

**THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON THE EGOJI OF MERU,
KENYA 1920 - 1963**

PERIS KANYUA KIRUJA

**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES IN
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF COURSE REQUIREMENT FOR THE
AWARD OF MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE (HISTORY) OF
MOUNT KENYA UNIVERSITY**

OCTOBER, 2015

ABSTRACT

This project is a study based on the impact of Christianity on the socio-cultural activities of the Egoji of Meru between 1920 and 1963. It analyses the integration of the pre-colonial community's social-cultural practices with those of the colonialists imposed through Christianity. The Egoji, an ethnic group among the Meru community, occupy a forty square kilometre strip on the southern part of Meru County. Before the coming of the British, this group of people had definite socio-cultural practices which bound them together and every member of that community was to adhere to them if he or she wished to live harmoniously in that society. The traditional education, worship and medicine were well administered by specific people who were highly respected and honoured. Every stage in an individual's development was marked by an initiation usually marked by a ceremony. Among these, the most emphasized was circumcision for both boys and girls. The family and the marriage institution were highly respected and several traditions guarded them. This order was adversely affected by Christianity which disregarded them and even labled them as satanic and were determined to wipe them from the society and plant their own. This was not easily acceptable to the indigenous community though it was infused in them to some extent amid some reactions. Though most of the people from this community have been converted to Christianity, they have not detached themselves fully from their traditional practices and at times turn to them secretly at times of need, hence the development of a more vibrant form of "African Christianity" which will satisfy the traditional African fully. The study is premised on modernization theory which equates modernization with Westernization and sees African cultures as underdeveloped. Other theories used are Cultural theory which views culture as a process and structural functionalism theory which postulates that a society consists of parts each with its own functions and work together to promote social stability. Data was collected from primary and secondary sources. Archival data was collected from the Kenya National Archives in Nairobi. Oral evidence was collected through interviews and focused group discussions. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling. The findings of this study will make the church administrators understand why some members resort to traditional religion in times of crises. It will also create a databank for researchers in related field.