continue with that saving mission. He further argues that failure to incarnate Christianity becomes the failure to make Christ appear in all his splendour to the people of each culture. If Christ divinised humanity then Christianity should do the same to African cultural and religious beliefs. According to him, evangelisation loses much of its force and effectiveness if it does not take into consideration the actual people to whom it is addressed. The author further argues that for the gospel to be effective, it must use the language, the signs and the symbols of the people it is addressed to.

The African Independent Churches in Kenya came into being because of what the African saw as the failure of the main Christian Churches to accept and promote the principle of inculturation. The fact that the Independent Churches broke away from the mission Churches is a clear indication that they wanted "a place to feel at home" (Kerre, 1999). They wanted to incarnate Christianity into the African cultures: to pray to God in the language and symbols they could well understand; to pray to God with all their being, soul and mind and a Church organisation that corresponded to their own vision. The African converts in the MCK in Meru County did not break away to form Independent Churches but they remained in their mainline Churches strongly committed to Methodism faith. However they retained most of their African traditional religious beliefs.

Waliggo (1986) notes that for the Church to be truly the Church of Jesus Christ, it must be both universal and particular. The Church in the African continent must reflect the characteristic culture of its people. This is because a faith which does not become culture is a faith which has not been fully received and not fully lived out. Studies on the response of the Meru people to the spread of the gospel reflect pertinent gaps which needs investigation. Waliggo contends that the gospel should be able to answer the questions that people ask and it should have an impact on their concept of life. However the author does not identify religious aspects that can be valued and appreciated by modern Christians so that the aims of inculturation are not misunderstood or misinterpreted. This is because there are people who seem to be opposed to the inculturation movement not because of any malice but simply because of what they imagine to be the aims of the movement. It was basically the intention of the proposed study to collect data on the aspects of ATR among Methodist adherents in Meru County and use the findings to recommend what specific aspects of ATR can be incorporated into Christianity so as to enable African Christians live more fully and more abundantly as Christians.

According to Waliggo, Pope John Paul II considered the question of inculturation for the mission of the Church so central that in 1982, he established at the Vatican Pontifical Council for culture. He said that since the beginning of his pontificate, he had considered the Churches dialogue with cultures of Africa to be a vital area because man lives a fully human life thanks to culture. Pope John II further argues that the future of man depends on his/her culture. He insisted that there is a close link between Christianity and culture. In addition, the Pope noted that faith was not a culture but it can only find expression and lives within

cultures. Faith must remain faith but it only becomes living in terms of culture, understanding by culture the integral life of men and women and their values.

In their effort to introduce Christianity the missionary Church was unable to present to Africans more than a western image of its faith. Mugambi (1989) faults the early Christian missionaries for the modern missionary movement to introduce Christianity alongside their western culture. A similar problem arose in the New Testament when the early apostles, who were influenced by their Jewish culture of male circumcision as an outward sign for the descendents of Abraham, wanted the Gentile converts to be circumcised. This necessitated convening of the first Ecumenical Council in Jerusalem (Acts 15:1; Galatians 2:3). The Ecumenical Council agreed that faith in Jesus Christ was the qualifying factor and not circumcision. The author thus contends that one of the negative consequences of the above error in the theology of mission which rationalize the modern missionary movement was that Christianity came to be viewed by most Africans as a European religion superimposed upon the African cultural and religious environment. Africans wanted to relate their own cultural and religious heritage to Christianity. Mugambi further argues that Africans are members of a wider community which has its cultural and religious foundations in the social institutions of traditional African society. If their Christian experience is to be meaningful and effective, they cannot afford to cut themselves off from the rest of the community or from their own cultural and religious past. The writer seems to be of the view that Africans do not have to abandon their traditional religious heritage but should add the gospel of Jesus Christ to it in order to make them complete Christians.

In his study, Mugambi (1989) does not pinpoint aspects of ATR that conform with Christianity hence have persisted among African Christians. Furthermore, his study is generalised to all cultures and his findings cannot give a true picture of the situation in a specific region. Hence the current study focused specifically on the beliefs and practices which have persisted in the Methodist Church and how they have influenced the Meru practice of Christianity.

At the beginning of the missionary era in Meru region, there was the wild assumption that the Ameru did not have a deeply rooted world-view. Nevertheless, the mission Christianity in the region did not fall into a religious vacuum. It found the Ameru well and deeply equipped with their cultural and religious experiences, which shaped their world-view. Christianity to them

was not the first but the second religious experience to which they were exposed and continue to be.

According to Onyancha (1989), the African and Christian world-views contrast so much that the African world-view has made it difficult for Christianity to penetrate fully and shape the African personality because it is deeply rooted as the first experience prior to Christianity. Onyancha further says that African converts in mission churches have found difficulties in reconciling the previous experience with their new faith. The writer argues that while the laws of science are universal, religious beliefs are not. He says that religion must take different forms in different world-views. He further points out that even the western society did not adopt all aspects of Jewish Christianity. This was because the western world-view was different from that in which Christianity was founded. Similarly, the western society could by no means expect the African Christians to accept Christianity together with the western world-view since they had their own. At the psychological level, such a culture remained irrelevant to many Methodist converts in the Meru region especially among the old. However Onyancha's study is confined to Kisii region and therefore his findings cannot be generalised. The current study is an attempt to investigate the extent to which African world-view has been retained in Meru County.

2.3 Recent Studies on African Traditional Religion and Christianity Since the 1990s

Various scholars have attributed the lack of commitment to the Christian faith by many African Christians to the failure to recognize and appreciate ATR. Contemporary scholars suggest a deeper understanding of people's religious beliefs and practices so as to allow indigenisation of Christianity into the African cultures. A review of various churches shows clearly that African religion and cultures deserve a meaningful place in Christianity. The current study sought to establish whether such assumptions are true with the MCK in Meru County and attempted to investigate the possibility of harmonizing ATR and Christianity.

Nairwera (1990) affirms that different structures of the churches today have developed in different circumstances conditioned by the needs of different places and times. He observes that Africans have many valid ways of expressing faith in Christ and these ways should be respected. The hegemony of the doctrine of one Christian denomination over others is not necessarily a sign of truth in Christ, or a variety of interpretation a sign of falsity. The writer has further noted that many of the independent religious movements in Africa seek an

identity, a sense of dignity and self respect. He further argues that the African religion does not seek to compete with other religions or with science. It only wants to cooperate in the search for a better understanding of the world in which mankind lives and in working for the welfare of all people

Kerre (1999) concentrates mainly on the African Independent Churches and is concerned with African response to the gospel. He observes that the African Independent Churches comfortably accommodated African values and customs and have always been critical of the missionary approach of condemning everything African as sinful, evil, backward and primitive. They understood the objectives of the missionary as that of destroying their beliefs and practices. Kerre further notes that there were some people who abandoned their traditional beliefs and ways of life and adopted Christianity. They were indoctrinated to hate themselves as Africans and made a lot of effort to live and behave like the white people. In addition, Kerre observes that such people lacked confidence in their traditional ways of life and were ready to blindly ape the missionaries without reservation. The study attempted to investigate whether the same also applied to the Methodist Christians in the County.

A review of the mainstream Churches such as PCEA, the Anglican Church, the Catholic Church and the Pentecostal Churches that are also predominant in the region show that they too have continued with their traditional religious beliefs and practices but did not want mother Churches abroad to know for fear of being excommunicated from the mother Churches. (Nthamburi,1981). In the Catholic Church, Pope John II established at the Vatican a Pontifical Council for culture. The Catholic faithful are known for their traditional rhythms in their Church choir, their use of traditional musical instruments and their consumption of traditional beer. Detailed accounts such as those given above on attitude of African traditional beliefs in other Churches are lacking in the MCK in the County. The study findings would contribute relevant information that would show how MCK compares with other Churches in integrating African traditional religious beliefs in their worship.

In Christian Churches today, there is much talk about the need to make Christianity deeply rooted in the African religious cultural heritage. Many Christians have already been brought up to believe that there is nothing valuable in their own cultural and religious traditions. Some of the most outspoken opponents of the indigenization of Christianity are staunch African Christians fully indoctrinated to denounce their own cultural roots by missionaries

who have not done the same (Kerre, 1999). Such Christians are mostly in the modern Pentecostal Churches. The current study, while seeking to establish if such assumptions are true in the MCK, attempted to investigate the aspects of ATR that are persistent in the Methodist Churches under investigation.

According to Magesa (1999), African Christians have appropriated the gospel in their own ways blending their traditional religiosity with new insights from the gospel enterprise. As a result, the African Christianity in its wide variety is distinct from its parent denominations abroad. However the author is not specific in his study to show which particular aspects of African culture have been appropriated into the gospel and in which particular culture. He seems to have a general view on blending African culture and Christianity. This study therefore tried to unearth the aspects of Meru traditional cultural beliefs that the Methodist converts can infuse in their modern Christian worship in order to make Christianity easier and enjoyable for the Meru people. Christianity should be able to contribute actively to the solutions of life's problems by helping people to discover their own identity in the God of Jesus Christ. There must be a deep understanding of Christianity and local cultures so that the faith can become relevant to the existing situation.

A lot has been done on Methodism in Meru region by various scholars. Nki (2001) has examined the traditional and Christian interpretations of suffering and healing among the contemporary Ameru of Kenya. Nthamburi (1981) has concentrated on the history of the Methodist Church in Kenya with particular reference to Meru while Micheni (1988) has assessed the contribution of Methodist missionaries to education in Meru region. However no one has carried out a study on the persistence of ATR in the MCK in Meru region hence the findings of this study are expected to fill the knowledge gap. It is partly the aim of the current study to contribute to the current academic concern for evolving an African Christian theology.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

This study was informed by Emile Durkheim's functionalism theory of religion (1858-1917). Functionalism is a sociological view of religion emphasising its usefulness to the society. According to this theory, human activity is not only adaptive and manipulative but men also act out of felt needs. Human beings have extensive needs and in their very problem-solving tasks work out relationships according to their situation as it allows. The theory therefore

analyses the significance of religion in terms of those adaptive and expressive needs of human beings. The theory postulates that what has no function ceases to exist yet aspects of ATR and culture continue to exist in the MCK in Meru County. As such, it must have a function or a complex of functions.

The functionalism theory of religion focuses on relationships between religion and other social institutions. Its guiding principle is that religions shape the values that ground the major institutions of societies and that, reciprocally, many practical circumstances in a society condition its religious life. In fact, functionalism theory particularly emphasises long term effects of religion on other institutions including political, economic, educational, legal and cultural institutions. This view is strongly supported by Talcott Parsons (1971) who conceptualise society as a collection of systems within systems in which religion is one of the systems.

Another proponent of functionalism theory is Robert Merton (1968). He proposes a number of important distinctions to avoid potential weaknesses and clarify ambiguities in the basic perspective of functionalism theory. First, Merton distinguishes between manifest and latent functions of religion in society. That is those which are recognised and unintended by societal members and hence represents motives for their actions are classified as manifest functions. On the other hand, those actions which are unrecognised and thus untended by the societal members are taken to be latent functions of religion. He further distinguishes between consequences of religion which are positively functional for a society and those which are dysfunctional for the society and those which are neither. Merton finally concedes that the particular social structures which satisfy functional needs of society are not indispensable but that structural alternatives may exist which can also satisfy the same functional needs.

Both Durkheim and Merton concur that certain religious practices are functional and therefore contribute to a society's survival. It is on the basis of this view that this study was pegged on Durkheim's functionalism theory.

