

The Genealogical-Paternity Succession Model: The “Mother of All Succession Models in African Initiated Churches”

Graham Duncan

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-2583-1914>

University of Pretoria

profgrahamduncan@gmail.com

Joseph Tendai Magaracha

<https://orcid.org/0009-0008-7424-3335>

University of Pretoria

magaracha2000@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

The nexus between the genealogical and paternity models of leadership succession in African Independent Churches (AICs), also known as father-to-son, and generations of familial inheritance, respectively, are prevalent yet divisive. These models are rooted in African traditional customs, where the church is viewed as an extension of the founder’s intellectual property, to be inherited by children or relatives upon their death. The founder’s family and relations regard the church as their estate, leading to economic determinism and materialism, influencing disputes and splits within AICs. Economic determinism, a concept coined by Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels in 1848, posits that economic factors shape historical events and societal structures. In the context of AICs, this means that the distribution of material resources and goods within the church is central to understanding historical events and power struggles. The founders’ numerous sons from polygamous marriages and the complications brought about by the involvement of extended relations often led to struggles over the church and its resources and, hence, battles for control and ownership.

To gain ascendancy, family members construct and manipulate various leadership succession models, favouring their own ascendancy. This leads to the proliferation of traditions and factions within AICs, ultimately resulting in splits and divisions. The church becomes a site of economic struggle, where family members vie for control over its human, material, and spiritual resources. This is what this article critically highlights in view of patriarchal and capitalist values, prioritising family lineage and economic interests over spiritual values. This is an intersection of economics, politics, and religion that acknowledges the complex web of power dynamics that shape these organisations. For this study, the genealogical-paternity may be both singular and plural as the model/s



Studia Historiae Ecclesasticae

Volume 50 | Number 3 | 2024 | #15651 | 17 pages

<https://doi.org/10.25159/2412-4265/15651>

ISSN 2412-4265 (Online), ISSN 1017-0499 (Print)

© The Author(s) 2024



Published by the Church History Society of Southern Africa and Unisa Press. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

represent similar but differing perspectives of the nucleus and extended family among the Shona.

Intradisciplinary and/or interdisciplinary implications: The nexus of the genealogical-paternity models of leadership succession in AICs relate to ecclesiology, missiology and soteriology as Church History has historical, anthropological, sociological, psychological, philosophical, political, hermeneutical, ecclesiological, eschatological, ethical, and practical perspectives of the history and theology of the Church.

Keywords: African Initiated Churches; economic determinism; succession models; sects; constructivism; typologies; African Traditional Religion; syncretising and contextualisation.

Introduction

This article explores the nexus between the Genealogical and Paternity Models of leadership succession in African Initiated Churches (AICs), which are prevalent yet divisive, often leading to disputes and splits. Despite the widespread use of the models on church leadership and succession, their implications have not been studied. This study employed a phenomenological approach under the qualitative paradigm to investigate the role of the nexus between these models in three AICs in Zimbabwe, namely the African Apostolic Church of Johanne Marange, Zion Christian Church, and Mwazha's African Apostolic Church. Findings suggest that these models are central to leadership succession in these churches, often leading to conflicts and splits. The study highlights the complex interplay of factors, including traditional inheritance laws, family dynamics, and economic interests, which shape the outcome of leadership succession in AICs.

The Historical Samples of African-Initiated Churches in this Study

The African Apostolic Church of Johanne Marange

In the AACJM, leadership succession disputes are caused by a lack of codified church canons to regulate how leaders are selected in the Church. The church has relied on traditional inheritance laws and customs, which have been influenced by both African and Western practices. According to Ruzivo (2014, 15–32), the AACJM has a patrilineal system of succession, where the eldest son inherits the High Priesthood. This is in line with traditional African-Judaist practices, Nguni-Bantu practices, as well as Western and Dutch-Roman (civil laws) succession practices (Mbiti 1990, 211–216). The genealogical-paternity nexus in AICs is also affected by the conflation of family and church leadership with implications that the High Priest inherits both the church's spiritual authority and material assets. This has unfortunately led to curses and blessings levelled against enemies and friends, respectively, amidst leadership succession power struggles within the AACJM (Frahm-Arp 2018, 1–14; Afolabi 2021, 1–9).

Furthermore, Johane Marange had thirteen wives, meaning his children may not agree among themselves on who should succeed the father as High Priest due to maternal jealousy and competing interests (Makamure 2020, 125–145). This has led to instances of half-brothers fighting each other for the control of the church (like what happened with Oliver Marange fighting his father's children to support Noah Taguta for High Priesthood, a son of his father's brother. This is exacerbated by the absence of codified church canons, as decisions are made on the basis of personal opinions and memories rather than objective criteria. This has led to manipulation and reinterpretation of traditional customs and laws, making it difficult to predict who will succeed to the High Priesthood.

The Zion Christian Church

The ZCC and the AACJM share similarities in their leadership succession processes. They both rely on the genealogical-paternity nexus of leadership succession, with the son of the founder inheriting the High Priesthood. However, the ZCC's choice of Nehemiah as the successor to the leadership position instead of Reuben led to a split in the church. The narrative is that the younger son (Nehemiah), rather than the elder (Reuben), inherited the position, while in the AACJM, it was the eldest son of the founder (Abel Momberume). In both cases, the churches split owing to the commonality of accompanying disputes concerning the legitimacy of heirship to inherit where only males were counted (Ellis and Ter Haar 2004, 114–132).

