

**INVOLVING THE MARGINALISED: THE ROLE OF SENGWER
RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW IN THE CONSERVATION OF NATURAL
ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES IN EMBOBUT FOREST, KENYA**

BY

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DECLARATION

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my grandmothers Rhodah and Mary and my loving parents Mr John Mamati Juma and Mama Zippy Nandako Mamati for their love and support for education that got me here.

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ABSTRACT

The environmental crisis bedeviling the universe is a concern to many people. The aberration and destruction of the hitherto aesthetic environment threatens human existence on earth. This study sought to seek for ways of involving indigenous people's religious knowledge to solve the current problem of unwise utilization of natural environmental resources. Specifically, the main objective of this study was to explore the Sengwer religious worldview on the conservation natural environmental resources of Embobut forest. The specific objectives include: to determine the Sengwer religious worldview on natural environment resources in Embobut forest, to explore the influence of the Sengwer religious worldview on the conservation of natural resources in Embobut forest and to find out the challenges faced by Sengwer community in conserving natural environmental resources in Embobut forest. The study employed human relation theory and the social functional theory. It utilized qualitative methods since it sought to explore the attitudes and beliefs of Sengwer towards environment. The target populations for the study were Sengwer who reside within the Cherangany water catchment area and living within Embobut Forest. Thirty Participants who were knowledgeable about the Sengwer culture and who were living within the forest were purposefully sampled. Snowball sampling was also used to get research participants. Field data was collected through observation, interviews and focus group discussions. Data collected was analyzed through qualitative method and presented in a thematic form. Findings from the research show that the indigenous beliefs and practices of the Sengwer have an active role to play in the conservation of the natural resources in Embobut forest by controlling the utilization of resources and through creating awareness on the existence of certain natural environmental resources. It was established that, the Sengwer ensured sustainable utilization of natural resources through taboos, totems and beliefs systems attached to various flora, fauna and avifauna. The control and utilization of natural resource was done by creating awareness among members of the community and transmitted the very important environmental knowledge to young generation through oral literature therefore developing a positive environmental attitude to the young ones. The austere punishment by the Supreme Being through Illat and the council of elders acted as a deterrent and caveat to those who would be destroyers of the natural environmental resources. It was found out that the Sengwer have faced a variety of challenges in their attempt to conserve the forest. They include: Colonial and post-colonial government oppression, modern religions, population growth and development initiatives. Despite the challenges, they have come up with various initiatives in order to cope up with these challenges. The study recommends for a holistic approach towards promoting natural environmental resource conservation. The study shows that the Sengwer traditional religious knowledge on environment promoted a healthy and harmony relationship between human beings and the environment. Therefore, indigenous beliefs and practices of the local people have a crucial role to play in mitigating the current environmental crisis facing the world. Hence, there is need for a synergy of both African religion and modern ways to deal with the environmental crisis.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ASL:	Above sea level
FGDs:	Focused Group Discussions.
GOK:	Government of Kenya
NGO:	Non-Government Organization
UNDP:	United Nation Development Program
UNEP:	United Nations Environmental Program
UNCED:	United Nations Conference on Environment and Development
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNCCD:	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development
WWF:	World Wildlife Fund
WCC:	World council of churches
SCIC:	Sengwer Cultural and Information Centre

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OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF TERMS

Environment -the totality of the surrounding including plants, insects animals, birds, landscape and water sources

Conservation - The preservation and careful management of the environment and natural resources found therein

Sengwer religion - the indigenous beliefs and practices of the Sengwer community before the arrival of Christianity

Natural environment resources-This encompasses all living and non-living things occurring naturally in the universe. They include water land, soils, rocks, forests (vegetation), animals (including fish), fossil fuels and minerals.

Religious worldview- a multiplicity of beliefs and values that inform both private and public thoughts and actions of a community

Marginalised-a group of people out of the mainstream, ignored, isolated and treated as unimportant.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

According to the first United Nations conference on human environment in Stockholm in 1972, environmental conservation is a global concern (UNEP, 1972). The Conference highlighted the importance of relating environment to development. Later, the legitimacy of this issues were formalized at a United Nations conference on environment and development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (UNCED, 1992). The conference was convened in order to discuss on the way forward in tackling the environmental crisis. This led to various recommendations and a framework was laid on the various measures to be undertaken in order to tackle challenge of environmental degradation. The united Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) has expressed the need for countries to strengthen appropriate, relevant existing legislations and, where they do not exist, enact new laws and establish long-term policies and action programmes in the management of natural resources was emphasised (UNEP, 2000).

Most countries in Africa reviewed their existing policies and programmes which were externally funded bilaterally or supported by international organizations aimed at reducing the hazards of natural environmental resource degradation. Despite these efforts, reports have indicated that little has happened since the planet's environments and ecosystems are still enduring increasing stress; climate change, water quality and supply, biodiversity loss, and deforestation (UNDP 2012). These policies and programs have not factored local people's beliefs, practices and aspirations, therefore alienating them in the effort to conserve the environment.

Just like various organizations have tried to respond to this call, religion has not been left behind. In 1986, the Assisi Conference of the International World Wildlife Fund (WWF) recognized the relationship between religion and environment (Richard, 2003). This led to the Assisi declarations in which various religions declared how their various faiths help in the quest to solve environmental challenges confronting humanity (ibid.25).

Kenya has adopted various recommendations, laws and policies with an aim of tackling the environmental crisis. Such include Kenya Environmental Management and Coordination Act, EMCA, (Act No 8 of 1999, Kenya Gazette Supplement No. 3, Acts No. 1, January 2000). Environmental Management and Coordination (Water Quality) Regulations of 2006; Environmental Management and Coordination, Conservation of Biological Diversity (BD) Regulations of 2006 (Kibutu, 2012). Despite all these efforts, little has been achieved since the country has witnessed in recent past, the unprecedented effects of environment degradation such as floods, food shortage and recurrent drought (Morgan, 2015). All this has been as a result of human activities that continually harm the environment particularly the destruction of water catchment areas. Human activities have also led to the destruction of the earth biological systems in which food chains habitats and physical systems such as the water cycle and the ozone layers are being destroyed. Therefore, environmental degradation which includes desertification, pollutions, forest depletion and erosion are all a by-product of man. Therefore, it is opined that the solution to this challenge can be found by man. It has become evident that the existing legislation is inadequate since it does not bear with the people's aspirations.

Marakwet Sub County is rich in forest cover. The forest occupies approximately 65,500.3 hectares that translates into 38% of total land of the sub county (GOK, 2008). Over 95% of the forest cover is made up of various indigenous tree species that form a good catchment for rivers that drain from the area (GOK, 2002). There are various environmental challenges facing Embobut forest in Marakwet sub county today; deforestation of the indigenous trees, encroachment of forest for cultivation, loss of biodiversity, soil erosion, loss of vegetation through charcoal burning, extraction of firewood, illegal logging, lack of holistic environment management plans and desertification .

Embobut forest is crucial to this study since not only do the local inhabitants depend on it but also the whole country; it is the largest reserve of the Cherangany water tower which is a major water catchment area and source of many rivers. The increasing deforestation has affected the hydrological cycle hence the amount of rainfall, is reducing (Chebet, 2010). Furthermore, there are observations of decreased water levels in rivers as a result of the decreasing indigenous forest cover (ibid: 35).The hydrological imbalance has led to prolonged drought and flooding that the country has frequently experienced in the recent past.

Scholars such as Lyn White, Tucker have pointed out and recognized that religion has a role to play in tackling this environment crisis. White notes “what people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny—that is, by religion (White, 1967, p. 1204). Unfortunately, this religious dimension has always been ignored and under appreciated by government when trying to mitigate these challenges (Hitzhusen, 2007.) Religion shapes our attitudes

and values towards nature; it provides basic interpretive stories of who we are, what nature is, where we have come from and where we are going (Farrel 2011). Furthermore, it can be argued that religion gives suggestions of how we should treat other humans and how we should relate to nature (Ruether et al., 2000, p. 37).

Senghor explicitly writes that : “As far as African ontology is concerned, too, there is no such thing as dead matter: every being, everything--be it only a grain of sand—radiates a life force, a sort of wave-particle; and sages, priests, kings, doctors, and artists all use it to help bring the universe to its fulfilment” (Senghor 1995, p. 49). This means that everything that was found in the universe had a religious purpose for its existence, hence, a reason for the conservation of the natural environmental resources. The ascription of supernatural and psychic powers to natural environmental resources is the backbone of African religion. This preceding type of animism has played a significant role in ensuring that natural resources have been well conserved through observance of taboos and totems(animals and birds being part of the tribe kindred) related to natural environmental resources. This belief has overtly or covertly promoted the conservation of natural environmental resources such forests, animals, rocks, snakes, and birds.

Traditional African religion permeates all facets and spheres of the human life. John. Mbiti (1969, p. 1) has cogently described Africans as “notoriously religious and each people have its religious system with a set of beliefs and practices. Religion permeates into all the departments of life so fully that it is not easy or possible always to isolate it.”(Mbiti 1969, p. 1). In African spirituality there is no dichotomy between the spiritual world and the natural world. This is further described by Mbiti when he writes:

It is religion, more than anything else, which colours their understanding of the universe and their empirical participation in that universe, making life a profoundly religious phenomenon. To be is to be religious in a religious universe. That is the philosophical understanding behind African myths, customs, traditions, beliefs, morals, actions and social relationships (Mbiti 1969, p. 262).

Religion therefore is capable of influencing people positively in regard to their worldview and attitude towards natural environmental resource conservation. If well utilized, it can be the best alternative in influencing how people relate to one another and how humanity can relate with the environment in a sustainable manner.

Mbiti further elucidates that Africans have been living in harmony with nature since time immemorial (Mbiti, 1991, p. 44). Hence, African traditional religion has the ability to positively influence natural environmental resources conservation. This is supported by Oladeji (2012, p. 9) who opines that “Local knowledge (LK) and traditional practices have great cultural significance and their applications have been found to be relevant in studies relating to contemporary medicine, food production, biodiversity conservation and management, hence, they should be maintained in a manner that ensures that the future generations live to witness them.” The current study seeks to explore on how the Sengwer religious worldview can be tapped and utilized in ensuring that natural environmental resources is conserved.

Studies and reports indicate that indigenous people are capable of protecting their environment through their religious worldview. For instance Zimbabwe’s chiefs have revived traditions to save the country’s last pangolins. Traditional leaders, with the support of the Zimbabwean government, are taking a strong role in protecting the country’s remaining pangolins. They are reminding their communities of age-old myths and beliefs about pangolins, as well as imposing heavy fines on those who

harm them, to instil a sense of collective responsibility among the people. (Zimbabwe's chiefs revive tradition to save the country's last pangolins, 2018). Indigenous knowledge has been used to conserve apes in DRC Congo, this has been possible through the government legislation that came in place in 2014 (Ortolani, 2017). From the above example it has been clearly expounded of the immense potential of African indigenous knowledge that stems out of peoples religious worldview which can aid in tackling the environmental crisis.

The aforementioned was also recognized during the earth summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 adopted the *Convention on Biological Diversity*, in article 10 which acknowledged the need to protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation or sustainable use requirements.

The Sengwer indigenous people are an ethnic minority who are traditionally hunter-gatherer forest people, whose ancestral lands are located in the Rift Valley province in western Kenya, in and around the forests of the Cherangany Hills. These people were the aborigines of Cherangany forest and currently majority of them live in and within Embobut forest (Parliamentary Select Committee report 2012, p.40-41). This indigenous community has faced a lot of challenges as they have been accused to be behind the destruction of the water tower. This has led the government to forcefully evict them from their ancestral land in the forest. Despite the fact that African traditional religion is cohesive with the conservation of natural environmental resources, little attention has been given to African traditional religion by the government agencies and various stakeholders involved in conservation of the environment. The aforesaid, precludes African traditional religion from playing an

active role in the conservation of natural resources. This study seeks to bring to the fore how the Sengwer religious worldview and traditional knowledge systems have influenced natural environmental resources conservation for generations in a bid to understand how this can have implications for the larger environmental sustainability project.

1.1 Statement of the problem

The current environmental crisis is a major concern to many people around the globe. Studies indicate that the planet is struggling against unprecedented assaults, suffering from the extinction of species, pollution, overload, and resource depletion (Tucker et al, 2001, p. 6). Global biodiversity is currently undergoing rapid and substantial loss with species and habitats in decline at an estimated 0.5% to 1% per year (Crowling et al, 2006). In Kenya, this has not been different, because of the many threats to the environment which include deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, water shortage and degraded water quality, flooding, poaching, and domestic and industrial pollution.

The effects of the environmental crisis as a result of poor management of the environment are ginormous as evident through the revenant oodles of floods, famine, hunger and drought in Kenya. The Sengwer are the aborigines of Embobut forest (Parliamentary Select Committee report 2012, p.40-41) who have sustainably conserved the forest but the encroachment of human settlement by other local communities such as the Marakwet and the Pokots living in and adjacent to Embobut forest cover has an adverse effect on the environment. This has led to the degradation of the Embobut forest which threatens existence of the many rivers that drain from this area into Lake Turkana and Lake Victoria. This has an overwhelming effect on

the human population since most of these rivers are used for irrigation, human and livestock use and hydro power generation thus endangers the livelihood and existence of human beings (Kareithi et al, 2012; Adams, 2003). Furthermore Embobut forest which is an indigenous forest found in Marakwet Sub County and the largest reserve block of the Cherangany water catchment is rich in herbal medicinal species that has been used for generations (Kigen et al, 2014). This rich medicinal biodiversity is also under threat. This calls for concerted effort that involves the revival of aboriginals' religious worldview in conserving the environment.

There are various laws and policies that the Kenyan government has come up with, the first policy in relation to sustainable forest management and conservation was first articulated in 1957 through Sessional Paper Number 7 of 1957: Report of the Game Policy Committee. This Policy was subsequently restated by the Government of Kenya in 1968 through Sessional Paper Number 1 of 1968. Other laws and policies include the National Environment Action Plan (NEAP 1994) and the Environment Management Coordination Action (EMCA 1999). All this has been done in order to tackle the environmental crisis in the country. Despite the Kenyan government's effort to conserve the Embobut forest by forcefully evicting the Sengwer people from the forest and formulating various policies and laws; this has not yielded the expected results. The politicization of environment conservation in the country has also worsened the situation. Rocheleau (1995, p. 6) in his study on the persistence of environmental degradation in Kenya concludes that 'decades of intervention by "experts" to reverse a series of crises, including overgrazing, soil erosion, biodiversity loss, deforestation and threatened wildlife have failed due to "experts"' inability to tap local knowledge from a people's Folklore.' The deprecating of the indigenous

religion of the Sengwer can be adverted as the reason why Kenya today faces calamitous consequences such as floods, prolonged droughts, hunger, pollution and so forth. The destruction of the forest and the environment has a far reaching effect on ecosystem balance and potential economic benefits. The potency of African religion which has a very strong environmental ethics that can aid in tackling environmental problems facing the country has been least appreciated and underutilized. Therefore, the persistence of this environmental crisis calls for a paradigm shift in tackling this challenge since measures laid down to solve the problem have been futile and seems to be at best a mirage. The threat to the natural environment calls for the participation and involvement of every individual to experience success. It is in this context that this study sought to critically explore and investigate how the Sengwer religious worldview can contribute to solving the environmental crisis and how it can inspire and inform environment conservation activities.

1.2 Research questions

Specifically, the study addressed the following questions:

1. How does the Sengwer religious worldview address natural environment resources in Embobut forest?
2. How does the Sengwer religious worldview influence the conservation of natural resources in Embobut forest?
3. What are the challenges facing the Sengwer in conserving natural environmental resources in Embobut forest?

1.3 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study was to explore the Sengwer religious worldview on the conservation natural environmental resources of Embobut forest. The specific objectives include:

1. To determine the Sengwer religious worldview on natural environment resources in Embobut forest.
2. To explore the influence of the Sengwer religious worldview on the conservation of natural resources in Embobut forest.
3. To find out the challenges faced by Sengwer community in conserving natural environmental resources in Embobut forest.

1.4 Significance of the study

The study will be beneficial to policy makers in Kenya in relation to future policy making decisions concerning natural resource management and the fight against destruction of the natural environment.

It will also add to the existing canon knowledge of indigenous people with regard to natural environment resource conservation. This may be used as a point of reference by academics, researchers, historians, students, government agencies, eco-friendly non-government organization that explore means of saving the environment.

Lastly the study intended to engage religion and to identify and recommend possible ways of collaboration between indigenous beliefs and practices and formal institutions in natural environmental resource conservation; since the indigenous practices that are rich in environment conservation has not been tapped (Rocheleau 199, p. 6).

1.5 The scope of the study

Despite natural resources found all over the country, the study was carried out in Marakwet Sub County. This is due to the fact that the area is rich in natural forest resources that have been conserved by the community for a long period but lately it is facing an environmental crisis. Embobut forest constitutes the largest block of the Cherangany water catchment tower which is part of the main five water catchment towers in Kenya. The Sengwer people are the majority community that inhabits this area. The research aimed at determining the contribution of the Sengwer religious beliefs and practices in conserving the natural environmental resources within Marakwet sub-county. The study was limited to people who live within the Embobut Forest and those who are knowledgeable about the Sengwer religion and culture. The research was limited to two variables: the natural environment resource conservation and indigenous religious beliefs and practices of the Sengwer people.

1.6 Limitations of the study.

The researcher anticipated the following limitations during the study: Language barrier between the researcher and the informants during the interviews. The study overcame this challenge by recruiting, training and using research assistants and interpreters in field who were well versed with the local language.

The study also envisioned the challenge of locating participants who had the knowledge about the Sengwer people, and their beliefs and practices. However, the research overcame this challenge by using both local traditional and administrative leaders who helped the researcher to identify knowledgeable participants.

1.7 Literature review

This section is aimed at providing the thesis with a strong theoretic base by reviewing the relevant literature with key concepts on natural environmental resource conservation, environment crisis, and traditional African religious ethos on environment. It is limited to the following parameters: natural environmental resources and indigenous religious worldview of the Sengwer people. This study relied on the following literature.

Blackburn (1970, p. 3-4) has done an extensive study about the Ogiek people. He succinctly says that Ogiek. “Are one of the most widely distributed tribes in Kenya, inhabiting, now or in the recent past, virtually all of the high forest areas of Kenya. Traditionally they are a hunting and gathering tribe.” He highlights different categories of the Ogiek found in Kenya such as the Cherangany, Digiri etc. He says that for Kenya as a whole, there may be as many as 30 Ogiek groups. He takes a regional approach in his study basing on the Mau Ogiek, this approach is generic in nature which tend to portray the homogeneity of the different categories of the Ogiek people. He further says that each Ogiek group identifies itself as a separate social unity from other groups. They each have their own name for themselves, though they may refer to other groups by names other than the one used by each of those groups. Therefore, Ogiek is generic term used to refer to all categories of hunters and gatherers found in Kenya and Tanzania. This study sought to study a specific category group of Ogiek who are the Sengwer also commonly referred to as Cherangany. The study delineated that despite the Sengwer being part of the Ogiek group, they have distinct features on religion, history, geographical, cultural interactions that are different from the other Ogiek groups.

Raymond Ogunade (2005), in his article, “*Environmental Issues in Yoruba Religion: Implications for Leadership and Society in Nigeria*” writes about the Yoruba people having rituals as a principle tool that is used to control and approach the unseen world and rearrange the physical world and bring material transformation change when the physical world is experiencing instability. He writes that “This is an integral part of the reasons why Yoruba people are very careful about their interaction and use of resources in nature - because these "corrective" rituals are also very expensive” (Ogunade2005, p. 2). Just like the Yoruba people the researcher makes the assumption that the Sengwer people have corrective rituals that are used in conserving natural environmental resources. Therefore, motivation for the study was to identify the rituals that are used by the Sengwer people in this study area in regard to the environment conservation. This concern has been addressed in chapter three of this thesis.

Tucker and Grim (2000) in their article *The Challenge of the Environmental Crisis*, Observes how indigenous beliefs have a strong environment ethics;

Most indigenous peoples have environmental ethics embedded in their worldviews. This is evident in the complex reciprocal obligations surrounding life-taking and resource-gathering which mark a community’s relations with the local bioregion. The religious views at the basis of indigenous life ways involve respect for the sources of food, clothing, and shelter that nature provides. Gratitude to the creator and to the spiritual forces in creation is at the heart of most indigenous traditions. The ritual calendars of many indigenous peoples are carefully coordinated with seasonal events such as the sound of returning birds, the blooming of certain plants, the movements of the sun, and the changes of the moon.

They further insisted on the need for “exploring comprehensive cosmological perspectives and communitarian environmental ethics as the most compelling context for motivating change regarding the destruction of the natural world.” Tucker and

grim wrote an article that did not go into specification of a particular group of people. This study was based on these premises, as it sought to understand the religion of this particular group of hunter-gatherers by investigating potential contributions of the religious worldview of the Sengwer in trying to mitigate the environment crisis. This study found out in chapter three that the Sengwer religious worldview has taboos, totems, rite of passage and religious specialist, all this embedded strong environmental ethics that are still relevant today.

