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THEOLOGY AND CULTURE

TENSIONS OF CHURCH T(T)RADITION AND THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL CULTURES IN THE AFRICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OF KENYA: JUSTIFYING CONTEXTUALIZATION

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ABSTRACT. The African Orthodox Church of Kenya was formed as an African Instituted Church in 1929, with considerable cultural and liberative connotations, before officially joining the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa in 1956. The journey of being faithful to the rich and ancient Eastern Orthodox tradition, history, and heritage as well as grappling with the local cultures is been an ongoing tension for this church. The tension is better appreciated from the eye view of non-Kenyan Orthodox and young theologians in comparison with that of the locals. Some contextualization practices within this church were ecclesiastically sanctioned, while others have never been reviewed, even though both are practiced with no distinction. This Orthodox Church in Kenya continues to be regarded as one of the staunchest and first growing Orthodox Church in Africa, influencing many upcoming African dioceses and the theologians they form in the main Patriarchal seminary based in Nairobi. This paper seeks to document this tension and struggle of the church and local community traditions and cultures, and with it seek to justify some of the contextualization that is realized and practiced in this church at present.

Keywords: African Orthodox Church of Kenya, contextualization, tradition, culture, mission.

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1.0 Church and culture

Christianity to her core is founded on specific cultures, which played substantial roles in the life of the church. All mission endeavors have since the beginning been carried out in specific and unique cultures, starting with Christ who was born in the Hebrew culture, and the fact that Christianity grew within Judaic and Greco-Roman specific cultures.[2] The church cannot shy away from the existing local cultures, which since the Tower of Babel have continuously increased (Gen 11:1ff), and which God along history has used in His mission (*Missio Dei*). Furthermore, the church has membership from all sorts of cultures, with the underlying fact that the church meets its converts and adherents in their already existing cultures. Ideally, the church does not evangelize to cultures but rather to men and women within these cultures. Nevertheless, such conversions do not mean the neophytes are removed from their specific cultures and cultural orientations. Rather, the church sometimes transforms the new cultures, but sometimes borrows from them on how to portray the message of salvation. Such decisions determine how steadfast such converts shall remain in their newly acquired Christian spiritual journey and what relations they keep with their indigenous cultures and former traditional religion.

Some cultures have elements different from those of the church, while others are very close to what Christianity is. Nevertheless, because culture alone cannot save, no matter how good it is, rather Christ does, the church seeks to transform all human cultures.[3] Christianity being a faith that is founded on a truth that transcends all cultures can therefore not afford to be identified with some specific cultural trends, and neither can the good in the culture be ignored considering that God created cultures and the goodness in them (Gen 11). The role of the church, therefore, remains to bring all cultures in Christ where "the flame of Pentecost abolishes linguistic, ethnic, and cultural borders,"[4] uniting humanity with God, fellow humans and the rest of creation. The balance that is sort in "mission lands" is therefore about how to be faithful to the gospel of Christ as embodied in the Christian Tradition (capital T) without being irrelevant to the local community, and how the local communities continue being relevant to their positive cultures without being syncretistic and dualistic. Understanding how the church settles in such new mission cultures matters a lot, if formerly foreign cultural ways shall be justified as okay for both the creedal and newly

[2] Catherine Bell, *Ritual: Perspectives and Dimensions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997): 212-223.

[3] Georges Florovosky, *Christianity and Culture*, Volume 2 in the Collected Works of Georges Florovsky (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing Company, 1974): 14.

[4] Archbishop Anasatasios Yannoulatos, *Facing the World: Orthodox Christian Essays on Global Concerns* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 87

converted Christians. The church Tradition (capital T) is been maintained along the centuries by the works and energies of the Holy Spirit. This has happened with few and sometimes many challenges on the human side, especially when the human traditions are challenged, or the cultural context calls for some new way of interpreting or representing the church tradition (small t). As Boris Bobrinskoy rightly puts it, "Faithfulness to the Tradition does not mean that it cannot be questioned. Thus the [Church] Fathers had to act against a certain notion of the Tradition in order to assert the mystery of the faith."[5] The issues that mostly brought complications in church history were those that were "new" to the church practices then and especially those not found in the scriptures, shown by the many historical events that has in many ways made the church what it is today.

"Church history," like Chryssavgis says, "is always cultural."[6] This only confirms that the way of doing things in a church that is led by the Holy Spirit is living and not dead and that there exist developments in the **t**raditions of the church with time, just like the age of the church fathers has not ended.[7] Different "mission lands" have along the years contributed to the development and enrichment of the church, even without formal declaration of the church on those issues, for the Holy Spirit leads the church. It is such missional additions that make the Orthodox Church in different local churches to practice differently, creating a unity in diversity. These differences are sometimes in the way of chanting; Byzantine and Slavic chants, or the dress code of the clergy in church; white or black veils for hierarchs, or in administration; where one church has a Metropolitan as a senior hierarch than an Archbishop and another an Archbishop being senior than a Metropolitan, or even having or not having pews or chairs to seat-on during church services. All these churches are Orthodox and in communion amidst their highly visible differences.

The last two centuries saw Christianity spread to the Global South, bringing with it very new cultures to the Christian demographic in those regions.[8] The beginning of the 21st century, paraded Christianity as a highly

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5 Boris Bobrinskoy, *The Compassion of the* Father. Anthony P. Gythiel trans., (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003), 168.

6 John Chryssavgis, *The Way of the Fathers: Exploring the Patristic Mind*, 2nd revised and expanded edition, (Minneapolis, MN: Light & Life Publishing Company, 1998), 21.

7 Cf. Ibid., 24-34; Panagiotes K. Chrestou. *Greek Orthodox Patrology: An Introduction to the Study of the Church Fathers,* (Rollinsford, NH: Orthodox Research Institute, 2005), 15-16.

8 Andrew F. Walls, The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith (Edinburgh/Maryknoll, NY: T&T Clark/ Orbis Books, 2002); Philip Jenkins, The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity, 3rd ed., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Southern religion, a trend expected to continue.[9] Africa is taking a lead in this, with estimations putting it to hold one of the largest Christian populations that shall become one of the most popular global missionary sending centers of the 21st century.[10] The upcoming Global South third world theologies, will eventually be popularized and may be the theologies of the future, if past historic trends of theology are something to go by.[11] The Orthodox Church is not an exception in the changing Christian demographics, nor will it be different in the forthcoming new theologies, theological understandings and interpretations. Kenya holds the highest number of Eastern Orthodox Christians as well as the major theological school for the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa. It is from this church, that future Southern Orthodox theologies are to be expected. Thus, the African Orthodox Church of Kenya (AOCK) is the main focus of this study to help evaluate the place of culture and contextualization in the Eastern Orthodox Church.

This study will use a qualitative practical theology methodology to sort out the data available on the subject of culture and the Orthodox Christian tradition. The study shall seek to highlight and evaluate some of what the African Orthodox Christians are doing that is considered by visiting Orthodox Christians as well as some young African theologians as foreign to Orthodoxy and what the locals have to say about them. Secondly, the study will then seek an Orthodox theological and historical evaluation and understanding of such contextual practices that can justify or reject the same. The study shall then use the above to offer a theological justification for the unique cultural traits within the African Orthodox Church of Kenya. This third world Orthodox theological study will also offer guidance on how best to handle cultural matters from an Orthodox missiological perspective in Africa and beyond.

2.0 Mission and Contextualization

Contextualization is important in mission, to help transmit the gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:16-20). Contextualization involves transmitting the word of God to a specific culture in a way that they can fully understand, without compromising the gospel, while mission entails going out and spreading the

[9] Centre for the Study of Global Christianity, *Christianity in its Global Context, 1970-2020: Society, Religion, and Mission* (South Hamilton, MA: Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, June 2013).

[10] Pew Research Center, Global Christianity: A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Christian Population (Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, December 2011).

[11] John Parrat, *An Introduction to Third World Theologies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

Word of God and His salvation to all nations (Matt 28:16-20). Whereas the word of God is one, the church is one, and the sacramental life of the church is one, the nations and the languages of the nations needing to be reached are many. This forces contextualization, because if the word of God will be delivered to the unreached nations in a language and presentation they understand, then the gospel has to be packaged in a way that these nations can fully grasp. While doing this, the one basic principle is to make sure that the gospel, the church, and the sacramental life of the church is not compromised. Thus contextualization, or adopting without compromising the gospel, in order to make it culturally relevant to the nation needing to be reached is an important component in mission.

Full understanding of the culture, the context language and gospel is needed in order to contextualize correctly. Foreigners could belittle important things in a culture, for not fully comprehending what it is all about, while insiders may hold-on to some cultural aspects that may hinder the gospel, by assuming they are not harmful. Indigenous missionaries or foreign ones, by forcing the merger of incompatible cultural aspects to the gospel in a way that compromises the gospel, can bring syncretism or create space for the growth of dualism. Thus, soberness and absolute knowledge of both the gospel and the culture in question is needed in every context.

The Orthodox Church has had a history with many cultures, but that does not mean that they will not come across cultures the Orthodox tradition may be inexpressible. Thus Clapsis proposes "the Orthodox churches in their missionary efforts must allow 'young churches' that have been established in cultures that are not traditionally Orthodox to develop to ways by which they can express the gospel using their indigenous cultures (without, of course, departing from the essentials of Orthodoxy or disrupting communion with other Orthodox Churches)."[12] Thus he concludes, contextualization is not just a missionary issue but also a pastoral model of evangelization that all local churches must seek to discuss.

