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Title

**Ethnic Land Conflict a Constant Struggle in Kenya:
A Critical inquest on the role played by the Methodist church in Meru County,
Kenya.**

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Dedication

To my affectionate memory of my late sister in law Mrs. Margaret Kamami Mwenda, who died on December 31st, 2016 due to heart failure caused by blood clot.

I dedicate this work to my wife Fridah, my Son Lemuel and Venjoy for accepting, 'dad' to leave them lonely in Nairobi, Kenya.

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I am greatly indebted to various persons who contributed to the completion of this study. First, is to my Maker and Lord for the grace He bestowed upon me, during the time of undertaking this study.

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Abstract

In Kenya, the occurrence of ethnic land conflict seems to be frequent. As such, the Church in general and in particular the MCK has divine role to cognize and makes use of her call to the mission of reconciliation in fostering unity among the people in the current society. However, one wonders if the Methodist church in Kenya has played any role in mitigating ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Kenya. This study, investigate the causes of ethnic land conflict in Meru County, Kenya, the role played by MCK and if the church has any known strategy in place to deal with ethnically land-related conflict. Third, to assess the role of indigenous institution *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru and Methods used to resolve the land conflict. The study was funneled by two theoretical perspectives, ethnic conflict theory and reconciliation theory of Atonement. The study was guided by research question, what causes ethnic land conflict and what should be the role of the Methodist church in mitigating ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya? The other sub-research questions are; what are the perception and causes of ethnic land conflicts among the Ameru people? Does the Methodist Church have any strategy for resolving ethnic land conflict? What has been the role of indigenous institutions the *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru in dealing with land disputes? The study established that the causes of ethnic land conflict are political influence, disputed on land boundaries / historical land grievances, land titling, and adjudication. The study's findings are: MCK has not played any role, *Njuri Ncheke* is a trusted and has methods like; oathing, dialogue and instilling of discipline. The study recommends use of complementary theoretical perspectives for further research and knowledge supplement in mitigation of ethnic land-related conflict in this field.

Abbreviations

MCK	Methodist Church in Kenya
IT	Information technology
NGO	Non-governmental organization
US	United States

Elucidation of the picture on the cover page: The front page picture captures, *Njuri- Ncheke* symbol at the heart of Meru town which is the sign of Meru council of elders, “Panel of Judges” as a cultural unity of the Ameru people.

The other part of the picture is a Church building representing the MCK in a bid to propagate peace through reconciliation.

The statement, “*This land is not for Sale*” is an indicator to give warning against land grabbing in the current society.

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Chapter One

General Introduction to the Study

This chapter of the study presents general actualization and introductory part of the research work. The chapter is built up with; general brief overview concerning the content of the research work, the personal motivation of the study, the significance of the study and the anticipated research outcome. General research overview, on empirical research, the analytical unit and research question are presented in this chapter. The research design of the thesis, the scholarly context of the research work, as well as the structure and the organization of the entire thesis are part of this chapter.

1.1 Introduction

Ethnic land-related conflict and what causes ethnic land conflict has been an issue in Kenya, posing threats to people's peace and security. In the current society, Kenya stands at a critical juncture regarding land ownership and boundaries. During this time of devolved government and creation of counties, land is taking a paradigm shift towards rapid economic growth in the majority of communities of Kenya than before. Issues of land are not only experienced among Kenyan ethnic communities but are issue of great concern both locally and internationally. For a long time in the history of Kenya, land has remained a sensitive economic and political issue, this attributing land to be a major source of conflict. Achievement of sustainable peace is one of the greatest concerns of every nation, county, and each community. In pre-colonial Kenya, this was achieved through the use of indigenous institution, notably the *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru. Indigenous conflict resolution methods in Kenya had spectacular element being uncommon both in Africa and the global space. Therefore, indigenous institutions as able organ stood in the vintage position when it comes to resolving conflict. This is why in pre-colonial time, societies leaved in peace and harmony. Missionaries brought Christianity that has tried to replace indigenous existing. The Methodist church in Kenya is one of the Christian denominations brought by the missionaries which founded

her root in Meru County among the Ameru community. Despite the fact that the churches are preaching the gospel of peace and reconciliation, ethnic land conflicts have adversely affected Kenyan communities and in particular the Ameru people. The land of ancestry perceived as a deep concept of identity informs the politics of ethnic land conflict in the region, where unresolved land grievances have exacerbated tensions resulting to fighting and killings. This crisis jeopardizes the current county government attempts to resolve them. Therefore, it is in this context that I examine critically the role played by the Methodist church in mitigating ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya and further unearth the causes of such ethnic land-related conflict in this research.

1.1.1 Personal motivation

The leading motivating factor to this study is my personal encounter as a Church minister and a member of Methodist Church in Meru, Kenya where I have been born and brought up. I have witnessed issues associated with ethnic land conflict on many occasions. Among these conflicts are based on disagreement on land boundaries, land inheritance and even family rivalry among brothers on land ownership. In several incidences, key perpetrators were politicians using inciting verbal talks which spurred violence resulting to fighting, killings, setting houses on fire and displacing people. This crisis affected children and women who always get subjected to abuse and suffering. As a pastor, I have severally been confronted by many people crying and trying to look for a refuge. I realized such a situation required pastoral care and counseling. This made me feel inadequate to offer them the necessary help and pastoral care as I felt left with very little to offer. The majority of the victims happened to be church members of which I feel that lots need to be done to the worrying community by the church. This issue aroused a concern within me and this became my major concern in this study on what should be the role of the church and MCK in particular to help mitigate the predicament attributed to ethnic land-related conflict and bring peace to the warring community.

1.1.2 Significance of the study

This research study intends to fill the gap of lack of information on the role of the church that exists during conflict on the land issues. Therefore the knowledge that will come out shall be used to resolve conflict constructively on the land related issues as well as in homes, places of school, work, and worship.

1.1.3 Anticipated Research outcome

I need to be informed of what the Church is doing and so particularly what should be the role of the MCK towards the mitigation of ethnic land conflict. The research anticipates seeing and hearing the perception and views of the people, such as the MCK clergy, church leaders, people affected by the menace of conflict and members of indigenous institution the *Njuri Ncheke* elders towards how and the strategies that has been employed in responding to ethnic land conflict experienced in the region. The research will communicate the role of the Methodist church to the community. The Church may benefit from this study in the sense that the results of this study might contribute to the Church, particularly in the Methodist Church among the Ameru people of Meru County, giving her members and community some theological answers and guidance on conflict resolution today. The leadership will also get insights into organizing the Church and steering it carefully through turbulence in the community to ensure consensus is reached peacefully after the controversy.

1.2 Literature review of the Study

This part of the chapter endeavors in reviewing the related literature based on the themes of the study. The purpose of reviewing the earlier studies is not only to bring out the historical perspective of the present work but also to take cognizance of related studies. These studies assist in designing the study and in avoiding pitfalls. Alternatively, the literature findings are used to explain and support the interpretation of the outcomes of this study. The literature review is organized around past research studies. This section of the chapter, presents the related materials as follows; general overview of ethnic land conflict in Kenya and Meru in particular, understanding the role of the church and in particular the Methodist church in Kenya on matters of ethnic land conflict and lastly the indigenous institution the *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru in resolving land disputes.

1.2.1 Research review on general perspective of ethnic land conflict in Africa and Kenya in particular

According to Loode, Nolan, Brown, and Clements (2015) in the article “conflict management processes for land-related conflict” observe that throughout history disputes over land and land-related conflict are common. The authors further noted that land conflict is prevalent in many countries of the world especially those countries that have emerged from periods of colonial rule, have more often experienced disputes on land use and ownership.

They further noted that land is of paramount importance to most people and land is more than just land, since it has cosmological significance. While pointing out how land plays a central role in both political and moral economy since independence, Loode, et al, (2015) they write,

Land disputes have different causes which can be grouped into different types in relation to the substantive issues and the people who are involved. This is due to factors such as land administration disputes, land tenure and ownership disputes and disputes over boundaries. Land conflict can involve the use and the denial of use of communally owned land to individuals, rivalries over membership or influence in land owning groups. Due to scarcity of land there has been land-related conflict being so common where population increases rapidly, through birth rates or migration (Ibid, p.19)

According to US agency for international development (2005) land lies at the heart of social, economic and political life in most of rural Africa, and is tied to a complex network of issues ranging from power relationships to economics and from symbolic attachments such as identity to systemic inequities. The majority of the population depends on land as well as land-based resources for their daily livelihood. Due to this social and economic development, conflict-sensitivity has become so crucial in relation to land matters. Similarly, the issues attached to land rights, are intrinsically linked to the realization of total development which results in the competition of this rare natural resource.

According to Okapu Etiayang Nicholas, in his research report '*the factors influencing the sustainability of peace in resources based tribal conflicts in Laikipia North district*', observed that in Africa, there is the varying degree of land tenures such as freehold or private titles, communal/traditional systems, public land, and squatting. He further noted that there are various social dimensions such as class, gender, religion, the ethnicity which affect access to and ownership of land (Okapu, 2013, p.13). In support of this, Kagwanji (2009) asserts that across eastern Africa (specifically Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, and Rwanda) the question of the use and ownership of, and access to increasingly scarce land and related resources has been at the Centre of festering conflicts between ethnic groups in the region. He further adds that, at the community, household and individual levels, and a range of factors influence that accesses and controls land resources. In addition to this, he further and the following to write,

The recurrent tribal made complex by cultural diversities have proved a challenge to the systems efforts to attain sustainable peace in Africa and beyond. Dependency on land for production cannot be understated in Africa. The Kenyan land question and resource based tribal conflicts have been a historical phenomenon. Although many studies have indicated a relationship between land, peace, and security, none is specific to the conflict scenario (Ibid, p.3)

In the article “land-related conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa”, by Bob Urmilla (2010) observed that in the history of Sub-Saharan Africa, matters of land dispossession and contestation have greatly contributed to various forms of inequalities associated with the crooked distribution of land resources. He further noted that due to this historical phenomenon, land in sub-Saharan Africa has been subject to conflict resulting to a number of many discrepancies that exist in today’s society. This has greatly influenced the socio-economic and political positions of different groups of people. In addition to the above argument, he noted that poverty and inequality distribution of land resources are mostly noticeable among the poor.

According to Jacqueline Klopp in the article “peace building in Kenya”, a report published September 2010, pointed out that in postcolonial Kenya, those in political office easily manipulated inherited institutional structures determining land allocation. In competitive multiparty elections, which were reinstated in Kenya in 1991, this made it easy for land to become politicized in election campaigns (Klopp, 2010, p.7). He further observes that it is hardly surprising that the multiparty elections in the 1990s saw the dominant authoritarian party, the Kenya African National Union, manipulating land claims, where politicians activate claims that certain constituents hold land illegitimately since they are not indigenous to an area conceived as an ethnically homogenous territory.

1.2.2 Research review on the causes of ethnic land conflict in Kenya and Meru in particular

The origins of ethnic land conflict can lie in the social and political make-up and structure of society where disputes arise between two or more people or groups who perceive their needs, interests or goals to be incompatible. Such disputes may lead to a variety of responses for the purpose of mitigating them. This response can be informed of negotiation and mediation (Kagwanji, 2009, p. 22). He further pointed out that, if disputes are not addressed properly the chance for escalation

responses increases which can lead to violence and long-term fission of society. Okapu (2013) observes that Kenya being a multi – ethnic state has motivated a very strong attachment to people and their communities, espousing fundamentally different values, and in competition with each other for access to, or control over resources, hence creating acrimony and divisions. These conflicts are mainly manifested as political, economic, environmental, exploitation of natural resources, land clashes, religious differences and lately terrorism. The country has thus continued to be divided on the basis of ethnic, socio-cultural, regional, political and economic lines (Ibid, p.13).

Land disputes is a particular factor that has also fueled ethnic sensitivities and violent clashes in Kenya, especially so in the Rift Valley. According to David Anderson and Emma Lochery (2008), the article ‘violence and exodus in Kenya’s rift valley, 2008; predictable and preventable, pointed out that when Kenya moved toward independence a number of land settlement schemes were devised. They further noted that by 1975 there were more 250 of these land settlement schemes, the great majority in the Rift Valley or along its borders. The purpose of these land settlement schemes was not land distribution but to give back to Kenyans fertile land. As such land was sold at market prices which meant some of the natives of the Rift Valley were unable to buy it, so wealthy people from other regions acquired land in the region legally(Ibid,p.43).

From their research, “Kenya and the global land grab; a view from below”, Lumumba and Klopp (2014) laments that “Land grabbing” or the irregular and illegal allocation of public land in Kenya is a serious problem that has deep historical roots (p.54). They pointed out that there are a number of unaccountable land laws and management systems inherited from colonial times that have allowed massive manipulation of land as a form of power. These historical institutional and power configurations have primarily benefitted local elites, especially those embedded in patronage networks around the president. This indicated that land grabbing in Kenya is domestic matter.

Drawing from their article “Inter ethnic conflict in Kenya: a case of Tharaka Tigania Conflict, causes, effects and intervention strategies”, Lillian Mworira and Judah Ndiku (2012) argue that inter-ethnic conflicts in Kenya with special reference to Tigania and Tharaka communities of the greater Meru region were fueled by, access to and control of scarce resources. This was found to be the main cause of the conflict where the following factors such as political power, border disputes, land adjudication and government policy were established as the key causes of conflict.

The two writers noted with concern that the above, mentioned conflict impacted on the economic activities, environmental degradation, displacement of people as well as harming people physically while killings others. Conflicts among neighboring communities have been witnessed severally in Kenya. Conflicts arise out of scarcity and competition over pasture and water, for instance, case Turkana and Pokot. Other cases are due to border disputes which are compounded by routine interaction between the communities (Moria&Ndiku 2012, p, 163).

1.2.3 Research review on border dispute and historical ethnic land grievances as a cause of land conflict

The chronic ethnic land-related injustices that now beg redress, are associated with historically contested land boundaries and land grievances which stand to be among the key causes of land conflict in Kenya and too many Ethnic, intra-ethnic and majority of individuals among their clans. Peter Veit (2011) in the article “the history of land conflicts in Kenya” observed that due to presidential election held in December 2007, Kenya drew international attention when violence broke resulting in the death of 1,300 people. Veit further lamented that much of the conflict in Kenya has been linked to long-standing land conflict associated with factors such as border disputes and unsolved land grievances. Kenya has endured a long history of land conflicts, dating back to its colonial period when first the Germans and then the British promulgated policies and practices that alienated people from their customary land and pitted one ethnic group against another (Ibid, p. 1). He further lamented that the expropriation of land in East Africa and Kenya began as early as 1800. In 1887 the British colonial government declared all unoccupied land to be ‘Crown Land’, despite existing community ownership arrangements. The manner in which colonial authorities drew up local and national territorial boundaries in Africa was based on a rather simplistic understanding of the nature of ethnic communities (Ibid).

According to Benson Mulemi the article “putting land grievances behind us in Kenya”, noted that historical trends of dispossession and competing claims to land predate colonial times which caused inter-clan and inter-ethnic feuds about territorial ownership. He further pointed out those historical roots of land grievances threaten to reproduce the conditions for a vicious cycle of hostilities and internal displacement. Land conflict associated with historical injustices dates back to from the pre-colonial era. The Constitution construction in Kenya requires to be recognizing as a way of resolving pending issues related to land which tend to demonstrate complex socio-economic and

cultural challenge in relation to land as a natural resource (Mulemi, 2011, p.5). He further argued that land grievances are rooted in Kenyans as individuals, families, and communities. The issue of common property is particularly relevant because this is an area of historical grievance as well as competing claim of being the indigenous land owner. This is associated with different ideas about displacement and dispossession of people from 'ancestral lands'. This characterizes the struggle to maintain traditional modes of production, important for people claiming a particular region as theirs. Yet it is likely that most of the land in Kenya was once unoccupied. People tended to develop bonds with territories they perceived as their ancestral lands, associated with economic and non-material cultural values (Ibid, p.4). According to Meru local newspaper 'Mzalendo' dated November 2014, point out that for over half a century now, land tenure and adjudication has been a major problem in Meru and the neighboring communities such as; Tharaka people and Isiolo people. The contested border disputes problems can be traced from colonial times but things worsened in the post-colonial period with Kenya's attainment of self-rule. Politicians in the three counties have for years used the land issue as a campaign tool with each promising to solve the issue once and for all. Once they get into power, they sweep all the promises they made to the electorate under the carpet (see <http://mzalendo-patriot.blogspot.no/2014/11/isiolo-meru-conflict-is-historical.html>).

1.2.4 Research review on political influence as a cause of ethnic land conflict

According to Mworira and Ndiku(2012) inter-ethnic land conflicts in Kenya with special reference to Tigania and Tharaka communities of the greater Meru region were fueled by, access to and control of scarce resources. This was attributed to political power, border disputes, land adjudication and government policy being established as the key causes of conflict. Kenya's 2007 post-electoral conflicts are directly linked to the threat of land invasions.

According to Veit (2011), ethnic politics is seen as a source of land conflict among Kenyan ethnic groups. During colonial rule, every ethnic group in the protectorate experienced land losses (ibid). He further, noted that land losses by Kikuyu and other ethnic groups were exacerbated by the commercialization of the local economy which led to the emergence of a wealthy land owning class of Kikuyu. This later was attributed to the cause of ethnic clashes in Kenya.

According to Gecaga (2002) from the article "The Impact of War on Africa Women" attribute the causes of ethnic clashes in Kenya include political influence that traces back to colonialism, which

compressed communities into tribal cocoons through their ethnic barriers and isolation. The disposing of land belonging to some ethnic group's creating economic disparities into different regions and uneven distributions of social amenities such as schools and hospitals. In addition, she argues, colonialism promoted ethnic consciousness at the expense of nationalism and patriotism. The other causes of ethnic clashes are opportunism, unfair distribution of economic resources and political power along ethnic lines.

