Christianity perception of African traditional religious rituals: Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) and participation of Christian men in Gikuyu traditional rituals of mburi cia kiama, in Kiambu County, Kenya

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Key words: African traditional religion, corrective inculturation, Gikuyu traditions, mburi cia kiama, PCEA, perception, ritual kinesis.

Abstract
The empirical study dealt with religio-cultural crisis in Christianity and African traditional religion among Presbyterian Christian men of the Gikuyu ethnic group in Kenya. The men persistently participate in Gikuyu traditional ritual of mburi cia kiama whose processual undertaking revolves around slaughter of ritual goats so as to become members of Gikuyu council of elders. The research methodology used was mixed methods by means of both qualitative and quantitative. The descriptive survey design approach was the research technique used and required collection of data through questionnaires, interviews and participatory observation of rituals. Data collection strategy and its efficiency in collecting descriptive data was enhanced through source triangulation. The questionnaires were administered to the ordained male Church elders and the Presbyterian Church men. The parish ministers and the Gikuyu ritual leaders were interviewed, their selection done using snowball approach. The findings were that societal social status elevation impels Christian men to participate in traditional rituals contrary to church pronouncements. African traditional religious rituals demonstrate continuity, resilience against extra-religious forces of forces of globalization, secularism and modernity. One way of dealing with the perception is the corrective inculturation that ensures that the existing Church structures are not compromised. The perception index has to be manipulated to give credence to the proposed interpolation of ritual kinesis of Christian (Presbyterian) rituals and African traditional religious ritual (Gikuyu). The Church also needs to embrace the concept of glocalized Christianity. The praxis that actualizes the acceptable dealing with the perceptions is liturgical transformation.

Introduction
The approach of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA) in dealing with Gikuyu traditional rituals is a culmination of perception of the African culture by the early missionaries. The missionaries’ reaction towards African traditional religion was racialist and prejudice (Kibicho, 2006). African scholars have taken the center stage to correct the negative thoughts fronted by missionaries and progressively refute the above claims. Contemporary understanding of culture is that in all societies culture occupies an important position in all socio-religious discourse, none is superior to another (Kiazuki, 2009). Cultures across all societies interact, inform each other, dialogue through such processes as enculturation, inculturation and inter-culturation (Kuster, 2014;
Gichure, 2008).

Over a period of time PCEA has been embroiled in dealing with Gikuyu traditional rituals that the Church has considered run contrary to tenets of Christianity (Gatu, 2006). Examples include 1929 clitoridectomy of girls and the ‘Africa polemic’ putdown of PCEA from the Gikuyu non-Christian community (Kwame, 2010) and the 1969 forced oath taking within the Gikuyu nation (Gatu, 2016). One such ritual is the mburi cia kiama, a Gikuyu traditional ritual of slaughtering goats for purpose of initiation into eldership grade. The PCEA has made pronouncements concerning traditional practices that inform the church perception towards the Gikuyu ritual of mburi cia kiama. The church perception can be deduced from the following; that Presbyterian men are involved in retrogressive traditional practices that lead to syncretism (PCEA 21st General Assembly proceedings, 13th - 18th April 2015, Nairobi), that the ritual is responsible for lack of commitment by men in the church and needs to be condemned (Presbyterian Church men National conferences in Nakuru, 2007, Nanyuki, 2010, Mombasa, 2013). In the Kiamathare Presbytery report to General Administration committee, 2017, men were asked to shun mburi cia kiama because it is backward, cannot stand modernity and number of men participating in the ritual is decreasing.