CHAPTER THREE
METHODOLOGY

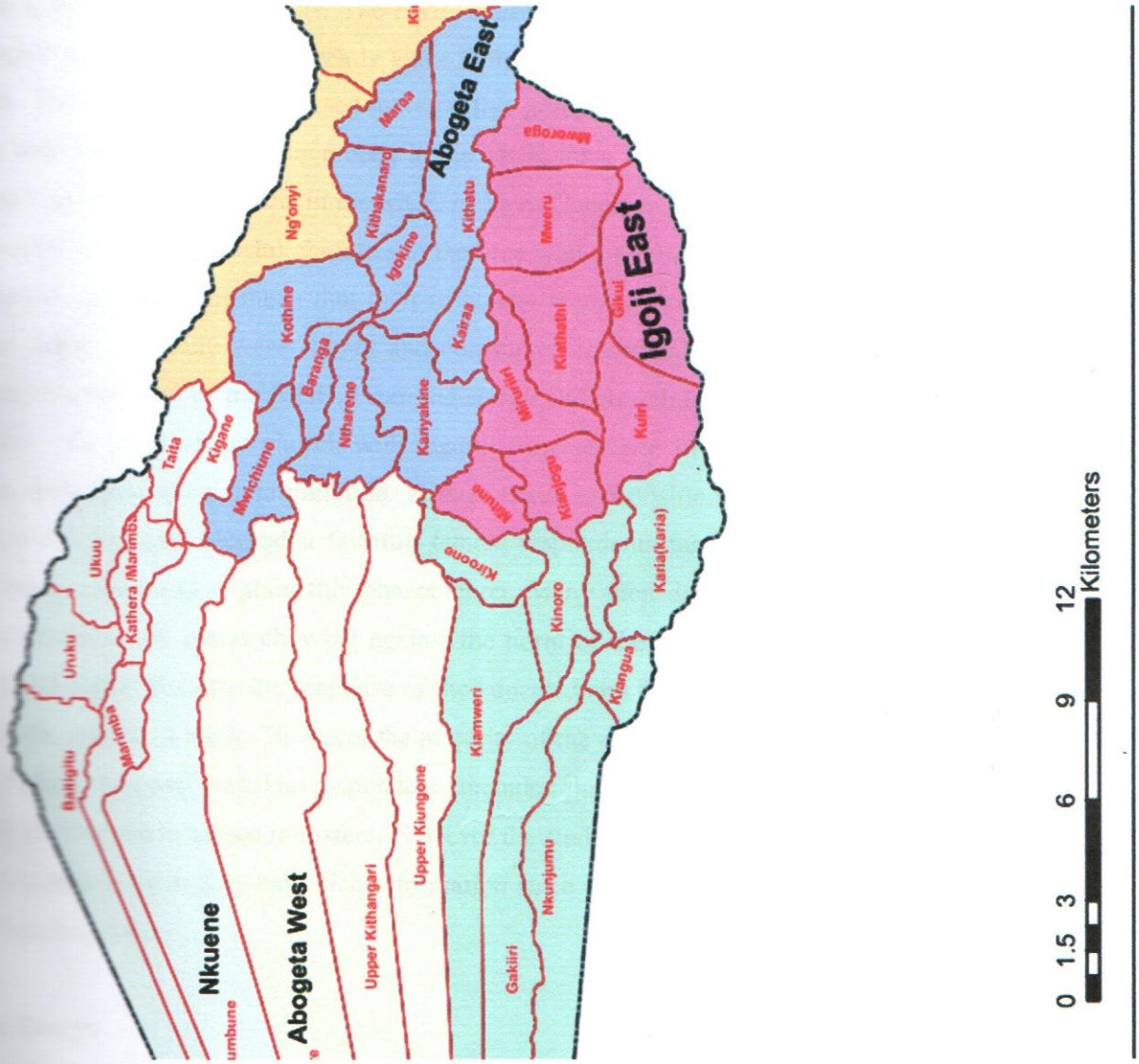
3.1 Introduction

This section discusses the design for the study to investigate aspects of ATR in the MCK in Meru County. It gives information about the study area, target population, sampling procedures, research instruments, pilot study and methods of data analysis.

3.2 The Study Area

The study was conducted in Meru County of Kenya. The subject of focus was the Methodist Churches drawn from Imenti South District. The District is located about 300 kilometres from Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya. This is a new District curved from the vast Meru Central District. It is bordered by Chuka and Tharaka District to the west, Imenti North District to the north and Nithi to the south. The District is predominately rural and agricultural. According to the Kenya national population census of 1999, the District had an established population of 205,712. The major economic activity of the inhabitants is agriculture.

Map of Imenti South District



3.3 Description of the Target Population

The target population was all the MCK members totaling to 15,130 drawn from 30 Methodist churches in the District (Nkubu Circuit Report, 2010). The unit of analysis was all the MCK members in the District. The churches were grouped further into three Circuits belonging to one Synod according to the organizational structure of the MCK. The subjects of the study were drawn from the thirty (30) Methodist churches. The churches had a total of 15,130 active members. The Circuit reports also showed another estimated number of 10,000 people in the District who professed the Methodism faith although they did not attend their services regularly and were not baptized.

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The researcher took into consideration facts such as age, status and the length of time in the church when selecting the respondents. The MCK church membership comprises mostly of the middle aged and old people who greatly value their traditional religious beliefs, attitudes and practices. The study therefore focused more on this group because they have knowledge of the Meru traditional beliefs and have been in the MCK for a longer time. The researcher noted the small number of the youths in the MCK in Meru County which can be attributed to the mushrooming of the Pentecostal churches in the area which are more attractive to young people. However, this does not mean that their responses were ignored. Their opinions and views on the subject of study were sought and considered important as the youth are the future leaders and members of the MCK. From the clergy and church leaders, the researcher sought to know the stand of the church with regard to persistence of traditional religious practices and their theological interpretation. Although sex composition did not matter as long as one was a baptised Methodist faithful, female respondents turned out to be more. There were many reasons to explain this phenomenon. Many men drop out of the church because of alcoholism and *miraa* chewing against the norm of the church. The standard of education did not matter because the response of the educated and the uneducated seemed to add weight to the subject of study. However the majority of the respondents were literate and this enabled them to respond well.The respondents included the youth, men, women, church elders, church leaders and ordained ministers. However the study focused more on the middle aged and old people because they have rich information since they have knowledge of Meru traditional religious beliefs

3.4 Research Design

The study employed a case study research design. This design was chosen with an aim to achieve an intensive descriptive and holistic analysis of the subject under investigation. According to Kombo and Delno (2006), the design facilitates a detailed assessment of a single instance which for this study is aspects of ATR and culture in the MCK in Meru County. By using this design, it was possible to evaluate the unique aspects of the study topic in the study area. The researcher opted to use this method which incorporated an in-depth analysis of the topic under study. The method was found to be advantageous because of its flexibility of using either qualitative or quantitative data or both which gave the researcher greater options in selecting the instruments for data gathering. The study aimed at collecting information from respondents on their attitudes and opinion in relation to ATR. Information for the study was collected from church leaders, the laity, church elders, youth representatives

and the ordained ministers. The researcher used both primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained using questionnaires and interviews while secondary data was obtained from books, journals and the internet.

3.5 Sampling Procedures

The study involved a sample size of 60 respondents. These were men and women with responsibilities in the church who included church elders, church leaders and youth representatives. Others were from the Circuit headquarters including the Reverends and the Ordained Ministers. Ordinary church members were also interviewed in order to corroborate the information given by church leaders and the clergy. The sample size was arrived at after considering the nature of the topic under study that required a detailed assessment, observation and interaction with the respondents. The relatively small number of 60 respondents enabled the researcher to spend reasonable time with each respondents hence was able to understand their views and opinions on ATR and Christianity.

The study employed purposive sampling procedure to identify the churches and the respondents. In this sampling procedure, the researcher purposively targeted specific churches and a specific group of people believed to be appropriate for the study. This enabled the researcher to select informants for in-depth interviews on the integration of ATR and culture in worship in the MCK. The target group cut across all groups of the church membership: the youth, men, women, church leaders and the clergy. However more focus was on the middle aged and the old because they greatly value their traditional beliefs, attitudes and practices. This group also tended to have knowledge of the topic under investigation unlike the youth. They have also been in the MCK for long and were accessible to the researcher. Out of the 30 MCK Churches, six were purposively selected. These were Kigume, Mikumbune, Gaatia, Nkubu, Ntemwene and Muringo Kamoro.

3.6 Research Instruments

Data was collected using five instruments namely questionnaires, structured interviews, checklists and church observation schedules. The most valuable tools of the study were the questionnaires and observation schedules of the Methodist faithfuls during live worship and in their natural surroundings. Majority of the respondents were middle aged and old church members with responsibilities in the six selected churches. However, the youth were also

interviewed to get their views and opinions on ATR. Representatives from the youth, men, women, church leaders, church elders and ordained ministers responded to these instruments.

ii) Questionnaires

The questionnaire was the main tool used for data collection in this study. It had both open and closed ended items. It was divided into part one and two. Part one had background information about the respondent and part two had items related to the research problem. The questions were simple to understand and the language used was clear and straight forward which helped to reduce misinterpretation. Each item included had specific purpose and contributed to the study. The questionnaire was preferred because it enhanced and upheld confidentiality. Since it was presented in paper format, there was no opportunity for interviewer bias. It was also able to gather data within a short time hence saving time. The questionnaires were distributed to identified Methodist faithfuls who were purposively selected. Since most respondents were literate, they were able to fill the questionnaires and 98% of the questionnaires were returned out of what was originally handed out.

iii) Structured Interviews

In this approach to interviewing, an interview guide was used. This was a list of questions that were covered by the interview. Questions were open-ended and conversational. The researcher was guided by the items based on the research objectives and research problem. According to Kombo and Delno (2006), structured interviews help the informant to open up and the researcher should stimulate the informant to produce more information. Prior to the formal interviews, the researcher requested for opportunities when the respondents found themselves free and ready to respond. Interviews were largely conducted in the homes of the respondents or appointed places for the purposes of privacy. The structured interviews helped the researcher to gather in-depth information on the topic under investigation.

iii) Checklists

This was a prepared list containing all possible aspects of ATR in the MCK (see Appendix C). The researcher used a checklist to indicate and ascertain the aspects of ATR in each Church selected for this study. A total of six (6) checklists were used in this study.

(e) Church Observation Schedule

The researcher used the Church Observation Schedule to observe live worship sessions in the selected Churches (see Appendix D). The observation guide contained items which focused on how the Church members incorporated ATR in their worship. The researcher adopted participant observation where the researcher took part in the worship activities. This made the respondents to become more comfortable with the researcher hence giving an intuitive understanding of their worship activities. Closer observation of the Methodist faithful was done in their natural surrounding, ceremonies, fellowships and in their families where it was possible. The researcher attended six church services and and managed to obtain a lot of information from the singing and instruments used, the nature of the sermons, their content and aims. The data obtained was used to supplement and cross check the information provided in the Church members questionnaires.

3.7 Pilot Study

The researcher conducted a pilot study prior to the administration of the research instruments. The pilot study enabled the researcher to refine the research instruments by making corrections based on the observations made, added new items, deleted some items and estimated the time taken by respondents to fill the questionnaires. This ensured that the instruments were refined before their final administration. It also tested the validity and reliability of the research instruments. According to Ary (1972), the adequacy of the research procedures and anticipated problems were solved at this stage, thereby saving the time and efforts. In the pilot study, the researcher selected two Methodist churches purposively. These were Kathera MCK and Kiamiriru MCK. The researcher administered the research instruments to church members, elders and leaders taken for the pilot study. The pilot study was conducted by the researcher herself to ensure maximum response and return of the questionnaires.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

The researcher obtained a research permit from the Office of the President, authorising her to collect data from the Methodist Churches in Meru County, and also another authority letter from the Graduate School, Egerton University. The researcher then proceeded to visit the selected churches to establish rapport and seek permission from the respective church leaders to collect data from their churches. The first visit enabled the researcher and the church leaders to select the appropriate day and time of visiting the churches.

3.9 Data Analysis and Presentation

A large quantity of data was collected. The researcher analysed the data using descriptive tools of data analysis such as frequency tables and graphs(Kombo & Delno, 2006). All the questionnaires and interview schedule obtained from the field were coded. Using study objectives and research questions as guidelines, all the data on the church member's questionnaires and interview schedules was summarised to draw conclusions. The researcher brought out meaningful observations made during the study. The findings of the study were critical in determining the place of ATR in the MCK in Meru County. On the basis of the findings, the researcher made conclusions, suggestions and recommendations for future action and research.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the study findings and their interpretation based on the objectives. The first objective was to assess the aspects of African religion and culture that have been integrated in Christian worship in the MCK. The second objective was to establish why the African converts to Methodism have not abandoned ATR. The third objective was to examine aspects of syncretism in the MCK and the fourth objective was to examine relevant theological issues with regard to the encounter between ATR and Christianity in Meru County.

4.2 Demographic Information of the Respondents

The researcher sought demographic information of the respondents in order to establish if there was equal representation in the sampling and to find out the period of time the members have been in their respective churches. In this regard, the church members' background which included the sex, age, academic and professional qualification and the length of time in the church was sought. Fifty eight (58) of the sampled members responded. The analysis of their responses revealed that 42% of the church members were male while 58% of the members were female. This indicated that most respondents were female. The information about the other variables was analysed and presented in Tables 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Table 1: Church members' age

Age	No. of respondents N=58	%
Under 20	6	10
21 – 40	10	17
41 – 60	28	48
Above 60	14	28

The findings in Table 1 revealed that 10% of the respondents were under 20 years, 17% were between twenty one and forty years, while 48% were between forty one and sixty years. 28% were above sixty years. It was clear that most of the respondents were middle aged (48%) and

old (28%). These were purposively selected since they form the majority in the churches under study.