The nexus of the genealogical-paternity model of succession is always accompanied by a footprint of leadership succession disputes and splits in the AICs. Once it is applied, it triggers other models of succession like the Religious-Cultural Model, the Prophetic-Spiritual Model, the Legal-Ethical Model, the Relic-Emblem Model, the Geographic-Ritual Model, and the Vilification-Expulsion Model into action to justify and legitimise one's ascendancy into power.

As Mbiti (1990, 211–216) notes, the Genealogical-Paternity model is deeply rooted in African culture and tradition, but it can also lead to power struggles and conflict when multiple claimants to leadership emerge. In the case of the ZCC, the choice of Nehemiah as successor was seen as an affront to Reuben's claims to leadership, leading to a split in the church. Furthermore, from a "patriarchal" leadership succession approach, leaders who are seen to have a divine leadership mandate are not seen to have accountability to external authorities (Sundkler 2018, 326 pp). Leaders thus can potentially abuse power through arrogance and corruption, necessitating conflicts and splits to accompany the process.

The African Apostolic Church of Paul Mwazha

The African Apostolic Church of Paul Mwazha (AACPM) here presents a unique case study of leadership succession in AICs as the struggle is centred around the founder, Paul Mwazha (25 October 1918), who is 105 years old and physically incapacitated, is

pitting his sons against each other. The inclusion of this church in the analysis highlights the complexity and challenges that arise from the application of the genealogical-paternity model of leadership succession due to the nexus. As Mbiti (1990, 211–216) notes, this model is deeply rooted in African culture and tradition, where lineage and patrilineal descent play a significant role in determining leadership succession. In this case, the sons of Paul Mwazha are vying for leadership, with Tawanda Israel Mwazha being favoured by the majority of the church board of trustees and the founder.

However, Ngoni Mwazha and Alfred Kushamisa Mwazha, sons from Paul Mwazha's first marriage, have also staked their claim to leadership. They have been supported by Bishop Juru, the Secretary General of the Church. This has led to a factionalisation of the church, with different groups supporting different claimants to leadership.

The Zimbabwe High Court's decision to declare that Ngoni and Alfred cannot be legitimate successors to the church (Munyoro 2021) while their father is still alive has added complexity to the situation. The view of Sundkler (1961, 203–213) concerning the unaccountability of male leaders in AICs due to the divine nature of the task has led to power struggles and fights in the AACPM.

The prolonged life of Paul Mwazha (born 25 October 1918), in light of literature's observations that AICs are often characterised by internal conflicts and power struggles over leadership succession (Ellis and Ter Haar 2004, 114–132), may give various factions time to better prepare for succession battles ahead, as well as schisms and splits within the AACPM.

The Emergence of African-Initiated Churches in Africa

The emergence of AICs in the early 20th century was a response to various factors, including issues of leadership, African self-governance, white racism, and Western cultural dominance. According to Babalola (1988, 217), the Native Pastoral Church (NPC) in Nigeria, an AIC, was founded on the 13th of October 1901 as a protest movement "against the denial of self-government, colour prejudice, imposition of foreign culture and customs, dictatorship, and the attempt to translate and enforce the principles of the Church of England in the Native Pastoral Church" (Babalola 1988, 217).

In Southern Africa, the agency of African converts captured the attention of researchers and writers (Kurewa 1975, 36). The desire was to establish Christian movements that authentically and uniquely addressed African interests, which led to the emergence of AICs (Sundkler 2000, 16). This phenomenon also affected Catholicism, which adopted the term "African Christianity" (Shorter 1977, 21) in order to redefine Christianity in plural thought forms and idioms (Kurewa 1975, 36). This move was an attempt to "capture the African imagination" and create a unique Christian expression that was relevant to African cultures and societies (Kurewa 1975, 36).

The emergence of AICs thus can be seen as a response to the dominant Western Christian tradition and its imposition of Western values and norms on African cultures. The AICs sought to create a more authentic and indigenous Christian expression that was rooted in African culture and experiences. As Sundkler (2000) argued, "the African Independent Churches were not simply imitations of Western churches but rather an attempt to create a new form of Christianity that was uniquely African" (p. 16).

The African Apostolic Church of Johanne Marange

The development of most AICs has been centred on economic determinism, especially the AACJM in Zimbabwe. The AACJM has been engulfed in succession disputes since 1963 at the death of its founding leader, Johanne Marange (1912–1963). Arnold (Anrod) Taguta, the elder brother to the founder, facilitated Abel Momberume to succeed his father (Johanne Marange) as the Church's High Priest, which sparked the initial leadership succession dispute. The Nguni model of succession was initially used when the father's inheritance was given to the first-born son. This frustrated the ambitions of some of his father's deputies, such as Simon Mushati, and prompted him to refer to the AACJM as a Nguni Church (*Chechi yema Nguni*), where, in line with their inheritance systems, the eldest male child takes over the father's property and leadership position in family and community (Gussler 1973, 88–126; Wright 1983, 1–33).