2.1 History of contextualization in the Orthodox Church

Most ancient religions, including the Orthodox Church, have constantly argued that they do not change or they have maintained very ancient traditions to this very day. But is this true? After the publication of books in the mid-15th

[12] Emmanuel Clapsis, *Orthodoxy in Conversation: Orthodox Ecumenical Engagements* (Boston, MA/Geneva: WCC Publications and Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000): 152

century, the Orthodox Church is been noted as having stopped reforming its ways of worship, spirituality or administration.[13] Even when the basic structure of worship and spirituality is maintained, there are possibilities that the reality on the ground may be different due to diversity of contexts and mission areas.

The church has had a principal of how to handle matters culture in relations to the church **T**radition (with a capital T). Explaining time and change, saint Augustine is clear in his exegesis on Psalm 101, noting that anything that has a past or future is not what it was nor is it what it will be clearly because it changes, but "God does not change, because there is in Him neither past nor future",[14] and neither does the church's **T**radition change even amidst historical differences and developments. On the other hand, culture always changes and more so evolves even within the same generation and place, making some church **t**radition (with a small t) to always change so that the gospel can be packaged for a specific culture. It is this kind of cultural change that has given the Orthodox Church the greatest of its cultural effects left especially by the Byzantine empire: from vestments, architecture, music, administration, laws, and synods among others. It is in the Byzantine period that we see most of the existing diversity of church **t**raditions die out to pave way to commonality and unity of **t**radition in the East.[15] Thus cultural aspects added to the faith in the Orthodox Church are actually understood from a small **t** - tradition perspective rather than the capital **T**- Tradition.

The development of worship under the influence of culture is true for the Orthodox Church as for everyone else. Looking at the historical development of the early church (1st -3rd c) and the Byzantine liturgy (4th-16th c) shows how much the church borrowed from the Middle Eastern and North African cultures.[16] Another example is how the Slavonic churches borrowed in their 17th century reform from the already established Roman Catholic tradition in their region as well as from their own culture, which have made them slightly different from the rest of Orthodoxy; the Greco-Roman tradition.[17] These cultural imprints have remained to these very moments in the Orthodox world

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[13] Gert Jan van der Sman, "Printing publishing in Venice in the second half of the sixteenth century," *Print Quartery* vol.17 No.3 (Sept 2000):235-247; Protopresbyter Michael Pomazansky, "Liturgical Books: From Manuscript to Print" in *History of Liturgical Texts*. https://www.fatheralexander.org/booklets/english/liturgical_books_pomazansky.htm accessed on 15 August 2019.

[14] *Enarr*. in Psalm 101

[15] Robert Taft, "Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers 34-35,* Washington, D.C. (1980-1981).

[16] Robert Taft, *The Byzantine Rite: A Short* History (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press,1992)

[17] Paul Meyendorff, Russia, Ritual and Reform: The Liturgical Reforms of Nikon in the 17th Century (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1991).

While simple ceremonies would have worked for all of Christian worship, additions borrowed from the cultures Christianity rubbed shoulders with enriched these sacraments to their forms today. Baptism in just water is enough after the Holy Spirit is called upon, but the additional symbolisms and rituals give it even more splendour and grace.[18] The new theological terminologies used in the Nicean Council of AD325 to explain the unity and diversity of the Trinity: *homoousios* (consubstantial), brought a lot of turmoil in the Church and yet today the Trinitarian theology cannot be explained without this former foreign terminology.[19]Although the monastic community had an upper hand in the initiation of church music, considering the likes of Saints Romanos the Melodist, John of Damascus, Andrew of Crete, and Theodore the Studite, this same community together with the church in general had a lot of challenges accepting the present church music, including the *Troparia* and *Kontakia*, that was formulated not using just the scriptures but rather using the then secular methods of poetry, chant and voices; even though theologically sound.[20] The best example of rejecting church music is the riot against the *Homogenes* (Only Begotten Son…) song in the 6th c, which was led by monastics that demonstrated in the streets.[21] The use of iconography in the church brought what is known as the first (AD717-787) and second (AD813-843) Byzantine iconoclastic controversies until their formalization on 11th March 843, today known as the triumph of Orthodoxy and celebrated on every first Sunday of Lent in the Orthodox world.[22]

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[18] Cf. Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Cambridge/ Grand Rapids, MI: William E. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009).

[19] John Behr, *The Way to Nicaea: Formation of Christian Theology,* vol.1 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001); _____, *The Nicene Faith: Formation of Christian Theology,* vol.2, part 1 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2004).

[20] Egon Wellesz, *A History of Byzantine Music and Hymnography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1961).

[21] Joan Mateos, The Evolution of the Byzantine Liturgy Part I: From the beginning to the Trisagion, in *John XXIII Lectures, Volume One. 1965 Byzantine Christian Heritage* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1966), 79; Robert Taft, "Liturgy of the Great Church: An Initial Synthesis of Structure and Interpretation on the Eve of Iconoclasm", *Dumbarton Oaks Papers 34-35,* Washington, D.C. (1980-1981): 50.

[22] Cf. Alice-Mary Talbot, "General Introduction", in *Byzantine Defenders of Images: Eight Saints' Lives in English Translation* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1998), vii-xix; Ambrosios Giakalis, *Images of the Divine: The Theology of Icons at the Seventh Ecumenical* Council, revised edition, Studies in the History of Christian Traditions vol.CXXII (Leiden/Boston, MA: Brill, 2005), 1-21; Patricia Karlin-Hayter, "Iconoclasm", in *The Oxford History of Byzantium* ed., Cyril Mango (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 153; "The Council of Nicaea II, 787" in Leo Donald Davis *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology* (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 290-322; Robin Cormack, "Art and Iconoclasm", in *The Oxford Handbook of Byzantine Studies*, eds. Elizabeth Jeffreys, John Haldon and Robin Cormack (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 751.

The Orthodox Liturgical year has continuously also been added to since the inception of the Church on Pentecost. Feasts such as the Nativity, Ascension, and the Feasts of the Theotokos were only inserted in the 5th and 6th centuries, while many feasts of contemporary saints and martyrs are added almost annually by their respective local churches, the feasts of St Nektarios of Pentapolis and the recent one of St Paisious the new of Mt Athos both of the 1900s being examples.[23]

2.2 Orthodox Mission and Culture

Orthodox missiological literature has mainly told success stories when it comes to how to do mission in new lands. Starting with the famous Cyril and Methodios' mission to the Moravians in Slavic lands in the 9th century, we see the preparatory work done by the church and empire before anyone is sent to those lands. They analyzed the situation and picked out two Thessalonian brothers, who knew the local Slavic language and culture in order to penetrate the "mission lands", and eventually use the same to the advantage of mission and evangelization.[24] The two Orthodox missionaries created a local alphabet, which they used to translate religious texts into the local language, and evangelized the Slavic lands without eliminating the local cultures, eventually creating an impact that brought others in the region into Christianity, including the Bulgarians a year later, and a century later the Kiev and Russian regions joined Christianity.[25]

A second common contemporary mission success story is that of Saint Innocent Veniaminov of Alaska and the work he did in Alaska, Siberia and the Far East.[26] After his arrival in these regions, he assessed the local situation, learnt their languages and cultures, and with permission and help from his superiors in Russia did one of the most revered mission endeavors in contemporary

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[23] Adolf Adam, The Liturgical Year: Its History and its Meaning after the Reform of the Liturgy, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (New York: Pueblo Publishing Co., 1981); Hugh Wybrew, *Orthodox Feasts of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary: Liturgical Texts with Commentary* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2000); Compare past synaxariste and present church calendars to see the additional saints.

[24] Francis Dvornik, *Byzantine Missions Among the Slavs* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1970).

[25] Anthony-Emil N. Tachiaos, *Cyril and Methodius of Thessalonica: The Acculturation of the Slavs* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001).

[26] Michael Oleksa (ed.), *Alaskan Missionary* Spirituality (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2010); ___, *Orthodox Alaska: A Theology of Mission* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992); Paul D. Garrett, *Saint Innocent: Apostle to America* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1979);

Orthodoxy. His ministry and mission was among very cultural based communities, but instead of abolishing their cultures with religion, he worked tirelessly to see them maintained and not tarnished by the foreign and so called advanced cultures.[27] His mission included helping translate religious literature in their languages, insisting on embracing what was good in their cultures, forming schools to educate the locals while maintaining the local languages, environment and spirituality.[28] It is such contextualized mission work that made the locals feel comfortable to join the Orthodox Church to this very day, becoming the first to receive Orthodoxy in America.

What the Orthodox have not done yet is to give the story of mission and culture when the locals are the ones who initiate the process of joining the Orthodox Church, and how the local cultures relate to the received Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition, which is the story of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya.

3.0 Cultural tensions in the Kenyan Orthodox Church

The African Orthodox Church of Kenya (AOCK) was formed in 1929 after the locals decided to separate from the British and Scotland Protestant Christianity.[29] Their main arguments were the need for a church that gave the locals a chance to lead as senior and ordained clerics, a church that respected

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[27] Michael E. Krauss, "Alaskan Native Languages in Russian America", in Barbara Sweetland Smith and Redmond J. Barnett (eds.), *Russian America: The Forgotten Frontier,* (Tacoma, Washington: Washington State Historical Society, 1990); Richard L. Dauenhauer, *Conflicting Visions in Alaskan Education*, 2nd ed., (Alaska: University of Alaska Veniaminov Bicentennial Project and Alaskan Native Knowledge Network, 1997).