Table 2: Academic and professional qualifications

Grade	No. of respondents N=58	%
University	6	10
Middle level colleges	20	34
Secondary school level	28	48
Primary school level	6	10
Others	-	-

The results in Table 2 showed that 10% of the respondents had acquired university education, 34% had acquired various trainings in middle level colleges. 48% had reached secondary school level while 10% had reached primary school level. The findings clearly revealed that most respondents were literate with academic and professional qualifications. Their occupations are shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Respondents' occupations

Occupations	No. of members N=58	%
Unemployed	9	16
House wife	7	12
Civil servant	26	45
Self employed	14	24
Others	4	7

The information presented in Table 3 indicated that majority (45%) of the respondents were civil servants mainly teachers while 24% were self employed. 16% were unemployed and 12% were housewives. 7% earned a living through unspecified jobs. Their length of time in the church is shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Length of time in the church

Length of time	No. of respondents N=58	%
Less than 12 moths	-	-
1 – 2 years	3	5
3 – 10 years	8	14
10 years and above	49	84

The information presented in Table 4 revealed that 84% of the respondents had been members of their churches for a period of more than ten years. 14% of the respondents had been members of the church for less than ten years.5% of the respondents had been church members for between one and two years while no member was less than twelve months old in the selected churches. The findings revealed that most members had knowledge of the topic under study because of their long experience in the church worship.

4.3 Aspects of African Religion and Culture that have been integrated in Christian Worship in the MCK

This section presents the research findings for the first objective of the study which was to assess the aspects of African religion and culture that have been integrated in Christian worship in the MCK. The section therefore presents the findings for the research question stated as follows:

What aspects of African traditional religion and culture have Methodist converts in Meru County integrated in their worship?

On the basis of this objective, the respondents listed several aspects of ATR that are already integrated in their worship. They also mentioned those that are no longer practiced and those that have been replaced with modern practices that are functional. The aspects were grouped into those incorporated and those not incorporated for the purpose of analysis. From the observations made, the researcher decided to investigate further whether the listed aspects were practiced by all members. Consequently, inquiry on the subject involved collection of

data on various aspects such as music and dance, African dressing , sacrifices, rituals, polygamy, offerings in kind, concept of God, concept of ancestral spirits, traditional circumcision and use of African naming system. The purpose of inquiring whether the members practiced the listed aspects was to show the extent to which ATR is practiced in the Methodist Church. However, the researcher gathered from oral interviews with members of the clergy that these traditional religious practices are done by members beyond the church control. The Church teachings and doctrines are against some of the listed religious and cultural practices such as polygamy, sacrifices, traditional circumcision and belief in ancestral spirits. Reverend Charity Gakii (OI, 19/10/11) noted that the MCK has put disciplinary measures in place for those members engaging in such practices. The Reverend observed that such measures are sometimes difficult to put into practice because the persistent practices are embraced even by some church leaders who are supposed to implement church teachings and doctrines. If anything, according to the reverend, the church has fought these practices with unwavering determination.

Three methods of data collection were used here. There were first structured interviews, use of questionnaires and church observation schedules. The items of the questionnaire were translated to mother tongue for the respondents who could not comprehend the questions in English. The respondents were required to respond to an open ended question stated thus:

Do you believe in African traditional religion? If your answer is yes, are there aspects of African traditional religion that you practice?

The responses were as shown in the Table below:

Table 5: Aspects of ATR practiced by church members

Aspects	No. of respondents who practice (N=58)	%	No. of respondents who don't practice (N=58)	%
Music and dance	58	100	0	0
African dressing	40	69	18	31
Sacrifices	20	34	38	66
Rituals	55	95	3	5
Polygamy	10	17	48	83
Offerings in kind	58	100	0	0
Traditional concept of God	9	16	49	84
Concept of ancestral spirits	20	34	38	66
Traditional circumcision	0	0	58	100
Taboos	51	88	7	12
Naming	45	78	13	22

From Table 7 above, all church members (100%) practiced music and dance as an aspect of worship because they enjoyed it, 69% of the members preferred African dressing and ornaments especially when singing Christian songs, while 31% did not. 34% of the members participated in sacrifices during prolonged drought and when misfortunes befell their families, while 66% did not. 17% of the members practiced polygamy while 83% did not. All the church members interviewed (100%) said that occasionally they give offerings in kind especially when they do not have cash money. 16% still believed in traditional concept of God where God was confined to the Meru community and was given a community name *Murungu*. His dwelling place was believed to be at Mount *Kirimara,* (present day Mount Kenya). Many MCK converts today (84%) believe that God is universal. All the church members (100%) believed in the concept of ancestral spirits and this was evident in their use of family names and the burial rituals. 100% of the respondents did not practice traditional circumcision as the traditional circumciser has been replaced by modern doctors and traditional seclusion period replaced by church seminars. 88% believed in taboos while 12% did not. 78% of the church members followed the traditional naming method while 22% did not.

From the above discussion, it was clear that music and dance, offerings in kind and the concept of ancestral spirit were aspects of ATR that were practiced by all the church members in Meru County. On the other hand, traditional circumcision was completely not practiced by the church members in the County.

The researcher further investigated whether ATR beliefs were openly practiced in the selected Churches. This paved way for further inquiry on the specific aspects of ATR that the selected churches have already incorporated in their worship. In both the interview guide and the questionnaire, the respondents were required to respond to an open ended question stated as follows.

Is African traditional religion openly practiced in your Church? List down the aspects of African Traditional Religion that your Church has already incorporated.

The data was analysed and summarised in the Table below.

Table 6: Aspects of ATR incorporated in the selected churches

Aspects	Incorporated (N=6)	%	Not incorporated (N=6)	%
Music and dance	6	100	0	0
African dressing	6	100	0	0
Sacrifices	1	16	5	83
Rituals	6	100	0	0
Polygamy	2	33	4	67
Offering in kind	5	83	1	17
Traditional concept of God	1	17	5	83
Concept of ancestral spirits	6	100	0	0
Traditional circumcision	2	33	4	67
Taboos	5	83	1	17
Naming	6	100	0	0

Table 6 above show that 100% of the selected churches had incorporated music and dance, African dressing, rituals, concept of ancestral spirits and naming in their worship and religious practices. 33% of the churches had not abandoned polygamy while 67% had

eliminated the practice. 83% had incorporated offerings in kind while 17% preferred cash money as offerings. 3% had not abandoned traditional circumcision while 90% had stopped the practice and replaced it with modern circumcision. 83% still retained several taboos while 17% no longer had taboos.

In addition, Table 6 indicates that all the churches had retained many aspects of African traditional religion in their worship. The results agreed with previous studies that African Christians would always remain Africans and members of a wider community and as such cannot separate themselves from the way of life of their communities (Mugambi, 1989). The results also revealed that some aspects of traditional religion had been abandoned by most believers such as polygamy and traditional circumcision. It was also clear from the findings that the traditional concept of God had changed among most Methodist faithful and only a few members embraced traditional sacrifices.

4.3.1 Music and Dance

The Methodist Church looks at Christian worship as a collection of activities that are carried out during Christian services. It includes singing hymns and choruses, prayers, reading the Bible passages, preaching the word of God (sermon), giving offerings, and giving sacrament (Holy Communion). The findings clearly show that the MCK in imenti South District have adopted African tunes in church music with 75% practicing it. They have developed a kind of music that suits the local situation. Use of body movement is encouraged when singing and every member of the congregation participates. Singing is usually accompanied by clapping of hands, drumming and even dancing. Modern musical instruments are used alongside traditional musical instruments such as drums, rattles, shakers, and *kayambas*. According to the superintendent Circuit minister, Reverend Moses Mbae (OI, 20/10/11), traditional musical instruments make the singing rich, enjoyable and lively. He adds that the body movements make the singing lively as opposed to the missionary style of singing hymns that did not allow body movements. Body movements are meant to express gratitude to God. Reverend Mbae further concurs with Mbiti (1969) that worship in mission churches is simply dull. The hymns are sung to foreign tunes with little rhythm and without bodily movements or twisting the loins as a religious expression. He also noted noted that a lot of work and effort is being made to indigenize music. For example, new hymns have been written in local language and African folk songs are being encouraged in worship. When singing a common tune, members of the congregation are sometimes encouraged to sing it in the language they

know best. The author witnessed a ceremony where a modern gospel singer was launching a Christian album. The Christian songs were performed in traditional attires with traditional musical instruments. (See photos below).



Plate1: Christian singers performing in traditional attires



Plate 2: Traditional musical instruments used in Christian music (Clockwise- shield, shaker, drum, horn)

4.3.2 African Dressing

One of the ways of identifying people belonging to different churches is by observing the way they dress. Traditional designs are being used in the Methodist churches with 67% using traditional ornaments and clothes especially when performing Christian songs. During the annual music and drama competitions regularly held in the MCK churches, the dancers dress in the African style. The author happened to be present in an annual church music and drama competition attended by ten churches from the synod. (See photo below). According to elder Jacob Kaaria (OI, 21 /10 / 11), the dressing styles that some modern churches allow become disruptive in worship services and make some worshippers especially the elderly feel out of place. The elder despised the tight short clothes and long trousers won by female worshippers. He added that traditional designs like *vitenge* and long clothes for female worshippers portray respect not only to God but also for other worshippers.





Plate 3: Christian singers dressed in traditional ornaments and clothes

4.3.3 Preaching / Sermon

The study established that local language is widely used during worship in the selected churches. Views from the respondents especially the clergy gathered from the oral interviews seemed to encourage the use of a clear and understandable language so as to make Christian worship an exciting moment worthy longing for. Reverend Charity Gakii (OI, 19/10/11) observed that a clear Kimeru language helps the members to express themselves freely in the African spirit without a sense of being brainwashed. It is for this reason that the Kimeru Bible and hymn book are commonly used in the rural MCK Church with the latest translation of the Ameru Bible launched in February at the Kenya Methodist university graduation square. Interpretation from vernacular to English or Kiswahili is only done when there are visitors from urban centres or during youth camps and seminars. According to Reverend Moses Mbae (OI, 20/10/11), vernacular language is used to make the congregation understand the sermon better. Many preachers also try to simplify the sermons by relating them to daily experiences of believers. Local examples are used and great effort is made to make the congregation apply the lesson to their life situation. Congregational involvement is encouraged by many preachers as they occasionally ask questions and the congregation responds in unison. During the church observation schedule, the researcher observed that the preachers tried as much as they could to involve the congregation. The prayers that followed the sermon were spontaneous; an aspect adopted from African style of worship.

4.3.4 Use of African Names in Baptism

The first sacrament which is given to those who wish to become Christians in the MCK is baptism. The church believes that human beings are fallen and sinful though they were originally created perfect. Baptism washes away original and deliberate sin the individual may have committed. The new individual is now whole, reborn in Christ and is given a new name as an act of recognition of a new person. Generally in the Meru community, just like in

many other African societies, names have a meaning. In the earlier days of mission work in the MCK, new converts were given foreign names which were either biblical or western. However, very few, if any of the new converts understood the meaning of these names. According to Reverend Charity Gakii (OI, 22 /10/ 2011), the MCK allows their converts to maintain the African names in baptism if they so wish. This trend has become very popular especially among the youth, for instance with 45% preferring family names in baptism. It surprised the author a bit to meet a respondent who is also a member of the clergy and has retained two African names and has ignored a Christian name. He is called Ireri wa Ireri. Many church members have retained two African names, particularly the family names.

4.3.5 Traditional Rituals

The study was also informed that several rituals are still practiced by members of the MCK in Meru County but the marriage rituals are the most outstanding. The MCK approach to marriage is slightly different from the traditional approach. According to an ordained minister, Reverend Doris Wanja (OI, 25/10/11), the Christian marriage brings two individuals together to become one flesh. This leaves no room for polygamy which is a dying practice in the church. Reverend Wanja further affirmed that the church has put in place measures against polygamy. However, the church doctrines allow those who were polygamous before conversion to retain their families and are accepted as members of the church. But they do not take part in the Lord's Table (Holy Communion) and cannot participate in church leadership in any capacity. Those who become polygamous while already Christians are suspended and finally excommunicated in case they do not change, repent, and confess openly.