Thus, at the succession ceremony, Abel, Maccabees (Makebo) and Judah Momberume were given Johanne Marange's Church staff, which at this stage were regarded as the founder's personal property. Simon Mushati began to complain against the personalisation of the two Land Rovers purchased by the Church being treated as personal objects of inheritance. In many African Christian churches, the leader's personal property and wealth have become closely tied to the institution, creating problems of succession and leadership (Gifford 1998). Thus, Mushati challenged the conflation of the family and Church institutions in the AACJM.

The succession dispute continued after the death of both Johanne Marange in 1963 and Abel Momberume in 1992 through a series of litigation and court cases (Magaracha 2024, 1–244). Noah Taguta, the son of Arnold Taguta, did not appoint Abel Momberume's son, Stephen, according to the Church's and Nguni traditions. Instead, he usurped the leadership of the church. This has attracted the attention of the media, and one can assume that economic interests and existing family rivalries are at the heart of all these leadership succession struggles in view of the costly series of court cases (Harris 2019). New models of leadership succession that emphasise spiritual authority and charismatic leadership (Gifford 1998), as well as the prioritisation of consensus-building and collaborative decision-making (Gussler 1973, 88–126), and their mechanisms, have been developed to legitimise the social constructs of new factions and their leaders such as the control of sacred shrines, church and biblical traditions (Magaracha and Masengwe 2011, 7–75). Constructs in contest for power are useful for

excluding other members of the AACJM, where economic interests feature too strongly, and this has generally been the trend in most AICs.

The philosophy that underlies the church succession matrix is that the church is an asset owned by the sitting High Priest. Hence, the High Priesthood is an object of inheritance as it is a source of honour, authority and wealth. This, then, entails that at the death of the sitting High Priest, church possessions and human and spiritual resources are inherited by the family of the deceased, with a strong possibility that the descendants of the deceased produce the incoming office bearer. The study has produced seven models for dealing with leadership succession in the AACJM, namely:

- The Genealogical-Paternity Model
- The Religious-Cultural Model
- The Prophetic-Spiritual Model
- The Legal-Ethical Model
- The Relic-Emblem Model
- The Geographic-Ritual Model
- The Vilification-Expulsion Model

These models have been developed from the understanding that the AACJM was developed following the Shona-Nguni succession models that value father-to-son inheritance (paternity) as well as relative-to-relative inheritance (genealogy). However, the complication is that brothers can also inherit from their elder brother. This has complicated how the inheritance in the AACJM became complicated.

The Religious-Cultural Model

The issue of inheritance has also been used regarding religious and cultural artefacts, seen as the source of power in the High Priesthood. The study has shown adequate evidence of violations of religion and culture by aspiring candidates who slept with their fathers' younger wives against the stipulations in Lev. 20:11, as the Momberume family married several wives of varying ages.

The Prophetic-Spiritual Model

The awakening of the Holy Spirit in the religious doctrine of prophecy in the AACJM has elevated the elements of prophecy in running church affairs. In this scenario, the spirit mediums have been used to inspire the credibility of the high priesthood. The chances of one being elected into the office of High Priest depended on prophecies made at shrines in this narrative.

The Legal-Ethical Model

To be elected into the office of the High Priest, a candidate has to be chosen in a council of elders where an eligible candidate has to be chosen, and the name has to be agreed upon. Even though the rites of passage in the AACJM are not written down, their traditions are carried out from their memories using deliberations, which will enable the candidate to lay his hands on the religious ceremonies and church relics.

The Relic–Emblem Model

The legal battle between the belligerents has also been based on relics and emblems. Their court battles were premised on the belief that the spiritual power of the AACJM founder was residual in the relics and emblems he left, along with the traditional and cultural beliefs. Those who fought for the position of High Priest thus fought to acquire the emblems such as the 20 robes, two plates, two trunks, three Bibles, two Apostolic robes, Z\$15,000, and US\$500 and staff, upon which legitimate charismatic power was symbolised and contained in the history continuity of from the charisma of the founder (Museveni 2017, 178–206; Müller 2015, 1–17). This religious paraphernalia was believed to contain the power to heal the sick and bless church members. Emblems thus were no mere objects of inheritance, and their value was priceless as they had numerous economic and spiritual significance. Followers also were motivated by the emblems, and those who owned the relics had more followers. This would be experienced during the Paseka times at the High Priest's home.

The Geographic–Ritual Model

The battle also involved places for worship and ritual activities. The cultic centre, such as Mount Nyengwe, Mafarikwa, or Macheke for the Marange church, holds immense significance for AICs as it represents the church's symbolic connection with the history, beliefs, practices, and the departed. It serves as a sacred space for worship, communal gatherings, and ritual activities, fostering a sense of identity, belonging, and unity among members (Resane 2020, 1–16). When Arnold Taguta moved the shrine from Mount Nyengwe, the original home of Paseka during Johanne Marange's leadership, to Mafarikwa, then Abel Momberume's farm in Macheke, Mashonaland East Province, it was an attempt to create a new symbolic connection in which Marange's biological sons could not keep a foothold in the activities of the church. Just like in the Abrahamic religions with Muslims in Mecca, Jews in Jerusalem and Christians (Gentiles) at Antioch, the Shrine where Paseka is taken at Nyengwe, Mafarikwa, or Macheke holds such kind of significance. This has also led to religious tourism, political patronage and economic fountain in the Marange region.