[28] Lydia Black and Katherine L. Arndt (eds.), A Good and Faithful Servant: The Year of Saint Innocent: An Exhibit Commemorating the Bicentennial of the Birth of Ioann Veniaminov 1797-1997 (Alaska: University of Alaska Fairbanks, Alaska State Museum, and Robert C. Banghart & Associates, 1997); Michael J. Oleksa (ed.,), Alaskan Missionary Spirituality (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2010).

[29] Evangelos Thiani, "Call for ecclesial recognition of Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna. The founding father of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya," Ortodoksia vol.59 (2019): 32-72; cf. Carl G. Rosberg Jr., and John Nottingham, *The Myth of "Mau Mau" Nationalism in Kenya* (New York and Cleveland, OH: Meridian Books, 1966): 105-135; Robert L. Tignor, *Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu and Maasai from 1900-1939* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976): 4-7; Robert W. Strayer, *The Making of Mission Communities in East Africa: Anglicans and Africans in Colonial Kenya, 1875-1935* (London/ Nairobi: Heinemann Educational Books Ltd, 1978): 77-87, 136-150.

rather than fought and abolished their cultures, and a church seeking for their freedom from colonialism.[30] After joining hands with another Ugandan group these Kenyans joined the African Orthodox Church community from America through South Africa in 1935 and eventually sort to join the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa in 1942, with their official reception happening in 1946.[31]

The African Orthodox Church of Kenya (AOCK) has had various challenges surrounding issues of culture in relation to Orthodox theology and practice. This is explicitly seen when some Orthodox Christians visit Kenya and narrate their experience. For some, the practices in or outside the AOCK are uniquely Kenyan, with the universal Orthodox identity fully in place, for others, the Orthodox and African cultural mix is very amusing, with others being very disturbed by the same. This mix of local cultures and Orthodox traditional ways of worship, administration and spirituality is not just a challenge for the foreigners but also for some locals and more so young theologians who want to "remain faithful" to the traditional Orthodox ways. The locals in the parishes do not understand any other way of worshiping God, leading the church, or living their spirituality, while some foreigners and some young African theologians fail to understand how the local cultures can affect such traditional Orthodox ways and not be considered unorthodox if not syncretistic, dualistic, or even heretical. The Orthodox Church in Africa has been silent on what model to use to handle the local cultures, if not give some theological justification to the locals, the young theologians and the visiting Orthodox Christians.

As a valuable church of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, the AOCK should engage the theological issues arising from their context and look for authentic Orthodox theological responses that will work for the African Church as well as the universal Orthodox Church and mission. This will not only help add an African Orthodox voice in the world of Orthodox practical theology and especially in the field of missiology, liturgics, and spirituality, but also help resolve some of the dire challenges and tensions the AOCK is presently facing on matters relating to culture.

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[30] F. B. Welbourn, *East African Rebels* (London: S.C.M. Press Ltd, 1961): 135-136; Francis K. Githieya, *The Freedom of the Spirit,* thesis (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1997.); Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965); Kamuyu-wa-Kang'ethe, "African Response to Christianity: A Case Study of the Agikuyu of Central Kenya," *Missiology: An International Review*, 16:1 (January 1988): 23-44.

[31] Evangelos Thiani, "The contribution of Daniel William Alexander to the birth and growth of Eastern Orthodoxy in East Africa," *Journal of African Christian Biography* 30.1 (2018): 27-35.

4.0 Contextualization in the AOCK

The Orthodox Church has had three ways of handling culture. Accepting some aspects of a culture, rejecting some aspects, and critically reviewing some aspects to see what fits and what doesn't.[32] Sometimes these are deliberate efforts and sometimes they are let to drive themselves. The issue of conflicting Orthodox and African cultures within the African Orthodox Church of Kenya (AOCK), can help shed light on how the sacramental life, administration and spirituality of Orthodox churches in newly established regions handle culture.

4.1 Leadership in the AOCK

Culturally awarded eldership is been a priority for leadership and formation of church councils and church leaders in the African Orthodox Church of Kenya. Getting married in Africa is one way of knowing one is gotten to a level they can be trusted to receive important community leadership as well as keep secrets of what they hear, and guide others where necessary.[33] This in a way restricts those who end up single for whatever reason, although this is changing with time. This is true among the Agikuyu of Kenya, the largest tribe in Kenya, which was the first tribe to receive Orthodoxy in Kenya and still holds the most Orthodox Christians in the country.[34] Traditionally, after a Gikuyu man is married he gives the local elders a fattened lamb and traditional brew (*mūratina*), while his wife gave her fellow women porridge (*ūcuru wa igongona)* and mashed food (*irio cia mukimo wa igongona*).[35] In return, the elders gave the Gikuyu man who brings

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[32] D.H. Williams, Defending and Defining the Faith: An Introduction to Early Christian Apologetic Literature (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020): 163-182; George W. Forell, "Christ Against Culture? A re-examination of the political ethics of Tertullian", *American Society of Christian Ethics* 19 (1978):27-41; Florovsky, *Christianity and Culture* (1974): 23-24; Saint Basil the Great, "Address to youth on how they might benefit from classical Greek literature", trans., Dimitri Kepreotes (Sydney: St Andrew's Orthodox Press, 2011).

[33] Cf. M. Masango, M. "Leadership in the African Context", *Verbum et Ecclesia JRG* 23.3 (2002):707-718.

[34] Fr. C. Cagnolo, *The Agikuyu: Their Customs, Traditions and Folklore,* 2nd ed., (Nairobi: Wisdom Graphics Place, 2006); Jomo Kenyatta, *Facing Mount Kenya: The Tribal Life of the Gikuyu* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965); L.S.B. Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*, 2nd unabridged edition, three volumes (Nairobi: Intra-Lab Services Ltd, 2007); David P. Sandgren, *Christianity and the Kikuyu: Religious Divisions and Social Conflict* (New York: Peter Lang, 2000).

[35] The Muratina beer is made of water, honey, and sugarcane juice fermented under a sausage tree fruit- *kigelia Africana*, the porridge was made of *mwere, mukombi, muhia* and *mugimbi* and mashed food (*irio cia mukimo*) was a mixture of *njugu, njahi, thoroko, kahurura* and *marigu*. While the lamb is meant for eating, the brew which is made of water, honey and sugarcane juice has some very sober meaning. Water here represents life as given by God, and why it is

these items the tribes' leadership secrets and family life leadership guidelines. After his children are old enough to be married, the same man would give another fattened lamb and brew, to be given further community secrets and more guidance on eldership and leadership. By going through all these stages, the wife of such a man is also counted as a leader of the same level as her husband and is given almost similar secrets by women whose husbands have gone through these stages, and a few by her now enlightened husband. Such information is passed on by generations. It is such levels that are expected of all clergy, men and women in the AOCK leadership within the Agikuyu of Kenya for a long time, with little exceptions. Young clergymen are exempted from waiting for their children to reach marriage age, and so are given both the first and second level of traditional leadership even when their children are young, to help them learn early and not be barred from any council in society and church.

Among the Agikuyu, some information cannot be diverged when persons not accepted as traditional elders are there. Clergymen including hierarchs, or even elected church leaders who are not from the Agikuyu or tribes having such leadership stages as this tribe are thus not considered as elders in the real sense. This means the non-traditional leaders may be in a church committee and never know of some aspects within the same. Sometimes, the church leaders that have not received the traditional eldership are asked to exit when the traditionally sanctioned church leaders discuss some issues, or such matters are left for discussion in their absence. This is because, traditionally no one fully trusts such non-traditionally elevated elders to keep secrets or consider them mature enough to discuss some issues. Such can be devastating for elected lay church leaders and clergymen that are not approved of by such cultures or who do not belong to the same.

Such traditional African leadership puts a predicament in Orthodox administration where the local diocesan bishop is given the full mandate to lead the church as directed by the Tradition, canons and his pastoral discernment.[36] In the African traditional way of leadership, even if one is the most senior person in the council; which is how the bishop is considered, everything is

important to thank and praise God before and at the end of each segment of one's life and in traditional ceremonies. The honey gathered from different plants by bees, shows how one gets life skills and knowledge from various other persons and life experiences to become better and better. The sugarcane juice represents the segments of human life similar to the sugar cane plant, which is segmented and the older it gets the sweeter and harder the bottom part becomes. Thus, the elders are considered at the bottom part of the sugarcane plant segments where they get wisdom from personal experience, mentorship from others before them, and those from their roots: the traditions left to them from the generations before them.

[36] Paul Jonathan Fedwick, The Church and the Charisma of Leadership in Basil of Caesarea (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1979).

democratically approved and agreed on before being announced to the non-council members, and thus when the local hierarch or priest brings new decisions to the congregants before consulting or discussing it with the local leaders, such leaders feel unappreciated and they may not follow such instructions to the letter. It is such contradictions due to non-Kenyan bishops not understanding the local leadership styles and cultures that has also added to the conflicts that has made the locals take such bishops to the Kenyan civil courts. Some of such cases are between the local African clergy and laity, against their local bishop; and some against the Pope and Patriarch of Alexandria and All Africa on matters, church properties in Kenya and who has the right to run the same.[37] The holy synod, the concerned patriarch and hierarchs, as well as other Orthodox outside Africa cannot understand how Orthodox Christians and clergymen can take the same ecclesial leaders they owe allegiance to and who they work with on a daily basis toa civil court. It is interesting that these same opposing groups could liturgize in the same church in the morning, head to court together in the afternoon, have the hierarchs led in entering the court, then seat in different opposing sides of the court of law, and all together continue with the evening service and other ecclesial matters of the day after the court session.