According to John Mbiti (1969) an African man lives in a religious universe. Names of people have religious meaning in them, rocks and boulders are not just empty objects but religious objects the sound of the drum speaks a religious life. He writes about how different communities associated plants and animals with their religious worldviews. He cites that birds and chickens are used in most societies for purposes, chiefly as sacrifices either to God or to lower spiritual beings and the living dead. Stories of mythical trees are also found in most of African communities. This information motivated the researcher to investigate these aspects among the Sengwer community. Mbiti does not go into specifications of how this fauna and flora were conserved by various communities hence the study sought to find out how the Sengwer beliefs and practices contributed to the conservation of these species.

Religious organizations have pointed out the threat on global environment. This is a found in a letter written by participants of a WCC meeting in Baixada Fluminense to the Churches' adopted by the WCC Conference which was convened in connection with the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro June 1992:

The earth is in peril. Our only home is in plain jeopardy. We are at the precipice of self-destruction. For the very first time in the history of creation,

certain life-support systems of the planet are being destroyed by human actions... We continue to assault the planet. Consumption of energy continues as though it were limitless in content and benign in effect. Many animal and plant species have been led to extinction. Pollution of water, soil and air is greater than ever. Desertification and deforestation accelerate... Hunger afflicts more and more people...(WCC,2012)

This statement points out to the impending danger facing humanity. Therefore; environment degradation cannot be underestimated; hence this study heeds to the call of the Rio De Janeiro conference.

Emeji et al (2012) in their Studies on African traditional religion indicate that most African communities are environmentally friendly and sustainable, which contributes much to the natural resources sustainability and conservation. They write this concerning African Traditional religion.

The major tenet of African traditional religion and belief system lies in the belief that the abode of the gods and goddesses can be within the community. The community gods may decide to have their abodes on rock, streams, pond, tress, land or anywhere they so desire. The gods choose their followers through the rites of initiation with a core messenger who is the mouth piece of the gods living among human beings. The gods or goddess communicate their will to the people through the juju priest or chief priest. This belief system states that the gods protect the community members from harm, famine, bareness, impotence drought, epidemics, and war among others.

The Sengwer community is also an African community whose life and identity depends on the natural resources found in Embobut forest. The study sought to find out if the Sengwer people have a belief system in which the supernatural beings can be found within the community and the specific place they reside. This will go a long way in trying to understand how they treated the environment. The findings of the study in chapter three identified sacred places in the forest where supreme beings were believed to be found. These sacred places such as: Kiptaberr hill, river Ainabkoi were highly revered hence contributed to the conservation of the forest and natural

resources found therein. Majority of the respondents also revealed that there is a general belief that all trees abode spirits.

Jomo Kenyatta (1978) in his book facing Mount Kenya points out how the Agikuyu community used their religion to conserve the mountain and the natural resources found within their environment. Key among these natural resources is the Mugumo tree that was conserved through the Agikuyu religion. Apart from that there were several places in the forest that were regarded as sacred hence treated with a lot of respect and key. Kenyatta does not go into details on how various environmental resources were conserved. Hence this present study sought to find out how various natural resources such as birds, rivers; animals, snakes etc. were conserved using the Sengwer in Embobut forest as a case in point. Kenyatta further writes on how the Christian religion interfered with traditional African religion by condemning most of the African practices. This motivated this study to find out the effects of Christianity interaction with the Sengwer religion.

Segun Ogungbemi (1997) writes on how traditional Africa societies conserved the environment, he also shows how Africans had a strong environment ethic;

In our traditional relationship with nature, man and women recognize the Importance of water, land and air management. To our traditional Communities the ethics of not taking more than you need from nature is a moral code. Perhaps this explains why earth, forests, rivers and wind and other natural objects are traditionally believed to be both natural and divine. The philosophy behind this belief may not necessarily be religious, but a natural means by which the human environment can be preserved. The ethics of care is essential to traditional understanding of environmental protection and conservation (Ogungbemi, 1997, p. 204).

Similar view is expressed by Godfrey Tangwa who says that the relationship between “plants, animals, and inanimate things between the sacred and the profane, matter and

spirit, the communal and the individual, is a slim and flexible one” (Tangwa, 2004, p.389). The above work by Ogungbemi and Tangwa suffers from challenge of generalization since it does not point out a specific community. This study sought to fill this gap by taking a case study of the Sengwer community.

Lynn White (White, 2003) is among the first scholars to study about the relationship between religion and ecology. According to him, “what people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Since Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny...that is, by religion” (White, 2003, p. 15). Whites assertion that, “What we do about Ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship” (Ibid, 2003, p. 35) provided a plausible conceptual framework for this study. This sought to know the attitudes and beliefs of the Sengwer people concerning the environment so as to understand how they influence the conservation of Embobut forest.

Researchers are increasingly focusing on the role of moral beliefs on social issues, including the environment. According to Farrel (2011):

Few concepts are as important to explaining social life as are moral ideas—namely, social constructions of right versus wrong and good versus bad, what is desirable, and what justice, equality, and the ‘good life’ look like...How individuals and social groups relate to the environment is also deeply tied to moral beliefs about what is good and right vis-à-vis the environment.

Thus religious beliefs and practices provide the moral obligation for human beings to treat natural resources with utmost care. Religion guided human beings on what they were expected of in their interaction with the environment. This was critically examined within the context of the Sengwer because; since Farrel does not mention a specific group of people whose religion tied them to their environment.

Religion is an important source of these moral beliefs. Gardner (2002) asserts that: “In the most general terms, religion is an orientation to the cosmos and to our role in it. It offers people a sense of ultimate meaning and the possibility for personal transformation and celebration of life. Hence religion serves as an important influence on environmental attitudes and influence.” Blackmore et al.,(2013) emphasis this when they say values motivate us to act, this values are formed out of religion, hence different actions will be taken depending on our values in regard to environment. There was need to study the positive environmental values among the Sengwer that can be used to promote environment conservation. The study found out that in chapter three that the Sengwer religious worldview is the main source of ethics and values that guided the morality of the community towards the environment. The rules, customs and traditions beneath the religion provided the impetus that enabled the community to live in harmony with their environment.

Jeremiah Tangui (2014), in his studies on the role of community based organizations in environment conservation in Kapcherop division Elgeyo Marakwet, postulates that the Community Based Organizations (CBOs) play a vital role in the conservation of the environment. He also points out the environment degradation in this area, is as a result of human encroachment in the forest cover (Tangui, 2014). He further points out on the need to study the local people in regard to environment conservation. Tangui’s study is based only on community based organizations; however he didn’t address how beliefs and practices of these people influence natural environment resources conservation. Therefore the present study sought to investigate the religious worldview of the Sengwer in natural environment conservation with a view of enabling the conservation of the forest by the local people using their religion. The

study revealed in chapter three that the Sengwer community attached beliefs to various natural environment resources found in their locality such as trees, animals, water bodies and hills. The beliefs and practices played a major role in the conservation of natural environment resources.

Kipkorir and Kareithi (2012) in their article on “Human and Natural Factors in the Deterioration of Indigenous Irrigation Furrows in Marakwet, Kenya”, shows how the livelihood of the Marakwet are at risk as a result of environment degradation which affects the irrigation systems especially in the semi-arid. In their study they mention in passing some of the rituals and taboos that are used in conserving the furrows. Their study was limited to furrows hence this study aimed to go deeper and wider in to understand the beliefs and practices of the Sengwer that affect Embobut forest environment.

Kassagam (1997) studies about names and cultural beliefs about birds amongst the Marakwet peoples of Kenya. He goes into details how the Marakwet had a bird culture made up of many beliefs that kept the birds loved by all. His study is only limited to the Marakwet and birds alone who constitute part of the natural environmental resources. The study aimed at identifying the beliefs and practices of the Sengwer people on all aspects that constitute the environment, among them including animals, trees, snakes, and insects.

Manjunath (2007, p. 76) points out on the need for countries to have a large forest cover. He recommends one third percentage of forest cover in developing counties and sixty percent in hilly areas. He further states the seriousness and importance of this when he states that “almost the entire block of developing countries and the poor

countries of the Third World are situated in the tropical zone and that any disturbance to the forest in this zone has serious repercussions on the lives of the people and the environment". Manjunath does not point out the steps that should be taken for countries to meet the recommended forest cover. This study sought to find out how religious worldview of the Sengwer people can be used and incorporated into the environment conservation measures to avoid the impending danger. In Kenyan Vision 2030 social pillar, Kenya aims to provide its citizens with a clean, secure, and sustainable environment by the year 2030. To achieve this, the nation has set goals such as increasing forest cover from less than three per cent of its land base at present to four per cent by 2012 and to lessen by half all environment related diseases by the same time (GOK, 2007). The Government has realized that the achievement of Vision 2030 depends on maintaining the natural systems that support agriculture, energy supplies, livelihood strategies, and tourism. This study comes in to try and facilitate the achievement of Kenya Vision 2030 and to ensure that the religious and cultural practices of the people are incorporated as part of the measures to conserve the environment in order to achieve success.

Kibet, Stanly & Nyamweru, C(2008) have done research on the Kaya forest found at the Kenyan coast which has been conserved owing to the fact that the forest has been used as sacred place where prayers, rituals, sacrifices, and burials took place. To safeguard the sacredness and sanctity of the forest: The Kaya council of elders has employed a system of rules and regulations, religious beliefs and practices to ensure that the Kaya forest is protected. This has led to the conservation of the Kaya forest to be deeply entrenched in the life and traditional Mijikenda culture. The Kaya forests have been protected nationally by Kenyan act of parliament, the National Museums

and Heritage Act of 2006. Internationally, the Kaya forests have been gazetted as World Heritage Sites of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) which has helped in the conservation of the forest. This study sought to find out how the Sengwer can conserve Embobut forest through their beliefs and practices and this has been addressed in chapter three of this thesis.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Conference) of 1992 through Local Agenda 21, and the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention) of 1998 recognized the importance of public participation in environmental decision-making. But unfortunately in most instances this has been viewed as a mere administrative formality, sector oriented and therefore limited in scope. Hence environmental degradation has been attributed to lack of public participation. This has posed a challenge to efforts fighting environmental degradation. This prompted the researcher to find out if the Sengwer have been involved in environment decision making. Findings from the field indicate that the Sengwer have been sidelined in decisions concerning the conservation of natural resource by the government and World Bank initiatives. This study comes in to try and recommend possible measures of public participation among them the inclusion of the religious aspiration of the local people in natural environment conservation. Findings of the study in chapter four indicate that, despite the Sengwer community facing a lot of challenges, they are still rich in conservatory knowledge expressed through the religious beliefs and practices that can be harnessed for natural environment resources conservation. The study has recommended possible ways of

how Sengwer can partner with other stakeholders to curb environmental degradation in chapter five.

Simon Omare (2006) in his thesis on the role of Isukha beliefs and practices in the conservation of Kakamega forest suggests that the Isukha beliefs and practices play a significant role in conservation. He further writes that these beliefs and practices regulate the utilization of environmental resources, creates awareness of the kind of environmental resources available, offer skills of utilizing environmental resources and protects certain resources from human obliteration. The Sengwer are a sub tribe of the Kalenjin tribe while the Isukha are a sub tribe of the Luhya tribe hence there is a difference in regard to their religious cultural beliefs and practices. This thesis is about the Sengwer people who are found in a different geographical location with a different history and past. This study was undertaken in order to find out the contribution of the Sengwer in environment conservation. Omare further points out challenges such as: urbanization, westernization, secularization and government policies that have cut out people from involving themselves in forest conservation (ibid). This prompted the researcher to find out the challenges faced by the Sengwer community in their attempt to conserve natural environment which have been addressed in chapter four.

Gardner (2011) asserts that despite religion playing an important ally to environment movements the two have had a tenacious historical relationship. Various issues have reduced the cooperation between religion and environmentalist among them include the mutual misunderstandings, the longstanding rift between science and religion, different views on humans' relationship to the natural world, and religion's association with conservative social and political views, and the challenge of western

religions who disregard African religion as backward. This led the researcher to find out some of the challenges experienced in this locality by the Sengwer people. He further points out that some traditional societies are resurrecting abandoned rituals to revive their cultures and preserve the ecological foundations of their existence (ibid: 35). Basing on this, the study sought to find out how the indigenous Sengwer beliefs and practices is being revived, upheld and highly regarded amidst the many challenges the community face. The findings from the field revealed that the Sengwer community has adopted various ways of coping up with the challenges they face in their attempt to conserve the environment which have been addressed in chapter four.

1. 8 Theoretic framework

The study is guided by the social functional theory and human environment relation theory. The social functional theory guided us in studying the first of objective on determining the Sengwer religious worldview on natural environment resources Embobut forest. The human environment relation theory guided us into the second objective of exploring the influence of the Sengwer religious worldview on the conservation of natural environment resources.

The study was based on Social functional theory of social science. This theory was first brought forth by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) in his book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*. Later, the theory was expounded by Radcliffe-Brown, along with Malinowski and others who took a functional position. They rejected earlier evolutionary ideas of understanding religion. To them what mattered most was the role that religion played in societies but not how religion began.

Radcliffe-Brown, for instance, believed that religion has a valuable function in society whether its beliefs and practices are false or erroneous. He submitted that:

We may entertain at least as a possibility the theory that any religion is an important or even essential part of the social machinery, as are morality and law, part of the complex system by which human beings are enabled to live together in an orderly arrangement of social relations. From this point of view we deal not with the origins but with the social functions of religions, i.e. the contribution that they make to the formation and maintenance of social order. (Radcliffe-Brown 1952, p, 154)

Basing on Radcliffe argument, the key to understanding the religion of any group of people is through the social function of their religion. The environment is part of the social order which human beings ought to maintain for the universe to function well. Through this theory, the study sought to establish and identify the Sengwer religious worldview and its function towards creating a cohesive and harmonious environment in Embobut forest and Cherangany hills by extension. The findings of the study identified and established that the Sengwer religious worldview has a functional role of ensuring that the natural resources found in the environment are well conserved and sustainably utilized for the society's harmony and coexistence. Religious beliefs are attached to various natural environmental resources such as hills, animals, trees and birds. The mutual dependence between human beings and the environment motivates people to use their beliefs and practices to conserve the environment and utilize the natural environmental resources sustainably.

The study is also based on human environment relation theory which states that the relationships between human and environment can be conceptualized in different ways as pointed out by (Milton 1996, p. 40, 66). He categorizes the relationship into three broad forms. First, human beings adapt to the environment and, as such, are influenced by their environment. Second, by adapting to their environment, human

beings can also influence their environment to suit their needs, implying that they are capable of influencing or shaping the environment as well. Third [taking the first two interpretations into account] it is the nature of the human-environment relationship that can result in both human beings and the environment influencing or shaping each other.

The human-environment theory is a useful framework for this study. This is because it recognizes that human beings are a necessity, in a relationship with their environment. It is in people's interests for this relationship to be cordial. Therefore, they take all effort to ensure that the environment is well conserved. The theory also shows the intrinsic relationship between the society and the environment as neither distinct nor separate entities. The harmonious and close relationship between traditional people and their environments has even been recognized by some international organizations, such as USAID, which holds that indigenous and traditional peoples have unique cultures that may be closely integrated with the local natural environment this close relationship can make indigenous groups a powerful force for conservation (USAID, 2005). This is also in agreement with 1992 Rio de Janeiro *Convention on Biological Diversity*, in article 10 which acknowledged the need to protect and encourage customary use of biological resources in accordance with traditional cultural practices that are compatible with conservation or sustainable use requirements.

The theory relates to this study because it shows direct relationship between the interaction of man and his environment. Therefore, it can be argued that human beings through their religion have a role to play in influencing the environment. This can be both in a positive or negative way. Guided by this theoretical formulation, this research was able to determine the influence of Sengwer worldview which promotes

environment conservation. Findings of the study revealed that in order for the Sengwer to maintain a cordial relationship with natural resources they used; taboos, totems, religious specialist, the council of elders and rites of passage to influence the conservation of natural environment resources. Through this theory, the study has also shown that both human beings and the natural environment depend on each other for mutual benefit.

The social functional theory and the human environment theory enabled us to understand the symbiotic relationship between human beings and the environment that has to be balanced to ensure that the natural environment resources are well conserved.

1.9.0 Research methodology

1.9.1 Sources of data

The source of data for this study was both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources of data was obtained from thirty key informants who have knowledge on Sengwer religious worldview and knowledge systems on natural environmental resources , the challenges they face, how they are coping with these challenges and possible ways of upholding these indigenous beliefs through oral questions, interviews, participant observation and focus group discussion. Secondary sources of data was obtained from written materials such as journals, magazines, newspaper, government publications, archival materials, seminar papers, dissertations, books and articles that were useful to the study.

1.9.2 Research design

A research design is a plan of obtaining answers to research questions. The study was qualitative in nature. The study sought to get an in-depth understanding of the phenomena by investigating the beliefs, practices, opinions, behaviors and attitudes of the Sengwer people in relation to environment conservation hence the study was descriptive and exploratory in nature. In order to understand the Sengwer religious worldview on natural environment conservation, qualitative techniques which includes interviews, focused group discussion and participant observation were used to collect data. These techniques were also used to investigate the challenges faced by Sengwer community and how they are coping with these challenges. The bulk of the information was obtained from field work because there is limited literature in relation to the subject under study. The data collected was analyzed and put in a narrative form to describe the Sengwer religious worldview, beliefs and knowledge systems in relation to natural environmental resources in environmental conservation.

1.9.3 Sampling Procedure.

The rationale for research is to make generalization or to draw inferences based on samples about the parameters of population from which the samples are taken (Yin, 1993). Miller (1991) suggests that a researcher needs to select only few items from the universe for his study purposes, based on a representative sample that is often better than one based on a larger sample or on the whole population for there is no need interviewing large number of people saying the same thing. The sample size hence should be optimal basing on the researchers discretion that fulfills the requirements of efficiency, representativeness, reliability and flexibility (Karma, 1999). The choice for the sample size was influenced by specific population

parameters of interest and the heterogeneous or homogeneous nature of the sample population.

Purposive sampling method was used to get key informants to this study. Through this technique the researcher deliberately selects his or her informants on the basis of the knowledge or experience that the informants possess, with the aim of securing informants that will be able to provide the relevant answers to the researcher's questions (Bernard, 2002; Dixon, et al., 1987). The informants were selected basing on those whose activities and actions affect the environment, those who have adequate knowledge about the Sengwer people, their indigenous beliefs and practices and those who have environment and ecological knowledge. Hence, not everybody was part of the study. This method was used to identify groups and various organizations that play a role in environmental issues.

Snowball sampling techniques was used to select individual members of the targeted groups. The local people themselves referred the researcher to people whom they considered to be knowledgeable about the Sengwer indigenous religion and their environmental issues. In a situation whereby more than three names were given from the same village, a focused group discussion was arranged.

1.9.4 Target population

The target population for the study was Sengwer who live within and at the periphery of Embobut forest and within Cherangany water catchment at large and also those whose activities have a direct influence on the environment. The study had the following categories of interviewees among them include: traditional rulers or chiefs,

traditional elders, rain makers and herbalists. These particular groups have a direct involvement and participation in environmental issues and that's why they were subject to the study.

Thirty key informants who are have knowledge about the indigenous Sengwer religion and environmental issues were the subject to the study. Out of the thirty respondents drawn from the areas surrounding the forest, fifteen were subjected to three focused group discussion of five members per group. Then other fifteen were subjected to oral interviews. This represented a considerable population size targeted for the study that provided relevant and adequate information for analysis. The study focused on Embobut forest found in Marakwet Sub County.

1.9.5 Data collections methods

The methods of data collection in this study were both: participant and non-participant observation, personal interview and focus group discussions. Non participant observation was used to collect data on the various natural resources found in Embobut forest. Natural environmental resources such as rivers, sacred trees, and hills were observed and recorded through, note taking. Participant observation was carried out to observe the religious life and practices of the Sengwer people, the various rituals and festivals carried out. Members of the focused group discussion demonstrated how the prayer rituals are done, songs related to natural environment resources were also sang.

The study involved in depth interviews, this method was employed in collecting data on the influence of the Sengwer religious worldview on environment conservation and the challenges they face and ways of upholding their beliefs and practices. These

interviews were based on certain considerations such as interviewee status in the society, occupation, place of the interview, and age of the interviewed persons. This helped in having a strong reliability test on the information collected. Fifteen in-depth interviews were conducted with the religious specialists, traditional leaders, traditional medicine personnel and elderly people in the society. An interview schedule was used to guide the interview process. This was deemed suitable because the researcher was able to engage respondents and questions were formulated and asked spontaneously as the interview progresses. These personal interviews carried out by use of a predetermined set of questions also helped in improving the reliability and validity of the information collected since the same questions were asked to all the participants in the study. This method was suitable to the study because in depth information about the phenomena under study was obtained.