Scholars are agreed that whenever African Christians are faced with life threatening crisis, they revert to African traditional religion to seek solutions (Galgalo, 2012). Participation of Presbyterian men in mburi cia kiama rituals is not an exception. Encounter between PCEA and Gikuyu culture can be analyzed in terms of Niebuhr (1951) Christ and culture contact. Interaction between Christianity and culture in Niebuhr (1951) is presented in five possible outcomes. Two extremes are Christ against culture and Christ as the fulfiller of culture. In between there are mediating perspectives, that is, Christ of culture, Christ above culture, Christ and culture in paradox. According to Kuster, (2001) Christ, the transformer of culture is the one preferred by the Calvinists who are the predecessor of Presbyterianism. However the Church of Scotland mission, by relocating converts to Christianity in order to live with missionaries in mission centers in Kenya adopted the Christ against culture paradigm (Muita, 2003). The undertaking was expected to further the doctrine of “tabula raza” (Gitonga, 2008, foreword section). The perspective brings out the argument that Christianity converts culture. The approach that Niebuhr identifies as Christ against culture stresses the conflict between Christ and culture. The attitude implies a negative stance to culture as something hostile to Christianity one that has shaped the perception of PCEA towards mburi cia kiama rituals. The consequence is the idea of embracing Christianity that deprives one the indigenous construction and changes a person’s African worldview to that of western worldview. The Christ against culture approach was used in eliminating all forms of traditional expressions of Gikuyu religious spirituality through rituals. The western missionaries totally negated any form of introducing African indigenous practices into the European forms of rituals.

The explanation of the persistence participation of Presbyterian Christian men in mburi cia kiama ritual has not been studied. The perception of PCEA on mburi cia kiama ritual has not been researched. There is no study that shows how corrective inculturation of mburi cia kiama ritual can be used to deal with church perception of African traditional religious rituals in PCEA. Studies have been done on Churches and Gikuyu culture, but not using the tools of ritual kinesis. Phenomenological explanation of Christian men on the persistent participation in mburi cia kiama rituals in pursuit of Gikuyu traditional identity in PCEA has not been researched. This study therefore investigates how Christianity (PCEA) can deal with the perception of African traditional religious rituals (Gikuyu mburi cia kiama) by proposing an inculturation model that redefines a liturgical transformation.

Findings on PCEA perception of mburi cia kiama rituals
The research analyzed the perception of mburi cia kiama by Presbyterian Church men (PCM), Parish ministers and PCEA leadership in general. The study approach on perception was multifaceted because of the subjective views of respondents. The study looked at the perception of the following concepts; perception of earning respect, perception shaped by Gikuyu cultural practice and their influence on spirituality, perception formed by fear of syncretism, whether PCM perception of mburi cia kiama rituals affect their participation, perception molded by projection of trends in participation of PCM in rituals, PCEA leaders perception of mburi cia kiama rituals in globalized world and their continuity in future.
To establish the perception of *mburi cia kiama* rituals, PCM were asked to indicate whether they agreed with various statements on perception of *mburi cia kiama* rituals on spirituality of the Presbyterian Church men. Table 1 shows the distribution of perception by respondents.

Table 1: Distribution of PCM by perception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ordained church elder who has participated in <em>mburi cia kiama</em> is considered to be a more respected than the one who has not.</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in <em>mburi cia kiama</em> is not a requirement for church recognition.</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The number of PCMF members participating in <em>mburi cia kiama</em> is increasing.</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A time will come when PCMF members will stop participating in <em>mburi cia kiama</em>.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors own survey

**Perception of earning more respect**

On whether PCM who have participated in *mburi cia kiama* rituals is considered to be have earned more respect within the society than the one who has not participated, slightly more than a third (36.0%) of the respondents agreed, 11.3% of them disagreed with the statement. Concurring with this view, Kenyatta (1938) asserts that during council of elders’ social undertakings, selected members who have participated in the rituals of *mburi cia kiama* are highly respected in the society. Explanation of the finding in terms of Turner’s theory, in liminality of status elevation, the ritual candidate is being trans-positioned irrevocably from lower to a higher social location in an institutionalized structure. The findings confirm ritual-functionalism symbolized by societal construct of status elevation. The reference of a Gikuyu male as an ‘elder of the council’ in the society is appealing for a Christian man who is not referred to as such in the church. Therefore the propensity to participate in the ritual of *mburi cia kiama* is a more alluring option.