The laity and priests taking their bishop or patriarch to court, while they still fully respect him and are concelebrating with him would be unimaginable in most Orthodox countries but have been seen in Kenya since the early 1980s to the present. Such a dilemma is brought by the lack of full standardized contextualization which brings dualism. The bishops coming from outside Africa do not understand the local cultures as they should, and the locals do not accommodate the church cultures and traditions of the countries their non-African bishops come from. Thus, when a bishop makes a substantial decision as he would anywhere else outside Africa, he misses the collective consultation that the Africans demand of him.

It is such contradiction of church and traditional leadership methods that added to the challenges which led the very first hierarch of Kenyan origin, Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna, to his defrocation by the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria and All Africa in 1979.[38] Bishop

[37] cf. Kenya Judiciary (2014) High Court Civil Suit No.281 of 2014; Kenya Judiciary (2014) High Court Petition No.47 of 2014; Kenya Judiciary (2015) High Court Civil Petition No.86 of 2015; Kenya Judiciary (2015) High Court Petition No.43 of 2015; Kenya Judiciary (2015) High Court Petition No.525 of 2015.

[38] Evangelos Thiani, "Call for ecclesial recognition of Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna: The founding father of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya," *Journal of African Christian Biography* (January 2021):2-27; Cf. Thiani, Call for ecclesial recognition of Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna (2019): 32-72.

George who was one of the three assistant Bishops to Metropolitan Frumentios of East Africa, was also the Vicar Bishop of Kenya. His work included working with the local Metropolitan and communicating everything from the Metropolitan to the people and vice versa. When it came to ordinations, Bishop Gathuna arranged and prepared the candidates that were approved of and forwarded to him by the national church council of elders; in which he was also a member, he would then work on a date, time and place for the ordination with the local Metropolitan. In two occasions he did all these, and the Metropolitan missed to attend the agreed-on ordination ceremony. Bishop George being in attendance and as an assistant bishop with no permission to ordain, only apologized to the candidate and the congregation in both occasions. Before the third occasion, Bishop George was put on notice by the local elders, that if the Metropolitan doesn't show up next time, he being a canonically consecrated bishop had to do the ordination.

These elders did not understand why an assistant Bishop would not be permitted to ordain, rather for them three things stood out. (i) The council of elders had agreed on the candidate and ordination date, and so it had to be done, (ii) if a senior most elder, like the Metropolitan, promised to do something, he had to do it no matter what, to save face and keep his public status inviolate, and (iii) *gutiri githinji utathinja;* meaning everyone old enough and who has gotten the right training can also do what their master does when the master is not around or is not able to do the work for some reason. With these traditional reasoning, which do not make sense in the Orthodox Church administration, but which, does in the African Gikuyu traditional leadership, Bishop George was forced to do the ordination on the third occasion planned by the elders, even without the blessings of the Metropolitan. This elder sanctioned ordination, without the local Metropolitan's blessings, became one of the accusations taken to the holy synod on November 1979 to add weight on the reasons for the defrocation of Bishop George.

Another predicament on leadership relates to the youth. The African traditional leadership is taught from tender age. The more mature you get the more you are exposed to important information and decision-making forums and responsibilities. This may seem very okay from one side, but it also means while the youth are taught and given leadership responsibilities, the same is limited and/or highly supervised. Youthful church members in the AOCK have their own association, led by their elected leaders, but supervised in each parish by a patron and a matron from among the adult church members. These adult members chosen by the youths or by the parish priest are to help mentor the young people as well as guide, supervise, and sanction everything they are doing. The youth leaders allowed in the parish council are mainly limited to

discussing matters concerning the youth and will in most instances be voiceless in discussing other matters, even though it is an unwritten rule. While this traditional system is limiting, it on the other hand exposes the youthful leaders to how their elders handle matters, helping them learn from them as they are mentored into future leadership. Nevertheless, such policing of the youth could make them timid in their contributions and growth.

Additionally, this leadership system may also be a problem for the church of this century and region. Africa is said to be the most youthful continent in the world, with 40% of its population aged below 15 years and 20% between 16-24 years.[39] In just 2010, 63% of Africa's population was below 25 years, with sub-Saharan Africa having a 72% youthful population,[40] a number expected to double by 2045.[41] The 2019 demographic census in Kenya noted that 75% of Kenyans are below 35 years of age,[42] the AOCK is not different from these demographics. This means that the current AOCK leadership in all levels should at least be having over 50% of its leaders being less than 40 years of age, but the reality on the ground as far as the Orthodox Church is concerned tells you different. Unfortunately, Africa is known for people not wanting to leave their positions of power. The Orthodox Church is universally also run by men of the older generations, which seems to resonate with this African concept of leadership positioning. If the current church leadership system insists on the older generation continuing with this same trend, even when research proves that there is dire need for fresh blood to take over, then the transition process for the next generation may have many missing links. This experience of older leaders not trusting the younger ones to take over successfully is not only shown in African church leadership, but also in national politics and even local village leadership, and thus the necessity of transformative training to such African leaders on the need for mentoring and preparing their successors.[43]

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[39] OECD, African Economic Outlook 2012: Promoting Youth Employment (OECD Publishing, 2012): doi: 10.1787/aeo-2012-en; AfDB, African Development Bank Report 2012: Towards Green Growth in Africa (Tunis-Belvedere, Tunisia: AfDB, 2013).

[40] www.youth-policy.org

[41] Africa Economic Outlook, (2012): 99.

[42] Tonny Ndungu, "Out of 47.6 million Kenyans, 35.7 million are under the age of 35", 21st February 2020 *Citizen Tv Digital* https://citizentv.co.ke/news/out-of-47-6-million-kenyans-35-7-million-are-under-the-age-of-35-323822/ accessed on 20th January 2021.

[43] Richard J. Gehman, *Learning to Lead: The Making of a Christian Leader in Africa* (Wheaton, IL: Oasis International Ltd, 2008); Robert J. Priest and Kirimi Barine (eds.,), *African Christian Leadership: Realities, Opportunities, and Impact* (Cambria, UK: Tyndale House Foundation/ Langham Publishing, 2019).

If the AOCK will grow, it has to start developing youthful leaders and deploying them in existing positions. Having the right people to lead is important, and thus the need to seek and recruit future leaders as early as possible.[44] Christ exemplified youthful leadership in the church, himself being within this youth bracket when he started and climaxed in His ministry at His thirties. Christ also had a mixture of youthful and older men among His Apostles, showing how important recruiting and mentoring the youth is to church leadership.[45] The early church mentorship and leadership development borrowing from the example of Christ had a methodology of recruiting, selecting, training and deploying leaders.[46] One great example of such early church mentorship and leadership development is that of the young Athanasius in the fourth century under the tutorage of Archbishop Alexander of the ancient Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria.[47] Archbishop Alexander picked the young man Athanasius, made him a bold disciple of Christ, and then moulded him into a great theologian and spiritual leader. This young man would later be sent as a delegate to represent his Archbishop and the church of Alexandria in the first ecumenical council in Nicaea in AD325. The young Deacon Athanasius defended the faith of his mentor against the heresy of Arius, in a probably better way than his mentor, Archbishop Alexander. Athanasius would later succeed his master and mentor to become the 20th Archbishop of Alexandria, lasting for about 45 years as its primate. Such should encourage the AOCK to see that it is possible for them to trust and give leadership opportunities to youthful leaders with much success and not be restricted to the European and African models of church leadership.

The Agikuyu traditional leadership had for so long died out among many Gikuyu people of Kenya, except in few communities like those of the AOCK. When it was revived in the 1990s many Gikuyu men ended up joining their village council of elders (*kiama*). While the AOCK was part of the institutions that preserved this culture, it was also negatively affected by the excessive revival movement of the Agikuyu culture. This is because while some people

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44 Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004): 105

45 Alton Chua and Pelham Lessing, "A Biblical Model of Mentoring with a Knowledge Management Perspective," *Conspectus* 15 (2013): 86-90.

46 Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini, Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2004): 95-102.

47 Claudio Moreschini and Enrico Norelli, Early Christian Greek and Latin Literature: A literary History: Volume 2, From the Council of Nicea to the Beginning of the Medieval Period, (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2005): 21-46; Hans von Campenhausen, The Fathers of the Church: Combined Edition of the Fathers of the Greek Church and the Fathers of the Latin Church (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1998): 69-83.

did the revival genuinely, others used it to create outlawed criminal gangs including the former *Mungiki* (crowd) and the current *gwata ndai* (riddle).[48] Such gangs are known to terrorize many citizens asking for protection fees from businesses and resident areas that they took control of. They also revived the practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), traditional alcohol drinking practice, and snuff use among the Agikuyu, and further passionately taught against Christianity while propagating for the revival of the traditional religions.[49] While the government eventually managed to suppress these kinds of groups, they negatively branded the council of elders in the society and any institution connected to such including churches like the AOCK. The AOCK is been in the forefront to see that a more positive, progressive and transformed traditional council of elders is formed in society, rather than reviving any and all detrimental practices, just because they were practiced by the Agikuyu ancestors. Even as late as 2020, the AOCK is lost several young men to such groups and even saw several young families break due to the negative practices that come with this cultural revival including FGM, alcohol use, snuff use and gang lifestyle which these groups brought about.