Focus group discussions were also used in the study. The researcher arranged three focus group discussions of five members who included: the traditional elders, herbalist, religious specialists, youths, hunters and gatherers. Through this interactive discourse, participants were able to offer insights on their perspective in regard to their religious worldview on natural environment resource conservation, challenges facing the community and ways of upholding their religion hence revealing clues to the social contexts that shape their opinions, attitudes and behavior on environmental issues. This method was also important because the information given by the participants was able to be challenged and corrected by the participants in the group; they were also able to assist in memory recollection and dealing with vested interest and bias by the members. Hence the dynamics in a focused group became an instrument

of reliability test. Therefore, the three focused group discussion provided adequate information for the research questions.

1.9.6 Data analysis.

Qualitative method of data analysis was employed in this study. This involved looking at the information gathered critically. Thematic analysis was also used where by data from various sources was organized basing on the search for themes of relevance to the research topic. Data obtained from both secondary and primary sources was categorized in accordance with the study objectives, which later formed the various chapters of this study. The recorded data was transcribed and coded before compilation. Direct quotations and narration was also used in presenting the findings.

1.9.5 Ethical consideration

The researcher first informed the participants about the purpose of the study. Participants were informed that their names were optional therefore they were free to provide their identity or decline. In cases where respondents were giving sensitive information or they were not comfortable if their names were revealed, the researcher used pseudo names. Consent was sought first for participation in the study and later for citing their names. Therefore, the researcher observed anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Kiswahili and English were used during the study but in the event that the participants were not ad versant with these languages, the research assistant that came from the Sengwer community helped in translation. Permission from relevant bodies were sought before commencing the research, this was from Moi university graduate school and the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and the local authorities in Elgeyo Marakwet

County. Accuracy, sincerity presentation and reporting of the study findings were the sole responsibility of the researcher.

1.9.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the background to the study, the statement of the problem, research questions, limitation of the study and the rationale for the master's thesis. Literature related to the study has also been reviewed. The chapter has also described the research methods used to collect data. They included participant and non-participant, observation, personal interview and focused group discussions. The next chapter presents the context under which the study was conducted.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0. THE SOCIAL, HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT OF THE AREA OF STUDY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is an overture to the study findings. This chapter presents background information about the Sengwer within Embobut forest in Elgeyo Marakwet County. The main aim is to establish the relationship between the traditional Sengwer people and the natural environmental resources found within their locality that sustain their livelihood. The chapter expounds the historical setting of the Sengwer people, geographical description of the area of study, the social and political organization of the community under study.

This chapter is divided into various sections. The first section deals with the geographical location of the study area. The drainage and population of the area has also been discussed. The second section has outlined the historical description of the Sengwer community. The migration and settlement of the Sengwer people has been presented in order to understand and trace their origin. Through this, the researcher will trace the evolution of some religious beliefs and practices and how this ethnic group found itself in the current location. Later, the section discusses the economic organization of the community, this is of essence to the study since it highlights on how the community utilized the forest for their economic gain.

The third section deals with the significance of the forest to the Sengwer community. It identifies plants that had medicinal value together with the wild fruits. The County Development plan on environment has been presented under this section, in order to understand their contribution in conserving the natural resource found in Embobut.

2.2 The geographical location of Embobut forest

Embobut forest is located in Elgeyo Marakwet in Rift Valley, Kenya. It is the largest reserve among the thirteen forest reserves that make up the Cherangany hills water catchment. The forest is located within an area defined by 1° 16' North, 35° 26' East, the altitude ranges from 2,000 meters reaching 3,365 meters above sea level (asl) at Cheptoket peak in the north-central section. The forest covers approximately 120,000 hectares and rises up to 3500 meters. The forest is characterized by indigenous species and afro alpine vegetation above 3300 meters. The location of this forest makes it unique in terms of the species of flora and fauna found inside the forest as seen in chapter three.

2.3 Drainage

The forest is important for water catchment, and sits astride the watershed between Lake Victoria and Lake Turkana basins. The forest has streams to the west of the water shed that feed the Nzoia river system, which flows into Lake Victoria such as Nzoia, Kapolet, Weiwei and Saiwa. Other streams flow to the east into the Kerio river system which drains into Lake Turkana, such as; Moron, Kapolet, Embobut, Arror and Siga. The foregoing drainage systems make the forest an asset that cannot be ignored by many.

According to the 2009 census of Kenya report, it is estimated that the Sengwer are currently 33,187 currently living inside and outside Embobut forest, while others spend in Trans Nzoia and West Pokot counties (KNBS, 2009). Majority of them still live inside the forest despite the evictions few others are scattered in other areas. The ancestral neighbors of the Sengwer people are the Maasai, the Keiyo, Marakwet, Pokot, Karamajong, Sebei, Kony, Ogiek and Nandi, who bordered them before the colonial and postcolonial government altered the boundaries.

Every member of the clan and community at large had an obligation to protect the natural resources found in the forest, these resources were core and central to the community existence and way of life. Therefore, the community came up with various ways of ensuring these resources are protected as it will be discussed later in chapter three.

2.5 The social historical description of the Sengwer

The Sengwer indigenous people are an ethnic minority who are traditionally hunters and gatherers, whose ancestral lands are located in the Rift Valley province in western Kenya, in and around the forests of the Cherangany Hills. Currently they are characterized as an indigenous marginalized, oppressed, mal represent, not well educated, poor, powerless and discriminated. This is evident through the forced displacements and evictions from the forest by the Government of Kenya to this community therefore disregarding their basic human rights as enshrined in the constitution (Yator, personal communication, August 27, 2016). Yator further says that the Sengwer livelihood, health system and culture fully depend on the natural resources found in the forests, that's why the forest is very vital not only to their

livelihood but for their survival too. Since the forest provides them with spiritual patronage and supports their cultural and traditional practices they are bound to protect the forest jealously.

The Kenyan constitution recognizes the Sengwer as minorities and marginalized group, and their rights are entrenched in article 56. The Parliamentary Select Committee report on the Resettlement of the Internally Displaced Persons in Kenya recognized the Sengwer communities as indigenous aboriginals inhabiting Cherangany hills since 18th Century.

“The Sengwer also referred to as Kimala are the indigenous people of Embobut [...] scattered all over Embobut forest”. There are one thousand five hundred and forty six (1546) households of the Sengwer people in Embobut forest.” “The Embobut community had lived in the forest since the 18th century and the land they occupied was their ancestral land and even after the coming of the colonial government, they were issued with permits to continue living in the land.”(PSC report, 2012).

They utilized the forest and the natural resources found there as anchorage for their ancestors and forefathers. This has led them to vehemently reject attempts to be evicted from the forest because of the attachment to the forest as their ancestral land. The Kenyan government has failed to abide by the constitution and its international obligations such as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; in respecting the rights of the Sengwer as a marginalized community.

The Sengwer were nicknamed Cherangany by the Maasai who were their neighbors, meaning “the people who had no cattle” (Kibet, personal communication, August 28, 2016).” Kibet further explained that they were nicknamed as Dorobo by their neighbors because they were scattered all over after their boundaries were altered by the colonial masters. Dorobo also meant that a group of people who were depending

on hunting and bee keeping, this term was also used by other communities to describe a hunter and gathers tribe (Blackburn 1970, p. 3). It is alleged that the Sengwer are a distinct ethnic group, “we are not Marakwet, but Sengwer.....” Arap Kamussein, (Kenya Land Commission, 1932).

Just like other Kalenjin sub tribes the Sengwer trace their route from Egypt (Sambu, 2007). They originated from Misri which is believed to be the current Egypt. During their migration they followed river Nile and first settled on the slopes of Mount Elgon and later on the plains of Uasin Gishu. Myths further trace their origin from their great patriarchy to a man named ‘Sengwer’. Sengwer gave birth to two children named Sirikwa and Mitya. After having a short stint at Mount Elgon, they moved to the the plains of Uasin Gishu where they interacted with the Maasai who lived at Uasin (Yator, personal communication, August 27, 2016).

Initially, the Sengwer operated between two places (*Soi, and Mosop*). During cold season they lived at *Soi* lowlands but during dry seasons lived at *Mosop* highlands. The descendants of Mitya loved and settled in the highlands while progenies of Sirikwa settled in the plains of the current Trans Nzoia county, Uasin Gishu county and Kakamega County. Sirikwa’s first born son was named Chepkoilel. The foregoing explains why the plains have since been referred to as Kapchepkoilel. During the fight against colonial government Africans were moved further into the forest, as they made way for the white settlers (Kiptum, personal communication, August 26, 2016).

The descendants of Mitya and Sirikwa formed the various clans of the Sengwer people that include Kapteteke, Kipsirat, Kamengetiony (Kopoch & Kapkotet), Kaplema, Kamesieu, Kapchepororwo, Kapchepar (Kaptoyoi), Kapumpo, Kaptogom, Kapcherop, Kaki-sango, Kimarich and (Kamosus), Kapsorme (Kapseto). The ancestral territory for the Sengwer starts from River Kiporoom in Uasin Gishu County (Kipruto, personal communication, August 26, 2016). It extends along River Kapsumbeywet through Ziwa (Sirikwa) centre, Moiben Posta and Kose hills in Uasin Gishu. From Kose hills it goes down to join River Moiben. Kipruto further explains that the boundary extends to River Moiben to the confluence of Ko'ngipsebe and Kimowo streams. It turns eastwards to cover areas of Maron sub-location in Embopot location in Marakwet district. Towards the west it extends to Kamolokon along Marakwet/West Pokot and Marakwet boundary. From here it extends to Sebit, Somor, then to Kongelai and up to River Swom. From River Swom to the confluence of river Swom and Cheptenden.. From Cheptenden river to the confluence of Cheptenden river and Moiben river where these two rivers confluence with Kiboorum. The Sengwer people occupied both the highlands and lowlands within this territory. These areas were used by the Sengwer for hunting wild animals, collecting, fruits, making beehives and collecting medicine (Chebii, personal communication, November 25, 2016).

When the colonial government came in, they took the lowlands and converted the land into farm lands to produce wheat and maize. The Sengwer remained within the forest which was home to the spiritual patronage. Since the Sengwer people were made up of different clans they divided various part of the Cherangany hill. Each clan had its own territory where they were to carry out all their activities such as hunting,

gathering and collecting honey. A person was restricted to do all their activities within their territories. If somebody wanted to hunt, collect honey medicine and fruits from another territory they were to seek permission from elders of that particular territory. This system ensured that resources were utilized in a sustainable by punishing culprits who destroyed the communal resources (Kimeli, personal communication, November 25, 2016).

2. 6 The Sengwer Ways of governance

The traditional way of governance of the Sengwer community was made up of clans. Each clan had its own portion of ancestral territory whose boundaries were marked by rivers, hills, trees and stones. The management of the forest as it will be discussed later was done under council of elders derived from various clans. Each of the clan had a portion of the plains and the forest which forms the Cherangany hills. Hunting and gathering was well managed and coordinated by the clans. Therefore, it was not permitted for a member of a certain clan to hunt, harvest honey and gather fruits in other clans' territories (Kiptoo, personal communication, August 26, 2016).

Each clan was led by elders known as Orkoi which means overseers who were in charge of the harmonious living of the members of the clan. Elders from each clan were responsible for coming up with rules and regulation governing the community. The elders played a key role in ensuring sustainable use of natural environmental resources as will be discussed in the preceding chapter 3.3. The Sengwer social life was based on communalism; individualism was highly discouraged through their communal, social and economic activities such as: hunting and gathering and harvesting of honey.

Limo, (personal communication, November 26, 2016) asserts that each clan had the responsibility of taking care of the all the resources within their territory on behalf of the community. There were some resources which were only found within a clan's territory but their usage was for the whole community for instance sacred sites in the forest.

2.7 Economic organization of the Sengwer people

The indigenous Sengwer relied on herbal medicine, bee keeping, and hunting and gathering to earn their living. However, their current economic life has changed to rearing of sheep, goats and cows in order to meet with the current economic situations. They also practice bee keeping, a high number of bee hive is viewed as a sign of wealth. Basing on the foregoing, a person with many beehives was accorded respect among the Sengwer. Later, their interaction with the Arabs, the Maasai and the influence of the colonial government led some to start practicing shift cultivation and livestock rearing though their main livelihood activity is hunting and gathering.

They practiced barter trade with the neighboring communities such as the Maasai with whom they exchanged meat and honey for agricultural and animal products such as goats, sheep and cattle (Koech, personal communication, November 24, 2016). This prompted the researcher to enquire about their relationship between hunting and gathering and bee keeping with natural resource conservation and how they ensured efficient practices, which shall be discussed in the next chapter.

2.8 Significance of Embobut forest to the Sengwer

Embobut forest plays a significant role to the lives of the Sengwer community; it is an essential to their life existence. The forest is a vital watershed; its conservation is important for adequate water supply for domestic use and animal consumption. The forest also acts as a tourist attraction for both local and international tourists; the legendary Kiptaberr hill located at the southern part of Embobut forest has a good scenic view.

The forest also sustains the livelihood of the community through providing food and medicinal products. Trees found in the forest are used by community to make and hang beehives; these trees were not to be cut down anyhow because of their economic significance to the community and the religious belief that all trees had spirits that were not to be harmed as it shall be expounded in the next chapter (Bowen, personal communication, November 25, 2016).

The forest is the main source of food for the Sengwer people who are hunters and gathers since time immemorial. The Sengwer made beehives on specific types of trees; they harvested honey at different seasons of the year. Honey constituted the main part of their diet for instance honey is mixed with water and used as their main daily drink for breakfast. It is also used to brew local Sengwer beer. Honey is used in community ceremonies; for instance during marriage ceremony honey is given to the mother of the bride as part of the dowry before marriage. On the other hand, the night before marriage, the bride and the bridegroom had to smear honey on their future house. Apart from honey being used in traditional ceremonies they used to cure different types of ailments. For instance if a child eats poisonous wild fruits they were

given honey to neutralize the poison (Jerop, personal communication, November 25, 2016).

The Sengwer traditional people also hunted specific type of animals that were not part of the totemic animal for a particular clan; they collected blood and meat from the hunted animal which they later mixed with honey. These constituted their main food. They also collected wild fruits and berries from the forest to ensure that their food was balance diet. Apart from bees providing honey for the Sengwer, it also played a key role in propagation of seedlings for the indigenous trees and plants through pollution. Women were responsible of gathering fruits while men were in charge of collecting honey from beehives and natural places such as from holes in trees or underground (Chebet, personal communication, November 25, 2016). Though, not all fruits were eaten there were specific wild fruits to be eaten as mentioned below:

Table 2.1 Fruits found in Embobut forest

Sengwer Name	Botanical Name
Lamai	<i>Sisylum guineensis</i>
Locilie	<i>Allophyllus abyssinica</i>
Monmon	<i>Rubus steudneri</i>
Kapchebimin	<i>Unknown 1</i>
Tunguruwo	<i>Flacourtia indica</i>
Mokoyo	<i>Grewia villosa</i>
Sosurwo	<i>Ensete ventricosa</i>
Komol	<i>Vangueria madagascariensis</i>
Mindililwo	<i>Dovyalis abyssinica</i>
Msongor	<i>unknown 2</i>

Source: (Kibet, personal communication, November 24, 2016)

The above table shows a list of some of the wild fruits found in Embobut forest. These wild fruits constituted the main diet of the Sengwer community. Since the forest provided the Sengwer with food it was mandatory for them to ensure that the natural resources found there are conserved lest they risked their survival. The advent of modernity has partly affected their dietary habits since currently they have incorporated other foreign types of food such as potatoes, maize and beans which are foreign to them.

2.9 Medicinal value of plants and trees

Plants and trees also played a vital role among the Sengwer people; they were used for medicinal purpose to treat different types of ailments. The table below shows some of the medicinal values of different plants.

Table 2.2 Medicinal trees and plants

Sengwer Name	Scientific Name	Medicinal Value
Cheptuya	<i>Euclea divinorum</i>	Treats worms
Lobcho	<i>Dryopteris inaequalis</i>	
Cheptegaa	<i>Yushania alpina</i>	Reduces acid in the body
Mindilililwo	<i>Dovyalis abyssinica</i>	Treats sexual transmitted diseases Treats barrenness
Eboria	<i>Unknown 3</i>	Treats STDs
Kaptolongwa	<i>Unknown 4</i>	Treats flu
Nerkwo	<i>Olinia rochettiana</i>	Treats flu
Ben barks	<i>Podocarpus glacilior</i>	Treats rashes
Tinwa	<i>Schefflera volkensii</i>	Treats wounds and stops bleeding
Toboswo	<i>Croton macrostachyus</i>	Stops bleeding
Tendwa barks	<i>Prunus africana</i>	Treats diarrhoea

Source :(Chebet, personal communication, November 24, 2016)

The community has a wide range of medicinal products derived from the forest that treats different ailments. Herbalists were reluctant to mention more of their traditional medicine products. Their dietary habits and traditional way of life have been partly affected through contact with the outside world and the various agents of social change as discussed in chapter four.

2.10 Elgeyo Marakwet county development plan and conservation of Embobut forest

The county government of Elgeyo Marakwet has a development plan that covers many issues among them, environmental issues. The plan identifies various natural resources found in the forest. The county government also recognizes the various environmental challenges facing the county such as environment degradations, climate change and its effects. The plan goes ahead to outline various mitigation measures to tackle environment degradation and climate change, this include strategies like afforestation, protection of water catchment areas that has already been initiated, proper land use practices and enforcement of acts and laws (County government of Elgeyo Marakwet plan, 2013). Despite these efforts, the county government has not dealt with the illegal forceful evictions of the Sengwer people from the forest. The plan does not outline how the county government can partner with the Sengwer people in conserving the natural environmental resources found in Embobut forest. The county depends on the national government in the conservation of the Cherangany hills water catchment area. Therefore, there is need to come up with proper county policies and strategies that put in mind community land and their right to ancestral land as outlined in the constitution of Kenya in the attempt to conserve the natural environmental resources using these indigenous knowledge. The

research has recommended in chapter five (5.2) possible measures that the national government and the county government can undertake to conserve natural environmental resources without violating the human rights of the aborigine Sengwer.

2.11 Conclusion

The preceding chapter has described the social historical overview of the Sengwer people, their migration route, and their social organization and their economic activities. A brief geographical description of the study area which includes; the drainage of the study area and the population has been provided to locate the study area and relate it to the topic under study. The findings of the study have clearly shown how the natural environment resources were important to the Sengwer community since their lives were wholly dependent on it both for cultural, dietary, economical and medicinal purpose. The succeeding chapter will present the key findings from the field in relation to the research topic.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 THE SENGWER RELIGIOUS WORLDVIEW ON NATURAL ENVIRONMENT RESOURCES IN EMBOBUT FOREST

3.1 Introduction

The chapter explores the religious aspect of the community which is crucial to the study. The foregoing is essential because beliefs that relate to the environment stem from their religion. The religious organization of this ethnic group that provides the basis of the Sengwer worldview on natural resource conservation has also been discussed at length. This is done in order to give a deeper understanding of the relationship between Sengwer religion and the surrounding environment.

Later various beliefs associated with natural resources found in Embobut forest and their cultural and religious significance are presented. Thereafter, the chapter discusses the methods used by the Sengwer in conserving and regulating the utilization of natural resources.

3.2 The Sengwer Religion

The Sengwer people had a robust religious system before the advent of Christianity and agents of colonization. Unlike major world religions such as Christianity, Islam and Buddhism that trace their origin to a founder, the Sengwer religion has neither known founder nor written scriptures. Just like other African religions, the Sengwer belief system is handed down from one generation to another orally. The foregoing claim alludes to John Mbiti's (1976, p. 115) assertion concerning African religion that,

“African religion is the product of thinking and experiences of our forefathers. They formed religious ideas, they formulated religious beliefs, they observed religious ceremonies and rituals, they told proverbs and myth which carried religious meanings, and they evolved laws and customs which safeguarded the life of the individual and his community.”

Sengwer religion is in line with what African scholars have written widely about African traditional religion (Awolalu et al 1979, Idowu and Bolaji 1962). For instance A. C. Leonard (1966, p. 429) vividly says that

“the religion of these natives [Africans] is their existence and their existence is their religion It supplies the principle on which their law is dispensed and morality adjudicated. The entire organization of their common life is so interwoven with it that they cannot get away from it. Like the Hindus they eat religiously, drink religiously and sing religiously. ”

Borrowing from this, therefore means that the life of the Sengwer is interwoven with their religion; religion provides meaning for their lives and existence.

The Sengwer people believe that they originated from a common ancestor called Sengwer who was created by *Assis*. They don't have a conclusive story of how creation of the universe and everything in it happened but they believe that everything in the universe originated from God (Terekoi, personal communication, November 15, 2016).