The Vilification-Expulsion Model

Finally, the use of vilification and expulsions has been instrumental in legitimising and delegitimising potential candidates for the office of the High Priest. The use of political

alliances with the ruling party and emotional connections within the larger Momberume family and the Johane Marange children has been phenomenal.

The Family Background of Samuel Mutendi of the Zion Christian Church

Samuel Mutendi's life history and genealogy are outlined in Section Nine of the Church's book, *Rungano rwe Zion Christian Church* (ZCC n.d., 15). In *Rungano rwe Zion Christian Church*, this and the historical development of the Zionist Christian Church (ZCC) are recorded. "According to this document, Samuel Mutendi was born by Makuwa. Makuwa was born by Mudengezerwa who was the son of Chirume Mushavi who lived at Great Zimbabwe. Chirume Mushavi was born by Dlembeu who was the first son of Chief Chirisamhuru of Matopos or Matonjeni. This history shows that Samuel was a member of the royal family" (Chiminige 2014, 35). *Rungano rwe Zion Christian Church* is the Church's unpublished booklet, written in the form of biblical chapters and verses, comprising 56 sections and 37 pages (ZCC n.d., 15). Samuel Mutendi's birth in 1880 was a mystery (Chiminige 2014, 35). It is similar to that of Bishop Eliyasi Vilakati of the Jericho Zionist Church in Swaziland (Fogelqvist 1986, 59). His birth was premature, and according to customs then, he was supposed to have been killed by an old woman. For some unknown reason, Samuel Mutendi's life was spared, and he was looked after by his own grandmother, who privately breastfed him. Samuel Mutendi was the only child and had a premature birth at a time when premature babies were the only candidates for the grave. However, Samuel was left out to stay indoors with the goats, as goats used to stay with people in huts during those days. He was breastfed by his grandmothers, who struggled until they saw one of his eyes open, and they discovered that he was a human being. In his later life, he grew up to be a healthy person (Chiminige 2014, 35). He was named Tongotendaziso as they "thanked the eye" or "believed the eye", which revealed that he was human (Chiminige 2014, 35). Samuel was saved by his blinking eye; later, Tongotendaziso was shortened to Tendeziso (Chiminige 2014, 35). Thus, Samuel Mutendi is a Christian name for Tendeziso Makuwa (Chiminige 2014, 19).

Samuel Mutendi's Call to Ministry

Mutendi received his call in 1913 at Chegutu while on police patrol (Chiminige 2014, 36; *Rungano rwe Zion Christian Church*, Section Ten). He is said to have seen the angel Gabriel, who informed him that he was going to form a Church in his country. In 1919, Samuel Mutendi dreamt of himself talking to God, was reminded of the 1913 vision, and was encouraged to pray and fast. Mutendi resigned from the British South Africa Police (BSAP) in 1921 and went back home to Bikita in Masvingo Province in Zimbabwe (Chiminige 2014, 36). He was employed with the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) as an assistant teacher. It was not long before he faced resistance for not following already-written prayers. As a result, Samuel left for South Africa. He and his colleagues secured employment at Bombara Farm in the Transvaal. While there, he and

his friends debated about which of the available Christian Churches was the best Church for them to attend. Samuel Mutendi dreamt of two angels whom he had previously dreamt of while he was a police officer at Hartley in 1913. While he was praying, one of the two angels spoke to him, saying, “the ideal Church for you is Zion” (Chimininge 2014, 36). In 1922, Mutendi was baptised by Engenas Lekganyane in the Zion Apostolic Faith Mission (ZAFM) and was named Samuel. Lekganyane was pleased with Samuel Mutendi’s conduct and performance. He thus commissioned him to baptise people in the then Rhodesia (Chimininge 2014, 36; *Rungano rwe Zion Christian Church* booklet, section ten).

The Establishment of the ZCC in Zimbabwe

Samuel’s first target for evangelism was his former school, Gumunyu. He wanted to preach to his former colleagues at the school. His colleagues were happy to hear Samuel Mutendi preach under the influence of the Holy Spirit. He, however, faced resistance from members of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC), Roman Catholic Church (RCC) and African Traditional Religion (ATR). His church grew by leaps and bounds. False accusations were laid against him, and one such accusation by a Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) deacon was that he had organised a gang of bandits or terrorists to rise up against the white government. This resulted in his imprisonment together with some members of his Church (Chimininge 2014, 36–37; *Rungano rwe Zion Christian Church, Section 32*).