4.2 Burials and Ecumenical Wakes in the AOCK

One of the mysteries that show how the African ethos leads the church into ecumenism and contextualization is burials and wake ceremonies in Kenya. It is common in most places in Kenya that when Christians die, a week or so goes by before they are buried. During this week of mourning, the Christians within that community regardless of their church, converge at the grieving family's home or their place of choice, anytime from the afternoon hours to late in the night to share in an ecumenical service that entails consolation messages, prayers, extra-liturgical chants, a homily, and essentially contributions towards the burial arrangements. While the Orthodox Church is strict in sharing in prayers with other Christian,[50] this ecumenical tradition is generally accepted even by the Kenyan Orthodox Christians with no question. When it is within an Orthodox home, the meetings start with a maximum ten

[48] Erik Henningsen and Peris Jones, "'What kind of hell is this!' Understanding the Mungiki movement's power of mobilisation," *Journal of Eastern African Studies* (2013): 371-388, https://doi.org/10.1080/17531055.2013.794532

[49] Jacob Rasmussen, "Mungiki as youth movement: Revolution, gender and generational politics in Nairobi, Kenya," *YOUNG* 18.3 (2010):301-319, https://doi.org/10.1177/110330881001800304

[50] Thomas F. Best and Dagmar Heller (eds.,) *So We Believe, So We Pray: Towards Koinonia in Worship* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1995).

minutes Orthodox prayer session for the dead (the trisagion service), and then the ecumenical version is incorporated. On the day of burial, the Orthodox prayers for the dead are done, some extra liturgical chant follows with a homily, and finally some spontaneous off-the-head prayers towards the bereaved family are done by the main celebrant. Such action and prayers have become an ecumenically accepted addition within the AOCK. Rather than the canonical guidelines of the church, the ecumenical aspects are mainly led by the Ubuntu[51] mentality, which calls for communal unity and personhood, especially when one is in need.

Different cultures in Kenya have different practices when it comes to the dead. The Agikuyu of Kenya have a culture that is shy when it comes to viewing dead persons. Thus, during the burial service, the AOCK parishes in Central Kenya will have closed caskets, while those in Western Kenya shall be opened and all attendants will first come to pay their respect to the departed person before they take their seat during the burial ceremony.[52] Many will mourn and wail loudly to show that they were not involved in the death of the departed.[53] The procession to the grave after the burial service will in Central Kenya involve a short and fast journey while singing *Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy immortal…* in the sad grave mode. In Western Kenya, this procession is a full traditional dance and extra-liturgical dancing mixed with joy and solemnity, following the rhythm of the drums and other available instruments with the coffin in the shoulders of the family members who rhythmically swing from one side to the other. The censer leads the Church team, while the family is led by the bereaved family's young men carrying the coffin. The two groups; the church and family, part ways and then come from opposite directions. The church team from the gate, and the family team carrying the coffin from the homestead. They then meet at the graveside which is in most instances in the middle of the home, go round the grave thrice swinging the coffin as they continue singing. When the body is put on the grave, then the Western and Central region of Kenya shall have the same form, for they then do the final part of the Orthodox burial services with the prescribed prayers and actions for the grave side.

After the death of an Orthodox Christian there are several prescribed periods of doing memorial service prayers. The memorials are done on the first, third, sixth, ninth and fortieth day, and then the first, third, sixth and ninth month, and from there every day of the year that the person died and during

51 Michael Battle, *Ubuntu: I in You and You in Me* (New York: Seabury Books, 2009).

52 Joseph Malusu, *The Luyia Way of Death* (Nairobi: Oxford University Press, 1978).

53 Michael C Kirwen (ed.,), African Cultural Domains Book 1: Life Cycle of an Individual (Nairobi: MIAS Books 2010): 120.

the memorial Saturdays for all the dead during the Lenten and Pentecostarion seasons. The practice in Kenya is to commemorate the dead on the fortieth day, annually on the day the person died and during the Saturdays of the dead. Sometimes a parish may decide to be doing all the memorials of their departed one Sunday annually, and in most instances, such has no relationships with the memorial Saturdays.

These memorial services have in a way replaced some of the traditional practices and rituals among the Kenyan tribes. The Agikuyu custom of remembering and praying for the dead in the traditional way is one such forgotten practice among the Orthodox Christians.[54] Before the colonial era, after a person died, the Agikuyu would dispose of the body by throwing it in the distance bush away from other people. This practice was changed during the colonial era, where the practice of burying the dead within the family land or homestead was picked up, mainly from the missionaries. The newly departed among the Agikuyu like in most African cultures are considered to be living among the ancestors watching over the living, while those who are named after them are considered as taking over their legacy on earth, a nominal reincarnation.[55] Some times after the burial, the bereaved family would do a *hukuro* (unearthing) by slaughtering a goat that would be eaten as they invoked the spirit of the dead person asking them to sleep in peace with the ancestors and not to disturb any of their living relatives, friends or neighbours in their dreams or even avenge themselves for whatever wrongs the living may have done against them while alive.[56] This practice of *hukuro*, is not seen among the Agikuyu of the Orthodox Church in Kenya anymore, rather the Orthodox memorial service seems to have completely replaced it, even in these days of traditional rituals revival among the Agikuyu.

4.3 Instrumental led dancing and extra liturgical songs

The "musical praise of God is emphasized by the worship of the church", while order, theology, and the church's message within the musical poetry and chant forms is intensified by the melody.[57] For this reason, the Orthodox Church has pride in the diverse liturgical chanting in various local churches. Although

[54] "Death and Disposal of the Dead" in Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*, vol.2 (2007): 937-991.

[55] Michael C. Kirwen (ed.), *African Cultural Knowledge: Themes and Embedded Beliefs* (Nairobi: Maryknoll Institute of African Studies, 2005): 15-63

[56] Leakey, *The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903*, vol.2 (2007): 977-980

[57] Hilkka Seppälä, The Song of Fire and Clay: Perspectives of Understanding Orthodox Church Singing (Joensuu, Finland: University of Joensuu, 2005): 63-64.

the existing Orthodox forms of music seems to be variants of the monophonic Byzantine-Greek hymnography and the polyphonic Slavonic hymnography, they sometimes move quite far off their original source to create original orders and sounds.[58] Several local churches have their preferred chanting forms depending on where one is in church. The autocephalous churches are almost divided in half on the kind of church music they employ even though with variants. Albania, Alexandria, Antioch, Constantinople, Cyprus, Greece, Jerusalem, and Romania are among the churches that use the Byzantine-Greek church music, while Bulgaria, Czech-Slovakia, Estonia, Finland, Georgia, Moscow, Poland, and Ukraine uses the church Slavonic form of music. Nevertheless, this does not mean one cannot find variants. For example in Romania, some churches use the Byzantine mono voice and others the Western four voices chant; while Finland, Georgia, Serbia and Bulgarian are each uniquely styled to form their local church music traditions, and are therefore no longer truly Salvonic.[59] Even with the wide varieties, the common practice of not using instruments, which are considered an Old Testament ideal, and in their stead the use of the original God-created instrument, that is humans, seems to be a widely accepted practice in Orthodox chanting universally, especially among the Byzantine chanters.[60]

The AOCK follows the Byzantine-Greek monophonic chant, although with a few variants created in the formative stages of the church in Kenya due to the lack of a byzantine music guides. The church music instructors that have influenced contemporary Orthodox church music in Kenya includes the late Patrick Masiza and his successor Evans Aseneka. The late 1980s and early 1990s, saw the Orthodox Church in Kenya loose so many members to the Pentecostal and Evangelical churches. This was according to those who left because of the "boring" church music and unfocused homilies. Those leaving the church mentioned that the Orthodox Church was too boring for them, with others mentioning they did not feel alive when in church. On matters music, the clergy then were very strict, and categorically rejected instruments, dancing or singing of extra liturgical religious songs in the Orthodox parishes. Those who

[58] Cf. Ivan Moody and Maria Takala-Roszczenko (eds.,), Unity and Variety in Orthodox Music Theory and Practice: Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on Orthodox Church Music at University of Eastern Finland, Joensuu, Finland 6-12 June 2011 (Jyväskylä, Finland: International Society for Orthodox Church Music, 2013).