Due to the importance attached to children by the Meru people, there are rituals performed on the wedding day to increase and ensure fertility of the couple. The church acknowledges that by the act of creation, an individual becomes a co-creator with God, as doing and continuing that which the creator started. The Biblical message to increase and multiply (Genesis 1:28) which refers to the first people, Adam and Eve, is transplanted to fit into the Meru culture. The women grind and prepare the traditional porridge which is taken to the elders of the extended family of the bride. The porridge is taken alongside traditional beer and a little poured on the ground which is taken to bless the couple with children. According to the church elders, the pouring of porridge and traditional beer is an act of hospitality and a welcome to the family members believed to be in the invisible world. The elders on the

morning of the wedding give food and drink offerings as tokens of fellowship as a show of oneness with the living dead. It was interesting to learn that though the church is shifting and encouraging the bride wealth payment trend from animals to hard cash, many church members in the area under study have made sure to retain a traditional aspect of bride wealth. Two animals must accompany the money and according to one respondent, elder Gerishon Gitonga, (OI, 18/10/11), one more animal must be escorted much later after the marriage has been blessed with children. Those with in-laws in the neighbouring sub tribes of Tharaka and Tigania must also accompany the money with *uki* (traditional honey) and a big bunch of miraa respectively. On the wedding day, the bride is made to carry her wedding cake for a short distance before cutting it as sigh of blessings in her married life. (See photo below).



Plate 4: Modern Christian wedding with the bride carrying a cake on her back

4.3.6 Concept of Ancestral Spirits

The relationship between the living members, the spirits and the spirits world is very important to the Meru people with 75% respecting their role as shown in Table 5. This is evidenced in their burial system. The Meru call the spirits "Nkoma cia ba Juju" which literary means "the spirits of our forefathers." Although the Methodist faithful strongly believe in God's protection, they also believe that the spirits of their forefathers continue to protect the homestead while in the invisible world. Data collected through interviews with members of the clergy clearly indicated that the church has no problem with this belief. The head of the family is buried at a strategic place in the homestead from where it is believed he can keep watching over the homestead. He is buried with the head facing Mt. Kenya which is believed to be the dwelling place of God. According to elder Gerishon Gitonga (OI, 24 /10/11) the spirits of the forefathers are the guardians of family affairs, traditions, ethics and activities. In his own opinion, the elder stated that any offence in this matter is ultimately an offence

against forefathers, who in that capacity, act as the invisible police of the families, clans and the community at large.

Among the Meru, special care of the graves is taken since the spirits are considered to dwell within the burial sites. To both the laity and the clergy in the MCK, the ancestral spirits are a reality which must be reckoned with, whether it is a clear, blurred or confused reality. According to Reverend Gakii (OI, 19/10/11) the Christian faith cannot erase the reality of the ancestral spirits. The spirits live among the people to serve their needs and give services to those who welcome it among themselves through offerings and sacrifices. The reverend added that the authors of the Bible and even the early Christian missionaries were seen to honour martyrs like Peter and Paul through worship. The reverend claimed that this is similar to the honour given to ancestors by the Meru people through pouring libations and naming children after them. The Church however does not openly condemn this belief. Within the above understanding is found the Ameru reverence to the ancestors not only as founders of the tribe but also as people who were and continue to be responsible for the existence of the tribe.

4.3.7 Offerings in Kind

Church offerings are not only given in form of money but also include produce from the local area such as foodstuffs and animals. Such offerings are sold after the church service and the money is used to support church activities. Traditionally offerings of foodstuffs were given as thanksgiving offerings directed to God, spirits and the living dead. One church leader who was interviewed, James Mugambi,(OI, 25/10/11) said that although many church members in the rural areas were poor, they still felt the obligation to thank God through offerings. The church leader further noted that although the Christian missionaries encouraged giving of offerings in form of money, many church members still gives offerings in kind. Offerings include produce from their farms such as sweet potatoes, irish potatoes, bananas, arrowroots, yams and chicken among others. Reverend Wanja noted that a believer should be allowed to bring to the house of God whatever they have in line with the scripture, "do not come to the house of God empty handed." Reverend Wanja further added that most Methodist adherents in the rural areas are poor and cannot afford money as offering all the time.

4.4 Meru Converts Response to African Traditional Religious Practices

This section is a presentation of the research findings of the second objective which sought to establish why Meru converts to Methodism cannot abandon ATR. The research question for collecting the relevant data was stated as follows:

Why are Meru converts in the MCK reluctant to abandon African traditional religious beliefs?

In regard to this objective, the researcher sought to establish the church members who believe in ATR and the underlying reasons. The research questionnaire item for this purpose was stated thus:

Do you believe in African Traditional Religion? Give reasons for your answer.

The Church members' responses were analysed and presented below.

Table 7: Responses from the ordinary Church members, leaders and the clergy on their beliefs in ATR

Respondents	Yes	%	No	%
Ordinary church members **(N=34)**	26	76	8	23
Church leaders **(N=19)**	12	63	7	39
Clergy **(N=5)**	5	100	0	0
Total **(58)**	43	74	15	26

From Table 7 above, 76% of the ordinary church members believed in ATR while 23% did not 63% of the church leaders believed in ATR while 39% did not. All the members of the clergy (100%) believed in ATR although they did not practice the same. Of the total number of respondents 74% believed in ATR while 26% did not.

The chart below further illustrates the findings.

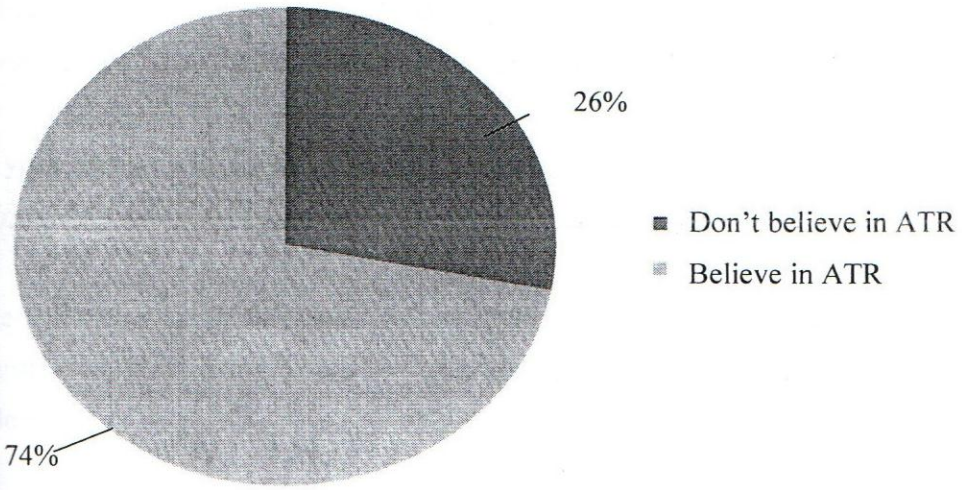


Figure 2: Respondents view on ATR

The results in Table 7 suggested that the Church members did not wholly believe in ATR. The findings also suggested that the members of the clergy fully believed in the traditional cultural and religious beliefs. However, being the custodians of the church teachings and doctrines, most members of the clergy did not practice ATR. The researcher established that most of the ordinary church members and leaders who denied loyalty to ATR may have done it out of ignorance and failure to understand the relationship between cultural and religious practices. This is probably because in the previous section, all the respondents admitted of incorporating African music and dance and most of them agreed to have retained traditional concept of spirits in addition to performing marriage and death rituals. This observation concurred with Mbiti (1969:1) who noted that because traditional religion permeates all the departments of life, there is no formal distinction between the spiritual and the material areas of life.

It has already been observed from the previous section of the study that the members of MCK in Meru County have continued with their traditional religious practices as opposed to the Church teachings and doctrines. Methodist adherents have incorporated several aspects of ATR in their worship and religious practices against the church teachings and doctrines. In addition, it has been noted that both the Church leadership and the laity are not in agreement in regard to most religious and cultural practices of the Meru people. It was necessary therefore to establish why Methodism adherents are reluctant to abandon ATR. The study

inquired from the respondents how they rated their Church members in relation to their willingness to abandon ATR. Data was collected through interview sessions and the questionnaire. The research statement for collecting the data was stated thus:

In your own opinion, what makes it hard for Christians in your Church not to abandon African Traditional Religion?

The researcher sought to know from the respondents the reasons for not abandoning ATR to wholly embrace Christianity. Their responses were captured and analysed in the Table 8 below:

Table 8: Responses on reasons for not abandoning ATR

Responses	No. of responses (N=58)	%
It is part of their life	55	95
Gives solutions to their problems	30	52
God is the same with similar attributes	50	86
Rigidity and attachment to the religion of their forefathers	45	78
Fear of the consequences of abandoning their religious past	20	34
Christianity does not meet all their spiritual needs	40	69
African moral values are good	50	86
Illiteracy and ignorance	20	34
Belief that Christianity is a foreign religion	35	60

Note: Respondents gave more than one reason

From Table 8 above, 95% of the respondents indicated that they could not abandon ATR to wholly embrace Christianity because it was part of their life. One respondent who is also a church elder wondered whether life can be complete without the religious practices and values of the Ameru. The elder said that his faith in God does not hinder him from retaining the religious practices that benefit him. 52% said that it gave solutions to their problems. This is in line with the theory that guided this study that the practices that are functional in a society remain while those that have no function cease to exist. One respondent, elder Gerishon Gitonga noted that there are many problems facing African Christians that

Christianity was not able to solve. On the contrary, the elder said that traditional religious practices had solutions to the same problems hence Christians could not abandon the same. 86% of the interviewed respondents were in agreement that God is the same with similar attributes both in Christianity and ATR. 78% stated that it was because of their attachment to the religion of their forefathers. Elder Gitonga observed that abandoning the religion of their fore fathers completely would bring a curse on the land of the Ameru. 34% said that they feared the consequences of abandoning their traditional past while 69% indicated that Christianity did not meet their spiritual needs. 86% stated that African moral values were good. Many respondents attributed the current indiscipline and rebellion among some youths to lack of knowledge of some African moral values. 34% indicated that illiteracy and ignorance were the reasons for not abandoning ATR to embrace Christianity. On the other hand 60% stated that Christianity was a foreign religion to the Ameru and embracing it wholly was not easy.

Therefore the study findings demonstrated that ATR was still very relevant to Methodist adherents in Meru County. Many respondents cited rigidity and attachment to their Meru cultural and religious past as a reason why they cannot abandon ATR. To them, it is a way of life and they cannot be separated from it. They have been brought up in that religion and it is hard to change. Besides, their forefathers led the same religious life hence abandoning it would amount to disrespecting their forefathers. Others argued that the attributes of God in ATR are the same as those in Christianity. This view concurs with that of Bahemuka (1983) who argues that since God is the same, the African Christian has sifted Christianity and taken what is advantageous to enrich him or her since he or she is already a religious person. He or she has also sifted ATR and retained what is advantageous to him or her. Bahemuka further observes that African Christians do not see the need of abandoning his religious past because not everything was evil after all. Onyancha (1989) concurs with Bahemuka that the African world-view has made it difficult for Christianity to penetrate fully and shape the African personalities because it is deeply rooted as the first experience prior to Christianity. Onyancha further notes that the African converts in mission churches have found difficulties in reconciling their previous experience with their new faith.

According to the church elders, most Bible teachings appear foreign to the Meru Methodist faithfuls and therefore they have not been able to own the Biblical teachings to be part and parcel of their lives. The elders interviewed said that the Church programmes have not been

flexible enough to set aside time for detailed Bible study where the Christians can be made to understand Bible concepts. This has left the Church members with a shallow knowledge of the scriptures. The author was given a testimony by an elder who once tried to completely abandon ATR as discussed below. He has been in the Methodist Church from his youthful days to date.

Gitonga asserted that he was removed from his home at Kigane village and taken to a boarding school by the missionaries. The missionaries had claimed that they were doing this to keep him away from the influence of pagan practices of his parents and other relatives who had refused to be converted to Christianity. All the children who went to these boarding schools were supposedly removed from the heathen backgrounds of their parents. According to Gitonga, the missionaries were of the opinion that parents and relatives of such children were beyond redemption and therefore the children had to be taken to boarding schools for vigorous evangelisation and civilisation process. However, as he understood the gospel better, the elder discovered that some of his traditional beliefs and practices did not in any way conflict with Biblical teachings. For example, he realised that not all African songs, dance and worship were evil. He also discovered that Christianity did not give him solutions to all his problems and so he had to resort to traditional resources in times of need. The Gitonga affirmed that he is a Christian though a believer in Ameru traditional religious beliefs.