Establishment of the Church in Gokwe

The decision to move from Bikita could have been precipitated by two reasons. First, the rivalry between the Rozvi and the local Duma chieftaincies (Rafapa 2022, 73–94). Second, Samuel Mutendi did not have a cordial relationship with the Dutch Reformed Church, and then Mutendi decided to establish a second centre of worship at Defe Dopota in Gokwe in Chief Sahai (Daneel 1987, 106; 126–126). It is stated that:

As the man of God, Mutendi started to perform a lot of signs and wonders using his Mapumhangozi rod and a lot of people converted to the ZCC. Through his Mapumhangozi, Mutendi would perform acts such as rain-making and topping rain, as well as casting out demons (Chimininge 2014, 38).

The Death of Samuel Mutendi and Schism in the Church

Daneel (1987, 1–310) posits that during Samuel Mutendi’s country-wide round of paschal celebrations in April 1976, the frail old Bishop must have had foreknowledge of his impending death. He informed his followers that he would not be seeing them again and that he was being called to Heaven to receive the crown that was due to him. He died on 20 July 1976 at a newly established Jerusalem, at Defe Dopota, in Gokwe South District, in the Midlands Province in Zimbabwe (Daneel 1987, 106; 126). This was after leading the Church for over fifty years. There are reports of a mysterious flying object known as *Nyenyedzi ya Samere*, the star of Samuel, that was witnessed on the

night of 23 July 1976 after the death of the Bishop. The appearance of this unidentified flying object was witnessed by many Zionist members, as well as non-members of the Church. A meteorological expert in Bulawayo witnessed it, and so did police officers and an Air Rhodesia, Captain Gary Allan. A Salisbury police spokesperson confirmed that the police had also received an unidentified object report on Monday, July 26, from Mr Reison Chimedza in Gutu (Mgandani 2010). Members of the Zionist Church, at the burial of Samuel Mutendi, celebrated the fulfilment of prophecies Mutendi had made two weeks back at Sote in Bikita. They saw a dazzling flying phenomenon, which was believed to have hovered above Dopota Mission at Defe briefly before descending at a place where Mutendi was eventually laid to rest. The incident threw the mourners into a highly charged atmosphere, as several Church members present started speaking in tongues (Mgandani 2010). Defe Dopota in Gokwe, since July 1977, has become an annual pilgrimage site for members of the Zion Christian Church.

Succession Struggle and Split in the Church

According to Daneel (1988), Bishop Samuel Mutendi declined to reveal his preferred successor. Perhaps he wanted to avoid friction among members of his household of 17 wives and more than 70 children. He argued that God Himself would take care of the leadership of the Church after his death. There was a period of a year before a successor to Samuel Mutendi was appointed for the following reasons:

1. According to traditional customs, the distribution of the estate and inheritance can only be done after a year has passed after the deceased's death. The fate of the Church, which usually forms part of the founding leader's estate, is also decided at the same ceremony.
2. Over the long history of the Church, which spanned about half a century, the Bishop had shown preferences for different sons to succeed him. For instance, from the 1950s up to the 1960s, he had shown preference for his son, Enginasi. When the Church moved its headquarters to Defe in Gokwe, his son Solomon was the preferred candidate. Yet in the last three years of his life, Nehemiah helped to conduct Paschal celebrations and constitutional matters; he had become the Bishop's natural choice.
3. The competition between the two brothers, Reuben and Nehemiah, was based on who was "the chosen one", validated by events and dreams.

Reuben appeared to have commanded influence in many Paschal areas of the Church. According to Reuben, the Church recognised this choice with a special clothing ceremony (*kupfekedzwa*). This was done ten years earlier than Nehemiah's installation, during the inheritance procedures. More importantly, the most decisive incident is his presence at his father's deathbed. He was the only son of Samuel Mutendi present during the last few hours of his father's life. This, for Reuben, indicates he was the chosen

successor of his father. For instance, Reuben's validation as the "chosen one" is based on the following words of Samuel Mutendi at Gutu in 1964:

The Holy Spirit came in 1964, as you know, and Bishop Mutendi then said: "I am also now looking for the child of my choice to whom I can give the responsibility of my work, the one whom I can give the responsibility of my work, the one I shall instruct, dream, and find me the right child ... The prophets said that the Spirit has indicated Reuben" (Daneel 1988, 277).

Nehemiah argues that in 1963 when he had travelled to Gutu in the Masvingo Province of Zimbabwe, Samuel Mutendi had blessed him as his successor. Additionally, Samuel Mutendi had a secret will drafted by his lawyers that contained the following phrase: "I (Mutendi) have agreed that upon my death, the Church leadership will pass on to Nehemiah. He will be called Bishop Samuel Mutendi" (Daneel 1988, 274). By the time Nehemiah was appointed the bishop of the ZCC, the Church had split into three distinct factions:

1. The main body is loyal to Nehemiah, and two breakaways are led by Reuben and Grierson.
2. However, the succession of the Church leadership was decided by a vote by ZCC ministers in Gweru town. The results were as follows: Nehemiah—50, Solomon—3, and Enginasi—2. In the second round of voting, the results were as follows: Nehemiah—415, Enginasi—41, and Reuben—2.
3. Nehemiah was installed as the Bishop of the Church. Sainos, the eldest son of Mutendi, was appointed the name bearer and headman. Grierson later reconciled with Nehemiah and returned to the fold.

The belief in the founder's charisma remaining in the body, grave and religious artefacts appears to be strong among Church members of many AICs.