[59] Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, *Orthodox Christianity, Volume 3: The Architecture, Icons, and Music of the Orthodox* Church (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2014): 337-341

[60] Hilkka Seppälä, "The unity and variety of church music traditions: a theological view," in Moody and Takala-Roszczenko, *Unity and Variety in Orthodox Music Theory and Practice:* (2013):56-62.

left as well as those who remained concurred that the liturgy was too boring for an African, resembling funerals where the mood was low key and people recited liturgical words without truly understanding or caring about them.[61]

After the mass-exodus of laypeople, the Kenyan clergy and the hierarch then decided to review their stand and accepted instruments, extra liturgical music and dancing after the divine services, an approach that saw some of the AOCK members who had exited return and put a stop to the exodus. Since then, the AOCK accepted the use of non-Orthodox music and chants, instruments and dancing with one's entire body including jumping up and down, moving back and forth, and spinning and rotating around the church, while playing extra-liturgical music. This kind of emotional and physically engaging chant is considered naturally African,[62]with the locals picking up easily and fast, confirming the same. Such is equally very foreign to the Orthodox traditional church music. Some Orthodox Christians in Kenya may not even know their church music well, while almost everyone is conversant with the extra-liturgical chants and dancing done after the divine services. This involvement of African melodic music in the church has increased church attendance, participation and faithfulness to the faith within the AOCK, results complimented by similar studies elsewhere in Africa.[63]

Converts into the Orthodox faith since this kind of music was introduced, are said to find it easier to join the Orthodox Church, than the converts before the acceptance of local music. This is because they can already manage to participate in the extra-liturgical music, soon after converting and not feel out of place, as they slowly learn of the Orthodox music and way of chant. This makes music one of the most influential elements and medium of evangelizing and mission that the Kenyan church has.[64]

The liturgical chanting culture in the Orthodox Church in Kenya is that of the entire congregation chanting throughout the services. While this is a joyous thing to see, the difference arises when the communion chants are replaced with extra-liturgical chants, accompanied by hand clapping, drums and other traditional and modern musical instruments. Joy feels the entire congregation and is shown in the glowing faces of the congregants. Even those not formerly singing along in the divine services are seen to be fully awake at this juncture.

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61 Cf. Laurenti Magesa, *Anatomy of Inculturation: Transforming the Church in* Africa (Nairobi: Paulines Publications Africa, 2004): 31-32

62 Morakeng E.K. Lebaka, "the value of traditional African religious music into liturgy: Lobethal congregation" *HTS Teologiese Studies/ Theological Studies* 71(3): 1, Art. #2761, 6 pages. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts. v71i3.2761.

63 Lebaka, "the value of traditional African religious music into liturgy."

64 Begbie, *Theology, Music and Time* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003): 4.

The Body and Blood of Christ is received with the highest of joy, not only because it is the climax of the second part of the Orthodox Eucharistic service, but more so because the music resonates with the local cultural chant and dance. It is disappointing that such joy is not seen when singing the Orthodox chants in the rest of the Divine Liturgy. This shows the disconnect of the Byzantine-Greek style of church music and the African mode of music, thus the need to re-look at the way of doing church music in Kenya.

Africans have in the past and present used music in transmitting information, as well as accompany every aspect of their life including working, religious-cultural ceremonies, prayer, births, weddings, funerals, praising warriors, families and leaders among others. This makes the African culture not only orally oriented but also a singing society, which like the psalmist (psalm 150), believes that the more they use their voices and bodies in singing and dance, the more they show they are alive and appreciative of being alive.[65] What then is unique about the African music that is so essential for the Kenyans to want it entrenched in their faith?

> Some say it is communal and inviting, drawing in a range of consumers young and old, skilled and unskilled. It allows for the spontaneous and authentic expression of emotion. It is integrated with social life rather than set apart, natural rather than artificial, and deeply human in its material significance. Its themes are topical and of sharp contemporary relevance, sometimes humorous and satirical, sometimes sad and affecting, often profound. Thoughtful observers celebrate the close affinities between language and music, marvel at the extraordinary intellectual acumen displayed by lead drummers, song crafters, and instrumentalists, call attention to musicians' clever use of iconic modes to signify, and above all perhaps, proclaim the subtle and intricate domestication of a broad range of temporalities in African music- from the syllabic, speech mode employed by talking drummers to the mesmerizing, endless melody of *mbira virtuousi*. Obviously, then, little effort is required on the part of Africans to produce reasons for wanting to celebrate the extraordinary range and depth of their musical-artistic resources.[66]

[65] Peter Mbede, "the influence of music in theologizing in African churches" One Planet Publishing & Media Services Ltd 2.1 (2018): 138-150 URL: http://dspace.pacuniversity.ac.ke:8080/123456789/1579

[66] Kofi Agawu, Representing African Music: Postcolonial Notes, Queries, Positions (New York/ London: Routledge, 2003): xi.

Orthodox mission initiatives are expected to be aware that while music is universal, the way it is done differs, and additionally explains a people to their core anthropologically, psychologically, and ethnologically. Human music involves tonality (fixed scale systems), "rhythm (a steady succession of beats), harmony (sounds produced at the same time)", and the history of where it hails, all which is integrated in a people's way of life, evoking joy or sadness in society gathering, religious and even political ones.[67] This is probably the challenge all Euro-American church music meant for use in Africa has been incompatible with the African rhythm and tones, even after much work is done on them, while the ones used by the African Indigenous/Independent Churches fits perfectly.[68] The kind of African music, their style of music and dance, and their values for the same are unique to Africa and thus in order for church music in such a place to speak to the locals, and for the locals to truly express their prayer and worship to God, there is need for Orthodox church music to be Africanized.[69] This goes to emphasize that the Orthodox Church cannot ignore the role church music plays in the spirituality of a people. At the same time, the disconnect of the current Orthodox liturgical music in Africa and the local way of doing and appreciating music, needs to be discussed further with a goal to contextualize Orthodox liturgical music and services to speak to the African soul and to allow authentic worship and praise of God by the Africans.

4.4 Saints and Iconography

The church exists to produce relics, out of the glorified saints that reached theosis. Icons, the depiction of Christ, the Theotokos, glorified holy persons and their feasts, are mainly done on wood, paper and walls. These icons and the relics of these holy persons are among others used for veneration and memory of their works and teachings in the Orthodox church. One of the easiest ways to identify an Orthodox Church or the premise of an Orthodox faithful is through the presence of icons. Iconography is therefore an important and common element in Orthodox spirituality, worship and life. The Orthodox Church in Kenya has mainly borrowed, received and bought icons from Orthodox parishes, monasteries, establishments, and persons abroad. These icons come in all shapes and sizes including new or old, small or big, copy or original, paper or painted, among others.

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[67] Roberta Edwards Lenkeit, *Introducing Cultural* Anthropology, 3rd edition (Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2007): 284-285

[68] Madimabe Mapaya, "Music traditions of the African Indigenous Churches: A Northern Sotho case Study," *Southern Africa Journal for Folklore Studies* 23.2 (2013): 47 [46-61]

[69] John Miller Chernoff, *African Rhythm and African Sensibility: Aesthetics and Social Action in African Musical Idioms* (Chicago, IL/ London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979); Mbede, "the influence of music in theologizing in African churches (2018): 142.

While icons are highly important in Orthodox worship and spirituality, there are a few characteristics that make them challenging within the Orthodox church in Kenya, a reality that is also noted elsewhere in Africa. Usually, the inscriptions explaining who the saint or feast the icon is about, are written in the language of the country they come from, with most not in languages that the Kenyan Christians would understand. The icons in Kenya have inscriptions ranging from 98% in Greek, 1% in Finnish, 0.5% in English, Old Slavonic, Russian and Romanian, and 0.5% in Kenyan languages. The other disconnecting characteristic involves colour. The traditional colours of most Orthodox icons are dull in nature, to highlight the low key of the saintly life. Furthermore, even when the icons are depicting African saints, their skin colour is still highly European if not Middle Eastern.

The locals not understanding what the icon are all about due to language barriers, the lack of flashy and bright colours in the icons, which the Africans associate with holiness and not the dull ones, and the fact that no Africans that resemble them are noted or depicted as saints make the locals see the icons as foreign. This does not mean the icons are not respected or hang in the homes where they are available, but rather that there is relaxed venerations and religiosity of icons among the Africans. The exception are expatriates, most first-generation Orthodox Christians in Kenya, theologians, and very few from the other generations. This disconnect can be seen when the AOCK Christians enter or leave the church without venerating the icons, or the common hanging of icons high up where no one has access to venerating them, or the lack to identify uncommon icons in their homes or parishes.

Severally, the church is found a few people who were interested in writing icons for the African Church. Some were foreign missionaries and others were local iconographers who studied the art of iconography in Greece or Cyprus and some in Kenya through visiting iconographers. The few local iconographers that have tried making icons in Kenya have mainly failed to fulfil their expectations. Such failures are blamed on the lack of materials, the high cost of the available replacement raw materials, and the fact that most parishes would rather get free icons given by the diocesan offices rather than buy the original ones such iconographers make. Some of the greatest contributions of iconography were by Mama Stavritsa Zachariou an America-Greek missionary who lived in East Africa from 1979 till her death in 2000. She did the very first icons inscribed in local languages including Kikuyu, Luhya, Kiswahili and English. She taught several young men and women how to do Greek style iconography, but none really managed to continue in her footsteps. Her iconography is highly visible in some Kenyan, Ugandan and Congo churches. The Finnish mission to East Africa starting from the visit of Bishop Johanness (later Archbishop of Finland) in March 1974, saw visits and sending of Finnish missionaries in Kenya

and Uganda including Siina Taulamo, Teacher Maria Iltola (later Abbess Marina of Lintula Convent), Pirkko Siili, Nurse Leena Hijanen, Nurse Liisa Kyöstilä, Deacon Timo Lehmuskoski, Anja Hakonen, Fr Steven and his wife, Fr Johanness Charles Eko and the non-Orthodox project Manager Jouko Järviö. These missionaries brought some Finnish style icons to Kenya and also had some locally made, with inscriptions in Finnish, English, Kikuyu and Luhya languages.[70]

Some of the renowned local iconographers included George Wakibe Ndiguitha (b.1942 in Loitoktok - d.17th July 1993 in Kiambu) a resident of Banana Kiambu County, who was an experienced artist and the first Kenyan iconographer to return from Greece. George did a few Byzantine icons with English, Greek and Kikuyu inscriptions which are based within Nairobi and Kiambu County churches. Two other local Orthodox iconographers that were truly talented in art and went for studies in Greece and Cyprus were two Western Kenya artists, Joseph Matanyie Chasia and David Musambi. The iconography of the last two can be seen at the Seminary Chapel. The three Kenyans did not do iconography for long after their return to Kenya due to reasons explained earlier.