Through oral interviews, the researcher inquired from the respondents whether there were aspects of traditional religion that conflict with Biblical teaching, and have been thus abandoned. The research item for collecting the relevant data was stated as follows:

Are there aspects of ATR that you feel conflict with Biblical teachings?

Consequently, the respondents were asked to give their opinion on the specific aspects they felt conflict with Christianity and Biblical teachings. The findings from interview schedules with the respondents indicate that many respondents have abandoned the aspect of sacrificing. In addition, many Christians no longer communicate to the spirits through diviners and other religious specialists. To many Christians, Jesus Christ was the last sacrifice on the cross. It was also clear that the Church has abandoned traditional circumcision. According to Reverend Gakii (OI, 19/10/11), the traditional circumciser has been replaced by modern doctors. Therefore the initiates are taken to the hospitals instead of the traditional

shrines. The seclusion period that the initiates were subjected to after initiation where the community elders and their sponsors taught them on various cultural issues have also been replaced by seminars organised by the Church for the initiates. The researcher had an opportunity to witness a ceremony held for the young initiates after a two weeks seminar at Nkubu MCK. (See photo below) Such seminars are held especially during the month of December, lasting for two weeks. The initiates are taught on health issues and sex education. Some burial rituals such as shaving where the members of the nuclear family were supposed to shave their hair have also been abandoned by all members.



Plate 5: Young male initiates at a post-circumcision seminar at Nkubu MCK

In conclusion, it can be said that according to the MCK members in Meru County, conversion to Christianity does not mean abandoning African culture and religion altogether. Where there is no real conflict between African religion and Christianity, the convert retains much of his cultural and religious background as long as he remains within the traditional set up of life.

4.5 Aspects of Syncretism in the MCK

Objective three of the study was to find out whether there are aspects of syncretism in the Methodist Church. Based on this objective, the researcher sought to establish if there was a double mixture in worship and loyalty between ATR and Christianity. The findings are a response to the main study question which was stated thus:

Based on your Church's teachings and practices, is there double mixture in worship and loyalty between African Traditional Religion and Christianity?

The item seeking the responses was administered to the ordained ministers, church leaders and the ordinary church members. The analysis of their responses was presented in Table below:

Table 9: Response on double mixture in worship and loyalty

Respondents	Yes	%	No	%
Ordinary members (N=34)	3	9	31	53
Church leaders (N=19)	2	11	17	89
Clergy (N=5)	2	40	3	60
Total (N=58)	7	12	51	88

The information from Table 9 above revealed that 9% of the ordinary church members indicated that there was a double mixture in worship and loyalty in the MCK while 53% did not ascribe. 11% of the church leaders stated that there was a double mixture and loyalty in the MCK while 89% objected. 40% of the clergy indicated that the practice was rife while 60% objected. Consequently, the findings of the study revealed that few respondents (12%) stated there was a double mixture in worship and loyalty in the MCK while the majority of the respondents (88%) did not agree that there was double mixture in worship and loyalty in the MCK. Though it was earlier on observed through the research findings of the first objective that many respondents admitted that they have incorporated aspects of ATR in their worship, the same respondents frowned at the mention of syncretism. Majority viewed syncretism as a betrayal of their pure Methodism faith. The researcher observed that the respondents are unaware that they are already in the practice of syncretism. 7% of the ordinary Church members accepted that there are elements of double mixture in worship and loyalty. 17% of the Church leaders also admitted that the practice was in the Church while 40% of the clergy said there was double mixture in worship and loyalty. Basically, 12% of those interviewed said there is syncretism while 88% denied loyalty to two religious faiths.

The respondents were further asked to give evidence that show there is double mixture in worship and loyalty in the MCK. The research item for collecting the relevant data was stated as follows:

If your answer (10a) above is yes, state evidence that show that there is double mixture in worship and loyalty in the Methodist Church.

Data collected from the respondents including the clergy through structured interviews clearly showed that there are syncretism elements in the practices and beliefs of the Methodist adherents but many were ignorant of such syncretism elements. Their responses are summarised in the following subheadings which are evidences of syncretism in the MCK.

4.5.1: Methodist Church Membership to *Njuri Ncheke*

Njuri Ncheke is a traditional form of government by selected elders whose structure has survived the modern changes and indeed seems to be reviving in its importance. According to Reverend Gakii (OI, 19 / 10 /11), the Methodist Church doctrines do not allow baptised members of the Church to join *Njuri Ncheke* as elders or in any other capacity. The Reverend expressed concern at the recent turn of events where members of MCK have been joining the council as elders and openly taking part in the traditional oathing system and prayers organised by the traditional government. Among the current senior elders of the council is a former presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church, Lawi Imathiu. In a recent case of mysterious killings in Imenti South district where one of the victims was a leader in one of the sampled churches, the ordained ministers and leaders of the Methodist Church worked hand in hand with *Njuri Ncheke* elders in issuing threats and punishing the culprits.

In a show of unity, the two groups joined hands in a mass burial held for the victims, to curse the killers. Many politicians in the Meru region who are members of MCK are also members of the council. The Church leaders who happen to be community leaders are automatically recruited as council elders as is the current trend in Meru region. This is a clear evidence of syncretism as the council is the custodian of Ameru religious and cultural beliefs. It is a case of blending indigenous beliefs and Christianity with the Church representatives, being the custodians of Christian beliefs. During the launch of the Ameru Bible held on 26/2/2011, the Ameru church leaders and Njuri Ncheke elders received the Bible from the Bible society of Kenya general secretary. (See photo below). Another show of unity between church leaders

and the council's elders which is a clear evidence of syncretism was witnessed during the Meru cultural festival held at Nchiru grounds once given the date or year. Although the ceremony was organised by the council elders, the main guest was a Christian leader and modern preacher, Kamlesh Patni. During the well attended ceremony, Christian leaders from the county including some ordained ministers from MCK led a prolonged prayer session for peaceful 2012 general elections, peace and a united nation among other prayer items (See photos below).



Plate 6: Ameru Church leaders and *Njuri Ncheke* elders receive a new *Kimeru* Bible from Bible Society of Kenya General Secretary



Plate 7: *Njuri Ncheke* elders and Christian leaders in Ameru cultural festival held at Nchiru grounds

4.5.2 Belief in Witchcraft and Sorcery

Witchcraft and sorcery are a great temptation even to the Methodist adherents. Data collected through oral interviews with the laity clearly revealed that in strictly personal matters relating to the passage of life and the crisis of life, ATR is regarded as the final succour by most African Christians. According to Reverend Wanja (OI, 25/10/11), not many Christians in the MCK have a mature Biblical attitude during times of sicknesses and other forms of suffering that do not seem to have a clear cause. In a recent case of mysterious killings in Imenti South

district, even the clergy and the Church leaders entrusted *Njuri Ncheke* with the responsibility of finding the killers and cursing them. According to Reverend, Wanja, it is suffering and sickness that leads people to ATR. Many individuals feel that their ancestors are unhappy with them whenever suffering and calamity befalls them. Reverend Wanja further noted that whenever there is suffering, there is always the feeling that an ancestor has been offended by the living and his/her aggrieved spirit is haunting the living by causing suffering, sickness and even death. In order to avoid being haunted, many Africans, even when they are converted to Christianity, will want to keep the traditions laid down by the community. To break traditions of society will surely bring revenge from the ancestral spirits. It is in view of this that the MCK Church leadership has relaxed its doctrines concerning ATR.

On the other hand, Reverend Moses Mbae (OI, 20/10/11), contends that resorting to traditional resources is merely a sinful relapse brought by the devil. Reverend Mbae argued that God is able to give solutions to all life's problems. Nevertheless, Elder Gerishon Gitonga (OI, 18/10/11) asserted that there are some felt needs among the Meru Methodist faithfuls that the church has not yet met with its present approach to ministry and teaching. The elder added that unlike the modern Pentecostal Churches that cast out demons and pray against the power of witchcraft, the Methodist church does not address such problems and even the Bible does not directly speak to the problems facing Ameru Christians.

Asked whether they believe, fear or practice witchcraft and sorcery, the ordinary church members through oral interview admitted that they did. Many members said that the fear and suffering believed to be brought by witches and wizards forced them to consult medicine-men but secretly lest they are excommunicated from the church. An ordinary church member Edith Gichunge (OI, I0/I2/12) narrated to the researcher an experience that made her and her family members to go to a medicine-man to seek protection. Her mother-in-law became mad and one of her children became deaf. Upon visiting the medicine-man, she was given charms for protection and some medicines which were supposed to be either drank or rubbed into the body. She was also given some articles to hang on the roof of her house and that of her mother-in-law. Some other articles were kept in her farm and others in some secret places within the homestead. Gichunge further claimed that she was not alone in this practice as many other MCK members whom she knew did the same. Secret and open precautions are common objects in their homes. Asked why they do this and yet they are baptised Christians, the laity confessed that it is done to secure a feeling of safety, protection and assurance

because enemies are always there. Whenever there is a case of sudden illness, where there is no visible obvious cause, Church members consult a medicine man or a diviner to establish the cause before any remedy can be sought. Many believe that strange illnesses and happenings are caused either by the anger of an ancestral spirit or by witchcraft. However reverend Mbae confirmed that the church does not allow her members to come into contact with witchcraft or even believe in the same.

The researcher gathered from the Church elders through oral interview that witchcraft is a common practice among only the Ameru but it is a worldwide phenomenon. Elder Jacob Kaaria (OI, 22/10/11) cited that witchcraft goes as far back as the time the Israelites were in the wilderness when the law giver commanded that all sorcerers and witches be destroyed (Exodus 22:18). Data collected from the Church leaders revealed that the missionaries who brought Christianity to the Meru preached that witchcraft was an evil which should be discarded. They condemned witches and asked them to renounce their evil ways and return to God and ask for forgiveness. The author learnt from the interviewed elders that in the early days of the Methodist Church in Meru region, those Christians who practiced and participated in witchcraft and sorcery were suspended from active involvement in Church affairs and barred from the Holy Communion. The Methodist Church went a step further and condemned the belief in witchcraft. This condemnation was based on the belief that Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity, had conquered Satan and all powers of darkness therefore Christians cannot be harmed by witches.

A number of respondents stated that in and around 1997, the leaders of the Ameru community in Imenti South district launched a campaign to destroy witches. Christian leaders especially Methodist Church ministers felt that witchcraft was causing confusion in the minds of the Christians while the Christians were frustrated by the re-awakening of an old evil. Among those who were rumoured to be witches were adherents of the Methodist and Catholic Churches. Some out of fear confessed that they had tried without success to bewitch some people. Other Christian witches produced bewitching objects and admitted that witchcraft was some power within them and that they could not give it up. The researcher gathered that all the self-confessed witches in the MCK who confessed and repented openly were forgiven and those who refused were excommunicated from the Church.

4.5.3 Use of Similar Rituals, Symbols and Names

Syncretic elements were evident in the Ameru rituals, symbols and use of names. Though unaware, the Methodist faithfuls were already practicing syncretism as the researcher observed. A good example was the symbols used in baptism in the Church. The water symbol that was traditionally used before circumcision to wash the initiate was comparable to cleansing of the baptismal water. The giving of the new name in baptism as an act of recognition of a new person compared with the practice of giving an initiate a new name after initiation among the Ameru.

The clergy stated that in the Church, fire is seen as representing the third member of the trinity (Holy Spirit) who is symbolised by tongues of fire as witnessed in Acts 2:3. Fire was also used symbolically by the Ameru to prepare medicine for the initiates. This was later rubbed into the cut to make the initiates fertile. Data collected from Church observation schedule revealed that names used to refer to the Ameru traditional and spiritual leader who was called *mugwe* are also used to refer to Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity. For example, in the commonly sang chorus like, *Jesus Kristo nigwe mugwe,* means Jesus Christ is the *mugwe*. This chorus equates Jesus with *mugwe*, the Ameru spiritual leader. This shows loyalty of the worshippers to both Jesus Christ and *mugwe*, a clear evidence of syncretism.

4.6 Theological Issues in the Encounter Between ATR and Christianity

The fourth objective of the study was to establish whether or not there are relevant theological issues with regard to the encounter between ATR and Christianity, research question which was stated as follows:

Are there relevant theological issues with regard to the encounter between ATR and Christianity that need to be addressed?