Research participants asserted that the Sengwer believe in and recognize the existence of a supernatural being called *Assis* who is represented by the sun (Kipkorir, personal communication November 18, 2016). All prayers are directed to *Assis*. The Sengwer made it a tradition by praying thrice a day; in the morning, at noontime and in the evening. Apart from daily prayers, they prayed for blessings before hunting, for protection and healing. The foregoing is in alignment with other African religions as adverted by John Mbiti (1976, p. 3) who contends that, “most of the prayers are

addressed directly and specifically to God. He is normally mentioned by his personal or attributive name but sometimes he is addressed only by implications.” In a few circumstances prayers and sacrifices are addressed and dedicated to spiritual beings such as *Illat*, and ancestors depending on the context. This view is also buttressed by Mbiti concerning prayers in African religion when he says “A few, not more than ten per cent, are addressed to divinities, spirits, the living dead and personification of nature (trees, rivers, earth etc). In a few cases we have prayers addressed to national heroes and founders” (ibid: 3).

They have given God different attributes for instance; God is viewed as omnipresent (present everywhere), Omnipotent (all powerful) omniscient (all knowing). God exercises his powers through his main agent *Illat*, this is seen through lighting, and rain.

The spiritual world of the Sengwer indigenous religion is comprised of hierarchical deities. The most important and supreme deity being *Assis* (the sun), sometimes fondly referred to as *Chebetob chemataw* who is associated with blessings and good will. Another deity is *Illat* (god of thunder) who is associated with rain. During dry seasons, sacrifices were made to *Illat* to appease him to bring rain. He is also associated with fury and vengeance whereby he causes droughts or strikes people with lightning if he is angered. This belief made the community to always endeavor to live and be in harmony with the spiritual world by ensuring natural environmental resources are well conserved. They believe that God uses his Chief agent *Illat* to bring order in the universe and also to warn people. *Illat* also act as an intermediary between God and the Sengwer. Mbiti (1989, p. 70) postulates that Africans “held that God specifically created the spirits to act as intermediaries between Him and men.”

The Sengwer offered sacrifices and prayers to God through the intermediaries by invoking the spirits through the use of natural resources found within their environment to appease the spirits. *Illat* being the chief agent was responsible for accepting or rejecting the sacrifices.

Kiprono revealed that the Sengwer revered and venerated spirits especially ancestral spirits (personal communication, November 11, 2016). The belief in ancestors is intrinsically connected to the Sengwer religion. According A. E. Orobator (2008, p. 107 “an ancestor is a blood relative of a living community; this relationship could be of common parentage or shared ancestry.” The belief in ancestors is linked to the community’s close attachment to the forest because they believe that the ancestral spirits live the forest, as it will be discussed in the succeeding section.

The Sengwer religion formed the basis of their worldview on natural resource conservation which coheres with their social interactions as presented in the next subsection below.

3.3.0 Sengwer worldview on natural environment resource conservation

Barker (1999, p. 522) defines worldview as the way a person tends to understand his or her relationship with social institutions, nature, objects, other people and spirituality. Worldview is also defined as a set of assumptions and presumptions that a person holds consciously or unconsciously about how they perceive reality (Kurka 2004; Sire 1988, p. 17). A Worldview provides people with the foundation for behavior, thought and assumption that govern how people live (Kraft 1999, p. 385, 387).

John Valk in his article, *religion or worldview: enhancing dialogue in the public square* asserts that's Tillich (1957) and others focused on worldviews as responses to life's larger concerns or questions – what is the meaning and purpose of life, how to determine right from wrong, what are one's responsibilities and obligations, and what is important and why – which in turn become the foundation of beliefs and actions (Olthuis, 1985; Sire, 2004). Basing on the above premise a peoples' worldview is capable of directing their actions towards environment conservation.

The Sengwer are part of the many tribes that are found in Africa. In order to understand their worldview we will start by understanding first what African worldview means. Makwe, (1985) defines African worldview as “an abstraction which encompasses the total way of life of the African society. It is a psychological reality referring to shared constructs, shared patterns of belief, feeling and knowledge which members of the group that subscribe to this reality carry in their minds as a guide for conduct and the definition of reality.” Basing on the foregoing, the Sengwer worldview can be defined as a set of belief systems and knowledge about the universe, the supernatural being and the place of human beings in the world. The Sengwer worldview encompasses religious beliefs and practices of the Sengwer. The Sengwer worldview is centered on five main components: the Supreme Being, the ancestors, the universe, the community and the social systems.

3.3.1 Supreme Being

The Sengwer believe in a supreme being called *Assis* whose origin is always a mystery but is represented by the sun. The Sengwer believe that the sun is the eye of the Supreme Being who cannot be seen.

The Sengwer believe *Assis* to be the creator of the macrocosm and sustainer of life. This knowledge helped them to be always aware of the surrounding. They viewed God as the provider as he provides rain for wild fruits to grow and trees to flower for the honey production and food for wild animals (Kipsang, personal communication November 15, 2016).

Intermediaries of God such as the chief agent called *Illat* is believed to reside in natural environmental resources found within the forest. For instance *Illat* is believed to reside at river confluence and waterfalls. These beliefs directed the Sengwer worldview towards natural environmental resources and accorded nature due respect lest God wrath befell them for interfering with the habitation of *Illat*.

3.3.2 Ancestors

The belief in primordial ancestors is a key component of their worldview. Commenting on ancestors in Africa Phelps rightly observed that: “The spirit of the ancestors is a vital part of the African concept of the community, in which the collective power of all members of the community-the living and the "living dead" energizes and pervades the daily life of everyone. Those ancestors who exhibit special moral virtue and strength in life are held up as spiritual guides for the living” Phelps (1990, p. 335). This belief played a significant role among the Sengwer in the conservation of natural environmental resources. It is held that the destruction of natural resources could lead to the fury and vengeance of the ancestors befalling upon the community. Nyamiti, (2005, p. 66) asserts that in Africa ancestors are believed to “enjoy a sacred super human status with special magico-religious powers that can be beneficial or even harmful to the earthly kin.” Therefore, human beings did everything right to avoid the fury of ancestors descending upon the community for

destroying natural environmental resources. The ancestors rage was avoided through rituals, sacrifices, libations, prayers and incarnations. The Sengwer held a belief that the ancestors gave them the forest to provide them with all the needs and wants for the community's existence as long as they utilized resources in a sustainable manner. Hence it was the responsibility of the community as whole to ensure peaceful co-existence with nature. (Kiprono, personal communication, November 11, 2016). Ancestors were also a linkage between the living and the Supreme Being. Due to the proximity of ancestors to God, they perform various mediating roles. Hence ancestors were entitled to constant communication with the living. Different totemic objects acted as a commemoration of the ancestors, this made totems to have a sense of sacredness. Nyamiti (2005, p. 67) postulates the relationship between human beings, ancestors and the environment when he vividly writes that "solidarity is lived and shared through prayers and rituals, whereby human and cosmic solidarity is engaged." This motivated the community to respect natural environmental resources to avoid the wrath of God through Illat and the ancestors. The peaceful co-existence between the supernatural beings and human beings enabled the preservation of natural environmental resources. The indigenous religion of the local people has been diminishing and this can be cited as one of the reasons why Kenya today is facing disastrous consequences such as floods, prolonged droughts and so forth. A lot of inspiration can be drawn from the Sengwer worldview on natural environmental resource conservation.

3.3.3 The Cosmo

The Cosmo involve everything in it including, man, animals, plants, trees, birds and insects. The Sengwer viewed the universe as a creation of God who is always

concerned about what is going on here. Therefore, man is expected to do everything that is right for God not to get angry. All the natural environment resources have a place in the universe and man is in charge of ensuring that all are in harmony by not tampering with the environment (Rotich, personal communication November 16, 2016). For instance, the Sengwer revere trees as they believed that trees were the abode of spirits which should not be harmed. It is out of this belief that whenever the Sengwer cut a tree for certain religious or cultural purposes they had to pray to the spirits inhabiting the tree (Terekoi, personal communication, November 16, 2016). The concept of trees being the abode of spirits enabled the community to conserve trees since they did not fell trees anyhow lest the wrath of *Assis* came down and punished them. The Sengwer accorded nature due reverence and respect.

The Sengwer believed that all natural environment resources found in the universe had a role to play in peaceful co-existence of the world. This led them to attach beliefs to animals, trees, hills, water bodies, birds and snakes as discussed in section (3.4). This was used as a way of conserving and ensuring sustainable utilization of natural environmental resources.

3.3.4 Community

The community formed an important part of the Sengwer worldview; individuals found their meaning in the community. This is echoed in the words “I am because we are and since we are, therefore I am” (Mbiti 2008, p. 106). Decisions and social activities such as hunting, harvesting of honey and gathering fruits were done communally. Obligation to the family and the community went beyond personal needs and obligations. This is affirmed by O’Donovan (1996, p. 4) that Africans tend

to find their identity and meaning in life through being part of their extended family, clan and tribe. There is a strong feeling of common participation in life, a common history, and a common destiny. The reality in Africa may be described with the statement: 'I am because the community is.' To the Sengwer being human is belonging to the community and one belongs to the community by "...participating in the beliefs, ceremonies, rituals and festivals of that community. A person cannot detach himself from the religion of his group, for to do so is to be severed from his roots, his foundations, his context of security, his kinships and the entire group of those who make him aware of his own existence" (Mbiti, 1969).

The relationship between the Sengwer as a community and nature is symbiotic in nature. They ensure efficient and sustainable utilization of natural resources for the wellbeing of the community and this directed their worldview towards nature. The Sengwer worldview towards nature was founded on their religious views and attitude that were based on the moral obligation of each member towards nature. The worldview is underpinned by their religion and all that is found in the universe such as plants, animals, birds and sacred places such as hills, caves and rivers provide the fundamental elements given by *Assis* to sustain the human life (Kiptui, personal communication, November 15, 2016). The council of Elders has the divine sanction to ensure that God's creation was well taken care of. The universe is viewed in a religious term as God's creation; it is this that informed the Sengwer worldview about nature and all that is in the universe. Mbiti (1991, p. 44) makes a similar observation when he writes "African religion sees nature as a friend of man (humans) and vice versa. He (humanity) is an integral part of nature and the priest of nature. The destruction or pollution of nature (including air, water, forest, land, animals, trees,

plants and useful insects) brings harm to all life in general and injuries to human welfare in particular. Therefore, man [humanity] has to preserve nature and use it wisely, indeed mercifully, for his own and its survival.”

The Sengwer view man as the paragon of God’s creative work. This view comes with the responsibility of man ensuring that the rest of God’s creation is in harmony. Therefore, man was obliged to observe the rules and beliefs that fostered conservation of the natural resources. This ensured that there is equilibrium between the physical and spiritual world. It is religion that asserted the greatest influence in the lives of the Sengwer as it reminded them of their obligation to the environment and connected them to the spiritual world (Kipkurui, personal communication, November 20, 2016).

Natural environmental resources that had religious connotations were treated with utmost respect and awe. The same respect was transferred to all institutions that were established in the community to facilitate preservation and conservation of environment. The most important and powerful institution that ensured the conservation of natural resources was the council of elders which will be presented in section (3.5.3.3). The Sengwer worldview, therefore, played a significant role in ensuring that natural environmental resources were well protected, conserved and used in a sustainable manner. The Sengwer religion and worldview dovetails natural environment resource conservation.

3.3.5 The Sengwer social systems

The Sengwer had a complex social system that valued collectiveness and communalism. This is derived from the sense that they, Sengwer, came from one man called Sengwer. The complex social system infused natural resource conservation and

environment management practices and beliefs into their social life. Initiates were taught important life skills and what it meant to be a Sengwer. Henceforth, sustainable use of the natural resources was cultivated into the fabric of the community through their members at a younger age. This was made possible through various forms of oral literature that were done in the evening under the *bien* tree or in the house as it will be presented in section (3.6). Collective responsibility was emphasized. This is clearly seen whenever people went for hunting, they would share the hunted animal, however small it was, regardless of the number of hunters. By the fact that they hunted in groups; *Sakas* (collective hunting) shows the community's value for communalism. This extended to natural environment conservation as people grew up knowing that they belonged to the community and they are the community which was given the mandate by God to be the custodians of the natural environmental resources. Hence, it was their communal responsibility to ensure that the environment was well taken care of. The clan elders were the custodians, overseers and spiritual leaders who provided guidance on natural environmental resource utilization.

3.4 The Contribution of Sengwer worldview to the Conservation of Embobut

Forest

The Sengwer worldview on natural environment resources is 'eco-centric' this ensured stewardship of the environment by members of the community. The Sengwer worldview has contributed to the conservation of natural environmental resources of Embobut forest through attachment of beliefs on natural resources as discussed below.

3.4.1 Sacred places

Sacred refers to something set apart, forbidden, holy or revered. The use of beliefs, practices, rules and taboos helped in controlling access to sacred site therefore maintain their sanctity and separateness. Dire consequences from the mystical world were pelted upon those who flouted the rules and disrespected the traditional authority. In most cases a person who went against the laid down community rules and regulation would be struck by lightning through the chief agent of God *Illat* (Kirui, personal communication, November 16, 2016). Sacred places are more respected and revered because it is believed that spirits resided there. Sacred places in Embobut forest include, water bodies such as rivers, streams and hills were considered to be closer to God and His agents and their families lived there.

Eliade (1957, p. 26) asserts that “Every sacred space implies a hierophany, an eruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it quantitatively different. The distinction between the profane and the sacred may contain the following elements: reverence; deference; sanctions, prohibitions and rules of conduct; demands for offerings; territorial demarcation that serve as centers of pilgrimage. These means were evolved to keep the profane apart from the sacred passim. One should bear in mind that the sacred cannot exist without the profane, for the former needs to be constructed and protected from the latter. Trees are very common as sacred objects and as leading landmarks of sacred places” This is one of the common features of many traditional indigenous religions; they used to set aside a certain place as a sacred site. These places varied according to different tribes in Africa. They included places such as rivers, under trees, hills and mountains. This view is supported by Turner (1979, p. 24) who states that: "This place where other

realms meet is also indicated by various forms representing a link or connection between the human and trans human spheres, and usually set in a vertical dimension as a ladder, poles and pillars, trees and hills." The foregoing is not different among the Sengwer community. They have various places within the forest that acted as sacred for various rituals, festivals and ceremonies. Among these places is the legendary Kiptaberr Hill that is found at the far south western side of the forest. The preceding is very important and significant sacred hill among the Sengwer people that is revered up to the present day. There are myths that explain the origin of this Hill; it is believed that this place was inhabited by people long time ago. It was a residence of community before it became a hill (Kibiwott, personal communication, November 18, 2016). The hill is revered by the community as sacred because of the myth behind its origin. J Kassagam (1996) has well documented the myth about the origin of this legendary Kiptaberr hill as shown below.

The Falling Rock Legend.

It happened a long time ago, on a great day called Kibuno Day. It was the day that initiates came back from the forest after seclusion and circumcision. On this exciting day of strange events to come, boys were being anointed with oil by their mothers. Necklaces and other ornaments quivered on the anxious youth who were soon to become the new men of the village. It was a busy day and throughout the village they were fetching honey and goats for the feast. Women were preparing porridge and gathering firewood while the elders guarded the honey beer. They gathered the sacred honey beer which they would use to bless the initiates. In the wind a chorus of voices chanted, "*Kayech buntoi eo. Kayech keba kau. Cheba Chemamban. Cheba Kaisorei. Kirogui Talai Kipkonei.*" (It is the time of rebirth. It is the time to return to the village. It is the time to build your own home. It was the Talai who first descended from the forest).

And it was known that the women were happily singing praises of the initiates while preparing food for the feast. It was a good day and soon blessings were to be delivered to the initiates. After blessings from the composer a youth would be able to take a wife and have a family. Then he would really become a man.

"*Kayech*," The composer would utter, "*Keba kau. Keba chamamban.*" It is the dawning of a new life; to settle down into a permanent family home," the elder stated with the passing of honey beer.

And with these words the dancing was begun and what dancing you could see that day! What a celebration was happening throughout the village. Their ceremonial music pounded out its beat and vibrated through the heart of all living things, while prancing feet became inseparable from the red dust of the land. There was much laughing, much singing and much eating. There was movement and there was colour. Yet, in the swirl of all these events someone called out. Someone dared to be heard. "*Buchu mi tum osiyeke!*" "Quiet you people!" said the voice. But, no one took notice and the celebration continued. "*Ating'anen ng'olyon nyo nyikis. Ating'anen ng'oloyon nyo nyikis.*" "Please. I have heavy words for you," it pleaded and you could see hovering in the sky a black kukai. It hovered there, that raven, calling for all to listen.

Some observant elders heard the bird and called Kukai down but it refused to come until a skirt had been laid out for it to land on. The elders did as they were instructed to and suddenly the bird alighted on the skirt. It landed there and stood. It looked at the elders and the elders looked at it and there was a pause.

"*Rwakan?*" Kukai asked startling his audience. An astonished elder even leaned down on his hand and knees getting face to face with the bird to see if he had heard it correctly. "It is true," he confirmed." The Bird has asked, "Who will shave me?" Eyebrows were raised. The elders looked around at each other in dismay.

"Who will shave the head of a bird?" Someone inquired. But no one moved, "*Rwakan met tomworwok ng'alechuch.*" "Shave my head or I won't tell you my words," came the raven's low threat. A group of people had finally gathered. Some of them were laughing and some of them looked on in fear. But, they were all wondering to themselves, "What is this bird saying?" It was quiet for a time except for those who continued to dance in the village unaware of the curious visitor. Kukai sat and those people sat and no one shaved his head.

"*Aye*," the creature spoke at last, "*Chunui kor nyong'etei barak. Natas tai otumei kuchinchinok ngo kyakik.*" A rock which is big will fall from the sky. Dance and sing if you like, but it will land on you and the animals!" he cried. Before any person could say a word, the bird flew off into the sky. He flew away and was not seen again. He gave no more words as no one had shaved his head and everyone sat wondering at that strange bird and what it had said.

Several people had comments to make about the bird's message and a few individuals fell into a debate. "Lies!" said some. "It's a message from the gods," said others and for a little time the happy celebration was disrupted. But, only for a short while as too few people had actually heard the bird and even fewer had understood it. Soon the roaring fire was stoked again with the

music and festivities of Kibuno Day and most people returned to dancing. They returned to dancing and to laughing.

Yet, after some discussion a small group decided not to join the dancers, but to heed the warning of the unusual kukai instead. Off they trekked into the forest to escape the disaster as predicted by the raven.

Upon realizing that some of their villagers had left the celebration, another small group followed too and no sooner had they left than from out of the distant, sky fell a very large rock.

Crash! Thunk! It landed on the village, the dancers and on all of the farm animals just as the kukai had prophesied. Questions raced through everyone's minds. What had happened? Was anyone still alive? Had everyone died? Were there any animals left? Two warriors raced back to find out the answers, but returned to the forest alone with a strange, yet solemn message.

The rock indeed had covered all of the dancers, the village and the farm animals. However, from within the rock the singing of the villagers and the bleating of the animals could still be heard. People, cattle and sheep had all been swallowed up by the gigantic rock that had fallen from nowhere. How sad that the kukai had been right.

After thanking the raven for warning them of the calamity the two surviving groups parted company and started separate villages. As a sign of gratitude both clans adopted ravens as their totems.

One group, being the Talai, named themselves Kukai after the black raven and another of her group, being the Kobil, named themselves Cherekat after the white-necked raven. In doing this the Talai and the Kobil became the official guardians of these birds.

To this day no one knows where the falling rock came from or even why it came. But, oddly enough The Falling Rock Legend is still alive today at Mount Kipteber

From the field research most of the respondents supported this myth through their narrations of how the hill came into being. Out of this myth some of the Sengwer clans derived their totem objects which they revere up to this present time, these totemic objects will be delved in the next subsection (3.5.2) in this chapter. Kiptaberr hill is also significant to the community as there are various streams of water that flow from the hill

Water bodies such as rivers and, streams found in the forest were also regarded as sacred; it is at these places that the Sengwer believe that the spirits reside. The Sengwer performed various rituals at the riverside; they held the belief that the chief agent of God (*Assis*) called *Illat* resided along the rivers. For instance, Kipro explains that whenever it has not rained, the rainmakers from *Kaptoyoy* clan among the Sengwer are responsible for practicing rituals to bring rain. Elders from this clan are responsible for performing rituals in order to please the spirits to bring the rain (personal communication, August 28, 2016). They will have to go and perform rituals at the river confluence within the forest chosen by the elders. Among the trees that are used during this ritual include: Red cedar branches and leaves, *Yemit*(*Olea europaea*), *Kosisit*-(unknown scientific name), Rosewood leaves and four big calabashes of traditional brew and four big calabash full of honey. All these were mixed together then the elders would be accompanied by a virgin girl to the river to make prayers. As they pray, they place the materials in the calabashes for the spirit to consume. If they didn't consume, they prayed persistently as they repented on behalf of the community until the spirits 'consumed' all the materials they came with and that was a sign that they were pleased (Mutei, personal communication, August 27, 2016).

They also believe that the agent of *Assis* named *Illat* is found at any river confluence found within their territories. *Illat* is the chief agent of God on earth and in most cases he appears in different forms, but the most common form of *Illat* manifestation is through thunder and lighting. *Illat* is also responsible for the rains and during the rain making rituals by the *Kaptoyoy* (the rainmakers' clan) he is the chief spirit that accepts

the sacrifices in order to bring rain (Kibor, personal communication, August 28, 2016).