1.2.5 Research review on the role of the Church in dealing with conflicts

Drawing on the work of Robert Schreiter (1998), in the book *the ministry of reconciliation: spirituality and strategy*. He notes that:

That the Church's role in the reconciliation process, is seen in two ways; one is in terms of the resources the Church brings to the reconciliation process and secondly is in terms of the role Church can play in reconciliation. He adds that there are three resources which should be considered. The first is the message about reconciliation and the spirituality that flows out of it. The second is the power of its rituals and the third is its capacity to create communities of reconciliation (Schreiter, 1998, p.127).

He further argues that "the Christian message of reconciliation and spirituality should focus on the flight of the victim and the restoration of the humanity of the victim" (Ibid). He adds that Christian message should address the issues of memory, forgiveness and the rebuilding of trust. Also, the church rituals that can be used in the process of reconciliation are the sacrament. The church role on reconciliation as core mission work is to create communities of reconciliation. This is providing zones of safety through hospitality and this help in rebuilding the lost relationship (Ibid).

Wells (1997) noted that, in ethnic conflicts areas, Churches have been seen being in front line among other peace actors. This is because peace and reconciliation are considered to be a key agenda of the church's role which is founded on the vision and mission of the body of Christ. Moreover, the church is a mobilizing force that binds different people. This universal appeal necessitates the church to penetrate people's interior lifestyles. The above sentiment is further illustrated by the argument by Wells that Church can only actualize the potentials of peacebuilding and reconciliation based on her divine prerogative role, notably the reconciliation.

Exploring biblical perspectives on forgiveness, reconciliation and grace are the underlying message that should be embraced by the Christian churches in resolving conflicts. To mitigate conflict reflect upon actual efforts and achievements by Christian churches, organizations, and individuals to bring about reconciliation among former enemies. He further noted that such conflicts include peoples, divided, peoples persecuted internally by their own ruling elite and peoples tragically deprived of land and home. Reconciliation in these contexts is the only way for "two parties to rewrite their histories and enter upon a new path (Wells, 1997, p.260).

Herbert C. Kelman (2008) the book *a social-psychological approach to conflict analysis and resolution* observe that

The Church has a vital and essential mission towards reconciling her people. Further argue that due to the essential mission, the Church feels an obligation to go to the roots of the conflict, in order to bring healing and to re-establish relationship built on the original reconciliation. This will be the effective principle of all true reconciliation. For this reason, the Church has the mission of proclaiming this reconciliation (Kelman, 2008, pp. 170-183).

Drawing on work by Nyongesa Michael Wafula (2014), *The role of the Church in promoting reconciliation in 2008-2013 post-election violence Kenya*, noted that for the purpose of promoting healing in a conflict situation from a religious worldview values of human dignity should be understood that:

The first value he notes is the fact that all human beings have "human dignity" or rather all human beings are created in the image of God. Second, human beings live in God's world. Therefore as creatures, they need to accommodate one another. Third, religion or rather churches should help humanity to cross the boundary of negative ethnicity that characterizes our society. The role of the church in peacemaking and reconciliation is strengthened by the fact that the social and political crisis in the society questions radically the message of the gospel. Peace is the tranquility that flows from right order. When we put right order into the structures of our society, the tranquility that results is peace (Wafula, 2014, p.41).

Quoting Rothbart, D., & Korostelina, K. (2008) the book titled *The enemy and the innocent in violent conflicts*, Wafula further observed that, the church's approach to reconciliation was devoid of use the processes of negotiation, bargaining, mediation, arbitration that sometimes result with an agreement on mutually acceptable solution, signed by the parties. Like what happened in the incident of Kenya post-violent conflict in the years 2008-2013. This needed agreement that could have been bridged by the church to bring conflict to an end (Ibid).

The Bible is the core point of reference for the Church. It highlights several principles of peacebuilding and reconciliation including love, justice, forgiveness, and peace. These exalt the value of human lives and the rule of law. The Church is called the body of Christ. To maintain the integrity, churches must advocate for peace and love among their adherents. Ethnic conflicts are threats to the harmony of the society and integrity of the body of Christ. John Paul II, in his faith in Christ, proclaims that: The Church is founded on Christ who is perceived by Christians as the "Prince of Peace" (Isaiah; 9:1-6, Luke 2:14; 19:38, Ephesians; 2:14, 2 Thessalonians; 3:16). He said that He came so that the world may have life in abundance (John 10:10). Peace and the Church are, therefore, inseparable. In the beatitudes, Christ gave a summary of his teachings: "blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9). Peace and reconciliation are inseparable. Thus the church is necessitated to mitigate conflicts in order to live to her mission. In support of the above sentiment, Wafula (2014) argued that the church is a unique body built on charismatic goals to bridge peace. This is because reconciliation is a requirement and needs to be achieved. It is for this reason that, essential mission of reconciliation becomes the key objective in the church agenda. Church feels an obligation to go to the roots causes of the conflict.

The review of literature related to the study, presented in this part of the chapter is based on general perspective concerning the causes of land conflict. The review shows that there is likelihood that, causes of land conflicts are attributed to border disputes, historical land grievances, and political influence. Also, this part of the chapter presents reviewed literature on the role of the church in resolving land conflict. The authors justify the involvement of Churches in peacebuilding and reconciliation process. However, they have not shown the role that the Methodist church in Kenya has played to mitigate land conflict. The current research, therefore, is to establish the role played by the Methodist Church in Kenya in the mitigation of ethnic land conflict. In my view, the above literature has limitations based on the scope undertaken. Hence this calls for more research to be conducted in relation to ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya. Although the review has shown that many have written about the causes of land conflict, none have focused on land conflict among the Ameru people. This study is different because it endeavors to show how land conflict among the Ameru community can be mitigated by the involvement of the Church. Moreover, my participation and observation in an ethnographical study and my own experience, which motivated the study, provides a unique contextual understanding of land conflict, the involvement of the Methodist church as well as the effectiveness of indigenous institution(Njuri Ncheke of Meru).

1.3 Analytical unit and the research questions

1.3.1 Introduction

This part of the chapter deals with the scope of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, the purpose and the limitation of the study, the general overview of the research design, the scholarly context, benefit and the church role in the mission of reconciliation and the organization of the research structure.

1.3. 2 Scope of the Study

This study was conducted in Meru County, Kenya. The study investigated the causes of ethnic land conflicts and find out the role played by the MCK in resolving ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya. The Methodist Church leaders of Miathene synod, Church members and people affected by the conflicts as well as council of Meru elders the *Njuri- Ncheke* will make up the population of the study.

1.3.3 Statement of the problem

The history of conflict is as old as human history. From the dawn of human history nations, communities and individuals have been competing for control of the scarce resource, key of them being the land. According to Geschiere (2009), land is a starting point and a springboard for a series of inter-related, diffused cultural, social and political experiences stemming from its associations both real and imagined. The land of ancestry is a deep concept of identity that informs the politics of land in Africa. In Kenya, conflicts associated with land tend to be very diverse in the Meru community. Land-related conflicts manifest themselves in the form of inter-personal, intra-communal and inter-communal conflicts. The escalation of ethnic land conflict seems to be of great concern both locally and globally. Land conflict linked with unresolved land grievances has exacerbated tensions and jeopardize government attempts to resolve them. Therefore it is in this context that this research examines critically the role played by the Methodist church in resolving ethnic land conflicts among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya. As the problem alludes, this study helps to unearth the methods and the role of indigenous institution, the *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru and the causes of ethnic land conflict for the purposes of restoring peace.

1.3.4 Research questions

This study examines the role that Methodist church plays in mitigation of ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya. I set out to understand and explain the causes of ethnic land conflict and assess if the Methodist church has any known plan or strategy to resolve land related conflict. The main question of the study therefore is:

What causes land conflict and what should be the role of the Methodist church in mitigating ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya?

This research question is answered by the help of the following people. Namely, the Church Ministers, the Church lay leaders, persons affected by conflict and elders of Njuri Ncheke of Meru. This main research question is addressed through the following additional research questions, namely (1) what are the perception and causes of ethnic land conflicts among the Ameru people? (2) Does the Methodist Church have any strategy for resolving ethnic land conflict? (3) What has been the role of indigenous institutions the *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru in dealing with land disputes?

1.3.5 Purpose of the study

This study set out to establish the causes of ethnic land conflict and what should be the role of the Methodist church in mitigating ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya. The study also aims at highlighting the methods used by indigenous institution the *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru in resolving ethnic land-related disputes within the community. The study is further purposed to examine whether the MCK has any known strategy to help deal with the issues of ethnic land conflicts attributed to this ‘scarce resource- the land’. In this case the cause being, poor political influence, lack of clear established land boundaries and land adjudication/titling and ownership.

1.3.6 Limitation of the study

The study focuses on the causes of ethnic land conflict as well as unearthing the role of the Methodist church, if there is any known strategy to deal with ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya. Also the study sets at highlighting the methods used by indigenous institution *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru in a bid of settling land disputes. Therefore, the views gained from the study seem to be limited only to the perspective of the Methodist Church clergy, church leaders, people affected by conflict, and elders drawn from the council of *Njuri-Ncheke*. Due to the study’s cultural as well as geographical context, the study is limited to method, sampling, tools, variables and techniques proposed in this study. In my view, the reason to this is due to participants’ experience with Church matters; land issues and indigenous institution cultural norms as they are known by the ethnic community of Ameru people. Hence is difficult to generalize the findings of the study. The study was also limited by availability of respondents, due to the busy schedule of the respondent that was witnessed during the interview meetings.

1.4 The general overview of the research design of this study

The study is a qualitative field study, as the data was gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted in a case study. According to Bryman (2012), snowball sampling is used in which a small group of people relevant to the research questions was interviewed. Also, the study adopted two theories, namely, the reconciliation theory of atonement and ethnic conflict theory towards an understanding of the causes of ethnic land conflict and the role played by the Methodist church in the mitigation of ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya.

1.5. The scholarly context and anticipated benefits of the study

This section of the paper presents a brief overview based on the contextual scholarly and the anticipated research benefits. The section further presents the perspectives general role of the church on reconciliation, a key role of Church's mission into which this research is anchored. The other part of the chapter presents the scholarly discipline of the study.

Land related conflict is costly in terms of property loss, loss of lives and negative impacts on the economy. Being aware of the challenges experienced in Kenya attributed to ethnic land conflict, I hope this study may contribute to wellbeing of Kenyan society in several ways. First, the views gathered will be of great use to both the church and the participants, making them aware of factors that may trigger land-related disputes enhance resulting into conflict. In this way, they may end up avoiding such issues. Second, I hereby wish to add my voice to already existing discussions and the rest of groups, who have in the past been putting efforts to address ethnic land-related conflict. This knowledge is hoped to encourage a more productive discussion in MCK and land commission in the current Meru County, towards creating more faithful dialogue and practice in the society. Thirdly the findings of this study assist in suggesting the exact strategies or plans to use in developing effective methods of resolving ethnic land-related conflict. The use of this effective strategy may prevent similar scenes in the future. In the past, the Church has condemned most of the indigenous institutions "African traditional belief systems" like *Njuri Ncheke*. Fourthly, this study suggests to the Church some effective indigenous methods of peacebuilding and reconciliation that can be adopted when addressing land-related conflict. The study may be of help to the policy makers to come up with policies that can stop the conflicts, NGOs and other peace actors in addressing land conflict. Lastly, with this study, I hope to contribute to resolving land related conflict research by making sure that the church's involvement is felt within the community circles, which in my context, I have found to have a huge gap. In my view this study is a unique one due to its culturally and geographically rooted within the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya as an ethnic Community and the missiological perspective of the Church, in particular the MCK's role to mitigate ethnic land conflict based on reconciliatory perspective.

1.5.1 The church's role in the mission of reconciliation

This study is distinct in that it examines the role of the MCK in resolving land conflict. The study may be also unique due to its missiological understanding of church's perspective mission work

rooted in reconciliation processes. The study helps to understanding the reconciliation perspectives that can be used by the church in the processes of conflict mitigation.

According to Nyongesa Michael Wafula (2014), in his research project “the role of the church in promoting reconciliation in 2008-2013 post–election violence Kenya”. Write...

Ethnic conflicts in Kenya are attracting special attention from different sectors, especially from the church. This is because of their negative impact on social cohesion, economy, and loss of lives. Similarly, the phenomenon of ethnic conflict compels peace builders to intervene in order to mitigate the occurrence. Reconciliation is a process to reconcile the warring parties and to build a long lasting harmony. This process attracts various key players including, the government, NGOs, Church and church-based organizations (Wafula, 2014, p.19).

I agree with the above argument by Wafula since the contextual perspective of the study is built on the mission of reconciliation that the church can take to mitigate conflict. In this case, reconciliation is referring to a restored relationship in behavior and forgiveness to a deeper transformation based on God having forgiven mankind and that we can extend forgiveness to others. Within the framework of reconciliation, “forgiveness is at the heart of reconciliation. According to Schreiter (1998), the church role in reconciliation processes can be examined in terms of the resources it brings to the reconciliation process and the active role it can play in it. All this is built on the Christian message which addresses issues such as memory, forgiveness, and rebuilding of trust. This argument is further supported by Wirmark (1997) that maintaining the integrity, churches must advocate for peace and love among their adherents. This is because ethnic conflicts are threats to the harmony of the society and integrity of the body of Christ. For this reason, one cannot separate Church from peace because the two are inseparable. In other words, peace and reconciliation are inseparable. Thus the church is necessitated to mitigate conflicts in order to live to her mission.

In the article “Peace and Reconciliation as a paradigm: A Philosophy of Peace and its implications for Conflict, Governance and Economic Growth in Africa, in Peacemaking and Democratization in Africa; theoretical perspectives and church initiatives” Assefa (1996) noted that the church among other players, is obliged to be the major actor to reconcile and build peace. Since the Church

has a spiritual mandate in spreading gospel and resolve conflict, should not shy off. Thus, her mission is to consolidate peace. Peacemaking and reconciliation is therefore, key mandates and not merely options towards reconciliation process (Assefa, 1996, p.51). Indeed peace and reconciliation are religious terms and they are inseparable when it comes to church ministry. In this regard the church has role to reconcile people and maintain peace. The value of the church is maintained when peace and reconciliation is made priority in the society. Despite the church having a mission of peace and reconciliation and being predominant, conflicts, especially ethnic conflicts, continue to escalate in various parts of the country. It is against this contextual understanding that the study helps fill the gap by unearthing the role the Methodist church plays in empowering the society to stay in harmony and reminding the people in the society their active mandate of propagating the message of peace and unity as a way of mission work.

1.5.2 The scholarly discipline of the study

This section concerns the scholarly discipline of the study. In view of this study, the violent attributed to ethnic land conflict is a constant challenge in African continent, Kenya and Meru in particular. Generally it is a problematic stage with far reaching concerns, a reality that cannot be ignored among the society today. This crisis affecting humanity requires serious action to mitigate. Peacemaking, built on reconciliation is a critical manifestation of religion that acts as a glue to bind and unify the community broken by social conflict. This is made possible through the Church's mission work. The perspective of church's holistic mission is a broader biblical concept of *Missio Dei*, or the mission of God in which the plan of God is to restore His creation to the original purpose. This is in the light of spiritual, physical and community of peace. Therefore, Missiology becomes the foundation and center stage in which this study is anchored. This study adopts the discipline of missiology due its holistic integration of theological principles in understanding the causes of ethnic land conflict and what role should the MCK play to resolve ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya in the mission of promoting peace.

1.6 The structure and organization of the thesis

This study consists of seven chapters. It commences with the introduction to the study in chapter one. The introduction part is divided into six sections. Section one presents general brief overview concerning the content of the research work, on personal motivation of the study, the significance of the study and the anticipated research outcome. Section two presents general research overview,

on empirical research. Section three deals with the analytical unit and research question. Section four presents the research design of the thesis, section five contains the scholarly context of the research work and section six presents the structure and the organization of the thesis.

Chapter two provides a theoretical a perspective and discussion connected to major concepts in the problem statement. In this case, the perspectives of two theories are discussed. Ethnic conflict and reconciliation theory of atonement are critically discussed, their dimensions, perspective, and applicability.

Chapter three provides the methods used in this study. The chapter deals with the presentation of the research design, research methodology as well as sampling techniques of the respondents and interview questions asked.

Chapter four presents the general geographical background of the study. This chapter is divided into two parts. Part one based on the location of the study. Part two deals with the contextual background of the study on matters of land conflict that helps in understanding the perspective of both cultural and religious aspect in relation to the role of Methodist church in resolving ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County , Kenya in which the study is anchored.

Chapter five provides the presentations of the empirical findings of interviews. Presentations are made thematically as they appeared during interviewing processes. Chapter six focuses on the detailed discussion of the findings based on interviews as they emerged from the theoretical framework, empirical data, research questions and in relation to the literature that guided the study. This part of the study further presented the summary of the entire chapter. Chapter seven is the conclusion chapter, which summarizes the study, the findings, and recommendations and also suggesting the direction for further research in this field of the study.