The study wanted to find out whether the perception by PCEA that participation in *mburi cia kiama* is not taken as a requirement for recognition by Church men. The findings supported the church perception in that 44.4% of the respondents agreed and 35.5% disagreed. The influence of Africa traditional religion in the church is usually apparent because the Christians who take part in church rituals are the same ones who take part in the community (Pobee, 1979). Those that seek Christian identity also have Gikuyu traditional identity as well. Presbyterian men members in PCEA, notwithstanding formal Christian institutional requirements may want church members, peers and leaders who are also acceptable in the community to lead the church. It is common for members to influence each other in and out of church (Nthamburi, 1982). But PCM do not seem to attach the membership of PCM to *mburi cia kiama* ritual in terms of cultural perquisite from the findings. However, because of the cultural attachment to ‘goat’ among Gikuyu men mind-set and the practice of giving ‘goats’, though not necessarily the *mburi cia kiama* ritual, peers may tease each other including jokingly and informally asking for *mburi*
according to parish minister 1 during the interview.
The perception by some male Gikuyu Presbyterians that service in the community has a bearing in church leadership is weak and can have negative spirituality. However for those with such perception, it could be reason they give mburi cia kiama even when they are confirmed members in the church.

**Perception that number of PCEA men participating in the ritual is decreasing**
The study wanted to establish trends in mburi cia kiama ritual participation among men church members. When asked whether the number of Presbyterian Church men giving mburi cia kiama was increasing, nearly half (47.3%) of them agreed and strongly agreed with the statement. Only 16.7% of them were undecided. The findings also contradict the call by the Presbyterian Church leadership for men not to be involved in retrogressive cultural practices like mburi cia kiama (PCEA General Assembly Proceedings, 2015). The results showed that the increase in the number of PCM significantly affected the spirituality of the Presbyterian Church men.

**Perception that giving mburi cia kiama cannot stand modernity**
Regarding whether a time will come when PCM will stop giving mburi cia kiama, nearly a half (46.3%) of PCM disagreed, 11.3% of the respondents agreed with the statement. The result indicate that giving of mburi cia kiama by Christian men is a socio-religious phenomenon that is likely to persist. The study, through interviews established that Gikuyu council of elders continue to acquire and dedicate pieces of land for cultural use, dedication of shrines and sites, collaborate with county and national government through the Museum of Kenya to gazette and be granted custody of shrines for Gikuyu traditional rituals. The custody and reclaiming of shrines for rituals is particularly important to the continuity of Gikuyu traditional rituals. According to Gathogo (2017), in Kigumo, Kirinyaga County in Kenya, a number Gikuyu traditional shrines were given to the church to build worship centers in early days of Kenyan independence.
The continuity is supported by the assertion that there is an interchange headed for a certain new synthesis between Christianity and African culture to craft a trans African Christian identity (Rosa, 2012) that is given credence by the findings. A common approach towards achieving the African Christian identity is by reverting to African religious rituals practiced by Christians (Eze 2014). The results also are in tandem with Kibicho (2006) who had crafted a term “radical continuity” (p. 6), describing the resilient of Gikuyu traditional rituals in the context of expansion of Christianity in Kenya in mid-20th century. Gehman (2005) also talks about continuity, although the concept is in perspective of religious plurality. The finding on continuity runs contrary to the PCEA leadership as fronted by Parish Minister 4 (PM 4) during the interview;

“Mburi cia kiama ritual has no future, the Gikuyu ritual leaders are driven by a commercial agenda. Given time, the practice will just fizzle out. In the current period of modernity and globalization, there are no people to perpetuate retrogressive cultural rituals”.
The perception is influenced by the western Christianity thought that, according to Munyingi (2015), African Traditional religion was dismissed and relegated by Christianity as “synonymous with misery and superstition. African Traditional religion is qualified to have no future” (p 95). Further, this argument is qualified by the current forces of globalization and modernity. However the findings front the contrary view that mburi cia kiama ritual has refused to fizzle out. The response by Parish Minister 4 calls for the explanation as to why Christian men in increasing numbers continue to pursue local cultural religious rituals in the midst of globalization and modernity at a time it does not appear necessary to do so. The findings that mburi cia kiama ritual have a continuation in future negates what Bell (2006) says is presupposition of enlightenment’s “irrational religious paradigm” (p 37). The enlightenment persuasion that all religion would probably fade under the influence of empirical knowledge in the scientific age may still influence PCEA Church leadership in making pronouncements on mburi cia kiama rituals as demonstrated by Parish Minister 4. On assertion that mburi cia kiama is embraced by people who are not learned Gikuyu ritual leader 3 in an interview said the following about their cohort;