These sacred places played a significant role in the religion and spirituality of the Sengwer people. Therefore, the conservation of sacred places is still regarded as very important till the present day and this has assisted in conservation of the natural environmental resources found in the forest.

Table 3.1 Sacred places for the Sengwer

Sacred places	Religious function
Kiptaberr hill	<p>Legendary hill</p> <p>All types of prayers held here except rainmaking prayers</p> <p>Sacrifices were made here to please God</p>
River Kabolet	<p>Prayers by rainmakers held here</p> <p>Rainmakers used to perform rituals here</p> <p>Illat resided here, rituals to please Illat made here</p>
River Ainakog	<p>Prayers for rainmakers held here</p> <p>Illat resided here</p>
River Kabechio/Kikwai	<p>Initiation ceremonies held here</p> <p>Prayers by rainmakers held here</p>

Source :(Kiplagat, personal communication, August 27, 2016)

The table above mentions sacred places found within Sengwer territories, these places play a vital role to the Sengwer religious life. Prayers were held at the confluence of the rivers mentioned above.

There were restrictions placed against interfering with natural environment resources found at the sacred sites. Activities that are harmful and destructive to the natural resources were highly condemned. These restrictions to the access of the sacred site that acted as reservoir for biodiversity has played a role in ensuring that these sites survive up to present times. This explains why natural environment resources found at the sacred sites have been preserved for various rituals and ceremonies such as circumcision ceremonies.

3.4.2 Beliefs associated with Sacred Plants

Embobut forest has a wide variety of the flora. The resources found in the forest are of significance to the Sengwer people because their main livelihood depends on it as aforementioned in the previous chapter (2.8.). The forest is significant for medicinal value, hunting and gathering and honey making. Trees and plants found in the forest are also used for ritual purposes and others are regarded as sacred because of the sacred value attached to a particular tree or plant. The following is a list of plants found within Embobut forest and their significance value to the community (Kiplimo, personal communication, August 27, 2016).

Table 3.3 Plants of Embobut forest and their religious significance

Scientific name	Sengwer name	religious significance
<i>Juniperus procera</i>	<i>Torokwo</i>	Used to please rain spirits and Illat
<i>Olea europaea/olea africana</i>	<i>Yemit/mtamaywa</i>	Used for pleasing rain spirits and Illat
		Used to make bowls and arrows for hunting
	<i>Mutin</i>	Used by rain makers to please the rain spirits
<i>Ficus natalensis</i>	<i>Simotwo/mgumo</i>	Used to hang the hunted animal
		Prayers held under it,
		Ceremonies to thank God held under it
		Used to place beehives
<i>African prunus</i>	<i>Tendwo</i>	Belief that the tree Makes bees to be hostile
		Used to mix honey and meat
	<i>Kokorwor</i>	Used for cursing an evil person
<i>Erythrina abyssinica</i>		Used to treat mumps
<i>Periploca</i>	<i>sinendet</i>	Used during Ceremonies such as marriage, initiation
<i>linaeurifolia</i>		
<i>Arudinaria</i>	<i>teгаа</i>	Used during cultural functions and ceremonies
<i>alpine/yusghania alpina</i>		

Source: (Kibet personal communication, August 25, 2016)

To the Sengwer people plants and trees are clustered into different categories depending on how they were used by the community. The trees mentioned above had religious purposes attached to them. The Sengwer community protected all trees

because apart from the religious significance of trees, some were used for economic purpose such as mending of beehives while other trees had medicinal value to the community used by the herbalists.

3.4.3 Beliefs associated with Birds in Embobut forest

The Sengwer also had various beliefs about birds which motivated them to conserve various species of birds found within the forest. The following is a list of birds found in Embobut forest and their cultural and religious significance.

Table 3.4 Birds with religious and cultural significance

Common Bird name	Traditional Sengwer name	Religious/cultural Significance
Woodpecker	<i>Chepkongong</i>	Sign of bad Omen
Owl	<i>Kipkukut</i>	Sign of bad things to happen
Good owl	<i>Kipchigich</i>	Good luck
Eagle	<i>Talai /chepkrak</i>	A totem for one of the clans
Superb Starling	<i>Chesirotagat -</i>	A bird for fertility
Hartlaub's Turaco	<i>Merewo -</i>	Ceremonial bird
Bat	<i>keres</i>	Sign of a curse
Guinea fowl	<i>tarkekia</i>	Used for meat

Source: (Kimeli, personal communication, August 25, 2016)

From the above table, birds were also conserved because of the various beliefs associated with them. Birds are an important component of the ecosystem and the environment, the religious beliefs and practices ensured that different species of birds were conserved. From the myth in the preceding subsection in chapter three (3.4.1) on

the origin of the legendary Kiptaberr hill, birds played a key role as conventional messengers to the community therefore; they are highly conserved and protected.

3.4. 4 Beliefs associated with Snakes in Embobut forest

There are different snakes found in Embobut forest. The Sengwer people had beliefs that were attached to certain types of snakes; this made them not to kill them. The following is a list of snakes found in Embobut forest and their significance:

Table 3.5 Types of snakes and the religious belief associated

Name of Snake	Sengwer Name	Religious Significance
Green like snake	<i>Eren</i>	Not harmful sign of blessings
Python	<i>kuren</i>	Part of the spirits or represented the spirits
A black snake	<i>Kipsumbai</i>	Sign of bad luck

Source: (Kiprop, personal communication, August 25, 2016)

3.4. 5 Beliefs associated with Animals

The forest had various species of animals that were at the center of the Sengwer life since they depended wholly on hunting these animals for a live hood. They advocated for efficient hunting practices of the animals to avoid some facing extinction. This was done through various beliefs and practices such as taboos and totems that were held and attached to various animal species by the Sengwer people as will be discussed in the forthcoming section (3.5). The following is a list of part of the animals found in Embobut forest and their religious significance attached:

Table 3.6 Types of animals and the religious significance

English names	scientific name	Sengwer Name	Religious Significance for conservation
Buffalo	<i>Bubalus bubalis</i>	<i>Soo</i>	Sign of blessings
Elephant	<i>Loxodonta</i>	<i>Pelit</i>	Sign of blessings or good luck
Antelope	<i>Antilocapra Americana</i>	<i>Cheptringich</i>	Sign of bad luck predicts bad things
A warthog	<i>Phacochoerus africanus</i>	<i>Tora</i>	Dirty animal not to be killed
Columbus Monkey	<i>Colobus guereza</i>	<i>Chemgon</i>	Used to make garments for elders, rainmakers and ceremonial garments
Wild goat	<i>Capra aegagrus</i>	<i>kibire</i>	Used to make ceremonial attire for ladies

Source: (Kirui, personal communication, August 25, 2016)

The forest had different types of animals. The above is only limited to those that had a religious or cultural significance. The beliefs associated with the above animals regulated animal use, and its products; despite the fact that, some animal skin such as skins from the wild goat and Columbus monkey were used to make ceremonial garments, they were done so in a sustainable manner guided by the community council of elders. Their religious worldview coupled with these beliefs helped in conservation of different animal species found in Embobut forest. Animals also acted as totems for the various clans of the Sengwer as discussed in the succeeding section (3.5.2) in this chapter.

3.5 Methods of conserving and regulating the utilization of natural resources by the Sengwer community

Unwritten rules and regulations of the community enshrined in the religious and cultural beliefs and practices of the Sengwer shaped the effective utilization and conservation of the natural resources found within their locality as pointed out in the preceding sections. These beliefs and practices were strong enough to warrant and make people obey and observe all the rules and regulations that governed resource use by the community. Taboo, totems, rites of passage, religious specialists and the religious beliefs attached to them provided a framework for efficient utilization of natural resources in Embobut forest as discussed below.

3.5.1 Taboos

A taboo is a derivation of Polynesia term “tapu” that means forbidden (Blackmore & Shelia 2001). In the Sengwer language it is *kikire* which means forbidden. The term refers to a set of prohibitions set up or instituted by religious authorities as a way of providing guidance for the community. The main objective was to protect the sanctity and morality of the community and its well-being by not going against Gods will. Taboos among the Sengwer played a vital role of maintaining harmony between God, the spirits (the invisible world) and human beings and the creation (the visible world). Taboos provided a moral code of peaceful coexistence for the whole universe. The Sengwer used these taboos to protect and conserve the fauna, flora and avifauna.

Taboos restricted and prohibited unsustainable use of environmental resources such as animal's species, bird species, plant species, hills and water bodies. These taboos shape the Sengwer people's environmental ethics. Despite the impact of colonialism

and other challenges that continue to face the Sengwer people as mentioned in chapter four(4.0), they still cling on to these cherished fundamental values (Kipketter, personal communication, 24 August 2016).

The Sengwer view the environment as a very important and inseparable part of their lives. Therefore; the environment is an important aspect for the well-being of individuals as well as the whole community. This means that the observance of taboos helps in understanding the communitarian nature through the moral relationship between the individual and the environment. The Sengwer religious beliefs on taboos play an integral role in determining the positive values and attitudes towards the environment. Their worldview is anthropocentric in nature. Basing on the foregoing, a health environment provides the community with all its needs and wants, for instance, honey, medicine and religious adorations are found within the forest. During research, it was noted that, preservation and conservation of natural environmental resources is vital for the overall well-being of the community. In this regard, the Sengwer use taboos as an ethical tool that controlled the human behavior towards environment which in turn promoted good relations between human beings and the natural environmental resources. The following subsection explains in details the different categories of taboos in relation to plants, animals, birds and snakes.

3.5.1.1 Taboos related to plants

The Sengwer has various taboos that guided the effective use of the flora. They hold that, all trees are an abode of spirits hence it was regarded as a taboo to cut down trees because the spirit will be annoyed with the community (Talaa, personal communication, August 26, 2016). The belief that trees are imbued with spirits was a lively part of the Sengwer religious life that ensured the conservation of trees.

It was also a taboo for somebody to harvest plants for medicine. Herbalists were the only ones who harvested herbs for efficacy as mention in succeeding section 3.5.3.2.

Elders were the only ones who had the sole responsibility for the usage of trees, they were the ones who authorized the cutting of certain trees for religious or cultural functions, this helped in ensuring that the trees were efficiently used and managed. They only allowed the branches of a tree to be cut but not the whole tree and only two branches were cut from a single tree. The Sengwer people only used dead wood for firewood .This helped in ensuring that trees were not cut down carelessly.

Any person who went against the elders and destroyed the forest or harvested trees without permission was punished or banished by the council of elders. *Illat* would also struck such a person to death if he does not head to the punishment or the community's' expectations.

3.5.1.2 Taboos related to Animals.

Animals were very important to the Sengwer because they formed the main source of their livelihood as they depended on animals for hunting, and exchanged with the neighboring communities meat with other products. To ensure that hunting should not cause extinction of animal's resources within the forest they had taboos that helped in conservation of species of animals found within the forest. For instance, it was a taboo for the Sengwer to hunt or kill a gestating animal. Members were also prohibited from killing a lactating animal or a young animal. They were also prohibited from killing an animal giving birth because it endangers future generations of that particular animal. If a gestating animal (that's not harmful) was injured they would take care of that animal and treat it until it got healed (Kemboi, personal communication, August

25, 2016). Failure to do the aforementioned would lead to infertility, death and loss of children.

The Sengwer believed that there were animals which were feared and viewed to be a sign of bad luck therefore not killed. This belief helped them in conserving wild animals found in Embobut forest. For instance, a certain type of gazelle *Cheptirgich* represented bad luck therefore, whenever it crossed the path as they went for hunting they called off the errand as it is believed that bad things may befall them (Chebet, personal communication, August 25, 2016). The Sengwer did not kill a warthog for food because it was considered to be a dirty animal; incase it was killed by mistake, the society demanded that the killer should undergo certain cleansing rituals to avoid the Wrath of God. It was also a taboo for member of the community to kill an animal and refuse to eat. Severe punishment was given to such an individual.

Taboos were attached to some animal species that acted as totems to the various clans of the Sengwer. Members of that particular clan were not allowed to kill or hunt their totemic animal lest the ancestral spirits' wrath fell upon the clan. More details about totemic animals have been presented in the next sub section (3.5.2) in this chapter. This aforementioned proscription regulated human behavior towards animals, leading to conservation of various animals species with the Cherangany ecosystem.

3.5.1.3 Taboos related to Snakes

The Sengwer had taboos in relation to snakes and this helped in conserving different species of snakes in the forest. For instance, large snakes found in a cave represented spirits therefore; they were supposed to treat them well by not harming them to avoid the spirits getting angry. Whenever they found the snake in the caves as they went to

perform rituals they gave them local brew and honey to avoid any harm upon the clan. This view is supported by Chitando when he wrote about snakes. He argues that “...vindictive spirit should not be harmed as that could lead to more trouble.” Chitando (1996, p. 60).

The Sengwer believed in reincarnation, “we believe that people who died long time ago can come back in form of a snake therefore large snake species such as python they are not killed as they are believed to be representing ancestors” (Kangor, personal communication, 27 August 2016).

Whenever a snake entered a homestead they were not supposed to kill it, instead they were to serve the snake with milk or honey doing so with caution to avoid being bitten, and then the snake would leave on their own. By any chance that the snake was killed, they performed a cleansing ceremony or a ritual to ask for forgiveness from the ancestors.

Snakes were treated with respect, for they were believed to represent the ancestors, any snake found in homestead was not supposed to be killed or chased away but treated with a lot of respect. It was believed that the spirits of the living ancestors can take different forms and visit the homestead at different times. Beliefs and taboos against harming snake species helped in the conservation and preservation of different snakes' species.

3.5.1.4 Taboos related to Birds

Some birds had a significant role among the Sengwer peoples life, therefore; they were not killed. For instance, some birds acted as conventional messengers for God to human beings for example *talai*. Others were used as a way of direction to hunters such as an eagle like birds whenever seen in the forest acted as a sign of a particular species of animal present at that particular time in the forest that could be hunted therefore; it was a taboo to kill them. Birds such as owls acted as a powerful indicator to the Sengwer; because they conveyed a message of death or misfortune to the community. Therefore; their occurrence prompted the elders to perform rituals to avoid death or anything bad befalling the community (Kipngetch, personal communication, August 23, 2016).

Birds that were believed to be a sign of bad omen were not killed but rather chased away by using wooden stick lit with fire. Despite the belief that the owls represented bad omen, they still didn't kill them leading to their conservation. Apart from owls, some birds were totems for different clans because of the role they played in the life and existence of the clans as seen in the next section (3.5.2). This belief also helped in conserving different species of birds.

3.5 .2 Totems

Totemism is defined as a system of belief in which humans are said to have kinship or mystical relationship with a spirit-being, such as animal or plant (Haekel, 2013). An object of totem (animal or plant) is usually thought to interact with a given kin group or an individual who stands to serve as an emblem or a symbol to such group. It also involves the practice of having a natural object or animate being such as bird or

animal as the emblem of a family, clan, or group. In regards to this, totem is considered to play a significant role to those who accord much protective power of veneration and worship.

Emile Durkheim in his book, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, (1912) illuminates the unveiling understanding of totemism as practiced by Australian Aboriginal societies. In his argument, totemism represents religion in its most 'elementary' or simple form. A totem was originally an animal or plant taken as having particular symbolic significance for a certain group of people. It is therefore a sacred object, regarded with veneration and surrounded by various ritual activities. Eating the totemic animal or plant except on special ceremonial occasions, is usually forbidden, and as a sacred object the totem is believed to have divine properties which separate it completely from other animals that might be hunted, and consumed.

Totems have served as a commemorative object of ancestry that has promoted natural environmental conservation over time. Different clans among the Sengwer community identified themselves with different totems. Totems represented a mystical or ritual bond of unity within the group and were key symbols of religion and social cohesion within the community; they were also used as an important tool for cultural and religious transmission. Each clan identified with a particular totemic animal because of the history behind the clans existence. For example the *talai* clans totem is an eagle or *Talai or chepkrak*. The following myth explains how the relation came about;

A myth is told of how an eagle rescued the clan, during the community celebrations in the ancient time, an eagle came and warned the community about a danger that was to befall the community. The eagle acted as a messenger from God or *Assis*, but most people who were there didn't not heed

or listen to the eagle. The eagle approached one woman and told her the same message, the woman heeded to the eagle's warning and fled immediately. After she left, the place where celebration was taking place was engulfed with a large rock that fell from the sky and killed all those who did not heed to the eagle's message.

Therefore, the clan believes that the eagle saved them from extinction hence they revere this Bird, and regard it as their clan's totem. Therefore they are not allowed to kill or harm this bird (Ngetich, personal communication, November 26, 2016).

The Sengwer also have a myth about a Buffalo; the following is the myth:

The myth explains that there was severe hunger, in which the head of the family went out in the hunt but never returned. After realizing the head of household, could not return on time. It dawned on the wife that her child would die of hunger, to salvage the situation she went out together with her child to look for food. At one point they found a grass thatched house called *kirakia* with several openings, where they saw a calf of buffalo. In the evening the buffalo came to feed the calf, the woman approached the buffalo, milked it and gave the milk to her child. Later, the wife returned home and found her husband. She narrated the story to her husband; the husband thanked the gods claiming that had it not been for the *buffalo* they would have died. Later the lineage and clan was referred to as *kimoi* meaning buffalo because the *buffalo* saved them from extinction. The animal became their totem hence they don't kill this animal.

From the examples above, it shows that the different clans highly revered their totems. This was borne out of their deep and close intimate relationship as a result of the role the totems played in the life and existence of the clan. The totem animals were treated with high reverence and courtesy which helped in conserving certain species of animal by the community. It was a violation of the cultural and religious well-being of the community to hunt, kill or hurt a totem animal or bird. This concept of totems helped in the conservation of animal and bird species among the Sengwer. It also acted as a means of ensuring hunting was done in a sustainable manner.

Among the Sengwer community it was illegal to kill or harm a totem. It was likewise illegal for a relative such as wife, who may have hailed from a different tribe and therefore had a different totem, to hurt the totem of a husband or son. This was mainly because totems were viewed as part of the kindred, and it was believed that these totems shared blood with the ancestors. To hurt a totem however, was tantamount to hurting the community's ancestors. Severe punishments, such as banishment, fines, hard labor, or death, were applied to anyone who disrespected their totem (Ngesewo, personal communication, August 23, 2016). The Sengwer clans has over 12 clans since each clan had its own totem, the foregoing, helped in the protection of different species hence preventing the animal species from facing extinction. Therefore, totems form the basis of the strong bond between the clans and their totemic animal or object in the community which in turn helps in conserving different animal species that are part of the environment.

The fact that individual's members of a clan are prohibited from eating any totem animal reduced pressure towards hunting species of the totemic animal depending on the clan's totem. To ensure that prohibitions were strictly followed and observed, there were tough consequences that acted as a safeguarding measure to protect the totemic animals against being harmed or killed. Among the consequences included *Illat* killing the person involved in destruction of the natural resources in this case the totemic animals. In other incidence the person was banished, fined or cursed by the clan elders as explained in subsection (3.5.3.3). The following is a list of Sengwer clans and their totems.

Table 3.7 Sengwer clans and their totems

Clan	Sengwer Traditional Totemic Name	English Name
<i>Kabon</i>	<i>Kipchotwo</i>	Frog
<i>kakisango</i>	<i>soo</i>	Buffalo(small one)
<i>Kaptakininy</i>	<i>Talai(black and white)</i>	Pied crow
<i>Kamarich</i>	<i>Talai</i>	Eagle
<i>kapbombo</i>	<i>Talai</i>	Lion
<i>Kaptogum</i>	<i>Saniak</i>	Red ants
<i>kapkeny</i>	<i>Kobilo</i>	dog
<i>Kapkendo</i>	<i>kimoi</i>	Buffalo(big one)
<i>Kaptoiyoi(Kapchepar)</i>	<i>Illat</i>	Lighting
<i>Kap kai</i>	<i>Talai</i>	Raven
<i>Kapchangwony</i>	<i>Sokoma(chepsirere)</i>	Eagles
<i>Kapsunguru</i>	<i>kimoi</i>	Buffalo
<i>kaptoo</i>	<i>talai</i>	Crow
<i>kaptitoket</i>	<i>Talai</i>	Pied crow
<i>Kapchesoo</i>	<i>Kimoi</i>	buffalo
<i>kamunai</i>	<i>soo</i>	Buffalo (big one)
<i>Kapseto(Kapsomei)</i>	<i>segesege/sabit/</i>	Porcupine

Source :(Kipkosgei, personal communication August 20, 2018)

From the above table, some clans shared the totemic animals; they differentiated the animals through the description for instance, the *Kapsungur* clan's totem is a small Buffalo while the *Kamunai* clan's totem is the big Buffalo. The similarity in clan

totems either shows that the clans shared a common belief and history to that totem or the totem animal played a different role to each clan.

The *Kabon* clan whose totem is a frog, highly revere and respect frogs because it's believed that the frog helped the early ancestors of the clan to a stream of water during a dry season. As a result of the frog saving their lives, it became their totem. Henceforth it is a tabooed for members of that particular clan to kill or harm a frog. There were also prohibitions against interfering with water bodies because frogs were found there; this helped in the preservation of water bodies against pollution. This belief promoted the conservation of natural environmental resources.