Chapter Two

Theoretical Perspective of the Study

2.1 Introduction

This chapter of the study discusses the perspectives of ethnic conflict theory and reconciliation theory of Atonement. The chapter begins with general explanation and application of the theories to help explain the causes of ethnic land conflict and the role played by the Methodist Church in mitigating ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya. This study has been based on two theoretical perspectives such as Ethnic conflict theory and reconciliation theory of Atonement. According to Charles Hauss in his book *International Conflict Resolution* note that, theories are perceptual lenses through which the scholars, researchers and policy makers view and interpret the world they are in. They are also basis through which same scholars and researchers are able to make judgments on how human beings govern themselves (Hauss, 2001, p.13). It worth noting that behavior of human being is goal-oriented and originates from unfulfilled needs. Kenya being a multi-cultural society, with many ethnic communities, results to groups' competition towards the scare resources (land). This is where each ethnic community strives to fulfill the unmet needs such as economic, political and social needs. These needs produce tension which is released through certain behavior. There are many theories on conflict but this study is based on ethnic conflict theory. Kanchan Chandra in his book *Why Ethnic Parties Succeed: Patronage and Ethnic Head Counts in India* noted that, ethnic conflict arises among rational agents over scarce resources which are driven by the aims of political leaders for political and economic gains. The aim is seen as a deliberate manipulation based on a rational decision to encourage ethnic violence (Chandra, 2004, p.33). Therefore in this case Ethnic conflict is considered as the result of player's rational activity of common interest such as prosperity, power and security. Further than the explanation of the role of leading manipulation in ethnic wars, the utility of this theory lies also in explaining why some ethnically fragmented societies choose to fight or chose to cooperate rather than fight. The theoretical perspectives, upon which the study is anchored, are used as perspective of ethnic conflict to help understand both psychological and cultural attributes towards promoting peace through reconciliation. They are used as analytical frames in shedding light on the literature materials reviewed in the chapter. This will help in offering the grip on the research question what

role played by the Methodist church in resolving ethnic land conflict. The theories help in answering other sub research question such as the role of indigenous institution. The theoretical perspectives will further become a springboard for better reconciliation that is culturally rooted and easily understood and believed by the people of Meru. I limit my framework to the two theoretical frameworks because I do believe that reconciliation begins where conflict resolution ends. Ethnic land conflict are based on a myth of collective ancestry, which usually carries with it traits believed to be individual and group as well as innate. The two perspectives will strengthen one another for understanding the cause and offering the solution. So I cannot deal with one without understanding the other. I discuss each separately while I will combine them. I start with ethnic conflict theory as a perspective laying a foundation of the other perspective because it offers the understanding of the causes of ethnic land conflict as discussed in the following part of the chapter.

2.2 A perspective of the theory of Ethnic Conflict

This part of the chapter focuses on ethnic conflict theory from the perspective of understanding ethnic land conflict in general. To set the ground well, I wish to lay a foundation on ethnicity and conflict understanding as I revisit the idea of ethnic. As postulated by Donald Horowitz in his work, 'Ethnic Groups in Conflict', He views ethnicity as an inclusive concept that defines groupings on the basis of indicators such as color, appearance, language, race, religion, common ancestry, height, complexity, bod structure. This is a type of phenomenon that he says is based on both the myth of common ancestry, belief systems, physical settlement (Land or location) and group affiliations with common relationships. While quoting Smith and Horowitz, Mworira (2011) further expounded the meaning of the term ethnic community by linking it to that concept of kinship. He postulated that the bottom line of kinship ties makes it possible for ethnic groups to think in terms of family as well as semblances. In his book "Ethnic Groups in Conflict" Donald Horowitz basing his theoretical concept from instrumentalists argue that the concept of ethnic conflict is a myth because ethnic conflict does not involve ethnicity but rather institutional, political and economic factors. Horowitz further postulates that ethnicity in essence refers to the behavior and feeling (about oneself and others) that supposedly emanates from membership of an ethnic group (Horowitz, 1985, p.50). Ikiara Mworira lamented that, the persistence of ethnic conflicts has been attributed to the actions of community leaders who use their cultural groups to mobilize them in their competition for power and resources (Mworira, 2011, p.12). Now having set the ball rolling, I further bring in the concept of the theory here discussed below.

2.2.1 Understanding ethnic conflict theory

Ethnic conflict theory postulated by Donald Horowitz (1985), stems from social identity theory, in which every individual divides his or her social world into distinct classes or social categories and tend to locate themselves and others in relation to them. Horowitz further explains his description of ethnic groups as a conceptual convenience that captures the essential elements of politics in ethnically divided societies. He point out that these divisions are based on differences within clan, language or religion of politically relevant group boundaries. This theory has therefore enabled this study to explain the causes of ethnic land conflict. He further considers ethnicity as an umbrella which easily embraces groups differentiated by color, language, and religion; it covers “tribes,” “races,” “nationalities,” and castes.” The theory postulates that every individual divides his/her social world into distinct classes or so-called social categories and locate themselves and others in relation to them. The theory adopts basic premises of the rational choice approach in assuming that inter-group conflict originates in the perceptions of group members with regard to real competition for scarce resources, thus suggesting that hostility between groups’ results from real or perceived conflicting goals because they generate inter-group competition. In other words, the dynamic that evolves when groups are engaged in competitive zero-sum competitions leads to each group developing negative stereotypes about, and enmity toward, the other group(s) with which it competes. Horowitz further argues that ethnicity is based on a myth of collective ancestry, which usually carries with it traits believed to be innate. Some notion of ascription, however diluted, and affinity deriving from it are inseparable from the concept of ethnicity (Horowitz, 1985, p. 52). The ethnic conflicts are deep-rooted and require interrogating the psychological dimensions and perspectives as well as cultural attitudes. Therefore, in deeply divided societies, ethnic affiliations impact not only family and social life, but also more formal organizational life. From this departure, having understood the perspective of ethnic conflict theory, it is of vital to point out that ethnic identity in this study is established as a source of conflict and violence. To help understand the causes of ethnic land conflict and how the church can play her mission role to resolve such conflict, the ethnic symbolic identities that connect people together are discussed below.

2.2.2 Ethnic Identity and Symbolic interaction

Ethnic identity connects individuals through perceived common past experiences and expectations of shared future ones. Identity on shared value such as Land is a bottom line in this discussion. Identity is concerned with group judgments and judgments about groups and their motives conflicts

over competing, and apparently irresolvable, claims that engage the central elements of a group's historical experience. Due to belonging based on identity, conflict arises over competing claims that evoke deeply rooted dimensions. Conflicts related to highly significant identities have a tendency to persist, since threats to those identities are not easily put aside. For instance, particular pieces of land can be key elements of identity, whether they are the village, region, or country of birth and ancestral attachment. Therefore conflicts that are perennial become a possibility when some groups are discriminated against or deprived of satisfaction of their basic material and psychological needs on the basis of their identity. Ethnic identity on land ownership and territorial right are tools of analysis for understanding the centrality of cultural identity.

2.3 Reconciliation theory of atonement

The other perspective is reconciliation theory of atonement postulated by Linda Radzik (2009). This theory explained the value of repentance and the restoration of relationships. It's also emphasis on rebuilding of respect, trust among victims, communities, and wrong doers. The concept of reconciliation is therefore associated with that of atonement in theological systems of repentance built on the Christian message of reconciliation through Jesus Christ. According to Robert Schreier (1998), this is the church's role in the reconciliation process that focuses on the plight of the victim and the restoration of the humanity of the victim. This theory argues that, the idea of reconciliation enables one to explain the value of repentance without restructuring interest to the wrongdoers character, to account for the power of reparations without placing a dollar value on dignity, and to justify the suffering of guilt without falling into a simplistic endorsement or retribution and to insist on the moral responsibility of wrongdoing groups without treating its members unfairly. The theory emphasizes on rebuilding respect and trust among victims, communities and wrong doers. She noted that the definition of the term atonement as '*at-one-ment*' denotes the action of setting at one, or condition of being set after a discord or strife. She further explains that, besides images of reconciliation and reuniting, the metaphors that are most appropriate to this theory of atonement includes images of rebuilding, repairing, reforming or healing. This concept of reconciliation is therefore associated with that of atonement in theological systems such as repentance as built to reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. The reconciliation places the repair of relationships at center stage and attempts to capture the complexity of an appropriate response to wrongdoing. While wrongdoing does damage personal relationships, it is the damage to moral relationships that morality requires us to repair. Persons are

obligated to maintain a moral relationship with others, where this means both regarding others as equally morally valuable and being morally trustworthy in one's treatment of others.

2.3.1 Perspective of reconciliation theory of atonement

From conflict resolution perspective, reconciliation takes the center stage towards bridging peace among the parties experiencing conflict. Reconciliation involves voluntary self-reflection and acknowledgement of responsibility by every side of the party. Thus, reconciliation becomes the means through which peace is attained. Also, it does not stop at accusations and defense, but also requires reflection of one's own guilt in a kind of dialogue with the other through forgiveness. Therefore, in the context of this study to help understand the causes of ethnic land conflict and what role should the MCK play to resolve ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people, this perspective is becomes of great relevance in setting the shape of the study.

2.3.2 Understanding Reconciliation

According to Radzik (2009), this perspective holds that the goal of atonement is the reconciliation of the relationship among the wrongdoer, the victim and the community. The idea is built on the hope that the wrongdoer will come to merit restored standing in the moral community and that the other member of the community will have good reason to grant or recognize that standing. She further explains that the wrongdoer's obligation to atone consists in an obligation to create the conditions in which such reconciliation can take place. She further adds that a wrongful acts distances people from one another. The term reconciliation has strong religious connotations. Reconciliation is used in the Christian tradition to describe the broken relationship between God and mankind due to sin, with Jesus re-establishing conciliation between them through the sacrifice of his life: *"that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation."* (The bible, 2. Cor. 5:1). The term means the reestablishment of peace or friendship. Thus, referring to going back to a state that existed earlier, before a bond was broken.

Radzik distinguishes three goals of atonement: moral improvement so that one makes oneself a morally trustworthy person, communication with the victim and/or community in a way that withdraws the original insulting message, and reparation of harms done to the victim. In accomplishing the three sub-goals of atonement, there will be a place for feelings of remorse and guilt, repentance, reparation payments, private and public apologies, and service work for parties

other than the victim, and even self-punishment to the extent this self-punishment is useful in effecting moral transformation and sending a remorseful message to others. The overarching goal of atoning acts, however, is moral reconciliation. Therefore successful atonement would be a matter of bringing people together again or reconciliation which is the work of the church.

2.4 Ethnic conflict and reconciliation theory of atonement

Having seen the two theoretical concepts discussed above, this section discusses how both theories can be applied to fill in the gap in this research. Has noted in chapter 2.1 ethnic land conflict are shaped by identity, Horowitz (1985) postulates that ethnicity, in essence, refers to the behavior and feeling (about oneself and others) that supposedly emanates from membership of an ethnic group. Based on the issues of causes of conflict, the theory will help in understanding the concept and the relationship between ethnicity and land conflict attributed to ownership and belonging. The use of the two perspectives in this study; the ethnic conflict theory and reconciliation theory of atonement as postulated by Radzik and Horowitz is for the purpose of complementary reasons. It is also necessary that the use of both theoretical perspectives becomes of vital in the modern world and especially as I closely examine the role of the MCK in resolving conflict, that I also examine ethnic conflict and its rootedness holistically. It is for this reason that the complementary inclusive of Donald Horowitz and Linda Radzik theories becomes relevant especially the reconciliation role of the church grounded on atonement which offers solutions to the groups in deeply divided societies.

The perspectives of the two theories become of vital to this study because there has been no any other study conducted in Meru county of Kenya, detailing the causes of ethnic land conflict and the role played by the MCK in mitigation of the same. Therefore, this study based on the above theories helps fill the gap in this field, in the context of the causes of ethnic land conflict and the role of MCK in Meru County, Kenya who have exhibited strong ties and attachment to land but still staying in conflicts. Conflict emanating from ethnic land-related issues traces their roots back to the ancestral lineage as postulated by Horowitz above that psychological dimensions and perspectives and cultural attitudes have historical ties based on indignity. The understanding of the causes of land related conflict could not have been possible without these above-mentioned theories. This is because of the uniqueness of the study of the geographical location and cultural background of the community under the study. The Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya as discussed further in chapter four of this study in the background are homogeneous people, they

have co- existed peacefully through their indigenous institutions, a rule of council of elders called *Njuri Ncheke*. The *Njuri Ncheke* handled day to day matters of the communities and specifically paid attention to the settlement of disputes arising from border disputes, criminal cases and all matters of justice. This historical and cultural challenge goes back to when the colonial systems of government were introduced in Meru region. This kind of leaderships impacted negatively on land matters that were administered through the central government. These historical challenges have contributed enormously to the unresolved conflict that required special attention which is fitted by the above theories! It is against this background that this theory will establish a strong foundation in unearthing the deep clan ties, territorial right based on original ownership of the land and disputed boundaries in search for autochthons that “really” belonged. The current land grievances associated with cultural rules and shifting of boundaries are likely to encourage unequal distribution of the scarce but valuable resources and opportunities among the community under investigation. This situation that has resulted into divisions in the society, resulting to hostility and opposition, requires being readdressed by the use of unified theory. Reconciliation theory offers the required solution to the study. As Radzik postulates the rebuilding, repairing, reforming or healing are fit to the people of Meru who tends to view land as a precious commodity and this rises conflicting interest as they fight to possess it. It is for this reason that this theory is relevant to the study since the land is the basis of conflict where the warring communities tend to have competing interest based on autochthony since the rootedness and ownership of property brings the ancestral land to the center stage.

Based on the summary of this part of the chapter, I do consider reconciliation beginning where conflict resolution ends. This is the reason to why reconciliation theory of atonement becomes a priority in this study. Indeed, negotiating and implementing a peace agreement may often trigger acts of reconciliation in society. This is where the involvement of church mission with the gospel of peace and unity is of significance in understanding the methods used by the indigenous institution to resolve land disputes. Thus, reconciliation requires that peace to a certain extent has been consolidated in society. This study, therefore, considers reconciliation theory of Atonement, which will help in addressing a need to mitigate ethnic land conflict among the Meru people, and may further be adopted globally in studies of conflict resolution. This is because, the Church is supposed to play a pivotal position in reconciliation strategy. It is pivotal because the Atonement dwells at the center of Christian faith and practice. This theory of the atonement shall be built on

the spirituality and ministry of reconciliation that focuses on the plight of Victim and restoration of humanity and beyond (Schreiter, p127, 1998). According to this theory, it will be worth clarifying the notion of atonement is basically understood on the principles of Church message following the traditional account of how Jesus's ministry, including his death, reconciles sinful humanity with God help the community to be reconciled with humanity by the forgiveness of sins. This is where the church plays a key role in helping people to deal with sins. The theory will help bridge the research gap in understanding the role of the church, ethnic land conflict among the Meru community towards a mission of building peace. It will help fill in the gap because the researcher will mainly put into consideration the role played by the church and the way the gospel can be inculturated to people's cultural practices. This is because in this work, Radzik's goal for atonement is "the restoration of paradigmatically moral relationship where parties regard one another and themselves as equally valuable moral persons". Again the atonement theory of reconciliation will be understood under the model of the church as the body of Christ. The Gospel of Jesus rests upon the atonement models of salvation, sacrifice, ransom, and satisfaction, as its ground. The two theoretical frames will shape this study in understanding the theoretical perspective about the church's mission on peace building and reconciliation and the way indigenous institution like *Njuri Ncheke* can offer a bridge for promoting lasting peace.

2.5 Summary

This chapter discusses the perspectives of ethnic conflict theory and reconciliation theory of Atonement. The chapter, in general, gave an explanation and applicability of the theories. The chapter also discussed ethnic conflict theory and atonement theory of reconciliation that assist in the understanding of land conflict in general and how reconciliation is made possible. The two theoretical perspectives covered in the chapter are, that of Donald Horowitz (1985) postulates that ethnicity, in essence, refers to the behavior and feeling (about oneself and others) that supposedly emanates from membership of an ethnic group and reconciliation theory of atonement postulated by Linda Radzik (2009), which explains the value of repentance and the restoration of relationships, that brings about respect, trust among victims, communities, and wrong doers. The concept of reconciliation is therefore associated with that of atonement in theological systems of repentance built on the Christian message of reconciliation through Jesus Christ. In view of the above, the chapter becomes very useful in giving the reader a clear picture in relation to the theoretical understanding of the study, because the perspectives discussed may help bridge the research gap in understanding the role of the church, ethnic land conflict among the Meru community towards a mission of building peace.

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the theoretical perspectives in which the study is anchored. This chapter deals with methodological perceptions and approaches applied in conducting qualitative research. According to Ole Riis (2009) in the book 'Methodology in the Sociology of Religion' defines the term methodology as a practical technique for selecting, collecting and analyzing data (Riis, 2009, p.229). Consequently, the study adhered to the defined approaches within this understanding of methodology concept. The study employed both primary and secondary sources of obtaining the data. The primary data was attained using interviews whereas, the secondary sources was based on the literature written material that were relevant to the study. Therefore, the chapter presents the methodological steps followed to answer the questions of the study. This chapter is arranged in the following areas, which have been focused upon so as to get there; Research design, research methodology and sampling of respondents, sampling techniques and the interview questions that guides the study. Also the chapter briefly discusses ethical consideration that was followed in the entire study. Finally the validity and reliability which are central to any social research are discussed.