African Apostolic Church (Paul Mwazha Church)

Paul Mwazha born on 25 October 1918 in Chirumhanzu in the Midlands Province. He started having visions and revelations of Jesus Christ at a tender age, which eventually led to the formation of the Mwazha group within the Wesleyan Methodist Church. He eventually formed the African Apostolic Church in 1956 (Mwazha 1997). The Church grew to be an international Church with branches in all provinces of Zimbabwe and Mozambique, Angola, Botswana, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

From the time that Mwazha turned a hundred years old (25 October 2018), he became inactive in church activities. Much of the church leadership and priesthood roles were performed by Israel Mwazha with the help of the Board of Trustees. However, Mwazha's sons from two different wives formed church factions, dividing the church

membership. The elder sons from Mwazha's first marriage (Ngoni Mwazha and Alfred Kushamisa Mwazha), who had just been rehabilitated, led a faction which was supported by the Secretary General of the Church (Bishop Juru) (Jaravaza 2023). The other faction was led by Mwazha's sons from the second marriage (Tawanda Israel and Chiseko Mwazha) and had the backing of the majority of the Board of Trustees.

The conflict between the two factions emanated from a letter which was controversially attributed to Paul Mwazha in February 2020. Alfred Kushamisa Mwazha argued that his father had given him the Church, yet the Board of Trustees objected to his claim. The Board of Trustees argued that the letter just pronounced the division of labour among Mwazha's sons in line with the Church Constitution. The letter indicated that Alfred Kushamisa Mwazha was the leader of the church since his elder brother Ngoni Mwazha had polygamy, with five wives, which violated the church doctrine of monogamy and therefore disqualified him from leading the church (Jaravaza 2023). Tawanda Israel Mwazha was to administer the Holy Communion since he had gained experience over the years by participating in sanctuary rituals with his father. The dispute was taken to courts of law. The High Court dismissed Alfred Kushamisa Mwazha's claims to church leadership (Jaravaza 2023). Alfred Kushamisa Mwazha and Ngoni Mwazha led a breakaway faction called *Tsindondi*. Tawanda Israel Mwazha and Chiseko Mwazha remained with the other faction, which is nicknamed BOT (Board of Trustees). In 2023, Tsindondi further split into two factions led by Ngoni and Alfred.

Their conflict centred on leadership, as Ngoni was not receptive to being led by his younger brother. He argued that, as Paul Mwazha's eldest son, he was entitled to lead since he had repented.

Findings

Application of the Genealogical-Paternity Model of Leadership Succession in the African Apostolic Church of Johanne Marange

a). The model was first applied in this church when its founder (Muchabaya Momberume), also known as Johanne Marange, died in 1963. The elder brother to the founder, Arnold Momberume, appointed Abel Momberume, eldest son of the founder, as the High Priest of the church, claiming that this was according to Nguni tradition (father-to-son). Simon Mushati protested when Abel and his brothers were given land-rovers, which were church property (church asserts). Simon Mushati formed his own church known as St. Simon Church. Abel Momberume also inherited the home of the annual Paseka ceremony (Holy Communion) at Mt Nyengwe and moved first to Mafarikwa and then to Abel Momberume's farm in Mashonaland East. This meant that Abel Momberume had gained control of the Geographic Model as well, which further strengthened his position. His legitimacy was further strengthened when he took control of the founder's staff, apostolic robes, Bibles, and some cash. This third model is known as the Emblem-Relic Model of leadership succession. By the time Abel Momberume died in 1992, he had amassed a lot of wealth, which included vehicles, a

farm, and houses in Harare. This wealth was inherited by Abel Momberume's eldest son, Steven, but not the High Priest post.

b). At the death of Abel Momberume in 1992, the Ngunintradition of father to son was not adhered to, sparking prolonged court battles between Clement Momberume, a biological son of the founder, and Noah Taguta, the son of Arnold Taguta. The former accused the latter of usurping High Priesthood from the legitimate family of the founder. However, Noah Taguta was family, too. Noah Taguta succeeded to the throne through the Genealogical-Paternity model as well as the Geographical-Ritual Model, as he brought back the Paseka centre to Mafararikwa near his home. Equally important, he inherited the founders' robes, staff and critical Emblem-Relic paraphernalia. Again, this strengthened his position as the new High Priest. As a result, the majority of the AACJM rallied behind him. The country's political leaders followed suit. At his death, Noah Taguta had amassed a lot of wealth, which included Taguta Buses, Taguta Haulage Trucks, Taguta Farm near Nyazura, a dairy farm near Chipinge town, Noah Taguta High School, and many other farms and schools dotted around the country. In the second succession, an altered Genealogical-Paternity Model was utilised. Clement Momberume broke away with a smaller faction of the church.

Application of the Genealogical-Paternity of Leadership Succession Model by ZION Christian Church

Samuel Mutendi led the church founded he for half a century. In the process, he had seventeen (17) wives and seventy (70) children. Over time, he showed preferences for different sons. He died in 1976, and disputes about who was to inherit the leadership of the church ensued. After arguments about the founder's preferences for this son or the other leadership, the succession was decided by a ballot by church ministers who met in the City of Gweru, Zimbabwe, which produced the following results: **Nehemiah**—415, **Enginasi**—41 and **Reuben**—2.

