TITLE

THE IMPACT OF LUYIA TRADITIONAL RELIGION UPON CHRISTIANITY: WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE AFRICAN ISRAEL CHURCH NINEVEH IN WESTERN KENYA

ABSTRACT

The present study examines the impact of the Luyia traditional religion on Christianity with special reference to African Israel Church Nineveh in Vihiga District in Western Province, Kenya. The study investigates various objectives including; the socio–economic historical and religious settings of the Luyia community, the origins and teachings of African Israel Church Nineveh and the impact of the Luyia indigenous religious values on the African Israel Church Nineveh.

This research is based on Mbiti’s assertion that African traditional religion like the Luyia indigenous values is helping Christianity to grow rapidly in Africa. We also acknowledge stephene’s (1974, 1) idea that today as members of the black communities we are faced with defining ourselves, our past, our present and our future spiritually, legally, socially, educationally, morally, mentally and materially. The study is tied on the assumptions that the Luyia is a community with distinct origins and religious beliefs and practices which gives it an identity and sustainable meaning of life, the cultural interaction between the Luyia traditional values and Western European Christianity caused the origin of the African Israel Church Nineveh which combines the Luyia indigenous religious values with Christian beliefs and practices.

This study appreciates the assumption that Christianity has some prime, canonical or non–negotiable doctrines which serve as the standard or reference for the teachings of the African Israel Church Nineveh. In order to test the above hypothesis and objectives the study uses the symbolic interaction theory and the concept of enculturation. Symbolic interaction theory proposes that cultural interaction produces some new values by integrating aspects from the Luyia with Christian cultural beliefs and practices.
The concept of enculturation enables religions to experience a peaceful exchange of cultural values from one another with mutual respect and understanding while recognizing and appreciating their differences as mere challenges but not as tools of confusion, coercion and barriers against spiritual integration, solidarity and peaceful co-existence among believers.

The researcher has reviewed literature related to the topic of our study which helps him to develop the problem and to formulate the research theory and concept. Our study problem is that many African instituted churches are emerging and blending the Luyia traditional values with Christianity. However, such churches like African Israel Church Nineveh (AICN) are yet to have formal and serious investigations by scholars. Our main aim is to present an in-depth investigation of the above church so as to evaluate how it is combining the Luyia religious values with Christian beliefs and practices. This study is value oriented and applies a qualitative and descriptive research design.

Our research method includes collection of data by both library research and field work in Vihiga District. The research instruments include personal oral and structured interviews to the informants, administration of questionnaires, random and stratified sampling, focus groups discussions, personal involvement in church activities or participant observation and listening, radio-cassette tapping and photo taking. These instruments have helped us to collect adequate and accurate data for analysis and compilation into different chapters. This study has discovered that the bending of Luyia traditional values with Christianity is enriching Christianity with new rituals, songs, morals, medicine, education, exorcism, leadership, prayers, proverbs, communalism, dances, sports and numerical growth.

The Luyia indigenous religion is also getting enriched with Biblical Christian myths, resurrection, love, rituals, stories, scriptures, literacy, songs, fellowships, prayers and exorcisms of evil spirits. In this study the Luyia traditional religion and Christianity have some similarities including a creationism, spiritually, monotheism, and anthropocentrism, and divine providence, idea of sin, repentance and salvation. African Israel Church Nineveh appreciates the Western modes of development including literacy, health, agriculture and communication and science but it disputes the condemnation of the Luyia indigenous culture and spirituality by the European Missionaries.
The blending is harmonious and tends to guarantee a promising, meaningful, respectful spiritual destiny and a bright future to this church community. The above observations are good confirmations of our statement of the problem, justification, theoretical/conceptual frameworks and the study assumptions. Finally we have come up with our study summary and conclusion. Nevertheless we have discovered that there is much that remains to be done this research is not exhaustive. We have therefore made some recommendations concerning some significant areas which need further investigations so as to increase knowledge on this church.