3.1 Research design

This study is a qualitative field study, as the data was gathered through semi-structured interviews conducted in a case study. Snowball sampling was used in which a small group of people, relevant to the research questions is identified for the interview purposes. According to Bryman (2012), research design is defined as a framework for the collection and analysis of data (Ibid, p. 46). Further adds that research design has an important in helping the researcher to be in the position of understanding the behavior and the meaning of that behavior in its specific social context, I decided to pick on the case study design, this is because the basic case study involves detailed and intensive analysis of a single case that is studied. He continues to say that "the most common use of the term case is associated with the case study with a location, such as community or organization" (Ibid,

p.67). In my view, the Ameru people of Meru County are a group of ethnic community, who forms a single community. Therefore it is for this reason that case study design fits the study. Again, I dealt with one Church (the Methodist Church in Meru, Kenya), which forms the single group of “organization”. This is supported by Bryman that, a case study is not a sample of one drawn from a known population and that the people interviewed in a qualitative research are not a population meant to represent the whole group (Bryman, 2012, p.406).

3.1.1 Research Methodology and sampling of respondents

In this case, I used semi- structured interviews to collect the data. Bryman argues that “in case of the study research, there may be just one or two units of analysis. With such research, the goal is to understand the selected case in the depth of which sampling issues are relevant to such research” (Ibid, p.12). For this study the intention is to establish the role played by the Methodist Church in mitigation of ethnic land conflict among the Ameru. To achieve this study employs the use of a list of questions to collect the data. This is being done without following any order of the questions. Such method of semi-structured interview hallows the interviewer to ask additional questions for the purposes of getting significant response. I chose to use this method since the research obliged me to interview different groups such who were drawn from the Church and the rest of the indigenous institution, the Njuri Ncheke of Meru. In the Church category comprises of Church Ministers, the Church lay leaders and general members who have been involved and those affected by the conflict directly or indirectly. The other group is that of members of Meru council of elders in the locality.

3.1.2 Sampling technique

This study employed purposive sampling which is vital in dealing with the selection of units such as people or organization. This approach is relevant to the study because I dealt with the Methodist church and the Ameru people of Meru County who fit directly in responding to the research question, that addressed issues of ethnic land conflict within their locality. Again I choose the MCK and the indigenous institution because they happened to fall under my interest and relevant to the study. Therefore, the selection of my respondents through purpose sampling is very well supported by the sampling technique defined by Bryman, as, “the sampling which the researcher samples with his or her research goals in mind” (Bryman, 2012, p.418). In purposive sampling, sites, like organizations and people within sites are selected because of their relevance to the research

questions. Consequently, this site in my case is further narrowed to Methodist Church in Meru County, Kenya. The population of study is drawn from MCK and Meru council of elders *Njuri Ncheke*. This is alluded in the respondent mentioned above, that the Church category comprises of Church Ministers, church leaders, people affected by the conflict and Members drawn from indigenous institution, as was based on time factor. Owing in mind that, purposive sampling is nonprobability form of sampling technique as was mentioned above; the following participant is taken into consideration. This helped me to get the participants, who in this case are, 1 Church minister, 2 Church leaders (who may be either men or women) and then 2 persons affected by the conflict or who have been involved in the land conflicts (1 man and 1 woman) in each case 1 could be a youth. Lastly, 2 men of Meru council of elders (*Njuri Ncheke*) were interviewed. The *Njuri* is the only traditional judicial system which is recognized by the Kenyan government, it is an indigenous institution considered legitimate especially on issues of political decision making amongst the Meru people. *Njuri* is also a custodian of Meru traditional law and order which deals with land and property issues, as explained in the background to the study in chapter four. In total, 7 people who formed the population of my study were interviewed.

3.1.3 Interview Questions

This study adopted semi-structured interview criteria. The interviews were guided by the main research question, sub-research questions with follow-up questions if need be so as to address the research problem. According to Herberet Rubin and Irene Rubin (2005) in their book ‘qualitative interviewing: the art of hearing data 2nd.ed’, argued that follow-up questions helps in ascertaining that the research covers all the major parts of the research problem (Rubin and Rubin, 2005, p.129). For the purpose of this study, so as to help in-depth response to the questions, I used a list of questions with specific topics as key areas of my interview guide schedules. In this case, I used guided question as my sub-research questions of which each Sub-research questions had guided questionnaires totaling acting a research sub-questions. This was done through focus group and individually. In focus group, this was discussed among the 2 church leaders and to the 2 persons affected by conflict. The same questions are discussed among the members of indigenous institution, the *Njuri Ncheke* members where 2 members in this case took part.

3.2 Data collection and recording

Based on the methodological theory of this study, qualitative interviews were carried out into 4 categories of informants who participated in the study. For the purpose of anonymity, and after classifying the informants as follows, categories A (Church Leaders), category B (People affected by land conflict), category C, (Minister), and category D, which comprised of the indigenous institution members (Njuri Ncheke). Informant's names were alphabetically coded and naming was done according to each category. In the case of category A (Church leaders), the name assigned are Purity and John. Category B (People affected by land conflict), in this case, we had two victims. A lady and a man. The lady was referred to as Karimi and the man Mwiti. In category C, (Minister), the name minister did not change since was the only person in the category. In category D (Njuri Ncheke) members were named as Kaume and Miriti. As a researcher I did this intentionally so as to protect the identity of the participants. Details of their real names were changed but this did not affect the words used by informant when responding to questions. In recording the data, I used digital audio recorder and simple note taking. This method of recording data was vital as it helped me concentrate on the interview and gave free room to interact with my interviewee. Later the obtained field data was stored in my personal laptop and saved in flask disk for the buck-up security.

3.3 Method of data transcription and analysis

After collecting and recording of data, I later personally performed transcription of the data. I performed the exercise by listening and writing word by word while including non-verbal sounds. It was time consuming as I wisely listened to each talk. The respondents expressed themselves using *Kimeru* our vernacular language that I could easily understand. I tried to include the original language and wording so as to retain the accuracy of message. Later I had to split/brake the data into parts to help in carrying out data analysis. According to Bryman (2012), the process is referred to as coding of the data (Ibid, p.12). This processes helped in transforming the coded as well as transcribed data into different themes. The grouped themes simplified the process of data analysis. In this case, the views generated from the informants were coded into different themes and later analyzed thematically.

3.4 Validity and reliability of the research instrument

The reliability and validity of this study adhered to the requirements of research instruments as were projected in the beginning to the conclusion of this study. This view is supported by Bryman (2008), who argue that validity is the integrity of research end product arrived at the conclusion of the study. This study is valid because, the data collected was in tune to the degree into which the results obtained from analysis represents a phenomenon under the study. Drawing on Kirk and Miller (1986), validity in qualitative research is concerned with the interpretation of the data. In this study, the data arrived at is original as I avoided any interference from within and without in the process of data collection, presentation as well as interpretation which yielded to conclusion of the findings. This was made possible as I tried my level best to observe research techniques in the entire study.

This study employed interviewing through asking questions to the respondents who in turn gave answers. Therefore, reliability in this study was the pivotal concern in establishing consistency of the study through interviews and focus group. According to Lawrence Neuman (2003), reliability implies the dependability of consistency when one is using various techniques of gathering information in the case of different categories. This study is reliable based on the views as presented in various themes, which can be further verified in different settings.

3.5 Ethical Consideration

This research work adhered to the discipline of high integrity. Approval to conduct this research work was sought from the Norwegian school of theology and the letter to conduct research was signed. In the context of this study, every ethical effort was made possible by making sure that the whole process of the study was to have shape based on spirituality and ministry of reconciliation that focus on the flight of the people involved either directly or indirectly in matters of land conflict, in keeping their integrity and dignity towards the restoration of humanity during the field work interviews. This research also observed rules and ethical considerations needed in the entire process of carrying out the research work such as collection data and interviewing the respondents. The study tried to avoid all sort of deceptions. The ethical way built on honesty, accountability and telling the truth in what is written herein. I tried all possible ways in the use of acceptable language both in the written and spoken work that materialized to what is presented in this final document.

This minimized the possibility of harming both identities and the records of the participants that need to be mentioned as confidential (Bryman, 2012, p.134).

3.6 Summary

The chapter dealt with methodological perceptions and approaches applied in conducting qualitative research. The chapter outlined key approaches that enabled the processes of collecting data and the way the entire study is modified. To achieve this, both primary and secondary sources of obtaining the data were well presented. The chapter has pointed key issues used in the entire process of carrying out interviews. The chapter has dealt with methodological steps that followed answering the research question of the study. This chapter covers, research design, research methodology and sampling of respondents, sampling techniques, the research questions, ethical consideration as well as the validity and reliability of the study.

Chapter Four

Background of the Study

4.1 Introduction

This chapter concerns the background of the study based on the location where the study is conducted. The chapter is divided into two parts namely, part one of the section presents the general geographical based on the location of the study and part two deals with the contextual background of the study on matters of land conflict that helps in understanding the perspective of both cultural and religious aspect in relation to the role of the Methodist church in resolving ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Kenya in which the study is anchored.

4.2.1 Geographical background of the study: Kenya

The appellation of the country Kenya is derived from Mount Kenya, which is located in central highlands. Kenya is a country in Africa, located in East Africa which is boarded by Tanzania to the south, Uganda to the west, South Sudan to the North West, Ethiopia to the North and Somalia to the North East. The country covers 581,309km². (224,445sqm) with a population of about 45 million people as per 2014 census. This country is known to be multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-religious society. This is explained by the existence of about 42 different tribes speaking different dialects and with diverse cultures. These communities are made up of three main ethnic groups that are Bantu, Cushite, and Nilotic. Kenya comprises of foreign people from other countries who are not necessarily Kenyans by birth, but they live and work there. However, Kenyan (natives) constitutes the majority of the population. There are many religious groups in Kenya with Christians being the majority. With current devolved government, Kenya is divided into 49 counties; each administered the county governor.

4.2.2 Geographical background of the study: Meru

The study is carried out Among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya. The name ‘Meru’ refers both to the people (the ‘a Meru’), and the location. They live on the fertile slopes of Mount Kenya. Originally, there was only one geo-political district for the Meru people which originated from the colonial land unit. In 1992, the larger Meru district was subdivided into 7 sections namely: Igoji, Imenti, Tigania, Miutine, Igembe, Mwimbi and Muthambi (the history of the Meru people of Kenya). Micro-ethnic identity conflicts are becoming increasingly common in Kenya. According to Daniel Nyagah (1997), the book “*customs and traditions of Meru*” Meru people occupy the North Eastern slopes of Mt. Kenya. Their land is drained by eastward flowing streams which form rivers of various sizes. The Ameru of greater Meru region migrated and settled along the slopes of Mount Kenya. They have long historical ties attached to mythical belief on a common place of origin known as *Mbwa* (Nyanga, 1997, p.390). The Ameru people of Meru County and their geographical location can be traced in the map of Kenya as shown in figure 1 below.



Figure 1: Map of Kenya indicating Meru County
(<http://kenyemap.facts.co/kenyemapof/kenyemap.php>.)

4.3 Contextual background of the Study: Land and conflict perspective in Kenya and Meru

Having understood the general location of Kenya, there are many questions to ask. Why is land at the center of major political movements in Africa and Kenya in particular? Land remains at the center of major political movements in Africa and Kenya in particular. This is because land related conflict revolves around the question of community identities in relation to land administrative matters as well as political influences built on territorial's right and ownership of land. In support of this statement, Mulemi (2011) argues that land ownership and control are central to political storms in Zimbabwe and South Africa, and throughout African where agrarian societies, particularly Anglophone are engulfed in the midst of unresolved question in relation to land. Adebayo Adedeji (1999) in the book "*comprehending and Mastering African Conflicts: the search for sustainable peace and good governance*" write that in human societies conflicts are inevitable because societies have variations in interests. This is because human beings are known to be egoistic as they struggle to toil and make their ends meet (see, p.90)

In his book "*the perils of belonging: Autochthony, citizenship and exclusion in Africa and Europe*", Peter Geschiere (2009), pointed out that land is so vital to African people due 'the idea of autochthony' which means to "to be born from the soil" this is the aspect of land being so special to the people as a result of attachment that locals have to it. This is the form of belonging that signifies one being born from the earth itself (Geschiere, 2009, p.2).

I concur with the above writers that the reason to why land remain a contested issue is because the concept 'land' means different thing to different individuals or groups. For instance to some Kenyan communities, the significance of land is in the intrinsic value of ownership, while for others it is in tangible commercial or livelihood benefits. Therefore culturally and socially constructed meanings of land tend to differ enhance attracting conflict with the matter is not resolved well. I wish to point out that land ownership in Kenya is closely connected to political power, therefor controlled politically. Based on the above background I wish to point out that, land issues in Kenya are complicated by the fact that the drafters of the first constitution in 1963 felt it was best not to address land clashes and the associated inequality. Kenya is dominated by debates of historical justice, repossession and redistribution, which results to conflicts due to land ownership and

boundaries among the neighboring communities. The concept ‘we’ belong, so the land or this territory is ours, enhance this land is ours!

Indeed, in Kenya and Meru in particular, Kenya’s 2007 post-electoral conflicts are directly linked to the threat of land invasions. As discussed in the introduction part of this background, Kenya is made of many ethnic groups that thrive from communities made out of clans. Ameru people are one of them where stories regarding land mushroom on a continuous basis. This is resonated with the speech of the current governor, during the swearing in of the Meru Assembly members in April 2013. Governor Peter Munya noted that corruption was prevalent in most of the land offices in the county and that he would ensure before his term ends he would have fought the monster which he said was stifling development in the county. In his speech, he reiterated his commitment in ensuring land problems became a thing of the past (Ibid). “Land adjudication is a vexing matter that needs attention and must be addressed urgently. I am therefore dissolving all land adjudication committees and instruct the District Land Adjudication Officers (DLASOs) to report to my office for further instructions,” Munya said. The news was received with jubilation by residents across the county with most of them saying the move was long overdue. But political pundits questioned the motivation behind the governor’s move with some dismissing it as a political gimmick meant to hoodwink voters to support him in case he lost in the petition that was in court seeking to overturn his election. Therefore land related conflicts make the biggest number of cases solved at the DCs offices in these regions. Due to lack of proper land documentation, it has been easy to grab land in these areas and often people are killed or maimed due to land conflicts. Land conflicts are not limited to individual owners only but also communal lands. The multiple land conflict in the region embedded attached identity, ownership and territorial rights, makes matter difficulties when in resolving land related conflict. It is against this background that the research sought to find the causes of ethnic land conflicts, the role played by the Methodist church and the indigenous institution Njuri Ncheke of Meru County, Kenya.

4.3.1 Indigenous Institution the “Njuri Ncheke” of Meru and Land Matters

As noted above, the Ameru people of greater Meru region are believed in a mythical migration *Mbwa* where all the sub-ethnic tribe who migrated together has long historical ties. They occupy today’s many parts of the current Meru County. The Ameru people have co- existed peacefully through their indigenous institutions, the government of council of elders called *Njuri Ncheke*. The

indigenous institution called '*Njuri Ncheke council of elders*', which is a traditional governing body on matters of land. This council of elders consists only of knowledgeable men. The council has its headquarters at Nchiru market about 13 kilometers from Meru town. They have a membership of approximately five thousand who are spread across the region. According to Rimita(1988) the article '*The Njuri Ncheke of Meru*', the indigenous institution plays the role in conflict resolution and maintenance of peace within and outside the community. They also handled day to day matters of the communities and specifically paid attention to the settlement of disputes arising from border disputes, criminal cases and all matters of justice (Rimita, 1988, p. 19). The Njuri is the only traditional judicial system which is recognized by the Kenyan government. This council of elders deals with cultural issues like land and properties within the county. It is therefore considered legitimate and influential especially on issues of political decision making amongst the Meru people. The Njuri is also a custodian of Meru traditional law and order which deals with land and property issues (ibid, p.20).

With the introduction of colonial system of government, the greater Meru region like other parts of the country has been administered through the central government. However, the region has witnessed land related conflict resulting to death and loose of property. Among the Ameru people, the land of ancestry is a deep concept of identity that informs the politics of land in Meru. The land is observed as a precious commodity where land is inherited in the male line and held by a corporate entity. Unless the land is sold, the ownership of land is inalienable from clans. Under certain circumstances the ideology allows people to farm land belonging to their clan. Ideally, land is inherited in the male line, but the ideology allows a son to inherit land from his father. Each member of the community had a duty to protect the interests and property belonging to the community such that they will drive away strangers who came to their land. It is against this background that the understanding of the role and methods used by the traditional body *Njuri Ncheke* council of elders in dealing with land related conflict becomes of great significance to this study.

4.4 General Historical Background of the Methodist Church in East Africa, Kenya, and Meru

In his book “*a history of the Methodist Church in Kenya*”, Zablon John Nthamburi (1982), observed that the Portuguese were the first Europeans to appear in the East Africa scenes, where Vasco Da Gama, the Portuguese explorers, reached Mombasa on 7 April 1498 on his way to India. He adds that Vasco da Gama, the Portuguese was sent by King Manoel of Portugal, who had succeeded to the throne in 1495. He was instructed to spread Christianity as well as to acquire the riches of East (Nthamburi, 1982, p.56). Further pointed out that by 1630 the power of the Portuguese was warring. From this point, there was a power struggle between the Arabs and the Portuguese until the latter were completely expelled in 1729 (Ibid). When the Portuguese left they had not established any lasting Christian heritage. To this point, Thomas Wakefield was the pioneer missionary of the united Methodist free churches (U.M.F.C) in East Africa from there hence marked the beginning of the Methodist church in Kenya (1862-1932) This is the missionaries who came to the coast and the Tana River Valley belonged to a small but Zealous community of European Christians (Ibid). The missionaries came under the auspices of the Foreign mission committee of the united Methodist free church of Great Britain. This is where the history of Methodism in that land had its effects on the development of the Methodist Church in Kenya (MCK). Nthamburi (1982) adds that it was not until 1932 that a union comprised of almost all. In Great Britain was affected. This was a heroic achievement which was characterizing Christianity in modern times. The concerns of the Methodist Church in Kenya continued to the direct responsibility of the Methodist Missionary Society in loud. The Methodist Church in Kenya was being supported by both persons, in terms of personnel and finances, and the missionaries of the united Methodist free churches were thus able to begin work among the Coastal people, particularly the Nyika, Pokomo and the Galla of the Tana River.