“we have 4 men with PhDs, two senior lawyers, 5 accountants, prominent businessmen, contractors and clergy among others. Almost all cadres of men in the society have given mburi cia kiama. These are ex-
posed people with all manner of modernity. A number of our men in the diaspora have told us that they are looking forward to the time they will come to Kenya so that they can give mburi cia kiama. Some are considering inviting us to USA to speak to them on Gikuyu culture and want to know whether they can join kiama from that end”.

When Gikuyu ritual leader 2 was asked whether mburi cia kiama ritual is likely to fizzle out due to modernity, he replied; “…go to the internet, and google mburi cia kiama, or YouTube and see videos of young Gikuyu men being taken through processes of slaughtering goats, dividing and apportioning meat portions and the Gikuyu religious identity”. The finding that globally exposed and modern Christian men are giving mburi cia kiama contrary to modernity by Parish Minister 4 borrows from Bettis, (1969) that religion is convolutedly a social construction. The consequence is a shared global humanity, propelled by a world religion like Christianity, with localized followers in Gikuyu nation who socialize and pursue traditional identity around such home-grown rituals like mburi cia kiama. The resultant homo Africanus Christianus is fully global and wholly local, with all synthesized ingredients of a glocalized Christianity. Further the resilience of African traditional religion does not revolve around whether it is rational but for the reason that it is relational.

**Perception: condemnation of PCM who gives mburi cia kiama by the Church**

The research wanted to establish how men perceived condemnation by church leadership of Presbyterian men who had given mburi cia kiama. PCEA men were asked to indicate whether they strongly agree, agree, were undecided, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that the PCEA should continue condemning men members who give mburi cia kiama. Figure 1 illustrates their distribution;

![Figure 1: Distribution by measure to address ritual issue in PCEA Church](image)

On whether PCEA should continue condemning PCMF members who gives mburi cia kiama slightly more than a third (38.9%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement on condemning PCMF members who gives mburi cia kiama. On the other hand, 11.8% of the respondents agreed with the statement. This is in line with Komo (2018) observes the following “We do not rival the church by embracing our culture. In fact, we were born Gikuyu first before we joined the mainstream churches. People can opt to leave a church but you can never stop being Gikuyu” (p 32). To do justice to spirituality of Presbyterian men, the church needs to redefine spirituality to find expression as both Africans (Gikuyu) men and Christians (Presbyterians) (Galgalo, 2012).

**PCEA ordained men elders perception of mburi cia kiama**

The study wanted to find out how Presbyterian ordained elders perceived certain concepts in mburi cia kiama rituals. Ordained men elders were also asked to indicate whether they agreed with various statements on the perception of mburi cia kiama rituals on spirituality of the Presbyterian Church men Fellowship. Table 2 shows
the distribution of responses.

Table 2: Distribution of the ordained men elders’ perception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>SA f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>A f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>U f</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>D F</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>F SD</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are some members who have given mburi cia kiama.</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCEA should take action against men who have participated in mburi cia kiama rituals.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordained male church elder who has given mburi cia kiama is considered to be more Gikuyu than the one who has not given.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors own survey

When asked about some members giving mburi cia kiama, 41.2% of the ordained men elders agreed with the statement. They were supported by slightly more than a third (38.2%) of the them who strongly agreed with the statement that there were some members who had given mburi cia kiama. On the other hand, only 5.9% of the ordained men elders disagreed with the statement. The finding gives credence to the assertion that in PCEA, giving of mburi cia kiama by Presbyterian men is widespread. One of the religious roles that mburi cia kiama ritual plays is the Gikuyu religious identity (Wachege, 1992; Kenyatta, 1938).