The other Kenyans that learnt the art of iconography are students that were taught under the joint project of Filantropia and Valamo monastery-Finland to assist the AOCK. The project brought one of the highly talented Greek and Russian style contemporary iconographers of the Orthodox Church of Finland, Antti Narmala, to the Orthodox Seminary in Nairobi, Kenya. While in Nairobi, Antti gave an intensive course on iconography to about twenty students from the willing seminarians from various African countries with the majority being Kenyans, and a few local Kenyan Orthodox artists. While the preparations and fund raising happened way before, the main intensive program commenced on 22nd September 2017 and ended with the student's graduation on 7th October 2017. These students would concurrently go through some intensive iconology lessons, confession, spiritual guidance and daily morning and evening services done under Fr Evangelos Thiani; the Kenyan coordinator of the program. From this class of different African nationalities, local artists Samuel Njoroge Kirai (Muguga) and Andrew Njoroge Kamau (Nakuru), showed exceptional iconographic talents. To gift Antti, Archbishop Makarios said the Mount Athos version of the prayer of consecrating an iconographer upon him on 8th October 2017 at Holy Trinity Muguga. It was this team under Antti and Fr Evangelos that did the very first fully African contextualized iconography in using local materials, bright colours and inscription language in various African languages including Buganda, Kikuyu, Kirundi, Luhya, Luo, Rwandese and Swahili among others.

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[70] Jaako Lounela, Mission and Development: Finnish Pentecostal, Lutheran and Orthodox Mission Agencies in Development Work in Kenya 1948-1989 (Turku: Åbo Akademi University Press, 2007): 217-253.

4.5 Translations

Translating the message remains one of the most important aspect of contextualization, without which it would be difficult to evangelize or maintain the converted. Speaking, reading and hearing in the vernacular has always touched deeper than doing the same in a foreign language. As Bevans explains, "every model of contextual theology is a model of translation,"[71] thus the need to translate in the best way and form available for each context. The AOCK has had many translations done in various local languages. These translations are mainly done from Greek and English texts. Some were done by foreign missionaries and others by locally ordained and lay Christians.[72] The 1930s-1960s liturgical and theological translations in Kenya were led by Archbishop Daniel William Alexander of South Africa, Bishop George Arthur Gathuna of Kenya and Fr Nicodemos Sarikas of Asia Minor, the ones of the 1960s-early 1990s were led by Bishop George of Kenya, Fr Obadiah Bassajakitalo of Uganda, Fr Chrysostomos Papasarantopoulos of Greece, Acting Archbishop of East Africa Anastasios Yannoulatos and Mr Peter Kahuho of Nairobi; while the ones of the mid-1990s to the present were led by Archbishop Makarios Tillyrides of Nairobi, the seminary students and the clergy leaders of the concerned communities.[73] At the moment the AOCK has a translations department that is led by Fr Raphael Kamau and Ms Esther Kibe, who have undergone professional translations training under a translations expert from the USA, Dr Michael Colburn of the *Orthodox Christian Mission Centre* (OCMC). While much needs to be done on translating liturgical and theological books, the basic texts are widely available, most of them being reprinted annually if not bi-annually due to the growing demand.

One of the most fundamental Christian documents that needs translation in new mission cultures is usually the bible. Up until now, the AOCK churches and Christians use the biblical translations produced by Western Christian translation institutions for their church/liturgical and home/personal use. Nevertheless, in the 1980s the AOCK had Samuel Kiaraho, the current professor of biblical studies at the Orthodox seminary in Nairobi, as a translator at the Bible Society of Kenya. While this helped offer some Orthodox understanding and influence in the translations produced by the largest, most used and influential bible translators in Kenya, it was never enough. The deuterocanonical books as expected in the Orthodox bible are not available in the Kenyan local languages,

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71 Stephen B. Bevans, *Models of Contextual Theology: Faith and Cultures*, revised and expanded ed., (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002):37-53.

72 F.B. Welbourn, *East African Rebels: A Study of Some Independent* Churches (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1961): 90.

73 Thiani, Call for ecclesial recognition of Bishop George Arthur Gatungu Gathuna (2019): 58-59.

rather some Roman Catholic translations are what are mainly used where available. The gospel books found in most AOCK altar tables are usually in Greek, with limited bilingual editions of English and Greek. During the liturgical readings, other local bibles are used, while the gold or silver covered scripture at the altar table remains a mysterious decorative book lying on liturgical tables and used in processions. To alleviate this, the Easter of 2011 saw the AOCK produce a bilingual gospel book in English and Kiswahili. This was initiated by Archbishop Makarios Tillyrides, but done by his two assistants; Fr Raphael Kamau and Ms Lydiah Gatwiri. These much-appreciated leatherbound gospel book is not an original translation but rather a cut-and-pasted Western translations of the English and Kiswahili Western translated bibles, which has greatly replaced most of the Greek gospel books on the AOCK churches altar tables, giving the locals a feel of the Orthodox gospel book as arranged according to the lectionary and Feastal readings.[74]

The official translations of the entire bible; from the Septuagint and with an Orthodox *phronema* (mindset), is still highly needed considering how much the bible is used by the Orthodox in Kenya.[75] Since not many theological or spiritual texts are available for the locals, the way the bible is used by the AOCK clergy and laity is very close to the model of the Church Fathers, more so their excessive use of the Old Testament and the Epistles in their long homilies.[76] These Kenyans read the bible at home on a daily basis, constantly preach long biblical homilies, and teach from scripture almost at every church, social, political economic, cultural and all other community event. The excessive use of the Old Testament in all these is common, more so because it has narratives that are very close to the local African cultures. If not for liturgical reasons and the spiritual edification of the Orthodox in Kenya, the fact that some biblical translations are far from the Orthodox ecclesial understanding is a reason to expedite such an effort of producing an official Orthodox translation of the Old and New Testament bible for use in church and Orthodox homes.

4.6 Pastoral Staff and Relics

The Orthodox bishop's pastoral staff /crozier (*poimantike rabdos* in Greek) and the relics of saints are highly contentious among many adherents of the AOCK. Some insiders and outsiders have interpreted their use in church as

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74 Archimandriote Job Getcha, *The Typikon Decoded: An Explanation of Byzantine Liturgical Practice* (Yonkers, NY: St Vladimior'ss Seminary Press, 2012): 53-66.

75 John Breck, Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001).

76 Christopher A. Hall, *Learning Theology with Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002); _____, *Reading Scripture with Church Fathers* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998).

demonic, while others have even left the Orthodox faith citing the same. While the two practices are still accepted and given a chance to continue, they raise very unpleasant conversations with the locals both the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox.

The *poimantike rabdos* is a long metallic rod with a cross and two serpents on the top, which carry several symbolisms. The cross denotes the victory of Christ, the source of power for the staff holder amidst all the struggles of ministry. The two serpents facing each other on each side of the cross, signify the prudence expected of the bishop holding it, and serves as an indicator of the visible and invisible enemies of the church. The serpent and cross combination has also a connotation of Prophet Moses pre-Christ symbolism of the cross, when God instructed Moses to mount one bronze serpent and those bitten on looking at it got well and did not die (Numbers 21:9), while the cross is the post-Christ symbolism of victory and the fruits received by those who come to Him. "Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him" (John 3:14-15). The arrangement of the cross being in the middle of the two serpents is visible in Psalm 110:2, "The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion, saying, "Rule in the midst of your enemies!" During their enthronement, Orthodox bishops are awarded this pastoral staff, to denote the transfer of pastoral authority and shepherding of their respective dioceses with the words: "Receive this Staff to shepherd the flock of Christ entrusted to you. To the obedient let it be a help and a support. With it, lead the disobedient and the wayward to admonishment and instruction." While all these symbolism, explanations and prayers look fine, the problems only come when the locals look at it and see the two serpents. The African take on serpents is completely different from the biblical and European one.[77] The African understand serpents to represent evil, darkness, the devil and devil worship, and essentially paganism and therefore not considered a Christian symbol.[78] Therefore, any place with serpents is highly disassociated with God, and instead associated with devil worship and witchcraft.

The Orthodox Church has much appreciation for relics (the bodily remains of a saint). The presence of these relics and the veneration of the same is common in Orthodox parishes. Furthermore, out of the early church performing services on top of the tombs of martyrs, the church extended the placement of

[77] Robert Hazel, Snakes, People, and Spirits, Volume One: Traditional eastern Africa in its Broader Context (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019).

[78] Wilfrid D. Hambly, "The Serpent in African Belief and Custom", *American Anthropologist* 31(1929):655-666.

the relics of three different martyrs on the altar table of each Orthodox Church during its consecration.[79] This is imbedded in the canons that instruct the destruction of all altars with no relics (canon 91 of Carthage held on AD 418/9) and churches without relics being considered heretical (canon 7 of the 7th Ecumenical Council held in Nicaea in AD787). Religious persons carrying the bones of holy people like Moses and his predecessors did with the bones of Joseph (Exodus 13:19), the miracles realized through them like the case of the bones of Elisha resurrecting a man (2 Kings 2:8), the souls of martyrs living under the altar due to their testimony (Rev 6:9), and the fact that whatever the saints used or touched (Luke 8:40-48; Acts 19:11-12) or even their shadows touched (Acts 5:15-16) did miracles among others are not contested by the Kenyan Orthodox Christians, for God works through his servants whether they are living or not.