However, the growth of the Methodist among the Galla people was not welcoming. He further notes that the United Methodist Free Churches (UMFC) missionaries were unsuccessful to convert the Galla because of their inability to comprehend the local customs and traditions. In addition, they condemned the Galla’s long-held tradition as being devilish, heathen or immoral. They also saw nothing good in the Galla’s traditional dances; music and initiation ceremonies and they condemned them for being incompatible with Christianity (Ibid). Nthamburi (1982) adds that efforts to enhance membership growth were further hindered by factors attributed to the caliber of

the persons who were sent to Tana River, the harshness of the East Africa Coastal climate, limited finances and lack of resource persons in the Methodist missions. But against all these odds, the pioneer Missionaries of the Methodist church, particularly Thomas Wake Field and Charles New, never wavered from their primary objectives of establishing a mission among the Galla. Indeed, Kirsop (1901) notes that it was after a long time and much toil that the Methodist missionaries turned to the more receptive Pokomo community, and from this level, the growth of the Methodist church spread to the country side, reaching to the highlands and people Meru District (1912-1928). As a result of this, the first mission house was built by two missionaries, Griffins, and Mimack, in September 1912 at Kaaga, Meru. This also correct the common MCK regard for Reverend B.T. Worthington as the pioneer of the Methodist mission in Meru, since it is Griffins and Mimack who actually started the mission at Kaaga.

Before missionaries came in Kenya and Meru in particular, the Ameru believed in *Murungu* (God) who was the creator and sustainer of all existence. The missionaries brought a new approach to God which was very quiet different and to a certain degree opposed to the Meru understanding of *Murungu* (God) and the traditional authorities the (*Kiama and Njuri*). Meru people felt that their religion, which knit all people together, was being eroded. People became suspicious and resentful of the foreigners. This made it difficult to evangelization. But all in all, the reaching out was carried out in a slow motion. Among others, Philip M'Inoti became a distinguished leader of the Meru who were the local church leaders. Also people like Samson Mutiga, Kornelio M'mukiira, Andrew Mwereria, and Paul M'Itwoke church followers (Nthamburi, 1982, P. 45). These people carried the light of the gospel to remote places while European Missionaries lived at the center station at Kagaa, with the occasional supervision of the out-stations. The planting of the churches started and daily churches attendance presence in Sunday worship and catechumen classes, as well as the sacrament were being observed.

The later other churches were opened across Meru region. According to M'Luruti, one of the pioneer preachers of MCK in Muthaara Circuit, the Methodist mission spread across Miathene Synod and landed in Muthaara in 1932. This was possible through the boys who were converted as the first members of the church, and they were enrolled in school to become missionary agent who helped in propagating the gospel. However, and as Nthamburi (1982) adds, the Ameru were not eager to embrace the new religion, just like most of the other African communities. Their

attitude can be described as that of “watch and see”. He further states that they feared that by accepting the new religion, they would leave their traditional beliefs which they jealously guarded. They adopted a ‘watch and see’ attitude towards the new converts (Ibid). From this early beginning, MCK had no much involvement in the community apart from evangelizing, starting schools and hospitals. Currently, the MCK has sphere headed matters of education and health in the community. The church owns key leading learning institutions namely, the Kenya Methodist University and St. Paul’s University where the majority of the ministers are trained. Also, the church runs hospital known as Maua Methodist hospital, Methodist insurance brokers, Methodist SACCO Limited and Methodist Guest House.

Administratively, the MCK comprises of ten (12) synods with every synod governed by a Bishop. The following are the synods: - Singwaya, Kilifi, Mombasa, Nairobi, Kaaga, Nkubu, Miathene, Nyambene, Tharaka, Western Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda. The synods are not autonomous from the conference “connexional” in character. Leadership in the Methodist Church is a bottom-up type of administration. This means that the Methodist Church is made up of congregations from local Churches. Without local Churches, there is no Circuit, Synod or Conference so the structure starts from the bottom.

4.5 What the Methodist church has done to resolving land conflict

From historical background presented above, the MCK seems to have located herself in Kenya and Meru in particular. The mission of the Methodist Church in Kenya is “To respond to the divine call of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and to proclaim the holistic Gospel in word and deed and in the power of God’s Holy Spirit.” (See www.methodistchurchinkenya.org).

The key agenda are basically on mission work and evangelism rooted in preaching the gospel, education and health matters. Matters of community land and church participation on property crisis have not been a key priority of the said church. Again, it is worth noting that MCK based on the above historical background her major goal is centered on spiritual matters. MCK has document referred to as ‘Standing orders and Agendas’, this is a book which constitutes the constitution of the Church. It acts as a guide to the running of the church on matters of decision making. The Bible is the core point of reference for the Church. It highlights several principles of peacebuilding and reconciliation including love, justice, forgiveness, and peace. These exalt the value of human lives and the rule of law. The Church is called the body of Christ. To maintain the

integrity, churches must advocate for peace and love among their adherents. Ethnic conflicts are threats to the harmony of the society and integrity of the body of Christ which need spiritual liturgical tools for the purpose of restoring peace. Besides the Bible, this constitution is of great significance to MCK as matters of land fall under the Property and finance committee. These committees oversee the welfare of the MCK properties and matters of finances. It does not go outside the church walls such as addressing individual and community land. The church role on reconciliation as core mission work is to create communities of reconciliation. This is providing zones of safety through hospitality and this help in rebuilding the lost relationship. The role of the Methodist Church among the Ameru has not been evident particularly on matters of ethnic land disputes. In Meru community, ethnicity and sacred identities are underlining factors both to an individual and to the community. The *Njuri Ncheke* and Christian churches, such as MCK, have been engaged in contentious issues concerning indigenous traditional practices which they call 'evil'. For example taking of oath and sacrifices, used when swearing are not allowed by the Church doctrines.

The church in general, and in this case, MCK is not seen participating in resolving ethnic land conflict. In this regard, it can be possible for the church to have plans towards reconciling those in conflict. This strategy can bring lasting solutions through the consciousness of church and her spiritual intervention to put plans in place. The church can play this role by making ethnic land conflict resolution a key priority for her mission. The alluded background has justified lack of the MCK involvement in conflict mitigation in her mission of peacebuilding and reconciliation. It is against this background that the research sought to establish the role played by MCK among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya.

Chapter Five

Presentation and analysis of data findings of the study

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter four, the background to the study was discussed based on the main research question “*What causes land conflict and what should be the role of the Methodist church in mitigating ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya*”? The previous chapter provided the location of the study; the geographical background, Kenya and Meru. The background laid a foundation on the issues of land with clear understanding of the contextual and cultural perspectives ethnic land conflict. This chapter starts with the section of introduction, followed by the field work experience. The rest of the section deals with the presentation of data based on narratives of all the interviews conducted and data collected from the informants during the field work as they emerged from the themes. The interviews were conducted with the guide of research question, where similar questions were presented to different individuals and group at different times. The seven informants had different views concerning the topic and the themes reviewed even though there were similarities in some areas. Furthermore, most of them participated in deliberating views on different themes provided. Nevertheless, some had various issues that provoked other followed up questions. Most of the informants were men by the virtue of *Njuri* which comprises of men. In this case, among the informants that were interviewed the *Njuri Ncheke* Meru Council of elders had two men who participated in the interview.

Therefore, the following qualitative interviews were carried out into 4 categories of informants who participated in the study. They were classified as categories A (Church Leaders), category B (People affected by land conflict), category C, (Minister), and category D, which comprised of the indigenous institution members (*Njuri Ncheke*). Informant’s names were alphabetically coded and naming was done according to each category. In the case of category A (Church leaders), the name assigned are Purity and John. Category B (People affected by land conflict), in this case we had two victims; these are a lady and a man. The lady referred as Karimi and the man Mwiti. In category C, (Minister), the name minister did not change since was the only person in the category. In category D (*Njuri Ncheke*) members were named as Kaume and Miriti. Two categories were

further interviewed in focus groups, like the 2 church leaders and 2 men from *Njuri Ncheke*. Who also participated separately in category interviews? In total, 7 people were interviewed as follows: 2 Methodist church leaders, 1 minister, 2 People affected by land conflict, 2 men from *Njuri Ncheke*. I will now give a short preview of field work experiences.

5.2 Field work experiences

The collection of data materials was done in July 2016. Some challenges and limitations during the process, but all were successful. Among the few challenges and shortcomings that were experienced include the following:

5.2.1 Poor accessibility

Due to long distance covered some interview scheduled meetings began and finished late. In several occasions, the informants were interviewed while in their homes and interference with children crying and talking to their parents. There were also poor internet network especially when trying to book an appointment with the informant that made communication difficult.

5.2.2 Lack of self-disclosure among some informants

Informants especially those affected by land conflicts were shy to disclose what happened and the causes of land conflicts. Amid the strongest points that led to the success of the entire process includes the following:

5.2.3 Devoted church members who were key informants.

Most of the informants were very reliable and devoted Methodist church leaders. These leaders gave the researcher a humble time and were willing to respond. The church minister who was in-charge of the circuit was very cooperative and supportive too. She was in the church office on time. Now having identified some weak and strong points, I now move on to the themes that were identified during the field work. During the entire field study, a number of issues were identified as they came out openly during the interviews. This information was collected with ease by the help of a list of interview guide questions in which questions not necessarily in the order listed were asked to the informants. Follow up questions were also made depending on the answers and discussions made by the informants. The interview guide questions were therefore discussed among individuals and in group, while the researcher recording all that was said. The recorded

materials were later coded and then transcribed into different themes as they appeared during the interviews. During interview the researcher identified the following themes that featured; In presenting these data, part of the chapter is arranged within these guiding themes: the causes of land conflicts among the Ameru people of Meru County, the role of the Methodist church in resolving ethnic land conflict in Meru and the role of indigenous institution *Njuri Ncheke* (Meru Council of elders) in dealing with land disputes. The following themes as summarized below were only presented in this chapter, and later discussed in chapter six.

To start with is the cause of ethnic land conflict is presented. In this case, factors causing land conflict were identified as; Political powers and poor political influence, border disputes and lack of clear boundaries demarcation and land adjudication and titling among others. Secondly, the role of the Methodist church in resolving ethnic land conflict in Meru was the second theme, where the following sub-themes were identified; that the church has not been involved in dealing with ethnic land conflict. The Methodist Church has not played any role in resolving ethnic land conflict. The Methodist Church has no plan or known strategy in dealing with land conflict and that, there is a need for the church to be involved in solving land conflict because of her mission of peace in the gospel and message of love. Thirdly theme, the role of indigenous institution *Njuri Ncheke* (Meru Council of elders) in dealing with land disputes was presented with the following sub-themes namely; *Njuri-Ncheke* was identified as a very able organ involved in settling land conflict. That majority of people trust and believe in *Njuri-Ncheke* ways of handling land dispute. That *Njuri-ncheke* respects the church and Church leaders that the church has lots to learn from it and *Njuri-Ncheke* council of elders has key methods used in solving land conflict such as; oathing, dialogue and instilling discipline.

5.3 The causes of ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County

Concepts of ethnic land conflict among the respondents came out clearly revolving around the access to and control of resources the “land”. With the main cause of ethnic land conflict attributed to factors such as political influence, border disputes and land ownership based on ownership and belongings. When asked to explain what they perceived to be the causes of ethnic land conflict, this is what they had to say.

5.3.1 Church Leaders

Church leader by the name Purity, when asked concerning being aware of any ethnic land conflict, she was aware and gave reasons. “In this region personally, I have severally witnessed families and our neighbors fight due to issues of land matters” Purity lamented. She also argued that both sub-ethnic and ethnic politics in the locality are the source of land conflict within this region. John, the other church leader also agreed that has witnessed conflicts associated with land. John said “for me, I agree that land conflict is real problem in this place. Our politician in this context, have been practicing dirty politics”. He further argued that their political leaders on several occasions spurred people that the people leaving in their neighboring community are interfering with their land. The above leader felt that the problems of land are associated with poor political influence where politicians tend to look at eliminating the others to conquer a territory in community. He argued the verbal talk from politician preach the language of hate and rivalry among their people, thus fueling conflict in the regions. Purity lamented that she is very aware of ethnic land conflict which she argued that many people have suffered greatly. While giving examples of several consequences of violent conflicts that have negatively impacting the security and peaceful coexistence in community said; “we have lost many people due to fighting concerning land boundaries and disputes. Your young men and husbands have been murdered and their bodies dumped into the bush! Even house were burnt there day. For example the year 2007 the area Member of Parliament by then Tigania East constituency car was burnt. So to me something need to be done since human life and properties have been destroyed” John echoed same sentiment saying, “many of our neighbor were displaced and their piece of land taken”

Purity when responding toward the person responsible on the causes of land conflict she said: “Leaders mislead the people in the community”. Political leaders have been accused of manipulating their ethnic communities to gain political votes. This makes them use land as a campaign tool especially on the areas with border conflicts.

5.3.2 Person affected by ethnic land conflict

Mwiti a victim of land conflict argued that land conflict is attributed to boundary dispute. He argued that he has witnessed many incidences where people have fought due to disagreement on land demarcation. Here is the story...

I am a victim of land conflict. I was born and nurtured in this locality. One day very early in the morning, I woke up only to see people running carrying their belongings. All over sudden my neighbor started screaming! "Fire, fire". While going to help her, I met with men carrying *pangas*, harrows and big stakes shouting '*twa buthamia buru bume mundene jwetu*' we shall get you out of our farm. Immediately I rushed into the bush to rescue myself. In few minutes I saw a cloud of smoke and I only could hear people screaming. I could not believe my eyes to see my house come down into ashes. Nothing was saved from that house. I lost much food stuff. All the harvest that I had gathered that season was turned into ash. We had to move from that place and went to a near-by camp without food and cloth. It was so bad to see people destroy everything getting me to square Zero (Mwiti person affected by land conflict)

He further argued that since time he memorial his land which he inherited from his father was associated to their clan. But the other community claimed that the boundary was not where he used to do farming but across the river which was the original boundary land mark. The place "*Ngongoaka*" bore the name of one sub- ethnic group the Atigania people of Tigania constituency since colonial times. But the other group was almost prohibited to use it for both farming and grazing near the contested boundaries. He further lamented that there has been a major disruption of socio-economic activities and livelihoods which has increased hatred between communities sharing the border.

Karimi argued that she is aware of land conflict in the area because she lost his piece of land: "due to land demand people are encroaching our boundaries and claiming this is their original farm where their ancestors used to graze cattle" While pointing his finger to one of the public primary school, known as public utilities, He added "that school and a cattle dip which was the key boundary was demolished by the neighbors who took my land! While tears rolling from her eyes he lamented they were both erected at the boundary but they are no more. See they crossed over and took that land of mine" Boundaries were associated among the Ameru people with public 'public

utilities' and natural land marks like rivers and hills. Mwiti argued that: "we have been fight every time especially when elections are near as we tend to hear politician inciting their supporters that they will take their land back when he ascend into power" No clear border existing today as the two people could argue because attributed each group that they were on their side and others as claims the same.

5.3.3 Church Minister

The informant felt that causes of land conflict are as a result of political incitement:

Communities continue to express dissatisfaction with the way the government manages allocations and certifications of land. Individuals and key stake holders are sideline because politicians choose people from their community and majority who owns the land are not informed in decisions about titling and land boundaries (Minister)

The informant argued that the Ministry of land has no transparent land certification mechanisms, enhance interfering with land maps and original owner: He lamented "land conflict have of late revolved around the question of community identities in relation to administrative and political constituency within Meru and its borders"

Informant said that there is a lot of intra-ethnic and clan favoritism and political patronage playing a key role in land acquisitions being part of corruption. He argued that such corrupt ways has increased economic hardships as well as plotting killings of innocent people.

5.3.4 Indigenous institution the *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru

Miriti the informant while responding to causes of land conflict, he agreed that there are many factors responsible to issues of land. He point out that in olden days, Meru people had no conflicts on land and that the conflicts came with '*mukoloni*' (colonizer). He further continued to say... "*baatui turi Ameru tutitwire na thiina ya mianka kuuma karanja*" (we as Ameru people from immemorial had no problems with boundaries). He added that one of the long term causes of the clashes in Kenya and among the Meru people in particular is attributed to the colonial legacy, which set historical land grievances. This took place in time of post-independence era. It is a historical fact that indirect rule administered by the British colonialists later turned out to be the 'divide and rule' strategy which polarized the various ethnic groups in the country. *Njuri Ncheke* elder by the name Kaume pointed out that land conflict are associated with ownership which is a key

impediment in resolving the problem. Miriti the other informant had similar view that the causes of land conflict are attributed to poor political influence he said: “politicians are the people who have negatively to our community. Contributed the issues of land conflict and has caused many people lose their own properties.

5.4 The role of the Methodist church in resolving ethnic land conflict in Meru

When the respondents of various categories were asked to explain the role played by the Methodist church in dealing with ethnic land conflicts, the following views came out. That the church has not been involved in dealing with ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people, and that the Methodist Church has no plan or known strategy in dealing with land conflict. And that there is a need for the church to be involved in helping mitigate ethnic land conflict because of her mission of peace in the gospel and message of love to her people. While responding on the above, this is what many had to say.