The data presented here was mainly collected through interview sessions with the enlightened members of the clergy. However the question was translated into mother tongue to enable the laity and the church leaders to respond in their focus discussion groups. The analysis of their responses is presented in the Table below.

Table 10: Theological Issues with Regard to the Encounter between ATR and Christianity

Theological issues	No. of responses (N=58)	%
Indigenisation	45	78
Inculturation	20	34
Incarnation	35	60
Culture	55	95
Polygamy	50	86

NB: Respondents indicated more than one theological issue

The analysis of the responses from Table 10 revealed that 77% of the respondents felt that indigenisation was one of the theological issues to be addressed in regard to the encounter between ATR and Christianity. 34% felt that inculturation was one of the theological issues while 60% identified incarnation as one of the issues. 95% stated that culture was a theological issue while 86% showed that polygamy was another theological issue to be addressed. From the above discussion, it was clear that culture was the most important theological issue which needed to be addressed with regard to the encounter between ATR and Christianity.

The respondents were further asked to suggest ways in which the issues raised can be addressed. The questionnaire item for this purpose was stated thus:

If your answer is Yes in (11a) above, state the theological issues and suggest ways in which they can be addressed

The respondents gave diverse suggestions and opinions which are presented below.

4.6.1 Indigenisation

According to Reverend Gakii (OI, 19/10/11), failure to indigenise Christianity in Africa is like dressing the universal God in the western garment only. Reverend Gakii contends that all cultures need the gospel and are judged by it. Similarly Mbae (OI, 20/10/11) stated that the gospel has a universally relevant and applicable message which cannot be reduced to the

demands and expectations of one culture. He added that each culture should be allowed to bring into being a community of believers which is in tune with the demands and needs of that particular society. Reverend Mbae noted that the first Methodist missionaries were wrong in the understanding of the term conversion. He says that on the scale of conversion, the foreign missionaries gave themselves 100% while the prospective convert was supposed to start at zero. In contrast, the Methodist clergy suggest that in the process of evangelisation, there are no active senders and passive recipients. The missionaries ought to be learners as much as the prospective convert is a receiver because we are all equal in the eyes of God. Both Reverends Gakii and Mbae were in agreement that Christianity has to look at the contemporary Meru situation in order to be relevant.

According to Elder Jacob Kaaria (OI, 22/10/11), indigenising Christianity means the worship will be accommodative through the use of local and understandable language, songs and dressing that will not disrupt a weak brother in the worship service. The elder noted that use of foreign languages has made some worshippers to feel out of place. The elder further said that the dressing styles that some Churches allow become disruptive in worship services. He said that the use of local languages will be an effective tool in evangelism. The use of local music and local names will make Methodist African Christians to appreciate Christianity. As a result the gospel will find home in the hearts of many Africans because communication would have been easy. This can be done without changing the teachings of the Bible. Similarly, Reverend Mbae (OI, 20/10/11) pointed out that the message of the Bible if well interpreted and understood can fit in every culture. The Reverend noted that the message of the Bible is universal and it is applicable to any person regardless of geographical setting and cultural background.

The researcher observed that the laity, leaders and the clergy are not ignorant of the constraints to effective indigenisation of Christianity in the County. Most of the respondents were in agreement that indigenisation is a controversial and greater task which demands a lot of planning as well as time. This is because of the diversity of cultures in Meru through intermarriages and immigration. As a result, the younger generation is getting more used to foreign languages, especially English and Kiswahili. Reverend Mbae said that the Methodist Church is a universal Church with members from different cultural dimensions and backgrounds. He further noted that the Ameru are living in a multi-cultural and multi-racial society from where future Methodist converts and leaders will come. The Methodist clergy

therefore preferred to base their strategy of indigenisation on the authority of the Bible other than focusing so much on western Christianity and culture. Reverend Doris Wanja suggested that indigenisation should include the removal of the term traditional which betrays Christian bias and is meant to portray African religiosity as old fashioned and outdated hence irrelevant. The Reverend noted that the use of the term traditional makes some believers to view ATR as a passing phenomenon only important to those interested in studying history of the past. She suggested that it should simply be referred to as African religion just as there is for instance Muslim religion or Hindu religion.

4.6.2 Inculturation

The researcher observed that the Methodist Church adherents tend to view Christianity as foreign or alien, one that has come to challenge their traditional religious practices. It is for this reason that many respondents during the oral interviews concurred that efforts must be made to inculturate the Church to the times and cultures of contemporary Ameru people. Church leader James Mugambi (OI, 24/10/11) observed that the modern MCK Church traditions and doctrines are flexible enough to accommodate the African background. He cited examples from the Bible where God addressed himself to the day to day problems or situations of the Israelite community. The Church elder argued that Church traditions must be relevant to African situations. Along the same line, Reverend Gakii said the Church needs to be inserted into the Meru culture so that the Christians can express their Christian practices in the language of today. This is the only way God's saving power through Jesus Christ can be understood by people of all cultures. Reverend Gakii's view concurs with that of Waliggo (1986) that for the Church to be truly the Church of Jesus Christ, it must be both universal and particular and reflect the characteristic culture of its people.

From the oral interviews with the ordinary Church members, it came out clearly that the laity prefers the Christian message adapted to the way of thinking and acting of the Meru people. This, they argued, will make Christians in the Meru culture to view Christianity as a religion that belongs to them and can offer solutions to their problems even in times of crisis instead of turning to African solutions. To the Methodist clergy, inculturation is the only way to make Christianity permanent in Meru by making it a people's religion and a way of life.

The researcher observed that some church leaders and elders were opposed to the idea of inculturation. The researcher sought to establish why some respondents were opposed to inculturation. Their responses were captured and analysed in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Reasons against inculturation

Responses	No. of respondents (N=58)	%
Did not understand its aims	10	17
Fear that it might create a faulty Christianity	5	14
Will lower Biblical standards	5	9
Will create syncretism	5	9
Will contradict the teachings of Jesus Christ	15	26
Will bring divisions in the church	16	28
Create unhealthy imbalance between local and universal church	15	26

The results on Table 11 indicate that 17% of the respondents did not understand the aims or even the meaning of inculturation hence neither valued nor appreciated inculturation. 14% of the respondents felt that inculturation might create a different type of Christianity which may be faulty thereby dismantling the central doctrine of the Christian faith. 9% of the respondents were afraid that inculturation may lower the Christian standards as set in the Bible. Another 9% feared that inculturation may divert Christian growth by introducing in it superstition and paganism which are long forgotten hence creating syncretistic Christianity. 26% indicated that inculturation will contradict the teachings of Jesus Christ while 28% stated that it would bring divisions in the Church. 26% feared that inculturation might create an unhealthy imbalance between the local Church and that the church leaders in particular would not want as they would wish to remain connected to the universal or international Church.

4.6.3 Incarnation

Many respondents said that Christianity should cease to be a foreign religion and become part of African life, more specifically part of the Ameru life. Their views concur with Mbiti (1969) that Christianity in Africa is so old that it can rightly be described as indigenous,

traditional and African religion. However, failure to incarnate Christianity into the African cultures has made the religion to remain foreign to the Africans.

According to Reverend Mbae, MCK leaders must follow the example of Jesus Christ and make efforts to incarnate Christianity into the Meru culture. Mbae further observed that Jesus saw it fit to enter the reality of humanity in full and became man while remaining a perfect God. The Methodist church should incarnate Christianity into the Meru culture so as to continue with that saving mission of Jesus. Similarly Reverend Wanja affirmed that it is only the denominations that are ready to make efforts to deeply incarnate the church that have a bright future. She further observed that where the opposite is the case, the church will remain weak and will always be seeking ways and means of retaining their members. Her views concur with those of Waliggo (1986) that for the gospel to be effective, it must use the language, the signs and symbols of the people it is addressed to and this is only possible through incarnation. Reverend Wanja also asserted that it is the desire to incarnate Christianity into the African cultures that made African independent churches to secede from the mission churches during the colonial period.

Another ordained Minister, Reverend Gakii (OI, 20/11/12) added that incarnation is unavoidable if the MCK wants to have a future among the Meru. She argued that the immersion of Christianity into the Meru traditional set up must be made a reality if the scripture "God with us" is to become practical. She further pointed out that the Meru religious beliefs are there to stay especially with the current revival of the role of *Njuri Ncheke* in Meru land. Her views agree with those of Emile Durkheim (1917) whose theory guided this study that the religious practices and beliefs that have a function in a society continue to exist while those that have no function cease to exist. Reverend Gakii faulted the missionaries for having ignored the attachment of the Meru Christians to their religious beliefs and practices.

Riungu Nkaabu (OI, 21/10/11), a youth leader argued that the younger Christian generation in the Methodist Church is quick to sift the Meru religious and cultural practices to retain those that are advantageous to them and leave out those that are not useful and conflict with biblical teachings. He further stated that ATR is still relevant to the contemporary Christians. He thus suggested that the MCK leaders should come up with a way of making Christianity part and parcel of the Meru people. According to Nkaabu, ATR is complex and even if the

younger generation of Christians has abandoned many ideas, others have still persisted, and even some old ones are still being revived. The youth leader added that the youth have already embraced the good in both ATR and Christianity hence the need for incarnation.

4.6.4 Culture

Data collected through oral interviews with the respondents showed clearly that culture is an issue that needs to be addressed in order to make Christianity to be lived practically in MCK in Meru County. Elder Gerishon Gitonga (OI,18/ 10 /11) noted that right from the beginning the African converts in the MCK were not able to distinguish between the missionary work and the western culture. The elder pointed out that instead of taking the gospel of Jesus Christ, the early Methodist converts in the region were struggling to adopt western culture. The Christians were not able to distinguish between the culture of the missionaries and the gospel the same missionaries were preaching. The elder said that some Methodist converts found it too difficult to adopt the western culture that they ended up moving to the African Independent Churches which accommodated the Meru cultural and religious practices. Elder Gitonga noted that culture is not static and therefore the Church should not ignore the changes that occur but should keep on adjusting so as to accommodate all people. Similarly, Reverend Gakii posited that the culture diversities of the world necessitate differences in emphasis from one cultural set up to another. Whatever may be appreciated in one culture may not be appreciated in another. For example, she observes that what the missionaries considered evil and barbaric was good and functional to the African Christians. The Reverend observed that the prejudiced approach and belief that the missionaries had about their culture made them not only to preach Jesus Christ but a mixture of missionary and Euro-American Christianity. In addition, Reverend Gakii noted that it is this prejudiced approach that made some Africans bitter as they felt their culture was being undermined and they ended up forming their own African Independent churches.

On the other hand, Reverend Mbae asserted that the approach used by the missionaries to introduce the gospel to the Meru left many early converts to Methodism to live in two worlds. This means that the Africans presented different images about themselves. When an African Christian was with the missionaries, he or she would try to be like them, when the same Christian was with his African people, he or she was one of them. The two Informants' views concur with Mugambi (1989) that in Africa, conversion to the Christian faith was introduced by modern missionaries' movement as the inward basis for acculturation into the western

way of life. In other words, emphasis was on the cultural heritage of those missionaries who came to evangelise African peoples. According to Reverend Mbae, it is the missionary approach that made the Meru people to view Christianity as a European and a foreign religion, an attitude that has continued to date. Reverend Mbae added that the Meru people have always had the desire to relate their own cultural and religious heritage to Christianity.

Many ordinary church members who were interviewed empasised the importance of using their vernacular language in worship. They said that they enjoy their traditional way of doing things used alongside their modern style of worship. A women's leader in one of the selected churches, Josline Gatobu (OI 23/10/11) stated that the Meru culture needs to be expressed in worship in the MCK so as to make Christianity a reality and practical to Christians among the Meru.

4.6.5 Polygamy

According to the researcher's observation, polygamy is a practice that is slowly dying in the MCK in Meru County. Reverend Moses Mbae pointed out that the Methodist Church doctrines do not allow polygamy. Data collected from the laity revealed that the few polygamists in the selected churches are mostly above sixty years of age. One of the polygamists who has two wives, *Mzee* Erastus Mbijiwe (OI,25/10/11) asserted that polygamy is only wrong in the New Testament. He added that the Old Testament approved of polygamy and great friends of God like Abraham and David were polygamists. Reverend Mbae noted that the MCK missionaries in the Meru region should have accepted and appreciated the polygamists the way they were as they too needed the gospel. Reverend Mbae added that failure to accommodate fully the polygamists in the MCK made many early Methodist converts to join the African Independent Churches.