In all, totems played a vital role among the Sengwer people. First, they helped in protecting the environment because totemic animals were not killed by that particular clan. It also controlled socially behavior and interpersonal relations in the community. For instance, it helped in curbing incest which is deviant behavior that makes God angry. It is believed that breaking of taboos with regard to totems can lead to catastrophic events such as drought and outbreak of mysterious diseases. Totems also give people a sense of identity and a feeling of belonging to a particular community. This encourages collective responsibility in taking care of the environment (Kibichii, personal communication, August 28, 2016). Despite totems having a religious leaning, they have inherently environmental values, which stem from man's respect to the totemic objects. Most of these animals such as Lions and Buffalos could not be found due to the various challenges that have affected the community in their attempt to conserve the natural resources as mentioned in chapter four. As a result of the many challenges that the Sengwer community have faced, these animals' species were at

risk of facing extinction therefore they have been moved to Rimoi National Reserve while others have disappeared mysteriously.

3.5.3.0 The role of Religious specialists in natural environment resource conservation

The Sengwer tradition religion recognizes and acknowledges special group of people called the religious specialists. Religious specialists include: council of elders, the rainmakers and the herbalists. They are respected men and women members of the community who provide solutions to the community's daily problems. Religious specialists are referred using different titles such as sacred personages', 'special men', 'sacred men', who possess what Mbiti calls "office personality", (Mbiti 1969, p. 166). Religious specialists among Sengwer derive their mandate from *Assis*. They have a religious duty to mediate between the physical world and the spiritual world. They also relay important information to the community from God. These categories of people: rainmakers, herbalist and council of elders among the Sengwer played a significant role in ensuring that the natural resources were conserved and utilized in a sustainable manner.

3.5.3.1. Rainmakers

To the Sengwer, water bodies such as rivers are considered sacred because, it is believed that the supernatural being named *Illat* and rain spirits resides there. It is at the rivers that *Kaptoyoy clan*; a clan believed to have powers in charge of rainmaking went to perform rituals to appease the spirits in charge of rain. The community elders of *Kaptoyoy* clan performed rain rituals through prayers and sacrifices to the rain god in order to bring rain. The rainmakers received their powers from *Assis*, therefore they prayed and appeased the spirits on behalf of the community to release rain.

The protection of rivers was important among the Sengwer community. They depended on these rivers for drinking water and performing rituals to bring rain which would later on lead to flowering of plants hence leading to plenty of honey. There were taboos that are still observed among the Sengwer in regard to rivers. For instance, people were not supposed to defecate in rivers as this would cause the wrath of rain spirit (*Illat*) to come down upon that person or the community. It was also a taboo to bath in small stream of water. People were not supposed to interfere with natural resources such as trees, stones found in rivers, because it was believed that the family of *Illat* resided there (Kemboi, personal communication, November 20, 2016). These beliefs in river deities are still strong among the Sengwer people. They revere all rivers found within their locality and as such they treat rivers and water bodies with a high degree of reverence. These rivers as mentioned earlier in subsection in (3.4.1) are treated as sacred places.

3.5.3.2 Herbalist

Herbalists are medicine men or women who act as native doctors in the African society. They are experts in providing medicine for the Sengwer community. The forest found in the highland and shrubs in the lowlands were the main sources of medicine for the community.

Not everybody was a herbalist; it was for a few selected people. The profession was handed down to the young members of the community through apprenticeship. Some learnt the profession from their elders through exposure to different kind of species of plant that cured different ailments; this was done unconsciously or consciously. The training of herbalist was informal.

Herbalists played a major role in the conservation and protection of natural environmental resources. This was done through the way they harvested the medicine from trees. They only harvested a small portion of medicine from a single tree, for instances only a few roots, barks and leaves were harvest from a single tree. Only herbalists harvested herbs for efficacy. Harvesting of medicine was done secretly and components of a particular drug were not divulged to any other person. This helped in conservation of the plants in the forest since harvesting of herbs was only limited to herbalists (Talam, personal communication, August 28, 2016).

3.5.3.3 Council of elders/Overseers (Orkoi)

Patrilineage led by elders was the traditional form of social organization among the Sengwer. Elders still have a very important role to play among the Sengwer people and their influence today cannot be ignored nor underestimated as they are consulted whenever something that involves the community arises. Despite the influence and advent of modern forms of social organization, the place and role of the Orkoi has withstood the test of time. They derive their power and authority from God. Just like other religious specialist mentioned above; Elders act as intermediaries between the visible world and the invisible world.

The foregoing can be explained through the most recent case where Trans Nzoia county government interfered with one of the sacred places of the Sengwer people. Trans Nzoia county government wanted to get water from one of the sacred rivers among the Sengwer. They went ahead without consulting the Sengwer elders. As the project continued, mysterious things kept on happening to its workers. It is claimed

that, property and personal items belonging to those working there were getting lost daily. Some left the place bare footed because their shoes were missing. These incidences kept on happening until the county government sought help from the Sengwer council of elders. The Sengwer council of elders informed them that “the spirits are not happy because you did not seek permission for the project” (Kirui, personal communication, August 27, 2016).

Later, the elders had to perform rituals in order to appease the spirits and ask for permission for the project to go on in order to assist other people. After the elders had performed rituals, the project commenced and went on well without any challenge till completion. From the foregoing example, it can be seen that elders play a vital role in controlling how the natural environmental resources in the community are to be utilized. The elders had the responsibility of showing which trees were to be harvested for a particular religious or cultural function. They were the ones who deliberated on the directions of the affairs of the community. Each clan among the Sengwer people had its own elders who formed the larger Sengwer council of elders who deliberated on the affairs of the Sengwer community (Korir, personal communication, August 26, 2016).

The elders formulated clan policies to guide the community, it was sacrilegious for anyone to disobey the elders and the rules put in place. This was done for the benefit of the whole community. The elders were in charge of ensuring that anybody who breaks the rules and mismanages the natural environment resources is punished according to the guidelines of the community (Kipruto, personal communication, August 25, 2016).

In case a person disobeyed and went against the community rules and regulations; elders were called upon to pass judgment for the destruction of natural environmental resources. Judgment was done under a large tree named *bein*. The elders preside over the cursing of those who had broken the communal laws by having them rotate a tree that was used for cursing called *Kokorwor*. This ceremony was referred to as *Kawatia*. Those who destroyed the natural environment were easily known and severely punished. To some extent if they would not reform they were banished or ostracized while others left to *Illat* to deal with them, whose wrath amounted to being struck by lightning leading to death.

In all, the use of taboos, totems, the council of elders and religious specialists acted as prohibitive measures, this acted as a way of ensuring the natural environment was well conserved. The non-adherence to these measures attracted the wrath of the Supreme Being through his agent *Illat* (the thunder god). There was instantaneous punishment and reward of evil by the Supreme Being through *Illat* in rewarding evil doers who destroyed natural environmental resources and disobeyed the community elders. The austere punishment acted as a deterrent and caveat to those who would be destroyers of the natural environmental resources. Despite the challenges mentioned in chapter four, Traditional Sengwer institutions of natural resource management are still relevant today. The study has recommended in chapter five for the traditional Sengwer institutions to be incorporated as part of the broad base approach of ensuring that the Embobut forest and Cherangany hills water catchment at large is well protected and conserved for posterity.

3.6 Initiation Rites of Passage

Rites of passage has been defined as rituals which mark the passing of one stage of life and entry into another e.g. birth, puberty, marriage, initiation to priesthood, or death (Barnard and Spencer, 2006, p. 489). Human beings undergo a development process that involves these various stages. Among the Sengwer people a member has to pass through all these stages starting from birth, through puberty, marriage to death and then reincarnation this applied to both men and women.

Every member of the Sengwer community underwent through puberty rites. During these puberty rites, members are imbued with environment conservation knowledge. Initiation takes place in the forest at a designated place, the initiates stay in the forest until they are reincorporated back in the society. The designated places in the forest where these ceremonies take place are sacred and nobody is allowed to interfere with flora found at those places. The beliefs and taboos associated with these sites help in ensuring that members of the community do not interfere with the places. This helped in ensuring that the natural resources within the sacred places for initiation are conserved. During the seclusion period initiates are taught about sustainable utilization of the environment resources, their clan totems and how they are supposed to relate with them. They are also taught their age sets and the community's expectations. They are taught different natural resources such as the flora and fauna found in the forest. The initiates are bestowed with the social and economic responsibilities. During initiation, young boys are taught hunting practices that do not threaten natural environment resources in the forest. On the other hand young girls are taught about gathering of fruits in a sustainable manner (Kipsaina, personal communication, November 24, 2016).

Puberty rites which involved initiation played a crucial role in ensuring that the environmental knowledge, the religious beliefs and cultural practices are passed from one generation to another. Through initiation, sacred places found in the forest were conserved therefore ensuring that the forest and resources found in were protected from destruction.

3.7.0 Oral literature as a means of creating environmental awareness

Oral literature is regarded as the oldest form of art created and used by mankind. It is a verbal art that different communities in Africa have used for centuries because it expresses ‘the very heart of a people’s way of life: it is the very soul of their culture’ (Bukenya et al, 1994, p .85). Furthermore it ‘expresses a given society’s world view and gives them a springboard from which their day-to-day existence is propelled’ (ibid). Okot p’Bitek also affirmed that oral literature embodies the political, social and moral philosophies of the people, their outlook on life and death’ (Okot P’Bitek 1973, quoted in Bukenya *et al*, ibid).

Different literary forms of oral literature acted as reservoir of the Sengwer religion, culture, values, concepts and identity as a people. Through oral literature traditional environmental knowledge which (Schmidt, 1994, p. 25) defines as ‘a body of knowledge built by a group of people through generations living in close contact with nature. It includes a system of classification, a set of empirical observations about the local environment, and a system of self-management that governs resource use was passed from generation to generation. Therefore, oral literature provided directions

and defined how the environmental resources were to be utilized in a sustainable manner.

The Sengwer religion had no written scripture which is a common feature of African religion. Their religion was passed from generation to generation through word of mouth. Therefore, oral literature played a significant role among the Sengwer since it was also used to preserve the Sengwer religion. This was done through songs, riddles, myths, legends, carvings, language, adages and symbols. Oral literature that was related to natural environment such as trees, animals and birds reminded the community about the Supreme Being and their religion. This ensured that they were always conscious of their actions towards the environment.

3.7.1 Proverbs

Proverbs are the most widespread and the most respected genre of African Oral literature (Bukonya *et.al* 1991, p. 47). They are part and parcel of every ethnic community in Africa that carried stronger wisdom and truth in a shortest way. The Sengwer people had wide collections of proverbs that showed the relationship between man and environment. Kamera (2001, p. 213) posits that “proverbs are known as part of folk wisdom expressed in pithy and short sayings, which are commonly recognized by the cultural community and are held to express social truths, ascertained and supported by experience.” Proverbs were used by the Sengwer to teach young ones about their natural environment and how to sustainably use natural resources. Through participation various environmental knowledge and wisdom were imparted to children. This helped children to grow up with an environmental conscious mind by being aware of their surroundings.

Some of the proverbs that were used by the Sengwer include the following:

Mokitile Murungu-you cannot cut the udder.

This proverb means that you cannot cut trees as this destroys the environment and it may lead to people being exposed to danger.

Mokitele marg'an-You cannot harvest honey from a beehive that has gotten bees recently.

Since the community depended on trees; this proverb informed people not to cut down immature trees the way you cannot harvest honey from an immature beehive. Therefore members were encouraged to only use mature trees that had fallen down or dead wood.

Mepel sondingung-tewechekei iyume-this proverb means that what benefits you should not be destroyed. Since the forest benefited the Sengwer people you were not to destroy the trees found there.

Karket kipsat ak kiptep-all people are the same. Therefore, everybody was supposed to be taught environmental knowledge because the effects of the destruction of the environment were to be felt to everybody.

Mii tarit ket-If you do something somebody is seeing you. It is used to warn people in a given place that as much as you may wish to destroy trees or natural environmental resources, you may be witnessed or seen by somebody.

Source: (Saina, personal communication, August 24, 2016)

From the above examples it clearly shows how proverbs communicated and created awareness about the environment among the Sengwer.

3.7.2 Songs

Songs were used by traditional societies as a medium of uniting and bringing together members of a particular community. Nandwa and Bukenya (1983, p. 85) in *African Oral Literature for Schools* postulates that song and dance pervade the entire spectrum of African traditional life; and that in most societies, there are songs for every stage and occasion of a person's life from the cradle to the grave. They further observe that songs encompass the entire gamut of African traditional life in itself speaks volumes. It is an indication that there are ideas and values which are generated and conveyed by songs which make them to permeate the social practices of African traditional life. These songs carry important messages and knowledge that talks about various facets of human life including conservatory knowledge of the environment. Songs encourage members of a particular group to be active participants in conserving the environment.

This was not different among the Sengwer as they used the songs to convey important information and knowledge about the Sengwer religion, culture and their surrounding environment. These songs were sung at different times of the year, during different occasions such as marriage, initiation ceremonies and when children played.

Among the songs that were sung and had important knowledge about the environment include the following:

<i>Kichaitapei</i>	<i>Distributor</i>
<i>Kichaitapei tulwop Cherangany</i>	Distributes water from Cherangany Hill
Chorus	
<i>Kicheitapei kinyem koroni</i>	Distribute water to all sources
<i>Kicheitakungir murung</i>	Distributes water to large rivers
<i>Kicheitakungir kaplum</i>	It distributes water to all places
<i>Kichaitakuit Turkana</i>	Distributes water that reaches Turkana
<i>Kicheita siekol pande.</i>	It distributes water for irrigation

Source: (Chelimo, personal communication, August 26, 2016).

This song is sang by the Sengwer and passes the message that Cherangany hills needs to be protected for it provides water to different parts of the country such as the Turkana region. The song shows how the Sengwer cares for Cherangany hills as an important source of water. Therefore, the song instills in people the awareness to conserve the forest.

Another song sang by the Sengwer that carries important knowledge about their environment and natural resources is:

<i>Chepelei</i>	Why burn the forest
<i>Hooye chepeleiyo, kipelchine suswepmoi chepeleiyo</i>	Why burn the forest that has grass land for wild animal

Chorus

<i>Hoo chepelieyo</i>	Why burn forest
<i>Kipelchine mbo sawee chepeleyo</i>	Why burn forest that sawee inhabits
<i>Kipelchine keener chepeleyo</i>	why burn forest that wild animals live
<i>Mutyo bwana chek ipel korop Sengwer</i>	Sorry white man, why mistreat land of the Sengwer
<i>Ipel mbo kipturuny ak kipire</i>	Why mistreat the wild pigs and wild goats.

(Source: Kiplagat, personal communication, August 25, 2016)

This song was sung by the Sengwer to warn against colonialist called Mr. Chek who wanted the Sengwer to be out of their ancestral land. In this song they mention some of the animals that were hunted by the Sengwer therefore this shows that the Sengwer as a hunters and gathers community who were very much concerned with trees/forest because it harbors their food. The song also shows how the Sengwer people benefited from the forest as they were against them being moved far from the forest because the forest enabled them to get honey, wild fruits and medical herbs.

Praises of Manhood Song

Chorus: *Aye merewo oe*

Aye merewo oe

Soloist: *Merewo tiombotim*

(Turaco beast of the forest)

Chorus: *Aye merewo oe*

Soloist :*Merewo mito ket*

(Turaco in the tree)

Chorus: *Aye merewo oe*

Soloist : *Mito mosop cherumbei*

(which is the highland waterfalls)

Chorus:*Aye merewo oe*

Soloist :*Merewoni mi mosop*

(Turaco in the highlands)

Chorus: *Aye merewoni oe*

Soloist: *Kayekei katanyon*

(Dawn is coming to our home)

Chorus: *Aye merewo oe*

Soloist *Kirogu Talai kipkonei*

(Talai came from the highlands)

Chorus:*Aye merewo oe*

Soloist: *Wechu kitor Kipteber*

(Our sons first settled at Kipteber)

Chorus: *Aye merewo oe*

Soloist: *Kitor Moyokwo*

(They settled at Moyokwo)

C: *Aye merewo oe*

Soloist: *Kitor Lemeiyowo*

(They settled at Lemeiyowo)

Chorus: *Aye merewo oe*

Soloist: *Kitorei leker*

(They settled at the fireplace)

Chorus: *Aye merewo oe*

S: *Kitor Charwa no*

(They settled where goats are shared)

Chorus: *Aye merewo oe*

Soloist: *Charwamosowon*

Source :(Kassagam, 1996)

This song is sung during various community festivals such as marriage and after initiation. In the song various natural resources such as rivers, hills, trees, birds and animals are mentioned. The song reminds the Sengwer of their history and surrounding environment. It reminds the Sengwer of how the bird saved them from facing extinction as narrated in the myth about the origin of Kiptaberr hill in chapter

(3.4.1). This prompted them to be conscious of their action towards the natural environment resources.

These songs show how the Sengwer person relates with nature and how nature inspired their creativeness hence enabling people to be aware of their environment. These songs are also sung in appreciation of nature. The Sengwer cultural dancers are currently the custodians of the Sengwer songs that promote environment conservation; they have maintained their traditional regalia, tunes and dancing style. They have also composed more songs in order to create environment awareness among the members of the Sengwer people and their neighboring communities. These songs are currently used to show how the forest was significant to the Sengwer people hence need to conserve the forest.

3.7.3 Riddles

Alembong (2011, p. 143) says that ‘riddles emanate from man’s keen observation of the natural phenomena and from his ability to establish a relationship between these phenomena, or from his attempt to find answers to some perplexing and puzzling situations, or even from his desire to make his fellow men take note of this or that situation.’ Riddles are also a common feature of oral literature found in most African communities. They were used to show how man was related with the environment by posing questions that related with the surrounding and the answer was to be found from things found in the environment.

The Sengwer people had riddles that conveyed environmental knowledge, Examples of this riddles are:

Atinye tukchuu chimweke pich-sekem

I have cows that sting people-bees

Atinye kirikinyu kipkeleny tulwo-cheptungwo

I have my bull that cracks the ground-mushroom

Turung turung aret komos –kusumyo

It is found beside our path –ground bees

Source: (Kipatalai, personal communication, November 23, 2016).

These examples of riddles show how Sengwer were conscious of their surroundings; the riddles were formed from what was found in their environment. They addressed various natural environmental resources such as animals, heavenly bodies, plants and human beings. Thus, showing how human beings are interrelated with the other creatures of the universe. The riddles were told to young ones especially in the evening as they waited for meals (Kiplagat, personal communication, August 27, 2016).

3.7.4 Story telling

Story telling is one of the earliest and most popular African traditions. According to Kiptoo, he argues that Sengwer people have had stories which have been handed down from one generation to another, these story are about the history and legends of the community and their attachment to the forest (personal communication, August 27, 2016). Storytelling is used as means of entertainment and as a didactic instrument for the Sengwer community. Narration of folktales, myths and legends by the elders in the society transmitted important environment values and norms to the younger ones. This created awareness of the relationship between human beings and the

environment and how our actions on nature can have either positive or negative impact. Storytelling broadened the Sengwer understanding of their surround and encouraged good behavior which in turn cultivated positive values towards the environment.

Traditional African religion had a variety of ways through which the conservatory knowledge of environment was passed from generation to generation. They never had the power of the pen but had the power of the mouth to that; they safeguarded this important environmental and ecological knowledge for the purpose of posterity. Oral literature was therefore an important component to the traditional African societies. The Sengwer people are not exemption, as they also employ various literary forms of oral literature as shown above to disseminate and pass ecological knowledge from generation to generation.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter provided an in depth discussion on the Sengwer religion and the Sengwer religious worldview on natural environmental resources. The various environmental resources found in Embobut forest and their religious and cultural significance and taboos attached to these natural environment resources by the community have also been presented.

It can be concluded that the Sengwer people viewed the world in a religious lens; therefore the universe is largely seen as religious universe hence everything was treated in the same way. Therefore the Sengwer religion played a significant role in influencing and ensuring effective and sustainable use of the environment and the

natural resources in it. This was made possible through the use of taboos, and totems that were attached to plants and animals in the forest.

Findings from the field as indicated above also revealed that oral traditions found among the Sengwer people such as proverbs, riddles, songs and storytelling were significant in ensuring that the environment is protected. Oral literature also appreciated the aesthetic beauty of the environment. It was also used to create environment awareness among the members of the community and impact the young ones with environmental knowledge. Therefore, positive attitudes towards the environment were inculcated to members of the community at a tender age through use of oral literature.

Undoubtedly, the Sengwer worldview has ecological implications that need to be tapped. This clearly shows that the Sengwer are environmentally conscious and are fully aware of their divine duty to protect the environment.