5.4.1 Church Leaders

While responding to the church role in resolving land conflict, the informant by the John argued that “In ethnic land conflicts areas, Churches have not been active. I think this is the high time when the church should stand to be counted in promotion of peace and reconciling people in the community! This is because peace and reconciliation constitute a very special mission for this church”. He further lamented, “I am not sure if my church has been involved in solving land related cases in this neighboring community”. In the same point Purity argued that, “ the church is being outshined by *Njuri-Ncheke* a traditional group of people who are not educated as people in church today” she further pointed out that, no any known reason to why the Methodist Church should not be in front line in reconciling people together and preach the gospel of reconciliation. John noted that the Methodist Church’s charisma should be unique and go beyond the church walls. Also it is the duty of the church to deal with issues affecting the community. While reasoning together, the informant above agreed that the essential mission of the Church is to go to address the roots causes of conflict and bring healing that will help in restoring peace and unity among the community.

5.4.2 Person affected by ethnic land conflict

Mwiti was not sure of any role played by the church when it comes to question of ethnic land conflict. He said “I only saw the pastor coming to pray with us”. The informant added that, “church

members only came to give us food when my property were destroyed” Karimi an informant affected by land conflict, had this view which relates with the above.

I wish to say that I have not seen the church participate on land matters in the community. What I remember is the issues of MCK members campaigning against traditional circumcision. This campaign saw it raise many controversial issues concerning traditional practices involving boy child. The Church’s on bring people together when there is conflict has never been witnessed (Karimi).

The informant said that church should fearlessly join the indigenous institution in the community in stabling and promoting peace. This is one of the ways to address the root causes of ethnic land rivalries. The informant also recommended that , church and indigenous institutions can work together especially in modern generation for advocating a long-lasting solution to the burning issues that lead to land disputes in Meru county. Mwiti the informant stated that

I am not sure of any involvement of the church in dealing with land conflict. I only know of ‘Akuru ba Kiama’ (council of elders) with land issues and boundaries. But this church called MCK; I only see them condemning and sometimes ignoring African traditional rituals of Ameru people. The church members and pastor only pray and conduct pastoral visitation to people who are her members (Mwiti).

The informant agreed that there, is a need of complementary approach to peacebuilding and reconciliation on matters of land and border disputes as this is inevitable for long lasting peace.

5.4.3 Church Minister

Responding to the role played by the church, the minister noted that the church has tried to do pastoral duties. The minister pointed out the church has been playing conducting visitation to people affected. But further argued that the church involvement has been outweighed by the current situation and with dynamics of scarce resources within the region that are affecting the society. On the other side, the informant felt that the church involvement has not been of great impact in dealing with land conflict. The minister lamented that with the challenges of ethnic land conflict, the Methodist church has a role to play in reducing or eliminating the crisis. This is what the minister had to say in support of the above.

In the circuit and churches where I have served as a minister, I have severally been confronted with individuals and groups with similar land conflicts. The conflicts are either between families, clans or neighboring members. Most of our Christian members are cultured to rely and seek God in all aspects of life. God is believed to be the answer to all our problems. This therefore means that every time a Christian is confronted with a serious challenge, the only place to find solace is from God through prayers from the pastor. As a church minister, I have been challenged on what to say to the conflicting parties. While trying to console them, they tend to be uncontended. Some suggests that '*Akuru ba njuri ni bakirawa mno*' that Njuri men are most feared (minister)

The minister lamented that the church in question has done very little concerning issues of ethnic land disputes. In support to why the church has not been actively involved, further said that matters of land do not feature anywhere in the standing orders of the MCK. He noted that no agenda's in the church business to deal with public or individual properties. The informant story narrated as below.

Even the MCK herself, has also experienced a great land conflict challenge. This is also by the fact that some institutions have been claiming ownership of church premises. The church has therefore been wrestling with the question of whether to report such incidents to court or just leave everything to God? The question therefore is doesn't the church and her members who are Christians deserve justice in their daily endeavors, or should they be silence amidst oppression and injustices in the name of love, and forgiveness ? Recently my dad contemplated on consulting the '*Njuri Ncheke*' (The Meru council of elders). When he called me to share the idea, I was dumb founded because I have been thinking that the church should be on the primary institution to provide a way forward and a guideline to her members. In this region land matters are at the apex. As I noted above, Political power essentially is an expression of economic strength. This can be in terms of rewarding or punishing. In rewarding, successive governments have given any kind of support that eventually translates into economic value, likewise in punishing, successive governments endeavored to weather down rivals and competitors economic strength. I strongly believe this challenge is affecting the entire church because Kenya as a country depends entirely on farming. The country and majority of the counties are agriculturally dependent and

economic strength squarely lies in the heart of farming 'LAND'. In this region land matters are at the apex. As I noted above, Political power essentially is an expression of economic strength for land is the main means of generating income, accumulating wealth and transferring the wealth between successive political units. I think, this is why land has been the means of rewarding loyalists and punishing opponents. The Church which seems to be replacing many traditional beliefs systems need to stand tall (Minister).

He lamented that the church has no known plan or strategy to deal with matters of land. The minister concluded by saying that there is a great need for the synchronization of the indigenous institution's ways dealing with disputes with MCK reconciliatory prayers preached away of forgiveness.

5.4.4 Indigenous institution the *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru

While responding to the role of the church, the informant who happened to be Njuri men had this to say; Kaume started by saying this...

Now, we all belong to '*Murungu*' (God). We are all his children and the church preaches the word of God. Neither do we have any problem with the Bible. The bible is the core point of reference for the Church. To my knowledge, the word of God written in the bible highlights several principles of peacebuilding and reconciliation including love, justice, forgiveness, and peace. Above all this I have not seen the church deal with land matters in this community. The church pastors preach the gospel but they are not entitled to go beyond that (Kaume)

Miriti also had similar views as he continues saying "Me I don't see any problem with the church, because church preaches peace". Kaume interrupted and argued that "I have not seen church going to *Nthenge*(Oathing ritual). Church has not been involved with matters of border demarcation because pastors are brought to work here come from far". The informant by the name Kaume while nodding his head said, "But I do agree that the church is compelled to mitigate land conflicts in order to live to her mission. This can only possible if they consult the council of elders who knows the history of land and the boundaries"

Miriti also had a suggestion that the church need to embrace indigenous methods of conflict mitigation he responded "Ameru people have their histories, which shape their mode of living and

thinking. Their histories encompass their beliefs and practices. Affiliated to beliefs in the churches, to be specific Ameru indigenous beliefs and practices attributed to “*Ngai wa Nyambene*” (god of Nyambene hills) Has a forces of bringing people together. In Ameru traditional society, rituals such as sacrifice, circumcision and oathing were used to foster reconciliation and cement societal relationships. By use of different rituals and practices that bound warring parties, conflicts were resolved. These rituals and practices sometimes involved the whole community and they are godly. So the church and Njuri are not enemies”

5.5 The role of indigenous institution *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru in dealing with land disputes

Njuri Ncheke of Meru being an indigenous institution in Meru region is considered a key traditional governing council in matters of resolving conflict. The respondents interviewed pointed out that *Njuri-Ncheke* is able institution involved in dealing with matters concerning land conflict, respondent expressed their views that majority of people have a lot of with the ways in which they handle disputes. Respondents also asserted that the member of indigenous institution respects the church. It came out clearly that *Njuri-Ncheke* council of elders’ ways and mechanisms used in mitigation of land conflict are: oathing, dialogue and instilling discipline. While responding on the above, this is what many had to say.

5.5.1 Church leaders

While giving their views on the role of the indigenous institution the *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru, the informant agreed that the council plays key roles on matters of land. John pointed out that on matters concerning land. “Ameru people, even prior to the advent of the western colonial rule had their own institution as well as practices and rituals that guaranteed social harmony between the communities”. Purity had a similar view with that of John. She adds that *Njuri Ncheke* was and still is very able in dealing with land conflict. He pointed out that Meru council of elders had several ways of resolving land conflicts by using traditional institution. While echoing on the above John noted that. “Majority of our people trusts our traditional customs” he further argued that reconciliation was one of the objectives that have been able to ensure and maintain peace in the entire Meru. So Njuri is seen as a key organ in the settling of various disputes in the community and reduced the amount of land conflict among people.

5.5.2 Persons affected by ethnic land conflict

Mwiti the informant had the following views concerning the role played by Njuri men on dealing with land conflict.

I have witnessed ‘Akuru ba Njuri’ (council of elders) settle land case in totally. They play very vital role in the society. Their functions are many, they make and execute community laws, and they are there and always ready to listen and attend the parties having conflict and settle their disputes. Apart from resolving disputes they also pass on community knowledge and norms across the generations. Those that are willing are initiated into the group and are wisely taken through the process. They are key custodians of traditional culture in the region. When dealing with local disputes they consistently first deal the causes and end up with the final stage where the two parties agree and come to terms with the mistake. It is at this point where they are reconciled with one another. Some matters are dealt with by lower ranks of the elders (Kiama), then the middle rank (Njuri) and finally the *Njuri-Ncheke* if the disputes are complicated (Mwiti)

Karimi the other victim concurred with the above views that Njuri plays major roles in resolving land disputes. “I totally agree with him on the issue of Njuri people concerning their mandate. Actually we the people of larger Meru do owe a lot of respect to the council of elders (*Njuri-Ncheke*). She further pointed out that, “to us, the Ameru people of Meru, the council of elders is respected. Due to the respect and trust in us, this creates an opportunity for the decisions to be made easily without having to use different sources of negotiations”

Mwiti argued that according to him, the traditional institution the (*Njuri-Ncheke*) is able to deal with land matters and boulder problems and reconcile people because it recognizes and takes the soil or land being an important aspect for any indigenous Meru person. To support his argument, he had this story to tell...

I come from a family, of Christians. My parents are and were still and devoted and staunch church members. Despite that, my uncle who is our immediate neighbor is a non-believer and an alcoholic. He insults and undermines my dad calling him names. This is culturally interpreted by the fact that he bore many sons than my dad who was blessed with only two sons. Although my grandfather shared the land equally among his three sons, this particular

uncle was always jealousy arguing that my dad deserved a small piece of land than others. He and his children threaten to take the land by force if nothing is done to reverse the order. Recently, I do remember he has been telling neighbors that even if it means killing someone, he is ready to kill in order to get that piece of land. Once in a while, my uncles' sons who attend same church with us started mocking us claiming that we pretend to know God, yet we do not want to give their land back. This is quite ironical since we all understand that the land in question legally belongs to us. My dad once approached the church resident minister about the issue but during one of the meetings the pastor emphasized the importance of forgiving his brother and letting him have the piece of land anyway. This land conflict with my uncle has long been a great challenge to our family due to the fact that he is my dad's blood brother and the fact that we would wish to maintain a good relationship with our uncle. Furthermore, he is an immediate neighbor. However as much as we would wish to maintain the good neighborhood, we would also wish to see justice in the whole endeavor. The issue worsened until we ended almost fighting. My father lamented that the issue will go further! '*Ngaita kuuma kiama*' (I will go to be initiated into Njuri). Actually my father ended being a Njuri man and abandoned the church. The Njuri people reconciled the two brothers (Mwiti).

Karimi supported the above views by saying that, the land is treated as sacred to Ameru people and Council of elders does not like seeing people fight and poor innocent blood because of soil. Therefore, this makes it possible to treat it as sacred. Karimi said that being a victim underwent a great challenge when she was lost her land. "If I had involved the *Njuri Wazee*, could not be a problem". She said that traditional ways of conflict resolution are the best and proper way of settling the land dispute among the Ameru people. When asked why he thinks so said, "People fear oath and going to *kithiri* is the worst option form a Meru person if the land is not yours. You fear dying or destroying your generations". This method is taken as a negation deal where both the people equally benefit.

5.5.3 Church Minister

Church minister had the following views concerning the role of indigenous institution the Njuri.

"According to the culture and beliefs systems of Ameru, traditional ways of dealing with community matters since the 17th Century have been governed by '*Akuru ba Njuri*' (Men

council of elders) who have been initiated into the group. Among the group we hear that they elect representative council leaders from the clan level right up to the supreme *Njuri Ncheke* Council. Since historical days, this traditional institution has been considered being important in creating peace, security, law and order. I have seen church members even run to Njuri secretly and consult with them about issues of land when court cases delay” (Minister).

He further argued that, “On my side, the use of the traditional methods of peace building and reconciliation can help identify the origin of the land conflict because the council of elders in question is the residence of the place and knows every issue of land and land ownership”. He continued to say that land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru can only be solved to totality if the traditional council of elders intervenes showing the original borders for the various communities in the region. Again the informant argued that Njuri elders are very accessible and they have ability of forming local barazas that would be used in mitigation of land conflict.

5.5.4 Indigenous institution the Njuri Ncheke of Meru

During the group interviews, the informants who happened to be the council members themselves had the following views. To start with Miriti argued, “We are law custodian in Meru”. He argued “we deal with settling land disputes and restore peace among our people” Kaume agreed with same view and said “ we are trusted by the community because no one goes against the decree and the agreements kept in our traditional history of the people called Ameru”. He continued to say “the *Njuri Ncheke* is respected by the generations that comes and goes”. In support of the above Miriti had the following story to tell...

Our people believe in ‘Kiama’. The Njuri-Ncheke is a very honest organ. Our ways of handling land dispute are very transparent. We call parties involved and have them tell their story in front of us. The council also visits the area in question. We go to see the border under dispute. Apart from dealing with issues of land, the group handled day to day matters of the communities, including family issues such as marriages and criminal cases and all matters of justice people involving individuals, clans or neighboring communities. For a long time, we the Njuri men are considered being the only key and influential traditional judicial system in the region. Even the government entrusted us with matters of land. We have several ways and methods of dealing with disputes. Depending on cases, we use

dialogue, negotiation, cursing, Oathing and instilling discipline to the offenders. Many cases from the court especially those involving un-adjudicated land disputes, family disputes, and boundary issues are referred to us (Miriti the Njuri man)

Agreeing with the above views Kaume said “it is very true with what ‘*mutanobaa*’ (my brother) has said, we are ready all the time and very willing indeed when called to show and mark the land boundaries. May it be individuals, a clan or the entire Meru community because Njuri wants to see people stay in a peaceful atmosphere” He continued to say, “Our decisions are final. This is because the judgments are absolutely right due to the way we employ community participatory mechanisms of solving disputes. Our way of dealing with cases are so different because, methods such as; oathing, instilling discipline and even cursing if one is not accepting the truth can be seen anywhere else”. Miriti echoed the above and said “our participatory nature of dialogue and negotiation are ways of reconciling the parties involved in the conflict. Further Kaume concluded by lamenting that, “Today due to limited dialogue among many peace mission in the current generation within and between communities, is causing lots of tension in the community as the group is being affected by many issues”

5.6 Summary

This chapter of study contains the presentation of the data and views composed from the informants during the field work undertaking this study. The chapter dealt with the presentation of the above interviews as was guided by research questions through which a number of similar questions were presented to different groups who responded at different times. The four categories of informants expressed their own views concerning the research question of the study based on the themes. Additionally, most of the participant explained and discussed issues raised from various questions that featured under the themes that were provided. However, some had various issues that provoked other and were followed up by subsequent questions.

Based on the chapter presentation, it was noted that, the cause of the land conflict was attributed to political powers and poor political influence, boundary disputes and lack of clear boundaries demarcation and land adjudication and titling among others. The chapter further brought to the record that, the role of the Methodist church in resolving ethnic land conflict was lacking. This is supported by the following views emanating from the respondents under the following sub-themes

were as follows; that the church has not been involved in dealing with land conflict among in Meru. The Methodist Church has not played any role in resolving the ethnic land conflict. The Methodist Church has no plan or known strategy in dealing with land conflict and that, there is a need for the church to be involved in solving land conflict because of her mission of peace in the gospel and message of love. Thirdly theme, the role of indigenous institution *Njuri Ncheke* (Meru Council of elders) in dealing with land disputes was presented with the following sub-themes namely; *Njuri-Ncheke* was identified as a very able organ involved in settling land conflict. That majority of people trust and believe in *Njuri-Ncheke* ways of handling land dispute. That *Njuri-ncheke* respects the church and Church leaders that the church has lots to learn from it and *Njuri-Ncheke* council of elders has key methods used in solving land conflict such as; oathing, dialogue and instilling discipline.

To facilitate the discussion of the above findings, the presentation is to reflect in details to the the themes drawn from the study which aided the presentation of the views to. The causes of land conflict are spurred by politicians or political aspirant leaders, the indigenous institution *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru is perceived being able to resolve land conflict. This is due to the fact that the majority of informants trust the institution. Lack of MCK's involvement in addressing issues of land conflict was noted as an issue of discussion. The presentation also suggested that there is a need for the church to be involved in mitigation of land conflict. In connection with the above the chapter also presented others views gathered from the informants under the causes of land conflict. These highlighted several consequences of violent conflicts that have negatively impacted the security and peaceful coexistence in community. Some of those cited are; loss of human life, property, displacements of large segments of the communities, disruption of socio-economic activities and livelihoods, increased hatred between the communities, increased economic hardships as a result of the loss of livelihoods, attributing to starvation among the displaced groups.

Chapter Six

Discussion of the findings

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the field data was presented as gathered from various informants. The presentation was done based on themes as they arose during the interviews. This chapter of the study focuses on detailed discussion of the themes. The themes were coded during the interviews under the following topics namely, the causes of ethnic land and conflict, the role of the Methodist church in resolving ethnic land conflict and the role of the indigenous institution *Njuri-Ncheke* in dealing with ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya.

6.2 Causes of ethnic land conflict

Based from the interview, the study revealed that causes of ethnic land conflict Among the Ameru people are attributed to political powers and political influence, border disputes and lack of clear boulder demarcation and land adjudication based on titling on ownership.