Nehemiah Mutendi was installed as the successor of the founder, Samuel Mutendi. He inherited the church and the majority of its members, and more importantly, he received the famous staff (Mapumhangozi), which had enabled barren women bare children. Enginasi and Reuben formed their own churches, but they were much smaller than that led by Nehemiah. Apart from gaining the emblems of the founder, he was able to retain a church farm in the Bikita District, known as Mbungo, and a place where the founder is buried, known as Defe, in the Gokwe District, where important national rituals are held. The ZCC has gone international. As a sign of Nehemiah Mutendi's financial muscle, he has built an imposing, uniquely designed church at Mbungo. He has built numerous schools across the country and has regular visits from top political offices. Apart from utilising the Genealogical-Paternity model, the emblem and Geographical Models were decisive in leadership succession in this church.

Application of the Genealogical-Paternity Model of Leadership Succession by the African Apostolic Church of Paul Mwazha

The leadership succession struggles in the AACPM are a developing story. The elder sons from Mwazha's first marriage (Ngoni Mwazha and Alfred Kushamisa Mwazha) seem to have come back to the church to inherit church leadership, yet previously, they were not concerned about it. This study may be unable to say much about it, but the involvement of the high court in the struggle can become a setback at the death of the father as the two who were denied to take over may eventually take over the church as the struggle may intensify at the death of the founder.

Discussing the Application of the Model in the Three Churches

The article highlighted the significance of the Paternity-Genealogical model/s in the AICs in Africa, particularly in the Marange Apostles, Mutendi Zionists, and Mwazha Apostles. The model/s refers to the cultural and traditional practices that emphasise the importance of family ties and lineage in determining leadership succession and material inheritance.

The article suggests that the lack of codified church canons and the conflation of family and Church institutions have contributed to the prevalence of leadership succession disputes in the AICs. The Paternity-Genealogical models, prioritising the eldest son or closest relative to inherit leadership, have been a major factor in these disputes. This model/s is based on African cultural practices, where inheritance and succession are often determined by patrilineal descent.

The article provides several examples of how the Paternity-Genealogical models have led to conflicts in the AICs. For instance, in the AACJM, the struggle for leadership succession has been characterised by rival claims to charismatic power and authority. The disputes have been fuelled by rivalries over control of church resources and wealth.

Similarly, in the ZCC, the succession dispute led to a split in the church. The same pattern has been observed in the AACPM, where the sons of the founder are struggling for leadership while their father is still alive.

The article suggests that other models of succession, such as the Religious-Cultural Model, Prophetic-Spiritual Model, Legal-Ethical Model, Relic-Emblem Model, Geographic-Ritual Model, and Vilification-Expulsion Model, are often triggered into action when the Paternity-Genealogical model is applied. However, these models are often subservient to the Paternity-Genealogical model.

Critically discussing the contributions of the Paternity-Genealogical model/s to conflicts in the AICs, it can be argued that these models have contributed to a culture of nepotism and favouritism in church leadership selection. The emphasis on family ties and lineage

has led to a lack of transparency and accountability in leadership selection processes. This has resulted in power struggles and conflicts within churches.

Furthermore, the Paternity-Genealogical model/s have also contributed to a lack of diversity and inclusivity in church leadership. The prioritisation of family ties has often excluded other qualified individuals from leadership positions, resulting in a lack of representation and participation from different groups within the church. This, therefore, calls for AICs to consider alternative models and ways of leadership selection and succession that are accountable, inclusive and transparent if splits and breakaways are to be avoided.

Contribution of the article to existing knowledge

The Genealogical-Paternity Model/s in AICs' leadership succession matrices underlines the dominance of the infusion of the African cultural heritage into the church and the need to develop models that transcend existing philosophies and psychologies of traditional inheritance at the decease of the parent or relative. Rather, the study investigates how this model can be beneficially applied in AICs without furthering the schisms and conflicts that have characterised these churches in the past couple of decades since the death of the founding members.

Conclusion

The AICs, in light of the conclusions drawn from their succession patterns, could arguably be viewed as a form of "family churches" as they use paternalism and patriarchalism. There is a pressing need to document these succession traditions and provide clear legal guidelines for disputes within these churches. To prevent the erosion of these institutions, church governance practices must be anchored in constitutions and constitutionalism, avoiding favouritism, nepotism, and corruption, as well as sexism, gender discrimination and ageism.

References

- Afolabi, O. O. 2021. "Why Leadership Conflict Exists in the Church: The Structural Conflict Theory Perspective." *The Journal of Applied Christian Leadership*, September 1. Accessed September 9, 2021. <https://jacl.andrews.edu/why-leadership-conflict-exists-in-the-church-the-structural-conflict-theory-perspective/>
- Babalola, O. 1988. *A Review of African Initiated Churches and Their Contributions to the Development of Education*. Joseph Ayo Babalola University, Ikeji Arakeji, Osun State
- Chimininge, V. 2014. "Zion Christian Church. Multiplying in the Spirit: Africa Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe." *BiAS* 15: 33–48.