In addition, Reverend Mbae affirmed that the MCK Church doctrine concerning polygamy has not changed and so polygamous marriages are not recognised. Polygamists do not take the Holy Communion and cannot be given leadership positions in the Church. Data collected from interviews indicated that majority of the respondents are against polygamy. Many cited the scripture in Genesis 2:28 that stress on one man one wife. Other pointed out that the hard economic times cannot just allow more than one wife.

Finally the respondents were asked to give their opinions on what the MCK can do to accommodate ATR. It was clearly observed from the study that the MCK adherents have not abandoned ATR. It was therefore necessary to seek the opinions of the respondents on what they feel can be done to harmonise the two religious faiths. The questionnaire item for collecting the relevant data was stated as follows:

In your own opinion, what can the Methodist Church of Kenya do to accommodate African traditional religion?

Results from respondents were obtained using an interview schedule and the questionnaire and represented in Table 12.

Table 12: Respondents' opinions on how ATR can be accommodated in MCK

Opinions	**No. of respondents (N=58)**	**%**
MCK should revise their way of preaching to accommodate the adherents of both faiths	45	78
MCK to diversity their way of worship so as to accommodate positive aspects from traditional worship	30	52
Preserve the traditional aspects that are good	50	86
Allow and appreciate all people irrespective of their practices by making church doctrines flexible	35	60
Do more research in ATR so as to expose the errors in ATR and condemn negative aspects	55	95
Appreciate the positive role of African religious specialists	25	43
Sensitising worshippers on aspects from ATR that do not conflict with the Bible	30	52
Uphold African moral values that promote discipline and respect	56	96

Note: Respondents gave more than one opinion

Table 12 above indicates that 78% of the respondents were of the opinion that the MCK should revise their way of preaching in order to accommodate the adherents of both faiths. 52% were of the opinion that the MCK should diversify their way of worship to accommodate the positive aspects from traditional worship. 86% supported the view that the MCK ought to preserve the traditional aspects that were good. 60% felt that the MCK should allow and appreciate all people irrespective of their practices by making church doctrines flexible. 95% expressed the opinion that more research on ATR should be done so as to expose the errors in the ATR and condemn negative aspects. On the other hand, 43% indicated that MCK should appreciate the role of African religious specialists. 52% affirmed the need expressed of sensitising worshippers on aspects of ATR that do not conflict with the Bible. 96% supported the idea that the MCK should uphold African moral values that promote discipline and respect. From the above responses, it was clear that the majority (96%) of the respondents believed that ATR could be accommodated in the MCK through upholding African moral values that promote discipline and respect.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMEDNATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the summary of the study findings, conclusion, recommendations and suggestions for further study on the basis of the findings. The purpose of the study was to examine the role of ATR in the MCK in Meru County and address the relevant theological issues involved.

5.2 Summary of Research Findings

5.2.1 Aspects of African Religion and Culture Infused in Christian Worship in the MCK

In regard to objective one of the study, several aspects of African religion and culture have been incorporated in Christian worship among the Meru. The Church members enjoy traditional music and dance and traditional musical instruments like *kayambas,* drums and rattles are used alongside modern musical instruments. Traditional dressing and ornaments are part of Christian dressing especially those performing religious official duties and when singing Christian songs. Traditional rituals are largely performed, especially marriage rituals during the wedding day. Traditional offerings given in kind are preferred especially by the poor members of the Church. Traditional concept of ancestral spirit has been retained and veneration of ancestors is a common practice. However many Methodist faithfuls have changed their concept of God as the God of the Ameru and they view God as universal. Many Christians, especially the youth have adopted use of African family names in baptism. Taboos are still observed and many believers fear to break a taboo because of the consequence of doing so. However, the MCK adherents have persistently indulged in these traditional religious and cultural practices without the blessings of the church.

It is worth noting that the MCK in Meru County has incorporated aspects of ATR in their worship. According to one member of the clergy, Reverend Moses Mbae, the African Christians living in the rural areas cannot afford to live differently from the rest of the community. This view concurs with Mugambi (1989) who says that African Christians are members of a wider community which has its cultural and religious foundations in the social institutions of traditional Meru society. In other words, for Christian experience is going to be meaningful and effective, African Christians cannot afford to cut themselves off from the rest of the community, or from their own cultural and religious past. Basically, the gospel of Jesus Christ should help the Meru MCK adherents live more fully and more abundantly as

Africans. As such, the Methodist Church in the County has made efforts to accommodate their converts the way they are. However, as observed from the above findings, change is inevitable and no society is static. Some traditional ideas are being abandoned, modified or influenced by the changing situation. For example, traditional seclusion period that the initiates were subjected to after circumcision has been replaced by youth seminars organised by the Church for the initiates after leaving hospital. In the traditional Meru community, initiates were kept in an isolated place and taught by their sponsors and elders for a period of three weeks and this is exactly what the MCK church is doing today. Many practices that were considered to be taboos are today regarded as normal practices. The traditional concept of God where God was confined to a community and given a community name has been replaced with the biblical concept where God is viewed as universal God and his son Jesus Christ, the savior of human kind.

5.2.2 The Link Between African Converts to Methodism and ATR

According to objective two of the study, the MCK Church members have neither wholly embraced Christianity, nor abandoned ATR. Even the members of the clergy fully believe in the religious cultural practices that have already been infused in Christian worship. Some of the Church members who denied loyalty to ATR did it out of ignorance and failure to understand the relationship between cultural practices and religious beliefs. This is because all the respondents admitted incorporating African music and dance in their worship and most respondents agreed to retain traditional concept of spirits in addition to marriage rituals. Many Church members were not able to distinguish between the religious and the non religious, between the spiritual and the material areas of life. The fact that they have not abandoned ATR is evident from the aspects of traditional religion they have infused in their worship. There is so much rigidity and attachment to their Meru cultural and religious past that to many faithfuls, it is a way of life they cannot be separated from.

5.2.3 Aspects of Syncretism among MCK Adherents

As concerns objective three of the study, it is clear that there are aspects of syncretism in the Methodist Church in Meru County. A number of top leaders in the MCK belong to the traditional government made up of selected elders called *Njuri Ncheke,* whose structure has survived the modern changes and seems to be reviving in its importance. Among the current senior elders of *Njuri Ncheke* is a former presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church, Lawi Imathiu. Witchcraft and sorcery are a great temptation even to the Methodist adherents. Many

believe that strange illnesses and happenings are caused either by the anger of ancestral spirits or by witchcraft and as such consult a medicine man or diviner to establish the cause before any remedy can be sought. Syncretism elements are evident in the rituals performed, symbols and use of names that refer to their traditional religious leader *mugwe* and Jesus Christ at the same time.

Though unaware, the Methodist faithful are already in the practice of syncretism. Many respondents admitted loyalty to both Christianity and ATR but at the same time frowned at the mention of syncretism. Majority viewed syncretism as a betrayal of their pure Methodism faith. Methodist faithfuls prefer to worship God and at the same time be themselves. They have accepted Christianity but retained their African personality. At the time of crisis, they lean back to where their roots are, and when things are well with them, they are Christians.

It can be said that Christianity has not penetrated deeply into the religious feelings of Methodists faithful in Meru County hence it has not succeeded in eradicating the old religious beliefs and practices. Many Methodist adherents prefer to practice Christianity and at the same time be themselves. They have accepted Christianity but retained their African personality which is evidenced in their loyalty to religious beliefs and practices. During times of crisis, the Christians lean back to where their roots are, but when things are well with them, they are Christians who praise God joyful.

5.2.4 Theological Issues in the Encounter Between ATR and Christianity

In regard to objective four of the study, there are some relevant theological issues in regard to the encounter between ATR and Christianity that need to be addressed. The hunger and the thirst for indigenising Christianity among the Meru were at the peak among the clergy as well as the laity. The challenges that Christianity is facing today are the ones prompting and propelling the faithfuls to call for indigenisation. This shows how passionate the local people are for the gospel. Many Christians were in agreement that efforts must be made to acculturate the Church to the times and cultures of the contemporary Meru people. Incarnation is another issue that the Christians greatly emphasised with an aim of making Christianity cease to be a foreign religion to become specifically part of the Meru life. On the issue of culture, many Methodist faithfuls are aware that culture is not static and therefore the Church cannot ignore the changes that occur, but should keep on adjusting to accommodate all people. It was the feeling of many believers that the Meru culture should be given a

meaningful place in the MCK. On the issue of polygamy the respondents were in agreement that those who are already polygamous at the time of conversion should be accepted fully as Church members while unmarried are advised to marry one wife.

5.3 Conclusions

Empirically, this study established that ATR is not a thing of the past but a religion that the MCK members in Meru County have made theirs by living it and practicing it. However, there is a clear disconnect between the church teachings and the practices among the MCK adherents in the County. MCK is officially opposed to ATR. On the other hand, the church adherents have not fully embraced the Christian faith and do not sound ready to do so from their responses. As the Ameru continue to be converted to Christianity, hardly do they abandon their world-view and related practices as the evangelists would wish. They have remained consciously and unconsciously attached to traditional values and beliefs while still professing Methodism faith. They are neither perfectly Methodist Christians nor traditionalists. This is a situation that would have been averted had the Methodist missionaries approached the Ameru with an understanding and acceptance of Christianity within the Ameru cultural context. If the modern church is to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, it is challenged to adjust itself to the changing world because culture is not static and change is inevitable. Jesus Christ, the founder of Christianity concentrated on the needs of the rural society to whom he ministered. He did not let them down. Likewise, the MCK today in Meru County is challenged to make itself available and relevant to the rural society so that it may fulfill the demands of Christian discipleship and become relevant to the modern Ameru community.

Theoretically, the above disconnect can be attributed to the fact that the church teachings and doctrines are dysfunctional while the adherents feel that their traditional religious practices are functional and fulfilling. This agrees with Emile Durkheim's functionalism theory which guided this study that religious practices that have no function cease to exist but those that have a function remain. It is clear that the aspects of ATR that have persisted are functional and fulfilling and that is what religion is all about. The persisting practices give solutions to some of their lives' problems which Christianity is not able to do. They provide answers to some of their lives questions that Christianity has not provided hence their persistence. The religious practices satisfy needs which would not be satisfied elsewhere. These include the need for security, love, self-esteem, protection and the inevitability of death. The church has

no solution when Christians are victims of either witchcraft or sorcery. The Meru Christians therefore have no choice but to engage the services of a diviner or a magician. Many Methodist converts find it difficult to continue nursing the Christian hope and salvation which is long coming. They grow suspicious and turn to traditional means of dealing with diseases and other problems which amounts to going against church teachings and doctrines. The Ameru measurement of religion is that it is capable of providing real answers to questions arising from within their existence. As long as Christianity is not accountable to this and does not give solutions to life's problems, it will remain dysfunctional to the MCK adherents.

Theologically, there is need to develop a theology that will accommodate African Christians the way they are. The clergy need to devise a new approach with a view to promoting an understanding between Methodist Christians and Ameru traditional religious inclinations, ideas, values and beliefs. The Bible does not disagree but enriches and fulfils traditional religious beliefs and practices. Both the Old and New Testament give testimony to this. Just as the Jewish traditions prepared the Jews for Christianity, Ameru traditions provided enough background for conversion to Christianity. The problem of alienating the Meru in the Christian churches need to be alleviated, for example, by finding a place for Jesus in the Ameru traditional religious set up. He would be the greatest ancestor who would do for the Ameru all that the ancestors did for them and even more. The word of God is meant to be effective in Christians' lives today and it is the task of modern preachers to make their hearers realise this fact. They should bring God's word to bear on the contemporary world. Modern Christians must engage the word of God in a face to face confrontation with their situation in life and strive to apply the absolute word of God in Africans' lives. All cultures need the gospel and are judged by it. The Ameru people have retained their religious beliefs alongside Christian faith and this makes it necessary for the MCK to develop a theology that will recognise the centrality of Jesus Christ and at the same time express a genuine African apprehension of the Christian faith. The MCK members have sifted both Christianity and ATR and accepted what is advantageous to them and left out what is of no advantage. As a result, the type of Christianity that has emerged in the MCK in Meru County is one that is enriched by the traditions of the Ameru people. It is Christianity with a human face that is no longer abstract or mere ideology, but a reality.