From the interviews with most of the informants, it came out clearly that the people from this region are aware of the reality concerning the land conflict. The interview revealed that, causes of ethnic land conflict was characterized by ethnic politics, boulder dispute and lack of proper land adjudication/ titling in the locality. The study revealed that there are several consequences of violent conflicts associated with land issues. The study establishing that the above-mentioned factors have negatively impacted the security and peaceful coexistence in the region. The reason may perhaps be due to disagreement on land demarcation and poor politics where leaders practice dirty politics with a view of eliminating the others to conquer a territory in the community. Some of the informants felt that verbal talk from politician preaches the language of hate and rivalry among their people, thus fueling conflict in the regions.

6.2.1 Political powers and political influence

The interview revealed that political influence based on ethnic politics and poor political powers invoked conflict in the locality. Needless to say, some of the informants felt that the quest behind

resolving ethnic land conflict is something many people are still wrestling within Meru community because majority of political leaders have been accused of manipulating their ethnic communities to gain political votes. From the interviews, ethnic politics is seen as a source of land conflict among the people. The region's leader's slightest provocation and incitement talks during campaign seasons contribute to hates and conflicts. This makes them use land as a campaign tool especially on the areas with boundary conflicts. When respondents were requested to respond to the question the causes of land conflict, they cited political influence as the major cause attributed to land conflict. The views raised by the informants cited political influence as the key source of ethnic land disputes. In support of this, the church minister blamed the ministry of land officers in propagating loopholes that politicians use in their influence. In my view, majority of the respondents seem to agree that politics have greatly contributed to the ethnic land conflict. Even though the minister cited was heard citing community identity to be another cause. Based on the above, the weight of the matter rests on political influence as a key underlying factor. In this case, I feel that, the rivaling individuals, families, and clans were perceived that their security and survival was not guaranteed. From the theoretical point of view by Horowitz (1985), explains his description of ethnic groups as a conceptual convenience that, captures the essential elements of politics in ethnically divided societies (see 2.1.1). In this regard, therefore, land disputes among the Ameru are attributed to political incitement, tribal tensions, and polarizations which tend to fear and tension. For example, the views raised in chapter 5.3.3 by the minister support the above.

Communities continue to express dissatisfaction with the way the government manages allocations and certifications of land. Individuals and key stakeholders are sidelined because politicians choose people from their community and majority who owns the land are not informed in decisions about titling and land boundaries (Minister, 5.3.3)

In support of the above, the findings from the data collected resonate with the theoretical perspective of chapter 2.1.1-2.1.2 that, land conflict among the Ameru people is attributed to political incitement as a result of identity-based on common descent and have continued to escalate and destabilize the community. The increased ethnicization of Meru county politics has deepened the sense of exclusion among the clans. Land ownership and demarcation have also taken a political perspective, with politicians encouraging conflicts to flush out supporters of political opponents

from their political turfs. This view is supported by the literature review drawn from chapter 1.2.2.2 as shown below.

According to Veit (2011), ethnic politics is seen as a source of land conflict among Kenyan ethnic groups. During colonial rule, every ethnic group in the protectorate experienced land losses. He further, noted that land losses by Kikuyu and other ethnic groups were exacerbated by the commercialization of the local economy which led to the emergence of a wealthy landowning class of Kikuyu. This later was attributed to the cause of ethnic clashes in Kenya (Ibid, p.3). The above arguments of the findings are further elaborated by the theory drawn on chapter 2.2.1, that 'Horowitz further explains his description of ethnic groups as a conceptual convenience that captures the essential elements of politics in ethnically divided societies'(p.30)

6.2.2 Border disputes

Due to lack of clear border demarcation, the issue of land conflict associated with disputed boundaries is revealed as another cause of land conflict. Based on the findings it was reported that many people lost their properties. To this effect, people are encroaching their neighboring boundaries and claiming the immediate land to be their original farm where their ancestors used to graze cattle. Therefore the cause of land conflict has resulted in continued expression of dissatisfaction with the way the government manages allocations and certifications of land without clear border demarcation when issuing title deeds. This is where individuals and key stake holders are sidelined because politicians choose people from their community and majority who owns the land are not informed in decisions about titling and land boundaries. The findings revealed that due to poor political influences there is a clear tendency of incitement to people of different clans based on geographical location. This is where the data presented showed that many politicians promise that once they get into power will help claim their lost land. This tend to make people feel that their territory goes beyond the known border land marks. This result to rivalry and fighting. Based on the discussion of the findings, the study revealed that there has been loss of human life, property and displacements of large segments of people of warring clan bordering each other within the community. The study also revealed that there has been a continued disruption of socio-economic activities and livelihoods, increasing hatred between communities. This resulted to increased economic hardships due to loss of livelihoods hence attributing to starvation among the displaced groups.

Needless to say, drawn from the above discussion, there is no clear border existing today as the two people could argue because attributed each group that they were on their side and others as claims the same. Also from the data, the issue of ethnic land conflict is seen to revolve around the question of community identities in relation to administrative and political constituency within Meru county borders. This is probably due to intra-ethnic and clan favoritism and political patronage playing a key role in land acquisitions being part of corruption.

The interviews based on the data collected resonate with the theories that guided this study. The perspective of ethnic conflict postulated by Horowitz (1985) postulates that ethnicity, in essence, refers to the behavior and feeling (about oneself and others) that supposedly emanates from membership of an ethnic group. Based on the issues of border disputes as causes of conflict, the theory shapes the study in understanding the concept and the relationship between ethnicity and land ownership. A well-established land boundary identifies the individual or community with that land. In this case, conflict among the Ameru people who are believed to have a strong attachment to the land which goes back to the ancestral lineage, feels that their land was passed to them by their forefathers. To this effect, no one else should claim their land. They tend to protect their territorial rights based on land demarcation. To resolve this challenge, clear land borders should be drawn. According to Horowitz (1985), there are ways of reducing ethnic conflict. He pointed out one is by scattering of power, secondly by providing opportunities for intra-ethnic competition and conflict, thirdly by encouraging politico-economic alignments based on other interests; and fourthly by reducing inequalities between groups to fighting dissatisfaction. As postulated by Horowitz this mechanism helps incorporates individuals and the identity groups of individuals which can form basis towards healing among the conflicting individuals or groups. This helps in forming the unity of analysis aimed at sustainable and long lasting peace based on consensus and trust. Theorizing the above idea in the context of Ameru and land, individuals in Meru are part of large community and should be involved in every step of showing borderlines.

6.2.3 Land adjudication based on titling and ownership

From the interview, it clearly shows that the idea of land matters contributes towards same people in having the conflict that significantly contributes to identity formation in relation to who owns what. Local communities view land as their own and define their identity in relation to the land. As a result, communities continue to express dissatisfaction with the location of border and who's

the piece of land belongs to. The interviews revealed that ethnic land conflict exists among the people and it is political driven, attributed to land adjudication in a corrupt means.

This blame is cast to people in the ministry of land at the county offices. When responding to question on the causes of ethnic land conflict, the church minister argued that people are not satisfied with the way the government manages allocations and certifications of land. This means that people do not trust the land adjudication on matters of issuing title deeds to the real land owners. To me, I feel they feel that poor people who have nothing to give 'to corrupt' are sidelined and their land is given to another person. This is due to what I may call actor's rational activity of widespread interest such as prosperity, power, and security vested to people who want to own land. This discussion is supported by the literature review that "The purpose of these land settlement schemes were not land distribution but to give back to Kenyans fertile land. As such land was sold at market prices which meant some of the natives of the Rift Valley were unable to buy it, so wealthy people from other regions acquired land in the region legally"(see, chapter 1.2.2). In reference to the above, issues of land ownership are causing conflict due to the scarcity of this valuable property. Beyond the explanation of the role of elite manipulation in ethnic wars, the utility of this theory lies also in explaining why some ethnically fragmented societies choose to fight or chose to cooperate rather than fight. This is the case of land matters in Meru. In general, based on the above discussions of the data findings, the above factors have complicated and compounded the conflict management process of land issues in Meru. The study establishes that there is a need of adopting ethnic conflict theory which helps in shaping the understanding ethnic identity. Identity connects individuals through perceived common past experiences and expectations of shared future ones. Identity is concerned with group judgments and judgments about groups and their motives (conflicts over competing, and apparently irresolvable, claims that engage the central elements of a group's historical experience. The study established land issues were basically attributed to ownership of the same land by both individuals and the community in question. It was revealed from the findings that land is a considered as a common battle ground in this region. Due to ethnic identity land is considered among the Ameru people to have more than economic significance. This is where land is attached to cultural, emotional and spiritual value. This is because land ownership goes beyond the above and enhances shifting to ancestral inheritance. Thus it's due to cultural ties land takes culturally and socially constructed meanings of land to a community.

This view is further supported by the literature information drawn from chapter 1.2.2. by Benson Mulemi (2011) in the article ‘putting land grievances behind us in Kenya’, as written here below.

Historical trends of dispossession and competing claims to land predate colonial times which caused inter-clan and inter-ethnic feuds about territorial ownership. He further pointed out those historical roots of land grievances threaten to reproduce the conditions for a vicious cycle of hostilities and internal displacement. Land conflict associated with historical injustices dates back to from the pre-colonial era. The Constitution construction in Kenya requires need to be recognizing as a way of resolving pending issues related to land which tend to demonstrate complex socio-economic and cultural challenge in relation to land as a natural resource(Mulemi,2011,p.5).

Resonating with the above information drawn from the literature review, the study established that problems related to ethnic land conflict arises when land ownership is linked to territories and the concept that ‘this territory is ours, therefore this land is ours’. This concept of ethnic conflict is supported by the theory postulated by Horowitz. This is because the concept perceived by the original owners of the property in question as attributed by the ownership as demonstrated in the ‘natives-settlers’.

6.3 The role of the Methodist Church in resolving land conflict.

Based on the data and the response that were given towards answering the research question, the views drawn from most of the informant came out clearly that, the church has not been involved in dealing with land conflict. Also, it was revealed that the Methodist Church has no plan or known strategy in dealing with ethnic land conflict. Most of the informant felt that there is a need for the church to be involved in solving land conflict because of her mission of peace in the gospel and message of love which is the core mission work.

The interview from the informant, further suggested that the church needs to embrace indigenous methods used by *Njuri Ncheke* in dealing with land conflict. This is because the indigenous institution is fading with time and the church seems to get strong roots within the community in the current generation. The discussion further reveals that the church seems more relevant in the modern society and stood a better chance for the sustainability and promotion of peace.

6.3.1 The MCK has not been involved and there is no known role played in mitigation of ethnic land conflict

The information drawn from the response presented in chapter 5 in the category of (Minister 5.3.4), revealed that, the Church has not been playing any role in dealing with land related conflict. In support of this, while responding on the role played by the church, Kaume also lamented that, Church has not been involved in border disputes and demarcation initiatives. On the same note, this discussion is supported based on the data presented in chapter 5.4.4. Where Kaume interrupted and argued as follows. I have not seen church going to ‘*Nthenge*’ (Oathing ritual). Church has not been involved in border demarcation because pastors who are brought to work here come from far. While nodding his head said, that he do agree that the church is compelled to mitigate land conflicts in order to live to her mission, but the MCK in this has not been seen being involved on this matter (see Kaume,5.4.4). Also the interviews further revealed that the church has not been active in dealing with the land issues.

But the views from the informant (Minister 5.4.3) were of different view concerning the role played by the church. To support his views, he said that the church has carried out pastoral duties in the region where people were fighting due to land disputes. In my view, may be the minister was not ready to condemn the church. Probably the minister supported the church involvement because he is part of the church pastoral team. Drawn from the data presented in chapter 5 of this study, we see this argument.

The minister pointed out the church has been playing conducting visitation to people affected. But further argued that the church involvement has been outweighed by the current situation and with dynamics of scarce resources within the region that are affecting the society. On the other side, the informant felt that the church involvement has not been of great impact in dealing with land conflict. The minister lamented that with the challenges of ethnic land conflict, the Methodist church has a role to play in reducing or eliminating the crisis (see 5.4.3)

The discussion of the findings reveals that majority of the informant felt that the MCK had not been actively involved in dealing with ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people. In my view basing the discussion of this study on the information drawn from the literature review, the MCK

need to shy from her divine role of reconciliation. This is because the church's key role in helping people to stay in harmony is made possible through reconciliation. This process can help propagate peace among the community. This argument is supported by the literature information indicated here by Schreiter (1998).

The church's role in the reconciliation process is in two ways; one is in terms of the resources the church brings to the reconciliation process and secondly is in terms of the role church can play in reconciliation. From this point of departure, the theory draws our attention on the study that, the Methodist Church should be in front line in reconciling people together and preach the gospel of reconciliation. This is because the Church is supposed to play a pivotal position in reconciliation strategy. It is pivotal because the Atonement dwells at the center of Christian faith and practice. This theory of the atonement shall be built on the spirituality and ministry of reconciliation that focuses on the plight of Victim and restoration of humanity and beyond (see chapter 1.2.3)

The study revealed that the Church needs to play her essential role based in her divine mission of reconciliation that seems lacking in the case of MCK. This is because it was established that Methodist Church has not been visible in the community in dealing with land conflict. For the purpose of peaceful co-existence human being need to do away with differences and live peacefully. According to Schreiter (1998), this cannot be achieved without message about reconciliation and the spirituality that flows out of it. Reconciliation is the role of the church in peacemaking. The strength comes from the mission of the church based on the message of the gospel, which addresses issues such as memory, forgiveness, and rebuilding of trust. This theory becomes of relevant to this study because, echoing this perspective, the MCK is supposed to play a central role which becomes the key foundation that can be adopted by the entire church for the purpose of resolving ethnic land conflict. This is because is God- centered Model in orientation, since it was God who continued to feel concerned for his creatures so that he provided atonement for man. Biblically, atonement refers to reconciliation between two parties through a sacrificial offering to cover an offender's sin. Atonement blends to the ideas of appeasing God's holy wrath and his granting forgiveness through the sacrifice offered in faith. Atonement is tied closely to the notion of covenant, and both the old and the New Testament deals extensively with it. The reconciliation places the repair of relationships at center stage and attempts to capture the

complexity of an appropriate response to wrongdoing. While wrongdoing does damage personal relationships, it is the damage to moral relationships that morality requires us to repair. In my view as per the above discussion, the Church feels an obligation to go to the roots of the conflict, in order to bring healing and to re-establish, so to speak, an equally original reconciliation which will be the effective principle of all true reconciliation.

6.3.2 The MCK has no known plan or strategy to mitigate ethnic land conflict

The information drawn from the background to the study in chapter 4, of this study explains the mission and vision of the MCK as noted below.

The history of the MCK shows that the church located herself in Kenya and Meru in particular through missionaries for the purposes of propagating the gospel of Jesus Christ. The mission of the Methodist Church in Kenya is “To respond to the divine call of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and to proclaim the holistic Gospel in word and deed and in the power of God’s Holy Spirit. The key agenda are basically on mission work and evangelism rooted in preaching the gospel, education and health matters. Matters of community land and church participation on property crisis have not been a key priority to the said church. Again, it is worth noting that MCK based on the above historical background her major goal is centered on spiritual matters (See chapter 4.4).

From the above views, it is clearly evident that MCK has no known plan to deal with land matters. In my view, the history of MCK had no agenda detailing matters of dealing with society properties. May be the church central agenda is to evangelize and preaching of the gospel. In this regard, the church lacks the plan to address matters affecting the society. In this case the issue of land conflict is not part of church’s mission. Therefore, the majority of the informants feel that there is a need for the MCK to have plans in place and be compelled to mitigate land conflicts in order to live to her mission. In my view, the reason to this may be is due to the expectation of the informants on the church mandate of preaching peace which seems to be lacking from the church in question. Therefore, I strongly do agree with their argument due to the fact that the situation is wanting because people are fighting and they need to be reconciled. To this effect, the Methodist church has a role to play in mitigation of ethnic land related conflicts by putting the right strategies and mechanisms to address issues affecting the community. In this context, the discussions resonate with reconciliation theory of Atonement. This is because the Church is supposed to play a pivotal

position in reconciliation strategy. It is pivotal because the Atonement dwells at the center of Christian faith and practice. This is because the theory points out that spirituality and ministry of reconciliation focus on the plight of Victim and restoration of humanity and beyond (Schreiter, p.127). The theory argues that, the idea of reconciliation enables one to explain the value of repentance without restructuring interest to the wrongdoers character, to account for the power of reparations without placing a dollar value on dignity, and to justify the suffering of guilt without falling into a simplistic endorsement or retribution and to insist on the moral responsibility of wrongdoing groups without treating its members unfairly. But the interviews from informant revealed that Methodist church has not been active in dealing with conflict resolution associated with ethnic land matters. Therefore the theory becomes a key springboard in suggesting the role to be adopted by the church. Therefore, this is the high time when the church should stand to be counted in promotion of peace and reconciling people in the community! This is because peace and reconciliation constitute a very special mission for the church mandate. Based on the above argument, the findings resonate with the theory in an effort to reveal the role that the church is supposed to play. But this role of the church seems to be lacking instead. According to this theory, the notion of atonement is basically understood on the principles of church message following the traditional account of how Jesus's ministry, including his death, reconciles sinful humanity with God help the community to be reconciled with humanity through forgiveness. Therefore, the study revealed that the two theoretical perspectives have been key in helping answer the research questions of this study. For example, ethnic land conflict theory by Horowitz (1985) initiated the understanding of the causes of ethnic land conflict and reconciliation theory of Atonement by Radizk(2009) helped towards addressing the need to mitigate ethnic land conflict through reconciliatory messages by the church. This is because the notion of atonement is basically understood on the principles of church message. The two theoretical perspectives helped bridge the research gap in understanding the role of MCK in dealing with ethnic land conflict. Therefore adopting the complementary perspective of the above theories, by the church in general may be a model of the church towards a mission of building peace in the community. I wish to point out that, MCK may consider applying the foundation laid by reconciliation theory of Atonement in addressing and mitigation of ethnic land conflict among the people of Meru County. This can be possible if different methods of peace building used by *Njuri Ncheke* are embraced by the church in the current generation when Indigenous institution is diminishing. The MCK can in future play

a pivotal role particularly in preaching peace and repentance in the community for the purpose of reconciliation. The pastoral team can also have organized peace visits to the victims. The research revealed that there is a great need and urgent interventions towards church's involvement in dealing with ethnic land. I tend to think the reason is because the indigenous methods of peace building are fading with time and are being replaced by the Church. Therefore church taking a complementary approach to peacebuilding and reconciliation can be of great help in mitigation of ethnic land conflict in future. This role if adopted by the church can be inevitable among the people of Meru for the purpose of long lasting peace. This can be possible if all actors are involved to ensure that issues that are affecting the locals at the grassroots are timely addressed.

