

ABSTRACT

The issue of multi-party politics in Kenya needs thorough research at the grassroots level. The existing literature on multiparty politics in Kenya mainly focuses on the national level at the expense of the local levels. Noticeably, political development at the national level has a significant impact at the grassroots level of Kenyan politics. Since sectarian interests have been prominent in Kenya's politics and governance for a long time, research at the grassroots level is necessary to address the problem of sectarianism in Kenya's multiparty political competition. The study analyses how multi-party competition has been conducted at grassroots level in Kenya with specific emphasis on Kisii region from the restoration of multipartyism in 1992 to 2007. The study analyses the influence of various social divisions among Abagusii on political competition in Gusiiland, especially in the multi-party era. The main contention of the study is that re-introduction of multi-partyism in Kenya in late 1991 did not immediately transform Kenya into a democratic society as multi-partyism is not synonymous with democracy. Sectarianism derails the growth of multiparty democracy in Kenya. Among the Abagusii, for instance, social divisions exist which have become obstacles to realisation of democracy at the local level. Therefore, the study illustrates how sectarian politics in Kisii have affected the democratisation process. The study is important, as it addresses the issue of political leadership in Gusiiland. It also addresses the problem of women's low representation in elective positions in Gusiiland since the re-introduction of multi-partyism in late 1991. The study is informed by postcolonial theory. Postcolonialism is relevant to the study's needs as it addresses gender relations and other aspects of post-colonial politics. Primary data for the study was obtained through oral interviews and perusal of archival sources such as ECK records, ministerial and local government reports. Overall, data from both primary and secondary sources such as newspapers, magazines and documentaries was analysed, section by section, within the parameters of the research problem and the theoretical framework. The data was then organised into an analytically written thesis. The findings of the study will be useful to scholars interested in focusing on similar studies in future. The study is also important to the voters and general public as it gives them a realistic view on the nature of their society's politics. Besides historicising Gusii politics during multi-partyism, the study also explores the relation between Gusii politics and national politics especially in the context of ethnic politics in Kenya.