

This study investigates the history and theology of the African Orthodox Church in order to determine causes of the problems within. Kiambu District and part of Nairobi Province (which was Kikuyu land during the colonial era) was chosen as the area of study. The District which was the birth place of the AOC was the stronghold of the militant Karing'a politics which gave rise to the church. This study is divided into five chapters and a conclusion.

Chapter one introduces the problem, the objectives and the method of the research. The theoretical conceptual orientation that underlies this study is derived from Milton Yinger's model on the integrative function of religion. Accordingly, the emergence, evolution as well as the Liturgy and the policy of the AOC have been addressed to. In so doing leadership problems in the AOC are investigated. To achieve these objectives both primary secondary sources are relied upon in the study.

Chapter two includes an exploration of factors that led to the rise and development of the AOC. The Chapter assesses the Agikuyu socio-religiosity in the pre-colonial period. This analysis points out that the introduction of Christianity, literacy, land alienation, forced labour and taxation by the Europeans led to the disintegration of the Agikuyu society. Consequently, the African Independent Movement arose in the 1920s. Formation of independent churches such as the AIPCA and the AOC attests to this. In 1960/6 the AOC became affiliated to the Greek Orthodox Church, thereby adopting the pattern of the Greek Orthodox church in doctrine, Liturgy and policy. In 1979 an internal strife within the AOC led to formation of a splinter group.

In chapter three, the AOC church calendar and Liturgy have been examined in order to identify AOC's doctrines and to verify whether the formation of the aforementioned splinter group was doctrinally influenced. The main church follows the Gregorian Calendar (or new calendar) which is thirteen days ahead of the Julian Calendar (or old calendar) followed by the splinter group. However, the two groups observe similar feasts but on different dates and follow a similar Liturgy written by St. John Chrysostom. This Liturgy constitutes the core AOC. Many of the distinctive doctrines of the Holy Trinity, transubstantiation in the Eucharist, veneration of the Blessed Virgin and the Saints are all embodied in the Divine Liturgy. Conclusively, uniformity between the two groups of Christians rules out doctrinal discrepancy as a causative factor to the split.

Chapter four analyses the AOC church government. The African Orthodox Church in Kenya regards the hierarchical constitution of the Church with its various degrees and orders as being pertinent to its existence. Therefore, the Patriarch of Alexandria, His Holiness Parthenios is its head while his representative in East Africa is His Grace, Anastatios. The examination of the AOC Church government reveals that the split in the AOC can mainly be attributed to leadership. In particular, different attitudes to Africanization of the AOC leadership have been the bone of contention. The 'moderates' prefer an affiliation to the Greek Church, Alexandria whereas the 'conservatives' advocate for total ecclesiastical independence in the AOC.

Chapter five shows that the leadership problems within the AOC emanate from the origin of the church. Archbishop William Alexander, who established the AOC was a zealous proponent of "Africa for Africans and Europe for Europeans". After Gatungu was defrocked by the Patriarch

of Alexandria in 1979, he took upon this pan-African slogan to win the hearts of other Africans from the now Greek-led church. Archbishop Gatungu was reinstalled by the Old Calendarists in Greece. This aggravated the tension between the main church (which is made up of New Calendarists) and the splinter group (made up of the Old Calendarists). Archbishop Gatungu and his followers formed a unified group with the hope of acquiring greater status in church organization without any ecclesiastical alienation. When Archbishop Gatungu died, he was replaced by Archbishop Niphon Kiggundu.

The overall result of this controversy is the existence of two churches sharing the same registration and name (AOC) with two different heads but having the same ecclesiastical objectives. The leadership conflicts have had detrimental effects on the church's role in socio-economic development. Though the AOC has assisted in the provision of education and primary health care, its contribution is dismal. It is concluded that the concerned leaders should seek reconciliation and amicability. This means that, the main church and the splinter group need to relax their stand so that an environment of negotiation is provided for. However, if the leaders cannot solve the conflicts, then the government as the guardian of peace and security must step in and do so instead.