The Methodist Church can also use the findings of the study to design the most appropriate peace building and reconciliation strategies which will be used in Meru County and can be adopted by other Kenyan ethnic communities. The Methodist Church can benefit from the findings of the study because it would provide the basis for awareness and better understanding of how their current peace building and reconciliation processes affect their ethnic land conflict mitigation. The study is original since none has been conducted in Meru on causes of ethnic land conflict and what should be the role of the Methodist church in mitigation of ethnic land conflict. Therefore the church reconciliation way of bridging peace and reducing ethnic land related conflict may be understood and possibly be adopted for the purposes of the reconstruction of the broken society in the context of Meru and Kenya as a whole.

Also the study may contribute to possible methods of mitigating further occurrence of land conflicts. Second, different groups have in the past been putting efforts to address land conflicts. Therefore, the findings of this study will assist in suggesting the exact processes or approaches to use in developing effective strategies. The use of this effective approach will prevent similar scenes in the future. In the past, the Church has condemned or ignored most of the African traditional belief as well as the African rituals and practices despite their pacifying abilities. Failure of peace actors to use African indigenous methods of peacebuilding and reconciliation perhaps could have contributed to the resurgence of ethnic conflicts. This study reveals that there is a great need for the church to embrace effective indigenous methods of peacebuilding and reconciliation addressing ethnic land conflicts and other related issues.

6.4 Role of indigenous institution *Njuri Ncheke* in dealing with land conflict

The study revealed that *Njuri Ncheke* plays a central role in resolving land conflict. The study established that the Meru council of elders is an able institution when it comes to conflict resolution and promotion of peace. *Njuri Ncheke*'s effectiveness due to positive features because majority of people trust and believe in its structures and strategies employed to resolve land conflict. Also the study established that *Njuri Ncheke* respect the church. The data revealed that this indigenous institution the *Njuri-Ncheke* council of elders has key methods used in solving land conflict such as oathing, dialogue and instilling discipline. These are key mechanisms of land conflict that tend to attracting participatory of people or community involved in conflict. This was revealed during interviews where informant A1 when responding on the role of indigenous institution (*Njuri*) on issues of land said, "Meru community, even prior to the advent of the western colonial rule, had their own institution as well as practices and rituals that guaranteed social harmony between the communities". This was also echoed by informant A2 who added that *Njuri Ncheke* was and still is very able in dealing with land conflict. The study revealed that Meru council of elders had several ways of resolving land conflicts by using traditional institution as stated above. The study established that *Njuri* is seen as a key organ in settling of various disputes in the community and reduced the amount of land conflict among people.

On matters of border disputes, the study revealed that traditional institution (*Njuri-Ncheke*) is able to deal with land matters and boulder problems because it recognizes and takes the soil or land being an important aspect for any indigenous African person. Therefore, this makes it possible to treat it as sacred. For example the respondent lamented that he could not lose his property if "*Njuri Wazee*" (elders) were involved to solve the matter. The respondents agreed that the traditional ways of conflict resolution are the best and proper way of settling the land dispute. The study revealed that people fear oath and going to "*kithiri*". According to cultural beliefs, "*kithiri*" is the final option when making decision to establish the person or a group saying the truth among parties in conflict. Because it can result into death, and people fear to die or pass the curse to their children and generations, one is deemed to say the truth.

The study established that the role of *Njuri-Ncheke* in dealing with land issue is one of the peaceful processes in reconciliation because it helps in identifying the origin of the land conflict. The council

of elders is key pillars when it comes to handling the issues of land disputes within the region. They are members who hail from the region and so they do understand every area in relation to borders and land ownership. For example the respondents pointed out during the interviews that that land conflict among the Ameru people can only be solved into totality if the traditional council of elders intervenes showing the original borders for the various communities in the region. Giving the reason behind this was that the Njuri people are familiar with land issues in Meru and the neighbouring communities. Therefore, successful conflict resolution and reconciliation is made possible by Njuri elders, since they are very accessible and they have ability of forming local barazas that would be used in mitigate any land dispute.

The study revealed that Council of elders is “traditional law custodian of the Ameru people”. From the respondents drawn from the members of *Njuri Ncheke*, the study established that, Elders themselves are able to discharge their duties successfully because they consider themselves as a trusted institution. For example based on the interviews in chapter 5, one of the informants said “we are trusted by the community because no one goes against the decree and the agreements kept in our traditional history the people called Ameru”. He continued to say “the *Njuri Ncheke* is respected by the generations that come and that shall come. From the background to the study chapter 4.2.1, it is revealed by Rimita (1988), that *Njuri* plays key role as he noted:

The indigenous institution plays the role in conflict resolution and maintenance of peace within and outside the community. They also handled day to day matters of the communities and specifically paid attention to settlement of disputes arising from border disputes, criminal cases and all matters of justice (Ibid, p. 19).

The above views agree with theoretical perspective on ethnic theory from chapter 2.3 of this paper. The Njuri Ncheke handled day to day matters of the communities and specifically paid attention to settlement of disputes arising from border disputes, criminal cases and all matters of justice. This historical and cultural challenge goes back to when the colonial systems of government were introduced in Meru region (see chapter 2.3)

The role of indigenous institution is very evident from as supported by the above views. The *Njuri* has been kin in dealing with the matters of bridging the gap between the fighting individuals or clans was and can be resolved if indigenous institutions are put into place. For example the

traditional mechanisms by *Njuri Ncheke* were established as key remedy: The study revealed that council of elders has been traditionally very influential decision makers who take decisions on behalf of the community. The policies passed are adhered to by everybody and violation will be based on penalties agreed. The *Njuri Ncheke* council of elders can assist in addressing the problems can contribute substantially to conflict prevention and management. The indigenous institution is recognized by the locals as a key organ.

6.5 Summary

In this chapter of the study, I have discussed the main themes that arose during the interviews as indicated in the previous chapter 5 above. I have discussed the causes of ethnic land conflict as identified in the process of data presentation. The causes are border disputes and lack of clear boundaries demarcation, political influence and land adjudication and titling. I also went further to discuss the role of the Methodist church in resolving ethnic land conflict, where it was clearly revealed that the MCK has not been involved in dealing with land conflict, and her role in resolving ethnic land conflict is lacking. The MCK has no plan or known strategy in dealing with land conflict. Based on the above discussion of the findings it was suggested that there is a need for the church to be involved in solving the land conflict. The discussion went further to deliberate on the role of indigenous institution *Njuri-Ncheke* of Meru in dealing with land conflict. The discussions revealed that indigenous institution is able organ when it comes to issues of land disputes. The majority of the respondent in their argument pointed out that people trust and believe in *Njuri-Ncheke* ways of handling land dispute and this council of elders was revealed within the discussion that they exhibit various methods that are used when handling land related conflicts; such as oathing, dialogue and instilling discipline among others.

As alluded in the above introductory part of this summary and as drawn from discussions of the findings, the cause of land conflict is spurred by politicians. Also it was established that MCK involvement in the mitigation of ethnic land conflict is lacking. Therefore, strategies to deal with land by the said church are said not to be in place. This is not so with *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru which majority felt its impact. Further, based on the findings, the study suggest that adopting reconciliation theory of Atonement for the purpose of healing the warring communities, by the Methodist church can be of great significance. This is because, "Healing" is a concept parallel to that of reconciliation, and incorporates many of the same distinctive features. A central concept in

reconciliation has been termed the "healing of memories" for both individual and social reconciliation. Church can be a vehicle to bring healing. This healing of memories recognizes first of all the importance of memories in forming both individual and collective identity. How we think of ourselves, both as individuals and as groups, have to do with the accumulated memories we have of past actions and relationships. When those memories are of traumatic events, we can find ourselves frozen in the past as it were, that is, those memories keep us in an eternal present of those terrible events, and can therefore stop any movement forward toward a pattern of different relationships in the future. Based from the above discussions, the study suggests that, the Methodist Church's should have her charisma strategy that should be unique and go beyond preaching the gospel within Church walls and deal with issues affecting the community. While reasoning together agreed that the essential mission of the Church in relation to the discussion is to go to the roots of the conflict, bring healing and to reestablish peace and unity.

Chapter Seven

Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This is the conclusion chapter of the study which presents the summary, response to both sub-research questions and the main research question. Also, the chapter offers the contribution of the study findings and the recommendations as way forward.

7.2 Summary

The chapter seeks to summarize the organization of the entire study and the findings of the study, by providing the probable causes of ethnic land conflict, showing if the MCK has played any role and if the MCK has any strategy to resolve ethnic land conflict and examine the methods used by indigenous institution the *Njuri Ncheke* council of elders in settling ethnic land disputes. This is done in response to the worrying rise of ethnic land conflict in Kenya and in Meru, as a leading motivating factor, locally and globally in this study. To undertake this task, the study is divided into seven chapters as follows. It starts by giving an overview of the study in the introductory part of chapter 1, the general literature review in chapter 2 based on the research question and the presentation of the theoretical perspective are discussed. Chapter 3 entails the discussion of research methods based on the methodological steps that are followed in answering the research question of the study. This chapter covers, research design, research methodology and sampling of respondents, sampling techniques, the research questions, ethical consideration as well as the validity and reliability of the study. Chapter 4 laid down general background to the study into which the entire research work is anchored. The location in which the study was conducted clearly gave a description of the geographical region of Meru County of Kenya, where the Methodist church is a key denomination. This is the home area of indigenous institution *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru. In chapter 5 of the study, presentation of the data findings is made. The interviews and data collection were made between the month of July and August 2016, where by response were coded and later transcribed into different themes. In chapter 6 of the study, discussions of the main theme were made. The study shows that cause of land conflict is spurred by politicians or political aspirant.

The study established that the Methodist church has not been seen being involved or in the front line in helping mitigate land-related conflict. It was revealed that the church has no strategy in place to deal with ethnic land conflict. This study established that *Njuri Ncheke* is a key indigenous institution that is able to resolve land related conflict, where majority of the locals have trust in its mechanisms. The study revealed that there is a need for the church to embrace indigenous methods of peace building for the purpose of promoting peace.

7.3 The answer to the Sub-research questions

What is the perception and causes of ethnic land conflicts among the Ameru people? By the help of the Church Ministers, the Church leaders, persons affected by conflict and elders of *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru, the answer to the above sub-research question is arrived at. From the interviews with most of the informants, it came out clearly that people from this region perceive ethnic land conflict as a reality. Therefore they are aware of the reality concerning the ethnic land conflict. Also, the discussions of the findings based on the interview revealed that causes of ethnic land conflict was characterized by ethnic political influence, border dispute and lack of proper land adjudication/ titling within the locality. From the discussion of the findings, the study revealed that there are several consequences of violent conflicts associated with ethnic land issues. Such as loss of life and property as well as displacements of people affected by the conflict. The study establishing that the above-mentioned factors have negatively impacted the security and peaceful coexistence among the Ameru people.

Does the Methodist Church have any strategy for resolving ethnic land conflict? The MCK has no plan or known strategy to deal with ethnic land conflict. The discussions of the findings established that the MCK has no agenda detailing the way of dealing with society properties. This is revealed in the background of the study chapter 4, the history of MCK. In this case, the church's central agenda seems to be preaching of the gospel. In this regard, the church lacks plan to address matters affecting the society. In this case resolving ethnic land conflict is not part of church's mission.

What has been the role of indigenous institutions the *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru in dealing with land disputes? *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru has been playing a vital role in resolving the ethnic land conflict. The discussions of the findings revealed that this indigenous institution has played a great role in the promotion of peace in Meru community. The findings also established that *Njuri* is an able organ when it comes to issues of settling land disputes and border demarcation. The indigenous

institution uses the following methods, namely oathing, dialogue and instilling discipline. These methods make their role to be effective and trust worthy.

7.4 The answers to the main research question

What causes land conflict and what should be the role of the Methodist church in mitigating ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya? The main research question was inspired by the concern on what causes land conflict and what is or should be the role of the MCK towards mitigation of ethnic land conflict. From the summary of the discussion finding in chapter 6, the causes of ethnic land conflict were identified as follows; border disputes, lack of well-established land boundaries demarcation, political influence and land adjudication and titling. In response to part two of the main research question, the discussions of the findings revealed that the Methodist church had not played any role and her involvement in dealing with ethnic land conflict is lacking.

7.5 Contribution of the study

My contribution to this study is to present the grassroots perspective of ethnic land conflict and what should be the role of the Methodist church in mitigating ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya. To enable me arrive at this stage, the church minister, church leaders, people affected by the conflict, members of indigenous institution *Njuri Ncheke* and various scholars added to this knowledge as outlined below.

In reference to this, let me refer back to chapter 1 of this study. In this chapter, I presented literature review based on other related studies. To mention but a few, Loode, Nolan, Brown and Clements (2015) about conflict management processes for land-related conflict, Okapu Etiayang Nicholas (2013) about factors influencing sustainability of peace in resources based tribal conflicts in Laikipia North district, Mworio and Ndiku (2012) about inter-ethnic land conflicts in Kenya with special reference to Tigania and Tharaka communities of the greater Meru region, Peter Veit (2011) about history of land conflicts in Kenya, Robert Schreiter (1998) about the ministry of reconciliation, spirituality and strategy and Nyongesa Michael Wafula (2014) about the role of the Church in promoting reconciliation in 2008-2013 post-election violence Kenya. The knowledge from the above mentioned sources forms the basis of the grassroots perspective, but still there is a missing gap that this current study is addressing. In this current study, I took a step further to

unearth the causes of ethnic land conflict and the role of the MCK in solving the land conflict. In this case, two theoretical perspectives were adopted for the purposes of understanding and explaining the causes of ethnic land conflict and how to mitigate it through reconciliation by the involvement of MCK. Thus my contribution to this study is that causes of ethnic land conflict and the role played by the church can be understood by people at the grassroots through reconciliation theory of atonement and ethnic theory as complementary theoretical perspectives in the study of conflict and mitigation of ethnic land disputes. Also, the study may contribute to shaping issues of ethnic identity, land and church involvement in modern society where lands remain a scarce resource. This study is important due to its valuable knowledge which supplements the academic discipline in mitigation of ethnic land conflicts by the church.

7.6 Recommendations of the study

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made as the way forward. There is a need for the Methodist church to have plans and strategies in place as part of church's mission agenda, which helps address issues of ethnic land conflict among her people.

The study recommends the adoption of both ethnic conflict theory and reconciliation theory of atonement as complementary theoretical perspective in understanding and explaining the causes of ethnic land conflict and for further empirical research in the same field.

The study recommends the strengthening and recognition of *Njuri Ncheke* and church ties for the purpose of dealing with ethnic land-related conflict in the modern society. The study recommends the church to come up with ways of sensitizing and awareness creation in issues pertaining border disputes and bad political incitement on matters of land to her members.

Recommend inclusiveness to both communities to participation in border demarcation, policy advocacy, influence and participation in public lands in a bid of providing clear boundaries and genuine land title deeds through land offices in the county. The Methodist Church can also use the findings of the study to design the most appropriate peace building and reconciliation committee to deal with pastoral oversight, resettlement, and compensation of displaced families.

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Appendix

Interview questions

The main research question that guided the study: What causes land conflict and what should be the role of the Methodist church in mitigating ethnic land conflict among the Ameru people of Meru County, Kenya?

1. How would you describe the role of the Church in dealing with ethnic land conflict in your community?
 - a) Have you witnessed any ethnic land conflict in your area?
 - b) How do you describe an incidence you have witnessed?(a) above
 - c) Do you know any involvement of the church in dealing with ethnic land conflict in Meru?
2. What is the perception and causes of ethnic land conflicts among the Ameru people?
 - a) Are you aware of any example of ethnic land conflict?
 - b) What do you think are the causes of ethnic land conflicts?
 - c) Who do you think is responsible for ethnic land conflict?
3. Does the Methodist Church have any strategy for resolving ethnic land conflict?
 - a) Do you know any involvement of the Methodist church in resolving ethnic land conflict?
 - b) Do you know if the Methodist church has any plan to help in resolving ethnic land conflict?
 - c) Are there reasons to why the Methodist church should be involved in resolving ethnic land conflicts?
4. What has been the role of indigenous institutions the *Njuri Ncheke* of Meru in dealing with land disputes?
 - a) How would you describe the indigenous institution (*Njuri Ncheke*) and its methods used in resolving land conflicts?
 - b) Why do you think that the traditional methods mentioned above helped in resolving ethnic land conflict in Meru?
 - c) Do you think that the Methodist church have anything to learn from indigenous Institution *Njuri Ncheke*?