It can be deduced that the Sengwer religious worldview influence natural environment conservation and can still be used to ensure the protection and conservation of the natural resources found in Embobut forest and Cherangany water catchment tower at large. Therefore, the Sengwer religious worldview is a precept of nature stewardship in the modern society.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE CHALLENGES FACED BY SENGWER COMMUNITY IN CONSERVING NATURAL ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES IN EMBOBUT FOREST

4.0 Introduction

This chapter sought to find out the various challenges that the Sengwer people have faced in their attempt to conserve the natural resources within Embobut forest. This chapter used primary and secondary sources to discuss the challenges that this community faces. Later on the chapter will highlight different ways of how the Sengwer are mitigating these challenges. Among the challenges faced include: Colonial and post-colonial government oppressions, modern religion, population growth, development initiatives and cultural differences

4.1 Modern religion

Majority of respondents indicated that Christianity has affected the indigenous beliefs of the Sengwer people in regard to conserving the environment. Christianity has dismissed most of the Sengwer beliefs and practices as backwards, forgetting that the Sengwer religious worldview has been the force behind a harmonious co-existence between human beings and the natural environment as pointed out in the preceding sections.

The first settlers who came destroyed the forest by clearing it for large-scale farming. They pushed the Sengwer people further into the forest. When the missionaries arrived, they tried to separate the Sengwer who had converted to Christianity from others who were still practicing their indigenous religions. Missionaries taught them to disregard indigenous beliefs and practices such as festivals, customs, traditions, and the observance of rituals. Kenyatta (1978) was undoubtedly writing about the missionary's attitudes toward African religions and culture when he wrote:

As far as religion was concerned the African was regarded as a clean slate on which anything could be written. He was supposed to take wholeheartedly all religious dogmas of the white man and keep them sacred and unchallenged, no matter how alien to the African mode of life. The Europeans based their assumption on the conviction that everything that the African did or thought was evil. The missionaries endeavored to rescue the depraved souls of the Africans from the "eternal fire"; they set out to uproot the African, body and soul, from his old customs and beliefs, put him in a class by himself, with all his tribal traditions shattered and his institutions trampled upon. The African, after having been detached from his family and tribe, was expected to follow the white man's religion without questioning whether it was suited for his condition of life or not (p. 269-270).

This was not different among the Sengwer; since those who converted to Christianity were supposed to leave all their indigenous religion, names, cultural practices; and become new people.

Sengwer elders, who imparted the moral and religious education, were often dismissed by the missionaries. The missionaries imposed a religion on the Sengwer that was out of touch with their local environment, this resulted to a clash of worldview between indigenous Sengwer religion and Christianity. The missionaries' attitudes towards African beliefs still persist today: most churches encourage their members to disregard their indigenous beliefs and practices. This is particularly true in modern evangelical and Pentecostal churches, which do not accommodate African religious beliefs and practices. These contemporary churches view African indigenous

religious practices, such as veneration of sacred sites and ancestors, as idolatrous or even satanic.

The modern churches have been the force behind the onslaught against Sengwer sacred sites in the forest. For instance, an early missionary attempted to build a church on top of the Kiptaberr Hill which is a sacred hill for the Sengwer people. It is believed that the church did not stand the test of time because the wrath of Assis through *Illat* came down and destroyed the church. The Catholics later attempted to install a cross on the same Kiptaberr Hill which was also brought down and thrown far away by the power of Assis (Kiprop, Personal interview, August 26, 2016). The repeated attempts of modern churches to destroy the Sengwer's sacred sites and to ensure that the Sengwer people's religious and cultural practices are forgotten clearly show their disregard for indigenous beliefs. Wangari Maathai, a Kenyan environmentalist who won the Nobel peace prize, expresses the effect on indigenous people when she says:

That tree inspired awe, it was protected, and it was the place of God. But in the 60s, after I had gone far away, I went back to where I grew up, and I found God has been relocated to a little stone building called a church. The tree was no longer sacred. It had been cut down. I mourned for that tree. (Hari, 2010)

Thus, Christianity can be cited as one of the main challenges facing the Sengwer people in their attempt to conserve the natural environmental resources. The wave of Christianity deeply affected the traditional institutions and systems that were in charge of safeguarding the utilization of natural resources. Modern Christianity's attitude has contributed to a systematic destruction of Embobut forest. Many people who have converted to Christianity don't respect the sacred places or the traditional systems put in place to protect them. They believe that Sengwer culture has been surpassed with the passage of time. Therefore, the social systems and means of

controlling natural environment resources have been destroyed. Chinua Achebe (1958), in his book *Things Fall Apart*, fictionalizes the impact of Western religion's cultural imposition on Igbo religion when Obierika says,

The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion; we are amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart (p. 24–25).

Just like the Igbo, things have fallen apart as a result of Christianity getting more converts who disregard their traditional Sengwer religion. This has led to a far-reaching effect on the influence of the Sengwer religious worldview on natural resource conservation as many local people started casting aspersion to their indigenous religion.

4.2 Colonial and post-colonial government oppression

Most of the participants pointed to the colonial and post-colonial government oppression as their main challenge. The Sengwer people have been disadvantaged since the advent of colonialism in Kenya. The challenges they faced during the colonial government are still being experienced today. In fact, they have now worsened due to the interminable evictions happening in Embobut forest (Rutto, 2018). Government oppression halts their attempts to conserve the environment using religious beliefs and practices like they could in pre-colonial times. During pre-colonial times, the Sengwer clan elders and the council of elders, who had the divine sanction from *Assis* and *Illat*, to enforce the observance of community's regulations, customs, and religious practices (Kipngetch, Personal interview, August 26, 2016):

The clan elders played a vital role in ensuring that the community's natural resources were used in a sustainable manner to avoid over-exploitation.

The colonial government disregarded both the clan elders and the existing traditional rules and regulations of the Sengwer people. They came up with various legislations that alienated the Sengwer people from their ancestral land. The separation hampered the Sengwer people from utilizing their rich religious beliefs and ethics to conserve the natural resources.

The Sengwer people were subjected to a lot of colonial injustices by the British colonial government. These injustices aimed to diminish the Sengwer identity and assimilate the community into extinction (Kenya Land Commission, 1932).

The Dorobo problem has risen because these people, living in small scattered groups, spread over large areas without any property...lived from hand to mouth by hunting and bee keeping...there's no reason in modern times for this precarious mode of existence and with the protection afforded by the government of these people now own stock...thereby raised themselves in the social scale and are fit to be received as a group in the larger stock owning tribes (p. 1944).

The then-acting provincial commissioner, Mr. C.H. Adams, went on to state in his memorandum to the Kenya Land commission that, "...I agree then the recommendation reported in the prescription that – wherever possible the Dorobo should become members of and be absorbed into the larger tribe which they have most affinity...."(p. 1946). The colonial government wanted to ensure that the Sengwer identity is lost. This is evident through the various colonial letters and publications by the colonial administrators who were after the extinction of the Sengwer people as aforementioned. They did not see the Sengwer as a people with the right to identity, the right to live, nor the right to profess and practice their religion.

The colonial government alienated the Sengwer people from their ancestral land in the forest. To achieve their objective of extinguishing the Sengwer ethnic group, they facilitated other communities (such as the Marakwet, Pokot, and Nandi) to access the Sengwer ancestral land. Various parts of the Cherangany forest were cleared for farming and settlement by these dominant tribes (Kenya Land Commission 1932). This effect of the colonial government is still being experienced today because various ethnic communities such as the Marakwet and the Pokot claim that the Sengwer are part of their clans (Ngesemwo B, personal communication, August 29, 2016). Furthermore, the British government altered the Sengwer ancestral territory boundaries. They divided the Sengwer people into two administrative units: Trans Nzoia and Elgeyo. Later, these administrative boundaries were further divided into four administrative units—namely, the Trans Nzoia, West Pokot, Uasin Gishu and Elgeyo Marakwet counties. This alteration of the boundaries led to encroachment of other communities into Sengwer ancestral and forest land, leading to the destruction of the forest and natural resources. The new administrative units favoured the governmental recognized communities. This has had a negative impact on the Sengwer cultural and religious life (Yatich, personal communication, August 29, 2016).

To ensure that the main objective of wiping out the Sengwer people was met, the colonial government converted the Sengwer community's land and homes into government forest. This is evident in the many letters that colonial masters exchanged. For instance, in the Sengwer Safari file (KNA/DC/TAMB/1/1/7), Assistant Conservator of Forests letter (Natives in Kapolet Forest) to the district commissioner Kitale on 7th January 1943 states that "I understand that some of the Cherangani Dorobo are once more in Kapolet Forest Reserve in spite of the police

raid there in last February and the severe penalties imposed in them. I would be glad if you could arrange for them to be shifted once and for all from Kapolet into West Suk Reserve before the end of the year". The post-colonial government continued Sengwer oppression by violently evicting the Sengwer from the Sengwer land as shown in the succeeding sections.

Among the Sengwer, the management and conservation of the environmental resources was tasked by clan elders from each Sengwer sub tribe. The colonial government interfered with the indigenous Sengwer communal ownership of land and the tribal systems responsible for controlling hunting, habitation, and utilization of resources in the forest. Members of each sub tribe were obliged to respect the sub tribe territories by not hunting, gathering, or collecting honey from another sub tribe's territory without permission from the elders. These systems ensured that the natural resources were conserved for continuity and future generations without causing extinction of the various plant and animal species. These systems were destroyed by the colonial government as they forcefully evicted the Sengwer people from various parts of the Cherangany Hills forest which is a major water tower in Kenya. This is still being propagated and perfected by the current government as there are still on-going evictions of the Sengwer people from the forest they call their home.

The colonial government made several attempts to erase the traditional lifestyle of the indigenous Sengwer people. The Sengwer people were known, and are still known, as an aborigine community of hunter and gatherers, but the colonial government introduced potatoes and cattle ranching as an attempt to change their lifestyle. This is found in the letter by the assistant district commissioner in charge of Elgeyo

Marakwet to the provincial commissioner. He emphatically says this concerning the colonial government efforts.

It is of course argued that the Cherangani were bushmen who were induced to leave their forests. It is true that all Government officers in charge of this district have striven to persuade the Cherangani who remained in the forests to leave their Dorobo haunts and habits and become cultivators on the slopes, owners of cattle, payers of taxes, and respectable members of society (Kenya Land Commission report, 1932, p. 1986).

The colonial government position on its intention concerning the alteration of the Sengwer lifestyle is buttressed by Mr. Hoey in his evidence before the land commission where he states that: "...it is given on the grounds that the Cherangani when I first came into the country had no stock, but the Administration Officers did their utmost to persuade the Cherangani to adopt an entirely different mode of life and become stockowners, and to cultivate a good deal more than they had done in the past." (Kenya Land Commission report, 1932, p. 1996). The colonial government also converted part of the Sengwer land in Trans Nzoia into a game reserve that is currently known as Saiwa Swamp National Park. This was a home for many wild animals where the Sengwer people went for hunting (Kibet, personal communication, August 27, 2016). The colonial effect is still being felt today as the government is hell bent to evict the Sengwer from their ancestral land found with the forest which will affect successively their lifestyle and identity as hunters and gatherers. The aforementioned has occurred through violent evictions and disrespect of basic human rights.

Immediately after independence, the Sengwer believed that their oppression and lack of identity would finally come to an end. On the contrary, the government that

egressed from colonialism worsened the situation. The post-colonial government, in succession, have followed the footprints of the colonial government in their continuous oppression, marginalization, discrimination, and denying the Sengwer their basic rights as enshrined in the various articles of the Kenyan constitution. Rather than returning the land and forest reserves that the colonial government had taken from the Sengwer, the post-colonial government gave that land to other communities and political cronies (Kiprono G, personal communication, August 26, 2016). This affected the Sengwer people since it mixed them with different communities who had different cultural and religious practices.

Lack of recognition of the Sengwer people as a distinct ethnic tribe has left their attempts to conserve the environment unsupported and unappreciated (Kiplimo Kibichii, personal communication, August 29, 2016). The 2010, the Kenyan constitution recognized the rights of the minority communities in the following sections: articles 19, 21, and 26 in the Bill of Rights; article 63 on community land; article 56 on minorities and marginalized groups; and article 67 on the National Land Commission (The Constitution of Kenya 2010). However, the government has not respected the constitution or the above-named articles as they have presided over forceful evictions of the Sengwer people from Embobut forest. Furthermore, the independence and post-independence government has failed to come up with comprehensive environmental policies that are in line with the local people's religious worldview. This has led to a vicious circle of conflicts and evictions by the Kenyan government to the indigenous Sengwer tribe leading to lose of life and property. Hence, there is need to bolster and resuscitate traditional institutions that were in charge of natural resource management to partner with the government instead of evicting the aboriginal Sengwer from their ancestral land.

The Kenyan government has used the World Bank-financed forest conservation program in western Kenya's Cherangani hills, popularly referred to as, "Natural Resources Management Project" (NRMP) as a means by which to continue with the violation of the Sengwer constitutional rights through violent evictions. The World Bank has left a trail of misery among the Sengwer as they are responsible for the evictions which they have vehemently denied in dire contradiction with what is happening within the Sengwer ancestral land (Kushne, et al, 2017). The Kenyan government has failed to recognize that the Sengwer community is environmentally conscious because their religion does not allow the destruction of natural resources in the forest. They have failed to realize that the Sengwer people coexisted sustainably with their environment since time in memorial and that their religious practices are rich in environmental ethics as revealed by the current study. This study shows how the government and the stakeholders should change to a holistic approach of involving the Sengwer people in the management and conservation of Embobut forest that is under threat.

The alienation of the Sengwer people from the forest threatens their survival and continuation of the generations since the forest is where their ancestral spirits live and also a community's identity as an aboriginal community of the Embobut forest and Cherangany hills by extension. The Sengwer people used the forest to appease and honour the ancestral spirits. The forest was also used by the community to teach adolescents during initiation ceremonies about the environmental knowledge of efficient and effective natural resource utilization. This eviction away from their ancestral land therefore threatens them on a cultural, spiritual and environmental level.

United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples provides a framework for protecting the rights of the indigenous people (UN, 2008). The Kenyan government should ensure that the Sengwer rights are respected in full compliance with the international standards as set out in the aforementioned declaration and the 2010 Kenya constitution.

4.3 Development initiatives and cultural differences.

Development initiatives are being undertaken on the sacred Sengwer sites without consulting the Sengwer elders. This undermines the contribution of the Sengwer beliefs in resource conservation. For instance, the recent harnessing of water by the Kitale county government without consulting the Sengwer elders undermines their authority in the society. Rapid social, cultural, and economic changes have disadvantaged and eroded the Sengwer religious beliefs and practices. This has subsequently affected their contribution towards natural resource conservation. Many communities have moved into the Sengwer ancestral land, leading to cultural dilution that has undermined the traditional Sengwer institutions that presided over conservation and preservation of natural environmental resources. These communities have no respect for the Sengwer elders, making it hard for the elders to impose the traditional Sengwer rules on resource utilization and conservation as pointed out by Terekoi, (personal communication, November 15, 2016).

4.4 Population growth

Ever-increasing population has an overwhelming effect on the natural resources as it puts more pressure on the earth's finite resources. The effect of overpopulation is felt not only in the country but also in Embobut forest. Population growth has led to depletion of natural resources as people clear forest to establish homesteads and farmland.

Kiplimo Kibichii (personal communication, November 14, 2016) argues that the influx of other tribes into the Sengwer ancestral land has contributed to the destruction of the forest and the natural resources. Communities such as the Keiyo and the Marakwet, who don't share the beliefs of the Sengwer that are associated with natural resources found in the forest, have no regard to conserving the forest. The Dominant communities neighbouring the Sengwer have interfered with sacred sites of the Sengwer people and destroyed sacred trees found there.

Members from both the three focus group discussions emphatically averred that dominant tribes, mentioned above, have invaded the forest to harness timber, firewood, and charcoal for economic purposes. This has led government agencies to believe that the Sengwer people are the force behind the destruction of the forest. Additionally, those same government agencies, such as Kenya Forest Service personnel, are involved in the timber business and illegal logging. (Kibet, personal communication, November 14, 2016). The later claim has been vindicated by a government-mandated forest taskforce report which indicts KFS management for depletion of country's forest cover. (Chepkwony, 2018). The report found out that the Kenya Forest Service had "overseen wanton destruction of our forests", and "systematically executed plunder and pillaging of our water towers".

Both groups (dominant tribes and Kenya forest service) are destroying the homelands of the Sengwer people and make the Sengwer seem unfriendly to the environment. Respondents pointed out the need to have the Sengwer community as the only homogenous ethnic community residing within the forest and be allowed to take care of Embobut forest. This is the surest way of protecting the natural resources. The surety comes from the fact that this group of people has a common shared religious system and a common accepted traditional authority. This is in agreement with principle 22 of the Rio declaration on environment which states that:

Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development. (U.N. 1992).

The Kenyan government which is party to the conference and the declarations that came out of it, has failed to honour both in law and practise the principles laid down. This has hampered the Sengwer in utilising their religion for environment conservation.

Overgrazing is also another challenge brought forth by increase in population. Dominant tribes that have settled around the forest rear many animals on limited land, which has led to people invading the forest for grazing which destroys many plant species that are found in the forest (Chelimo Kipyatich, personal communication, November 14, 2016).The above challenges have had an immense impact on the role of the Sengwer religion in conserving the natural resources in Embobut forest. It is an undeniable fact that the modern forces of social change have undermined the

effectiveness of the Sengwer religion in natural resource conservation. This has led to the systematic destruction of the forest and the natural resources found therein. It is truism that the Sengwer identity, language, religion and culture is on the verge of extinction as result of the above named challenges. There is need to protect the Sengwer and incorporate them into conservation efforts as active players by utilizing their religious worldview on natural environmental resource conservation.

4.5.0 How the Sengwer have coped with these challenges

Despite the Sengwer people facing the above-named challenges, they have continued to influence natural resources through the beliefs and practices that guide them. Under this section the researcher presents different ways of how the Sengwer community ameliorates and copes with the above-named challenges.

4.5.1 The Sengwer cultural center

Majority of the participant highlighted that the Sengwer people have established the Sengwer Cultural and Information Centre (SCIC) and the traditional “KopSengwer” houses at Kapolet to protect and preserve their culture and religious practices. The SCIC also seeks to appreciate and acknowledge the Sengwer people’s culture through the documenting and showcasing artefacts and work tools of the Sengwer people as a museum would. The SCIC reminds the people about their history, culture, and the environment. They hold annual cultural meetings at the SCIC. It is one very important step in ensuring that the unique environments under which most minority tribes live are preserved, maintained, and, above all, remain true to cultural and traditional characteristics (Kitum Kendagor, personal communication, November 16, 2016).

4.5.2 Legal action

The Sengwer have taken legal action against the government for forcefully evicting them from the sacred forest which is their ancestral land. They have taken their case to both local and international courts, seeking to protect their identity and existence within the forest (Kangongo J, personal communication, November 16, 2016). The Sengwer have sought the intervention of global organizations such as the World Bank and European Union to involve them in all decision-making regarding the conservation of Embobut forest. They have also written memoranda airing their objection for not being involved, including the statement: “European Union will be perfecting continued oppression, marginalization, torture and discrimination of Sengwer Indigenous Peoples if it will go ahead and fund the identified projects in Cherangany Hills of Marakwet district without consultation and participation of Sengwer Indigenous Peoples.” (Sengwer Indigenous Peoples of Marakwet District - Kenya, 2007).

Despite their legal efforts in the local courts, the government has not honoured the court injunctions. For instance, the government has disregarded injunctive conservatory orders issued by Eldoret High Court in March 2013. The Kenyan government has forcefully evicted the Sengwer people from their ancestral land by burning their houses and torturing them, not respecting their human rights as pointed out under section 2.2.

4.5.3 Syncretism

The word “syncretism” comes from the Greek word *synkretismos* which means “to combine.” Schreiter defines syncretism as the “mixing of elements of two religious

systems to the point where at least one, if not both, of the systems loses basic structure and identity” (Schreiter, 1994, p. 84). Syncretism therefore refers to the amalgamation of two or more religious beliefs. It also refers to the accommodation of two belief systems towards the beliefs, rituals, and practices of each other. The Sengwer people have coalesced their indigenous belief systems with that of Christianity to ensure that their religion does not die off. Research participants affirmed that, despite many members of the Sengwer community aligning themselves to one of the Christian churches (such as the Catholic Church, the Seventh-day Adventists, and African inland churches), the majority of them still practices their indigenous religion. This is seen through their cultural practices such as the singing, language, dancing, and prayers done in their vernacular language. Mbiti emphasized this concerning African religion when he postulates that “on the cultural level, like the naming ceremonies, initiation rites and marriage procedure, traditional elements become partially Islamized or are remodelled” (Mbiti 1989, p. 84). Many members of the Sengwer community have adopted Christian beliefs and practices that suit their traditional beliefs and practices. During Christian services they sing, dance, and pray in their local language.

Furthermore, Kipketer Kimutai, (personal communication, November 17, 2016) states that many converts take their children to undergo the traditional rites of passage. During this period, they are taught about the Sengwer religion and culture and the importance of the forest to the survival of the community. Christian churches should be encouraged to embrace Sengwer traditions that are in line with biblical teaching so as to interreligious cooperation in natural resource conservation.