The challenge on relics among the AOCK adherents arises because bones of dead people in Africa have a history of being used in witchcrafts and demon possessed personalities, if not devil worshipers.[80] Thus, a majority of Africans fear even coming near relics even though they know they are of holy people. This reality can be noted by the fact that except the consecrated churches having relics inside the altars, no visible relics are placed in the AOCK churches for veneration or otherwise. This is except the case of Saint Makarios Seminary chapel altar in Kenya, which has a closed box with the relics of Saints Nymphodhora, Mynodhora and Metrodhora put there in 2005 after the parish of Kambaa which they were meant for returned them to the Archdiocese. Even at this seminary chapel, these relics are not presented for veneration. The other relics in Kenya are stored in relic boxes of the diocesan bishops, which are only opened when teaching students or in readiness for consecration of churches.

While the relics and their use cannot be changed, and the fact that they are rarely seen except during consecrations, maybe the *rabdos* for the African bishops can be made to not contain the serpents in the spirit of contextualization.

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[79] Gus George Christo, The Consecration of a Greek Orthodox Church According to Eastern Orthodox Tradition: A Detailed Account and Explanation of the Ritual. Texts and Studies in Religion Volume 109 (Lewiston/ Queenston/ Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2005): 15-46; Nicholas Cabasilas, The Life in Christ. English Translated by Carmino J. deCatanzaro (Crestwood, NY: St.Vladimir's Seminary Press,1974): 149-158.

[80] Cf. Bernard Gechiko Nyabwari and Dickson Nkonge Kagema, "The impact of magic and witchcraft in the social, economic, political and spiritual life of African communities", *International Journal of Humanities Social Sciences and Education* 1.5 (2014):9-18.

5.0 Conclusion

While this study has given a glimpse of how the African culture has moulded the Eastern Orthodox Church in Kenya, there is need for further studies on the same. Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos insisted having a comprehensive study of the context and cultures, so that the ethos and culture of the locals will not crush with the Orthodox tradition and ethos.[81] He makes it clear that there is a problem in the lack of contemporary Orthodox mission clearly studying their "mission lands" before sending missionaries. At the same time, he emphasized on the need for analyzing the cultures of Orthodox mission areas so that their ways are accommodated, the lack of which divisions and subsequent complications could arise as seen in the case of Kenya. In matters liturgical reforms, it is been identified that several things have brought reforms in the worship of the Orthodox Church.[82] This paper has strongly added and demonstrated that even

[81] Anastasios Yannulatos, *In Africa*: *Orthodox Christian Witness and Service* (Boston, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2015): 134-139.

[82] Alexander Schmemann, "Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy, and Liturgical Reform," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 13 (1969): 217-224; Ionannis Fountoulis, "Liturgical Renewal in the Orthodox Church: Opportunities and Obstacles," (in Greek) *Kleronomia* 21 (1989): 325-334; John F. Baldovin, *Reforming the Liturgy: A Response to the Critics* (Collegeville, MN: Pueblo Book, Liturgical Press, 2008); Lewis J. Patsavos, "Ecclesiastical Reform: At What Cost?," *The Greek Orthodox Theological review* 40.1-2 (1995): 1-10; Nicholas E. Denysenko, "A Proposal for Renewing Liturgy in the Twenty-First Century," *Studia Liturgica* 40 (2010): 231-259; ___, *Liturgical Reform After Vatican II: The Impact on Eastern Orthodoxy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2015); ____, "Resourcemnet or Aggiornamento? An Assessment of Modern Liturgical Reforms," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 20.2 (2018): 186-208; ____, "Towards An Agenda for Liturgical Reform in The Byzantine Rite: A Response to Peter Galadza," *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 3.7 (2010): 43-68; Pantelis Kalaitzidis, "Challenges or Renewal and Reform Facing the Orthodox Church," *The Ecumenical Review* 61.2 (2009): 136-164; ___, "New Trends in Greek orthodox Theology: Challenges in the Movement Towards a Genuine Renewal and Christian Unity," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 67.2 (2014): 127-164; Paul Meyendorff, *Russia, Ritual, and Reform: The Liturgical reforms of Nikon in the 17th Century* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Theological Press, 1991); ____, "The Liturgical Reforms of Peter Moghila: A New Look," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 29.2 (1985): 101-114; Pierre Sollogoub, "Why a Reform of the Established Liturgical Calendar and of the Easter Date is Necessary," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60.1-2 (2016): 53-64; Peter Galadza, "Restoring the Icon: Reflections on the Reforms of Byzantine Worship," *Worship* 65 (1991): 238-255; ____, "Schmemann Between Fagerberg and Reality: Towards an Agenda for Byzantine Christian Pastoral Liturgy," *Bollettino della Badia Greca di Grottaferrata* 3.4 (2007): 7-32; Stefanos Alexopoulos, "Did the Work of Fr. Alexander Schmemann Influence Modern Greek Theological Thought? A Preliminary Assessment," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 53.2-3 (2009): 273-299; Thomas Fitch (ed.,), *Tradition and Liturgy: Theological Reflections of Alexander Schmemann* (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1990); Thomas Pott, *Byzantine*

contemporary culture is one way that worship in the Orthodox Church is being shaped. Thus, diversity of forms of worship in the Orthodox Church should be expected to continue as the Orthodox Church meets new cultures.

There is also noted that some Orthodox Christians from outside Africa have their conflict with some Kenyan Orthodox practices. In most instances they even comment that such are very Protestant (Pentecostal and Evangelical) and none-Orthodox ways. There could also be some truth in this, considering that the Neo-Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Africa have been noted as having much influence on all religious and social lives of the African Christians including of the mainline and locally initiated churches.[83] If that is the case, the Orthodox Church in Kenya could be said to have evolved to create not just an African culturally conscious church, but also a highly ecumenical and modernized Church.

This paper has also demonstrated several things concerning the Orthodox understanding and place of contextualization in the spiritual life of Orthodox Christians in Africa. One point emphasized across the paper is that contextualization and the church tradition should always be balanced, to avoid dividing the church for or against culture or church tradition. While the contextualization in this study maybe unique for the African continent, it is important for the Orthodox Christians in other countries to witness how the church has handled the issue of church and culture not only in the past but also in our contemporary times. The understanding of how cultural rituals and symbols are adapted and accepted in the North varies from that of the South, thus seeking for purity and simplicity as it were, and acknowledging that the mode of accepting one may not work for the other.[84] These pushes for the need to accept the diversity involved and further study of the ritual realities of new "mission lands".[85]

Liturgical Reform: A Study of Liturgical Change in the Byzantine Tradition, trans., Paul Meyendorff, Orthodox Liturgy Series book 2 (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2010); ___, "The Problem of A Common Calendar: Do We Need To Reform Our Liturgical Calendar Or Our Understanding Of The Time of Salvation," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 160.1-2 (2016): 79-89; Vladimir Khulap, "Pastoral Problems of A reform of the Liturgical Calendar in Russia," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 60.1-2 (2016): 65-77; W. Jardine Grisbrooke, "Liturgical Theology and Liturgical reform: Some Questions," *St Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 13 (1969): 212-217.

83 Damaris Seleina Parsitau, "From the periphery to the centre: the Pentecostalisation of mainline Christianity in Kenya", *Missionalia* 35.3 (2007): 83-111; Jonathan Kangwa, "Pentecostalisation of mainline churches in Africa: The case of the United Church of Zambia", *The Expository Times* 127(2016): 573-584.

84 Bell, *Ritual* (1997): 217.

85 Bell, *Ritual* (1997); Paul Bradshaw and John Melloh (eds.,), *Foundations in Ritual Studies: A Reader for Students of Christian Worship* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2007).

Some of the lessons learnt in the contextualization models of the African Orthodox Church of Kenya include

- That the Orthodox church is struggling to merge the church tradition and culture in some respects and that the same church has succeeded in some contextualization aspect, while keeping silent or not having a straight up response to some issues. Some aspects are easily manageable, others if deliberated on could find answers, while others are so complex and may not find any answers.
- That all past mistakes by Kenyan Christians or the Christians from abroad are also an important part of this journey of learning how to merge the church tradition and culture in Kenyan Christianity, but also in how to handle contextualization in new mission lands.
- What have succeeded in the contextualization models in Kenya are useful models to be shared by missiologists of the Orthodox communities worldwide and beyond.
- No matter what, not all challenges of the church tradition and culture can be resolved.
- Doing nothing is also an answer to some gospel and culture problems. It is important to let time handle some things, especially when they are as contentious as some of the Kenyan issues raised above.
- The early church struggles in seeking for models of how to intermarry culture and the church tradition is similar to the African struggle. We can thus use this as a way to understand how the early church handled culture.

The tension between the Orthodox tradition and the African traditional cultures continue to this very day. As the African Orthodox Church of Kenya grows and evolves within the local and the global community much remains to be seen. One thing is for sure, that the church in Africa should be more proactive in how they handle contextualization to keep the faith and still make it accessible and fitting for the locals.

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