Regarding to whether PCEA members should take action against men who have participated in mburi cia kiama rituals, slightly less than a third (32.4%) of the respondents were undecided. However, 26.5% of the respondents disagreed with the statement. They were buoyed by (14.7%) of the respondents that strongly disagreed with the statement that PCEA should take action against men who have participated in mburi cia kiama rituals. This finding was in agreement with the response of PCMF when they were asked the same question. Majority of the men said that action should not be taken against men who had taken part in mburi cia kiama ritual.

In relation to whether ordained male church elder who has given mburi cia kiama is considered to be more Gikuyu than the one who has not given, slightly less than a half (41.2%) of the respondents agreed with the statement. They were supported by 11.8% of the respondents who strongly agreed with the statement that ordained male church elder who has given mburi cia kiama is considered to be more Gikuyu than the one who has not given. However, slightly more than a third (38.2%) of respondents was undecided. This was in line with Bottignole (1984) who observes that conducting mburi cia kiama rituals is important because it helps in the ordained church elders to understand and strives for the religious traditionalism that gives them a real Gikuyu identity. Altman (1996) also report that the Gikuyu ritual process of mburi cia kiama plays a significant religious role of religious Gikuyu identity. Wachege (1982) also states that the ‘age grade’ identity in Gikuyu culture is a result of ritual of rite of passage and the age-group with whom one was initiated with at the time of circumcision which qualified a person to be incorporated into the Gikuyu community.

**Perception: Influence of ritual on spirituality**

The PCMF were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed on various statements related to the influence of ritual on spirituality. Some of the issues included the following: Christian rituals should not borrow practices from mburi cia kiama. Mburi cia kiama rituals improves men’s commitment to church. Table 3 shows their distribution
Table 3: Distribution of PCM by influence of ritual on spirituality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SA f</th>
<th>A f</th>
<th>U f</th>
<th>D F</th>
<th>SD F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian rituals borrow practices from <em>mburi cia kiama</em>.</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Mburi cia kiama</em> rituals improve on the men’s commitment to church</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Authors own survey

In relation to ritual borrowing practices, nearly half (48.3%) of the respondents were undecided with the statement that Christian ritual should not borrow practices from *mburi cia kiama*, on the other hand, 26.6% disagreed with the statement while the remaining 13.3% agreed with the statement. Concurring with this view, Altmann (2017) reported that by effectively utilizing progressive traditionalism such as rituals enabled Christians to control the forces of change, and thereby, encouraged modernity by making modernity look foreign and alienating Africans.

The findings indicate PCEA has not made effort to use Gikuyu ritual symbolism in Presbyterian rituals of confirmation and ordination. The result is consistent with the question about the impact of ritual of *mburi cia kiama*. The result indicate that PCEA has not attempted inculturation. The corrective inculturation has two fronts; first it challenges the pre-existing structures of Gikuyu traditions in that it is infiltrated by Christianity. Gikuyu ritual leader 3 said that; a Gikuyu man who wants to be part of council of Gikuyu elders should “have good standing with the church”. Again, on the use local brew as a symbol articles in Gikuyu traditional rituals, Gikuyu ritual leader I said “… But now as result of Christianity, and to safeguard their (Christian) faith, the blessing at the back of the two hands and chest is done with saliva. However, at the imbibing stage and sharing by the candidate and sponsor, sugarcane juice can be used”. Further, on the relationship between the church and Gikuyu council of elders, Gikuyu ritual leader 3 said; “... because the church and the Gikuyu culture walk side by side, the church found the people as Gikuyu people before they became Christians. To this end it is not correct to say that there is contradiction between church and council of elders. …ritual leaders from our cohort are church leaders from different denominations, including the Gikuyu ritual leaders”.

Therefore to a great extent, *kiama* has accommodated the church. On the other hand PCEA has continued to fight the participation of men in *mburi cia kiama* rituals (Proceedings of 21st General Assembly, 2015). However the finding are; that participation in *mburi cia kiama* does not impact on their spirituality negatively. Two, the number of men participating in *mburi cia kiama* is increasing, three, practice of *mburi cia kiama* among PCM will not come to an end. The corrective inculturation ensures that the existing Church structures are not compromised. The perception index has to be manipulated to give credence to the proposed interpolation.