5.4 Recommendations

If Christianity is to be lived and not to be just a matter of assent, then it requires concerted efforts by the entire modern Christian community. In view of this, the researcher recommends the following based on the findings of the study.

i) Christian life and doctrines should be reformulated in the patterns of each and every culture. This is necessary if Christianity is to be durable among the Ameru. Otherwise it will remain a foreign religion while the Ameru continue with their traditional religious practices.

ii) The thought forms and world views of particular communities should be incorporated into Christianity so that Christianity can fulfill its mission of the development and fulfillment of human beings. This will enable Christianity to build itself up within existing viable human communities.

iii) Leaders of all Christian denominations should strive to make Christianity strong and permanent. They should allow African culture and Christianity to blend one another so as to meet the needs of Christians and give solutions to their spiritual problems. This will make Christianity a people's religion.

iv) The modern Christian leaders should evaluate ATR and understand it in the light of God's word so that where truth is found, it is preserved, and where errors exist, they are exposed by the standard of the scripture.

v) The modern Church should do whatever it takes to make Jesus Christ appear universal and truly local at the same time. This will make Christianity in all its totality accomplish its founder's mission to be all to all people and win all for God.

vi) All Christian denominations should design ways of accommodating ATR in their worship so that the worshippers will not feel out of place.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Study

The study recommends further research in the following areas:

i) A similar study should be carried out in the Methodist Churches in other Counties in Kenya to establish whether the study findings apply to other areas to enable generalisation of the results of this study.

ii) A study of this kind should be done in other Christian denominations in Meru County to establish the extent to which other denominations have incorporated aspects of ATR in their worship and its implications.

iii) There is a need for a detailed study to investigate why the Methodist congregations have allowed Pentecostalism in their worship contrary to the MCK doctrines.

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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

I am Hellen Kagwiria Mukindia, a student at Egerton University pursuing a Masters Degree in Religious Studies. The following questions aim at obtaining information on the integration of African Traditional Religion and culture in Christian worship in Africa with particular reference to the MCK in Meru County. Please answer the questions by ticking [√] in the brackets provided. All the information will only be used for the purpose of this study and will be treated with strict confidence. Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Part One: Respondent Background

Church .....

1. a) Gender: Male [ ] Female [ ]

b) Age

i) Under 20 [ ]

ii) 21-40 [ ]

iii) 41-60 [ ]

iv) Above 60 [ ]

2. Highest academic and professional qualification (please tick whichever is appropriate).

i) University [ ]

ii) Middle level colleges [ ]

ii) Secondary school level [ ]

iv) Primary school level [ ]

v) Other (specify).....

3. Occupation (please tick whichever is appropriate).

i) Unemployed [ ]

ii) House wife [ ]

iii) Civil servant [ ]

iv) Self-employed [ ]

v) Other (specify).....

4 a) Are you a member of the MCK Church?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

b) How long have you been a member of this Church?

i) Less than 12 months [ ]

ii) 1-2 years [ ]

iii) 3-10 years [ ]

iv) 10 years and above [ ]

c) Are you a baptised member of the Church?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

Part Two: Questions Related to African Traditional Religion and Christianity

1 a) Do you believe in African Traditional Religion (ATR)?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

b) Give reason(s) for your answer in (1a) above.

i) .....

ii).....

ii).....

iv).....

v).....

c) If your answer is yes in (1a) above which aspects of ATR do you practice.

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

2 a) Do you appreciate ATR as a modern religion?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

b) Give reasons for your answer in (2a) above.

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

v).....

vi) .....

3 a) Do you believe in Christianity?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

b) If your answer in (3a) is yes, give reasons for your answer.

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

vi).....

4 a) Are there aspects of ATR that you feel conflict with Biblical teachings?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

b) If your answer in (4a) is yes, list below the aspects of ATR that you feel conflict with Biblical teachings.

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

vi).....

5a) Are there aspects of ATR that you feel do not conflict with Biblical teachings?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

b) If your answer is yes in (5a) above, list below the aspects that you feel do not conflict with Biblical teachings.

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

6 a) Should some aspects of ATR be incorporated in worship in the Methodist Church of Kenya?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

b) State the aspects of ATR that should be incorporated in worship in the MCK.

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

vi).....

vi).....

c) Give reason(s) for your answer in (6b) above.

i) .....

ii).....

iii).....

vi) .....

v).....

7 a) Is ATR openly practiced in your Church?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

b) Give reasons for answer in (7a) above.

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

8. In your own opinion, what makes it hard for Christians in your Church not to abandon ATR?

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

vi).....

9. List down the aspects of ATR that your Church has already incorporated in their worship?

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

vi).....

10 a) Based on your Church's teachings, is there double mixture in worship and loyalty between ATR and Christianity?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

b) If your answer (10a) is yes, state evidence that shows that there is double mixture in worship and loyalty in the Methodist Church of Kenya in Meru County.

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

11a) In your own opinion, are there theological issues in regard to the encounter between ATR and Christianity that need to be addressed?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

b) If your answer is yes in (11a), state the theological issues and suggest ways in which they can be addressed.

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

12. In your own opinion, what can the Methodist Church of Kenya do to accommodate ATR?

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

v).....

APPENDIX B

CHECKLIST

CHURCH.....

Aspects of African Traditional Religion	**Incorporated**	**Not incorporated**
Music and dance		
African dressing		
Buildings		
Sacrifices		
Rituals		
Weddings		
Polygamy		
Offering/*Sadaka*		
Concept of God		
Concept of ancestral spirits		
Traditional circumcision		
Taboos		
Naming		

APPENDIX C

CHURCH OBSERVATION SCHEDULE

Church .....

1. Does the preacher make any references to ATR?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

2. List the aspects of ATR practically expressed in the worship session.

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

vi).....

v).....

vi).....

3. Are the Church members participating in the worship?

Yes [ ] No [ ]

4. How does the preacher draw the attention of the congregation?

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

vi).....

5. How does the preacher use ATR to bring out his or her message?

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

vi).....

vii).....

viii).....

ix).....

6. Note any other observation (s) made during the worship session.

i).....

ii).....

iii).....

iv).....

v).....

vi).....

vii).....

viii).....

ix).....

x).....

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR CHURCH MEMBERS

1. What are your views on ATR?

2. What aspects of ATR do you practice?

3. What are your views on ATR and Biblical teachings?

4. What aspects of ATR should be incorporated in worship in the MCK and why?

5. What aspects of ATR has your Church incorporated in their worship?

6. Comment on the double mixture in worship and loyalty between ATR and Christianity in the MCK?

7. In your own opinion, what are the theological issues with regard to the encounter between ATR and Christianity that need to be addressed?

8. How should the MCK respond to ATR?

13. What in your opinion are the main constraints to effective harmonisation of these two religious faiths?

APPENDIX E

METHODIST CHURCHES IN IMENTI SOUTH DISTRICT, MERU COUNTY

1. Kigane MCK
2. Nkubu MCK
3. Muringa o kamoro MCK
4. Ntemwene MCK
5. Kagwampungu MCK
6. Gaatia MCK
7. Kathera MCK
8. Kiamiriru MCK
9. Kithaene MCK
10. Mwiciune MCK
11. Mikumbune MCK
12. Uruku MCK
13. Baitegetu MCK
14. Ukuu MCK
15. Kanyakine MCK
16. Kionyo MCK
17. Mitunguu MCK
18. Nkungugu MCK
19. Murungurune MCK
20. Kithurine MCK
21. Nkando MCK
22. Keeru MCK
23. Kariene MCK
24. Nkuriga MCK
25. Mwanganthia MCK
26. Ndagene MCK
27. Muurugi MCK
28. Ntharene MCK
29. Kirigara MCK
30. Muguru MCK

Source: Nkubu Methodist Circuit Headquarters Report

APPENDIX F

LIST OF INTERVIEWEES

S/NO	NAME	AGE	CHURCH POSITION	INTERVIEW VENUE	INTERVIEW DATE
1	Rev,Charity Gakii	52	Clergy	Nkubu Synod Office	15/10/2011
2	Rev, Moses Mbae	55	Clergy	Nkubu Synod Office	17/10/2011
3	Rev, Doris Wanja	43	Clergy	Mikumbune Circuit Office	18/10/2011
4	Elder,Gerishon ,Gitonga	70	Church Elder	Home	19/10/2011
5	Elder,Jacob Kaaria	65	Church Elder	Kigane MCK	20/10/2011
6	James Mugambi	56	Church Leader	Nkubu MCK	21/10/2011
7	Nkaabu,Riungu	30	Youth Leader	Kigane MCK	22/10/2011
8	Josline Gatobu	48	Women Leader	Muringa 'O Kamaro MCK	24/10/2011
9	Grace Kaburu	50	Women Leader	Mikumbune MCK	25/10/2011
10	Justus Mbijiwe	79	Church Elder	Gaatia MCK	26/10/2011
11	Catherine Kiruki	42	Church Secretary	Ntemwene MCK Church Office	27/10/2011
12	Edith Gichunge	40	Church Member	Home	28/10/2111
13	Margret Elias	60	Church Member	Home	29/10/2011
14	Kiungu,Mugambi	47	Church Secretary	Kigane MCK Church Office	30/11/2011
15	Kiriinya,Gatobu	32	Youth Leader	Mikumbune MCK	01/11/2011
16	Josphine Gatwiri	25	Youth Leader	Muringa'O Kamoro	03/11/2011
17	Kiara,Nyamu	55	Men's Leader	Kigane MCK	04/11/2011
18	Jane Kinoti	43	Church Member	Gaatia MCK	05/11/2011
19	Zipporah Kiome	70	Church Member	Kigane MCK	06/11/2011
20	Janet Kirigia	61	Church Member	Kigane MCK	06/11/2011
21	Tabitha Kooro	65	Church Member	Ntemwene MCK	07/11/2011

22	Kinyua M'inoti	55	Men Leader	Ntemwene MCK	07/11/2011
23	Linus Kiraithe	59	Elder	Ntemwene MCK	07/11/2011
24	Moses M'rithaa	69	Elder	Nkubu MCK	10/11/2011
25	Lucy Karwitha	26	Youth Leader	Nkubu MCK	11/11/2011
26	Margret Muriithi	44	Church Member	Nkubu MCK	12/11/2011
27	Silas Kiogora	29	Youth Leader	Muringo kamoro MCK	12/11/2011
28	Dinnah Makena	49	Member	Muringo Kamoro MCK	13/11/2011
29	Martin Mutonga	72	Elder	Muringo Kamoro MCK	13/11/2011
30	Isaac M'muuna	63	Church Leader	Muringo Kamoro MCK	14/11/2011
31	Meshack Mwiti	59	Church Leader	Nkubu MCK	16/11/2011
32	Phillip Kiunga	67	Member	Home	16/11/2011
33	Jack Gikunda	30	Youth Leader	Home	18/11/2011
34	Justus Muthuri	50	Member	Gaatia MCK	18/11/2011
35	Mary Nkirote	22	Member	Kigane MCK	20/11/2011
36	Muriungi Mugwika	49	Church Leader	Home	20/11/2011
37	Thomas Kirimi	58	Member	Home	21/11/2011
38	Peninah Muthaura	60	Member	Mikumbune MCK	21/11/2011
39	Silviah Gitobu	49	Women Leader	Mikumbune MCK	25/11/2011
40	Mutwiri Mutonga	57	Member	Home	25/11/2011
41	Harriet Karambu	49	Church Leader	Mikumbune MCK	27/11/2011
42	Kithinji Thuuranira	44	Men Leader	Home	27/11/2011
43	Kaimuri Mwiti	50	Women Leader	Home	1/12/2011
44	Millicent Ncekei	23	Youth Leader	Home	1/12/2011
45	Gitonga Anampiu	71	Member	Home	1/12/2011
46	Gladys Mbaabu	48	Women Leader	Kigane MCK	3/11/2011
47	Isabella M'mugaa	60	Member	Kigane MCK	3/11/2011
48	Julius Kaathia	58	Church Leader	Home	5/12/2011
49	Leonard Nkunga	74	Elder	Home	5/12/2011
50	Elizabeth M'Mwarania	69	Elder	Home	6/12/2011
51	Morris Kaaria	53	Member	Home	6/11/2011

52	Mugwika Mbae	50	Church Leader	Gaatia MCK	6/11/2011
53	Marion Kinyua	40	Church Leader	Ntemwene MCK	8/11/2011
54	Jescah Marangu	35	Member	Home	8/11/2011
55	Jaeli Mukiira	69	Member	Home	8/11/2011
56	Damaris Kariunga	60	Member	Kigane MCK	9/11/2011
57	Peter Ruteere	65	Elder	Home	10/11/2011
58	Matthew Mbijiwe	71	Elder	Home	10/11/2011

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