4.5.4 The place of council of elders

Findings from the field reveal that the Sengwer elders are still respected and feared by members of the community. Despite the many challenges that the Sengwer elders face, Kibet, (personal communication, November 17, 2016) argues that the council of elders have continued to play an active role of providing direction for the community and interceding for the community whenever there is a calamity. They are still consulted whenever a major decision involving the usage and utilization of the natural resources found in the forest. This has strengthened the Sengwer religion. There is need to empower the community elders so that they can continue to effectively ensure that natural resources are protected and utilized in a sustainable manner. Sengwer elders who have lobbied and petitioned the government to respect their rights to the ancestral land as stated in article 63 of the Kenyan constitution.

4.5.5 Informal education

The Sengwer people have transferred the indigenous environmental knowledge and their religious practices from one generation to another through informal education that takes places at home in the evening and during the various cultural practices that take place in the community. Tarus, (personal communication, November 17, 2016) noted that “boys are taught by their fathers during hunting and in the evening as they wait for food to be ready. Girls are taught by their mothers in the evening while cooking”. During rites of passage for both girls and boys, various ecological knowledge, religious beliefs, and indigenous practices centred on the community’s religious worldview are passed on to the initiates. Boys were also taught how to mend beehives from trees without destroying the trees. This has helped to build the identity of the initiates and make them feel proud of their culture and religion. Traditional

herbalists also transfer important herbal knowledge to selected members of the community. They are taught how to harness drugs for different diseases in a sustainable manner that does not harm the environment.

4.6 Conclusion

The foregone chapter has described a wide range of challenges that face the Sengwer in their attempt to utilize their religion to conserve the natural resources. This chapter has shown that the Sengwer have adopted various mechanisms to tackle the challenges and to ensure that they are actively involved in the conservation of the forest and the natural resources. Despite these challenges, the Sengwer have tried to play a pivotal role in ensuring that identity and religion remains does not vanish.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter summarizes the entire study. It presents key findings from the preceding chapters. It is divided into three sections. First, a succinctly description of the key findings of the study is presented. Later, it makes recommendations and lastly it proposes areas for further research.

5.1 Summary

The study examined the role of the Sengwer religious worldview in natural environmental resource conservation a case of the Embobut forest in Elgeyo Marakwet, Kenya. In essence, the study sought to explore the Sengwer religious worldview on natural environment resource conservation, determine how the Sengwer religious worldview influences natural environment resource conservation and lastly analyze the challenges that the Sengwer people face in using their religious worldview to conserve the natural environment.

The study was guided by human environment relation theory and the social functional theory. The human environment relation theory states that the relationship between human and environment can be conceptualized into three main forms which are intertwined into each other. The human environment theory helped us to understand the Sengwer worldview on natural environment conservations that underpins their

ecological and environmental ethics. The beliefs, practices, values and cultural heritage constructed their worldview that guided the human environment relation. There is need to change the immediate end approach adopted by government happening through forcefully eviction of the Sengwer from their ancestral land which may soon be tragic. But instead adopt an intergenerational approach that focuses on the behavioral and attitudinal change. This will play a major role in averting the impending environmental doom and return the harmonious human environment relationship that existed in the pre-colonial time.

The social functional theory used in the study elucidated and identified the functional role of the Sengwer religion in ensuring that the natural resources around them were well protected and conserved. The indigenous systems and measures put in place to police sustainable use of natural resources enabled the Sengwer religion to fulfill its functional duty in the society.

Literature related to the thesis topic and research questions were also reviewed. The methods used to collect data were also described. These methods were participant observation, interview and focused group discussion.

In chapter two the context under which the study was carried out was presented. This included the description of the geographical, historical setting of the Sengwer people; and social description, ways of governance and economic organizational of the Sengwer was also discussed. Lastly, the chapter presented the significance of the forest to the Sengwer.

Chapter three explored the Sengwer religious worldview on natural environmental resource conservation. The chapter identified various natural environment resources found within Embobut forest and the Sengwer beliefs attached to. Later, the chapter discussed the methods of conserving and regulating the utilization of natural resources by the Sengwer community. Lastly, the chapter showed how oral literature was used to preserve and transmit environmental knowledge and the Sengwer religion to the younger generation.

Chapter four discussed the challenges facing the Sengwer community were. The study identified challenges such as: Colonial and post-colonial government oppression, modern religions, population growth, development initiatives and cultural differences. The chapter also presented the various ways of how the Sengwer are conserving their religious practices in face of these challenges.

Finally, it was found out that the Sengwer religious beliefs and practices influenced the conservation of the natural resources found within Cherangany hills and Embobut forest in particular. The study was about the influence of the Sengwer religious worldview on natural environmental resource conservation. The study answered the following questions, what is the Sengwer religious worldview on natural environment conservation? How does the Sengwer religious worldview influence natural environment conservation? What are the challenges faced by the Sengwer community in using their beliefs and practices in conserving the natural environment? What measures should be taken in order to uphold and integrate the beliefs and practices of the Sengwer people in natural environmental conservation? At the end of the research, the salient findings led to the following conclusions:

The research found out that there are various natural resources found in Embobut forest which is of significant to the Sengwer people. To ensure that these resources were conserved the Sengwer people attached various beliefs stemming out of their religious worldview to ensure efficient utilization of the resources.

Key findings have shown that the Sengwer community is still religious in character and has a standard code of conduct, language, beliefs, practices, ethics and worldview that is environmentally friendly. They believe that the human community is related to the non-human community. This means the living, the non-living, the unborn, the ancestors; spiritual beings and God are related to the environment. Among the Sengwer people it is human beings that are the greatest beneficiaries of the ecosystems as they heavily depend on it. It is out of this understanding that underscores the need for the Sengwer people to live in harmony with natural resources. For this to be achieved, religious beliefs and practices played a major role in helping to achieve an equilibrium relationship of dependence on nature.

The Sengwer people value natural environment and this concern is expressed through observance of taboo, beliefs and practices, rituals and elders direction that guide sustainable utilization of natural resources. The Sengwer ethos on environment had religious, social and economic significance to the community.

5.2 Recommendations

Drawing from the above findings, the study recommends for the following:

5.2.1 Government input

Basing on the findings from the field it was noted that; the environment crisis that the world and the country is facing today is a human problem that stems out from human greed and irresponsibility of the government to come up with appropriate policies and legislation that are based on the indigenous Sengwer systems of resource management. Therefore, there is need for the government to integrate modern contemporary laws with indigenous beliefs and practices of the Sengwer people. This will ensure a holistic and sustainable natural resource conservation approach that does not override and alienate the community in environment conservation. In all, there is need for the Kenyan government to come up with laws and policies that are deeply rooted in traditional institutions that will strengthen traditional Sengwer institutions in protecting the environment. The indigenous beliefs and practices of the Sengwer people should be harnessed for policy inclusion that is enforceable at the county level, the national level and the international level. The policies will provide a framework on how the indigenous religion can be fused with the modern ways in conserving natural environmental resources. This would avoid unnecessary conflicts and evictions of the community from the forest.

The government should hand over such important areas to the Sengwer traditional institutions for preservation, maintenance and conservation of the natural resources found in Embobut forest and Cherangany hills at large. Through this initiative traditional and ancestral ways of conserving the environment will be revived. The

foregoing is argued basing on Milton (1996, p. 53) who cogently says that “If an understanding of local cultures is built into the formulation of environmental policies, there is less risk of alienating the local population, on whose co-operation the success of the policies may depend.”

There is need for the county government and the national government to empower the traditional authority in order for them to carry out their duties effectively as custodians of the natural resources found within their jurisdiction. This can be done through legislations and incentives given to the traditional authority to motivate them in their work.

The government should also avoid environment conservation measures that are insensitive to the local culture and their religious practices, especially those that alienate people from their sacred sites and disrupt the traditional ways of utilizing natural resources and conserving the environment.

Respondents argued that the Kenyan government should change and re orient its attitudes towards indigenous communities living in the forest and conceive traditional institutions as partners in sustainable utilization and conservation of natural environmental resources. The government should empower traditional institutions in their attempts to conserve environmental resources within their jurisdiction. These institutions and the traditional religious cultural beliefs and practices have been effective in ensuring the protection and management of the environment since time in memorial.

5.2.3 Sensitization campaign

Respondents also felt that parents through sensitization campaigns should also be encouraged to always feel proud of their religion and culture and pass the important ecological and environmental conservation knowledge to the young ones. In order for this knowledge to be appealing to young ones, there is need to repackage oral tradition in form of drama, movies, motion pictures, songs and radio and television presentation. This will also help in preserving these important traditional knowledge and religious beliefs and practices on natural resource conservation for posterity.

5.2.4 Integrating indigenous conservation knowledge into formal education

Most respondents argued that there is pressing need to integrate indigenous conservation knowledge into school curriculum. Necessary steps and initiatives should be taken by policy makers to include indigenous environment conservation knowledge that stems from peoples religious beliefs and practices into school curriculum starting from early childhood education, primary education, secondary education and tertiary education to form positive attitude among learners towards conserving environment from an early age throughout the student's education and adult life. This is in agreement with UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), which "...aims to integrate values, activities and principles that are inherently linked to sustainable development into all forms of education and learning and help usher in a change in attitudes, behaviours and values to ensure a more sustainable future in social, environmental and economic terms" (UNESCO, 2007).

Educationist and curriculum developers should come up with relevant indigenous content as a subject with environment conservation underpinnings to be a compulsory part and parcel of the education system in Kenya.

5.2.5 Interreligious cooperation

Since African traditional Religion has shaped human behavior, actions, beliefs and attitudes in relation to environment since time immemorial, the same can be used to encourage environmental ethics for the future. Therefore, there is need for cooperation between African traditional religion and other religions on matters that concern the conservation of natural environmental resources.

Religious leaders especially from the Christian faith should recognize the undisputed role that the indigenous religion has played in ensuring a conducive environment free from pollutions, degradation and hazards .They should seek for avenues on how they can create partnership instead of condemning and demonizing the indigenous religion of the Sengwer.

5.3 Suggestions for further studies

Further studies should be conducted on how technology can be incorporated in helping to preserve the religious beliefs and practices of the Sengwer people in nature and environment conservation.

More research should be done on how modern religions can complement and partner with the indigenous African religion in management and conservation of natural environment to curb the environment crisis the world is facing. Research should be

done on how indigenous religious practices and beliefs related to environment can be incorporated and disseminated into the formal education curriculum.

Further research should be done on the contribution of oral literature in natural environment conservation.

5.4 Conclusion

From the foregoing chapters, this research has shown that Sengwer religion is deeply interwoven with their natural environment. Through nature, their religion finds its expression. This religious system has helped in conservation of natural resources and ecological features found within their locality. The Sengwer indigenous religion has rules, taboos and sanctions that help to check abuse and over utilization of natural resources. This shows that this group of people had an environmental conscious mind that was transferred from generation to generation through various means of oral literature. This makes the Sengwer religion to be intrinsically environmentally friendly. The traditional authorities managed the resources through the council of elders, the religious beliefs, taboos and a wide range of sacred and cultural practices that constitute the community's worldview. These indigenous systems of management and conservation of natural resources that have been used over time has proved to be effective. This study has proffered salient recommendations on how religion can be incorporated into environment conservation measures. There is need to revive and harness these beliefs and practices for the preservation of our natural environmental resources in the present day for posterity.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Interview Guide for Traditional elders

1. What do you think human beings 'place is within the universe, based on your religious beliefs?
2. Do you know of any other religion(s) that operate alongside your religion in this traditional area?
3. If yes, could you tell me what they are?
4. What is relationship between your religion and the one(s) you have mentioned?
5. Does your religion provide an account of the creation of the universe?
6. If yes, could you briefly share (one of) them with me?
7. Do the Sengwer have festivals and ritual that involve certain plants and animals
8. If yes name them
9. List down the various practices/festivals and rituals that involve certain plants and animals
10. Do the Sengwer people have a sacred places/sites in the forest
11. If yes name them
12. Do the Sengwer people have plants and animals that are sacred
13. If yes what are they and their significance
14. Does the community have oral traditions used for natural environmental conservation
15. If yes list them and give examples
16. What is your impression about the general environmental situation in Marakwet Traditional Area today?
17. Do you have any specific cultural/traditional/religious way(s) of promoting /influence environmental conservation?

18. If yes, could you tell me what they are?
19. Could you also explain how they work?
20. In your opinion, how effective are these way(s) of conserving the environment in the present today?
21. So far, have you encountered any challenges in applying your methods for conserving the environment?
22. If there are any, could you share them with me?
23. In your opinion, how could these challenges be addressed?
24. African Traditional Religion (ATR) has often been described as an environmentally friendly religion. Do you agree?
25. If you answered yes or no to 24, could explain why?
26. List down environmental resources in Embobut forest conserved through the Sengwer culture e.g. trees, animals, snakes, birds, caves and hills (either in Sengwer or English)
27. What are the cultural reasons for conserving this species
28. Do you know of any other means of conserving the environment which is/are different from yours?
29. If yes, could you share some of them with me?
30. Is there a possibility of combining your methods of conserving the environment with those new ones you have just mentioned?
31. If yes, how could this be done?
32. Do the current religion worship or perform their religious function from any of the cultural environment site
33. If yes mention the site and the ritual performed there.
34. Are the modern youths actively involved in natural environmental resources conservation
35. If yes how are they involved
36. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your work, or do you have any questions with regard to our discussion?
37. If yes, please ask.
38. If no,

APPENDIX II: Interview guide for Herbalists/Hunters/Environmentalists

1. For how long have you had your current occupation?
2. Do you have any special experience pertaining to your work that you would like to share with me?
- 3 .How do you perceive the universe in terms of its creation and purpose?
4. Is there any relationship between humans and nature?
5. If yes, could you explain this relationship to me?
6. Does your occupation have any *positive* influence of effect on the environment?
7. If yes, could you outline and explain it/them to me?
8. Does your occupation have any *negative* influence or effect on the environment?
- 9 .If yes, could you outline and explain it/them to me?
10. How do you think it/they can be addressed in order to promote the sustainable use of natural resources?
11. What is your impression about the general environmental situation in Embobut today?
12. Do you agree with the suggestion that the environmental situation in Embobut can now be described as a crisis one?
- 13 .If yes or no, please give reasons for your answer.
14. Do you know of any ways in which traditional Africans conserve their environments?
- 15 .If yes, can you share some of them with me?

16. Do you know how traditionalists pass their conservationist knowledge on to the younger generations?
17. In your opinion, how effective are these ways of conserving nature today?
18. Are there any religious act(s) performed by the traditionalists that you consider to be anti-conservationist?
19. If yes, kindly share it/them with me.
20. African Traditional Religion (ATR) has often been described as an environmentally friendly religion. Do you agree?
21. If yes or no, could you explain why?
22. In your view, would it be possible to blend today's methods for conserving nature with those of the traditional people?
23. If yes, how?
24. If no, why?
25. Do you have any suggestions about how to address the current environmental problems in Embobut area?
26. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your work, or do you have any questions with regard to our discussion?
27. If yes, please ask.

APPENDIX III: Focused Group Discussion Interview Guide

1. List down the various practices/festivals and rituals that involve certain plants and animals
2. Do the Sengwer people have a sacred places/sites in the forest
3. If yes name them
4. Do the Sengwer people have plants and animals that are sacred
5. If yes what are their significance
6. Does the community have oral traditions used for natural environmental conservation
7. If yes list them and give examples
8. What is your impression about the general environmental situation in Cherangany Traditional Area today?
9. Do you have any specific cultural/traditional/religious way(s) of promoting /influence environmental conservation?
10. If yes, could you tell me what they are?
11. Could you also explain how they work?
12. In your opinion, how effective are these way(s) of conserving the environment in the present today?
13. So far, have you encountered any challenges in applying your methods for conserving the environment?

14. If there are any, could you share them with me?
15. In your opinion, how could these challenges be addressed?
16. African Traditional Religion (ATR) has often been described as an environmentally friendly religion. Do you agree?
17. If you answered yes or no to 16, could explain why?
18. List down environmental resources in Embobut forest conserved through the Sengwer culture e.g. trees, animals, snakes, birds, caves and hills (either in Sengwer or English)
19. What are the cultural reasons for conserving this species
20. Do you know of any other means of conserving the environment which is/are different from yours?
21. If yes, could you share some of them with me?
22. Is there a possibility of combining your methods of conserving the environment with those new ones you have just mentioned?
23. If yes, how could this is done?
24. Do the current religion worship or perform their religious functions from ant of the cultural environment site
25. If yes mention the site and the ritual performed there.
26. Are the modern youths actively involved in natural environmental resources conservation
27. If yes how are they involved
28. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your work, or do you have any questions with regard to our discussion?
29. If yes, please ask.

APPENDIX IV: Letter of Introduction**Interview guide****MOI UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGIOUS STUDIES**

Dear, SIR/MADAM

RE: REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW

I am a Masters student of the Department of philosophy, theology and Religious Studies of Moi University Kenya. I am conducting a research on the above named topic:

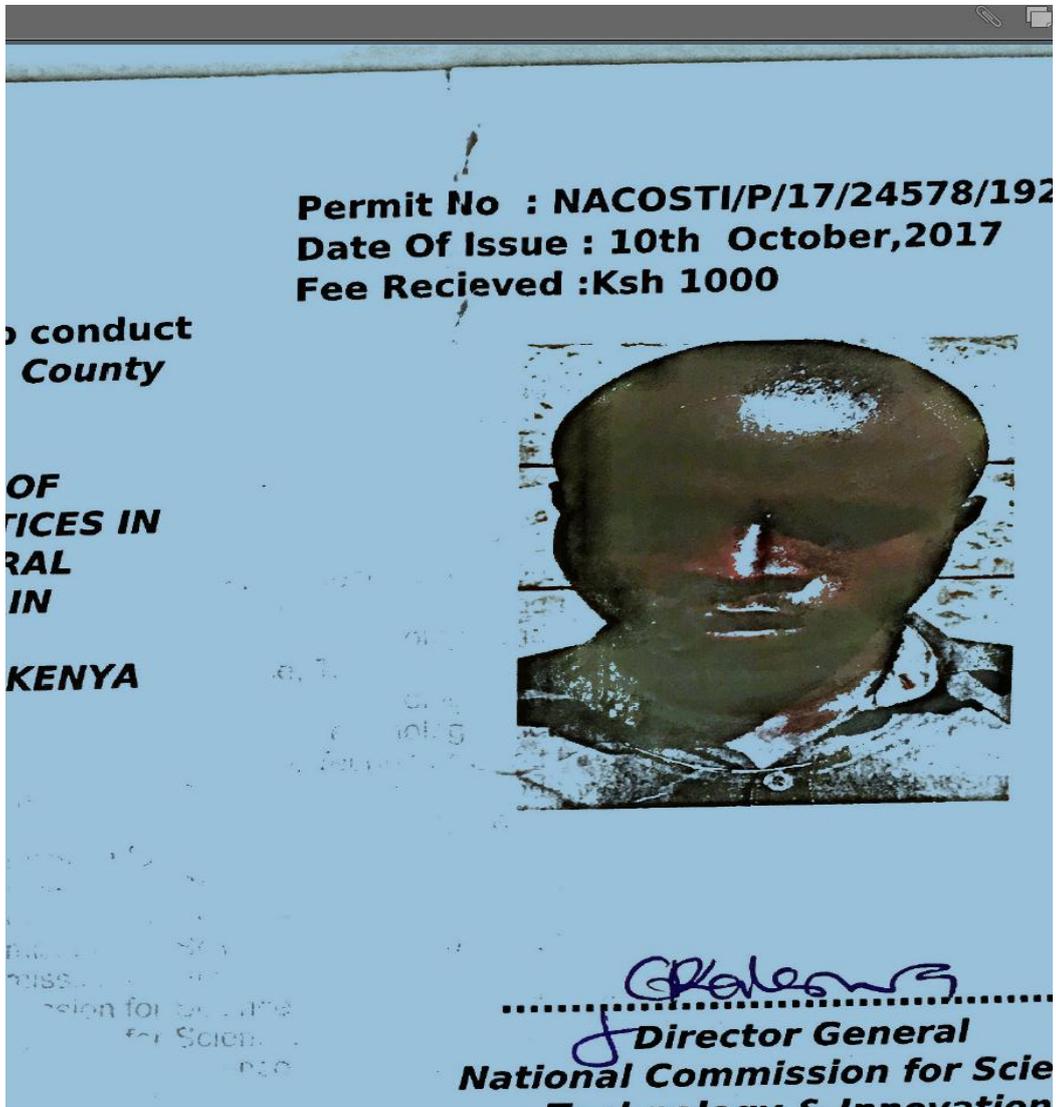
As a stakeholder in environmental issues in this Embobut area, would you be able to share your views on these important issues with me?

I would like to assure you that the information you will share with me in the interview will be confidentially and anonymously treated and will be used solely for the purpose of the study.

Thank you for your assistance.

Mamati King'asia

APPENDIX V: Authority permit



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