**Perception: mburi cia kiama on commitment of men in church**

Regarding the negative impact on commitment in church, 45.8% of the respondents were undecided, 15.8% strongly disagreed, while the remaining 6.4% agreed with the statement that *mburi cia kiama* negatively impact on the men’s commitment to their church. Concurring with this view Agbiji and Swart (2015) observes that traditional and cultural practices have long played an important role in the society and continue to permeate many aspects of life amongst Christians across the world. Cultural rituals have historically provided training for young adults in the absence of formal educational structures and have been held in high esteem by Africans for their role in transmitting values and skills from one generation to the next. *Mburi cia kiama* therefore as a ritual when practiced in PCEA churches, may not negatively have an impact of commitment. Magesa (2004) also observe that religious maturity should be gauged by the degree in which Christianity has been fully rooted in the African cultural experience as majority of African Christians continue to have two points of influence running parallel to each other, namely Christian teachings and their African culture. Muita (2003) on his writing about
the mission of the PCEA states that the church needs to continue to be more indigenous. Some religious matters regarding the PCEA church should be borrowed from some rituals.

**Perception that mburi cia kiama ritual symbolism as syncretism in PCEA**

Ordained men elders were asked to indicate whether they strongly agree, agree were undecided, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that the PCEA should Christianize mburi cia kiama ritual to transform it in ordaining elders. Figure 2 illustrates their distribution.

![Figure 2: Distributions by measure to address ritual issue in PCEA Church](image)

Regarding whether PCEA should Christianize mburi cia kiama ritual to transform it in ordaining elders, slightly less than a third (32.4%) of the respondents were undecided. However, 32.2% of the respondents strongly disagreed with the statement. They were supported by 26.5% of the respondents who disagreed with the statement that PCEA should Christianize mburi cia kiama ritual to transform it in ordaining elders. This is in agreement with Komu (2018) who observes the PCEA church leaders warns members to keep off a Gikuyu cultural practice referred to as "mburi cia kiama", which involves slaughtering of goats and giving advice to men on how to become respected elders because the practice introduces syncretism.

The finding on Christianizing is has the elders disagreeing because of what Parish Minister 4 arguing that; “embracing mburi cia kiama rituals in the church brings forth syncretism. Bringing Gikuyu culture in the church will destroy our faith” However, all religions have a measure of syncretism (Ross, 2017; Mokotso, 2015). Asked the same, parish minister 5 (PM5) answered; “...bringing Gikuyu traditional practice in PCEA is akin to the Scottish culture that missionaries brought that we still embrace. In PCEA, elders must wear a tie when they come to Parish sessions. If they do not they are chased out because they are not dressed appropriately. Let us also be proud to associate our church with our culture”.

The findings bring out genesis of syncretism in Presbyterianism. Syncretism in the Presbyterian tradition has been rooted in the office of the eldership. Although the Jewish tradition had the eldership as defined in the Old Testament of the Christian bible, the eldership that eventually was domesticated in the PCEA was the New Testament Pauline Hellenistic eldership as defined by Scottish Missionaries. One of the western missionaries’ omissions when they introduced Christianity was to trash the Gikuyu eldership which would have been inculcated and the issues currently arising as a result of mburi cia kiama would have been addressed. A measure of religious syncretism cannot be avoided. What the PCEA has currently is not an inculcated elder but a syncretic eldership. The religio-cultural component that depicts marks of syncretism in the current PCEA eldership is Missionary based and did not emanate from African religious phenomenological world. Religious syncretism in
PCEA has not originated from mburi cia kiama. The Church of Scotland based religio-cultural component of PCEA syncretic eldership, resulting from spirituality defined “for them” (Magesa, 2004) at the inception of the Church needs a redefinition. The ritual symbolism in spirituality through Gikuyu traditional religious identity would form the basis of redefinition that carries on board religious identity. The finding on ritual symbolism of acceptable attire by PCEA elders needs to be contrasted with matonyo (Gikuyu ritual regalia) described by Gikuyu ritual leader 2. The capacity of eldership in PCEA is challenged by Scottish syncretism fronted by missionary cultural exegesis of ritual articles and processes. The research findings redefines a religious syncretism driven by symbols that have a meaning in an African Christian Presbyterian eldership. The redefinition also provides an enhancement in projection and extrapolation based on findings as to the church ought to be in future.