- Daneel, M. L. 1988. *Old and New in the Shona Independent Churches viii: Leadership and Fission Dynamics*. Gweru: Mambo Press.
- Daneel, M. L. 1987. *Quest for Belonging: Introduction to a Study of African Independent Churches* (Vol. 17). Mambo Press
- Ellis, S. and G. Ter Haar. 2004. *Worlds of Power: Religious Thought and Political Practice in Africa*. London: James Currey.
- Frahm-Arp, M. 2018. "Pentecostalism, Politics, and Prosperity in South Africa." *Religions* 9 (10) 298: 1–16. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel9100298>
- Fogelqvist, A. 1986. *The Red-Dressed Zionists: Symbols of Power in a Swazi Independent Church* (Vol. 500). Uppsala: Dept. of Cultural Anthropology.
- Gifford, P. 1998. *African Christianity: Its Public Role*. London: Hurst and Co.
- Gussler, J. 1973. "Social Change, Ecology, and Spirit Possession among the South African Nguni." In *Religion, Altered States of Consciousness, and Social Change*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press
- Harris, A. L. 2019. "Chapter 15: The Spirit in the Church: Prophetic Agency in Urban Societies." In *The Holy Spirit and Social Justice Interdisciplinary Global Perspectives: History, Race & Culture*. Lanham, ND: Seymour Press.
- Jaravaza, D. C. 2023. *Interview on 7 November 2023 at ZIMTA Park in Mutare with Doctor Divaries Cosmas Jaravaza, Mutare District Evangelist and Lecturer at Bindura State University*.
- Kurewa, J. W. Z. 1975. "The Meaning of African Theology." *Journal of Theology of Southern Africa* 11 (32): 32–42.
- Kwaramba, J. 2023. "Chapter 23: The Relationship Between the Church and State in Zimbabwe." In S. Holzer (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Religion and State Volume II*. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-35609-4_24
- Magaracha, T. 2024. *Leadership Succession Disputes and Economic Interests in the African Apostolic Church of Johanne Marange*. Philosophiae Doctor in Church History, University of Pretoria, Pretoria.
- Magaracha, T. and G. Masengwe. 2011. *Power Struggles and Cultural Identity Crises in AICs, Investigating Factors and Dynamics Behind the AACIM Schism*. Lambert Academic Publishing, East Finchley
- Makamure, C. 2020. "Chapter 9: Power Struggles and Leadership Succession Practices in the African Apostolic Church of Johanne Marange." In Lovemore Togarasei, David Bishau & Ezra Chitando (eds.) *Religion and Social Marginalization in Zimbabwe*. Bamberg: University of Bamberg Press

- Mbiti, J. S. 1990. *African Religions and Philosophy*. London: Heinemann.
- Mgandani, B. 2010. "The Zion Christian Church Supplement." *The Sunday Mail*, July 19–25. Harare: Zimbabwe
- Müller, R. 2015. "The Zion Christian Church and Global Christianity: Negotiating a Tightrope Between Localisation and Globalisation." *Religion* 45 (2): 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2014.992111>
- Munyoro, F. 2021. "Supreme Court Settles Mwazha Church Dispute." *The Herald*, October 15. Accessed September 10, 2021. <https://www.herald.co.zw/supreme-court-settles-mwazha-church-dispute/>
- Musevenzi, J. 2017. "The African Independent Apostolic Church's Doctrine under Threat: The Emerging Power of Faith-based Organisations' Interventions and the Johanne Marange Apostolic Church in Zimbabwe." *Journal for the Study of Religion* 30 (2): 178–206. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2413-3027/2017/v30n2a8>
- Mwazha, E. P. M. 1997. *The Divine Commission of Paul Mwazha of Africa*. African Apostolic Church, Harare, Zimbabwe: Sebri Printers
- Rafapa, L. J. (2022). "Two Histories, One Organisation: The Case of Zion Christian Church." In *African Epistemology in the 21st Century: The Human and Social Sciences Perspectives*. University of Venda.
- Resane, K. T. 2020. "African Zionism and its Contribution to African Christianity in S.A." *Scriptura* 119 (1): 1–16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7833/119-1-1768>
- Ruzivo, M. 2014. "Succession Debates in the Johanne Marange African Apostolic Church." *Multiplying in the Spirit: African Initiated Churches in Zimbabwe, BiAS*, 15: 15–32.
- Shorter, A. 1977. *The Making of the African Independent Churches*. London: Longman.
- Sundkler, B. G. 1961. "The Concept of Christianity in the African Independent Churches." *African Studies* 20 (4): 203–213. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00020186108707144>
- Sundkler, B. G. M. 2000. "The Study of Independent Churches in Southern Africa." *Journal of Contemporary Studies in Africa* 15 (1): 14–22.
- Sundkler, B. G. M. 2018. *Bantu Prophets in South Africa*. Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429486296>
- Wright, J. B. 1983. *Politics, Ideology, and the Invention of the 'Nguni' (No. 7)*. History, Post-graduate Seminar, University of the Witwatersrand, African Studies Institute.
- Zion Christian Church (ZCC). n.d.. *Rungano rwe Zion Christian Church*. Unpublished Church Booklet.