**Mburi cia kiama: Parish ministers on perception.**
The study sought to find out from the clergy why they thought PCEA had proscribed participation of mburi cia kiama among the church members. The following is the summary of responses from the Parish ministers.

a. Confounding the Gikuyu ritual of mburi cia kiama as oath taking to be royal to Gikuyu traditions.

b. Fear of apostasy; church members being faulted to have left Christianity for Gikuyu traditional rituals.

c. Church members viewed by the Church leaders as being involved in demonic practices.

d. Fear of stimulating the retrogressive long-gone epoch in name of inculturation.

e. Mburi cia kiama ritual being viewed as a form of sacrifice.

f. Imbibing local brew is viewed as unchristian.

However, majority of the Parish ministers (5 out 6) were in agreement that the responses summarized above were fears, not backed by any research. Borrowing from Kiaziku (2009), the Church need to guard itself from fall on the conjectures of the missionaries who came to Africa, had pre-conception of the African as a person with no civilization, no religion and no culture and with no capacity to comprehend civility.

The study sought from the ministers one statement that sums up their perception of mburi cia kiama ritual. Their responses are summarized below;

a. Paganism, demonic and religiously retrogressive, needs condemnation.

b. Culturally desirable, awakening Gikuyu religious philosophy that creates unity and communion with PCEA.

c. Needs to dialogue with Christianity in order to transform the ritual as it enriches acceptance of PCEA in the wider society through inculturation.

**Conclusion**
The findings point to certain concepts that PCEA can adopt in dealing with perceptions. The first is that the Church needs to engage in the process of corrective inculturation order to be truly rooted in the life of the people. The Church also needs to embrace the concept of glocalized Christianity. The praxis that actualizes the acceptable dealing with the perceptions is liturgical transformation as the basis for embracing corrective inculturation. A redefinition of Presbyterian spirituality is necessary so that members practice a spirituality that blossoms among Gikuyu Presbyterian men as they express it in the current religious and cultural dispensation. Lastly, the church needs to recognize mburi cia kiama as one of the rites of passage within the Gikuyu culture so as to embrace the concept of Christianizing certain aspects of the traditional ritual. In contextualizing the recognition there is a need to accept that all religions have a measure of religious syncretism that is not necessarily pejorative. The other concept is interreligious dialogue between Christianity and African traditional religion at all regions where PCEA has a presence. Dialogue is critical for the reason that the perception that African traditional religion cannot survive modernity, secularism, globalization among other contextual challenges seem to be deep rooted in the minds of church leaders. However, it is equally important to note that the same challenges are a threat to survival of Christianity. Unlike the time when African traditional religion played host to Christianity at the time of missionary enterprise, the noted contextual challenges are unforgiving, are global cultures.
that follow closely the tenets of historical anti-religious paradigms (like social Darwinism and enlightenment with “religion as irrational”) and no religion is safe from their uncompromising new world order philosophy. In this line of thought, Christianity and African traditional religion need to dialogue for the two religions to defeat this common anti-religious enemy.

Recommendation
The church formally carries out the process of corrective inculturation that rewrites PCEA service books that recognizes the local component of the culture in which the church has a presence. Church formally enters into dialogue with Gikuyu ritual elders with a view to discussing how mburi cia kiama rituals can help perception of Christianity in the community. A sure approach to dealing with the church perception is recognizing mburi cia kiama ritual as one of the rites of passage in the Gikuyu culture.

References


25. PCEA Proceedings of the 21st General Assembly, held at St. Andrew’s Church, Nairobi on 13th-18th April 2015.


