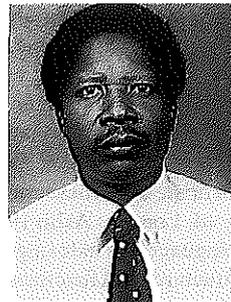Michael AFOLABI
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Spiritual Matters: Provision for Independent African Churches in General Classification Schemes

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African independent churches have in the last four decades grown in number and in membership. They have become Africans' own way of spreading the Word of God. However, despite several years of their existence and the publication of some books on them, the major classification schemes which are widely used in libraries, namely the Dewey Decimal Classification, the Library of Congress Classification, and the Universal Decimal Classification, have no provision for classifying books on them. The paper describes the nature of these churches and observes that they meet the criteria of a Christian church. It suggests how the three classification schemes could be revised to make provision for classifying books on the subject.   (Author)

1. The Problem

One important characteristic of a classification scheme is how frequently it is revised to accommodate new subjects. With the publicatioon explosion and its implications for libraries, it becomes necessary for classification schemes to be up-to-date. Through regular revision, classification schemes would be able to cater to various subjects, including emerging ones, so that information-seekers will be able to find the relevant information sources they seek.

However, examination of the *Dewey Decimal Classification* (DDC), 20th edition (1), reveals that although various Christian denominations have been assigned notations, it is difficult for the classifier to classify books dealing with African independent churches. TheIndependent Fundamentalist and Evangelical Churches with the notation 289.95 cannot accommodate African independent churches because Independent Fundamentalist churches refer to a type of church in the United States. African churches are not fundamentalist churches even though they are independent. Thus, given its present arrangement, DDC (20th edition) has no provision for classifying books on African independent churches. Such books as *Prophetism in Ghana* by C.G.Baeta, *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* by G.B.Sundler, *African Independent Church: The Church of the Lord (Aladura)* by H.W.Turner, *A Place to Feel at Home* by F.Welbourn and Ogot, *African Initiatives in Religion* by D.Barret, *East African Rebels* by F.Welbourn, *Schism and Renewal in Africa* by D.Barret, *Eden Revival: Spiritual Churches in Ghana* by D.Beckmann,

Bishops and Prophets in a Black City: African Independent Churches in Soweto by M.West, *Towards an Indigenous Church* by E.B.Idowu, and *Aladura: A Religious Movement Among Yoruba* by J.Peel are some examples of books on the subject.

Although the *Library of Congress Classification* (LCC) represents independent churches and parishes by BX 9999, the use of this notation is limited to independent churches in the Unites States (2). This explains why the classifier is instructed to divide by city, A-Z.
BX 9999 Independent churches, parishes, societies, etc.
     by city, A - Z
     e.g. B6 Boston. Community Church

As with DDC, it becomes difficult for a classifier to classify books on African independent churches as well as on other independent churches outside the United States of America.

In the International Medium Edition of the *Universal Decimal Classification* (UDC), the notation 289 is assigned "Other bodies, mostly non-ministerial, mostly independently formed" (3). However, the list of independent churches and Christian groups provided makes no provision for those originating from Africa. The examples provided are those originating from Europe and North America.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this paper therefore are stated as follows:

1. To describe the nature and characteristics of African Independent Churches and their non-provision in three widely used classification schemes.

2. To justify the need to accommodate them in the general classification schemes, particularly the DDC, the LCC, and the UDC.

3. To recommend the classification notation that should accommodate African independent churches in the DDC, the LCC, and the UDC.

3. African Independent Churches: Nature and Characteristics

The second decade of the nineteenth century witnessed the emergence of indigenous or independent churches in several parts of Africa, particularly in Eastern, Central, Southern, and Western Africa. There is no directory of these churches, but some of them are mentioned in this

paper. These churches include the *Aladura Churches in Nigeria,* notably the *Cherubim and Seraphim Church,* the *Christ Apostolic Church* and the *Celestial Church of Christ,* while in Ghana the *MusamaDisco Christo Church, Gyidi* and *Odiifo Nkansa Church* have emerged. In Kenya, examples include the *Lost Israelites of Kenya, Holy Ghost Church of East Africa,* the *Kenya Foundation of the Prophets Church,* the *Holy Spirit Church of Zayun,* the *African Mission of Holy Ghost Church, God's Word, Luo Roho Church, New Roho Israel Church, Musanda Holy Ghost Church of East Africa,* the *African Independent Pentecostal Church,* the *Church of Christ in Africa, Wakofu African Church, Muolo Roho Israel Church, Chosen Church of the Holy Spirit in Kenya,* and *Maria Legio of Africa.* In Zimbabwe, examples include the *Zion Christian Church, Ndaza Zionists, African Congregational Church (Chibarirwe)* and the *Mai Chaza Church,* while in Zambia there is the *Lumpa Church.* In Zaire, the Prophet Kimbangu established his *Eglise de Jesus-Christ sur la Terre.*

These churches considered themselves different from the traditional or mission-oriented churches. They regarded themselves as independent of foreign domination. Their growth and attitude did not depend on the attainment of independence of the country in which they were located. However, they have grown tremendously in the post-independence period. For instance, the *Celestial Church of Christ,* which was established in 1947, has over 200,000 members in Nigeria, République du Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Cameroun, Togo, Senegal, Great Britain, Ireland, the United States, Canada, Austria, Switzerland, and France (4).

4. Characteristics of the Churches Listed

1. The concern of these churches is to remove foreign elements from Christianity in Africa. This has been achieved largely by incorporating such elements from the traditional society and religion which do not oppose the Christian faith and doctrine in order to make the Christian faith more meaningful in Africa. As Oosthuizen vividly stated, "sociologically, the church must take hold of the main aspects of the African cultural patterns, otherwise it will remain foreign and without roots. This does not mean adaption or accommodation or seeking point of contact, but rather taking possession of what can be utilized in the indigenous culture to the advantage of the proclamation of the Christian message" (5).

2. These churches have become organization-conscious like the 'older churches'. In his book *Prophetism in Ghana,* Baeta wrote:

.... the prophetic leaders and their helpers ... have on the whole, followed the basic pattern of organization of African communities ... it centres round the strong personality of its leader who is its real pivot, though use is made of all sorts of councils as well; above all it gives more scope to individuals to express themselves freely (6).

The organization of the *MusamaDisco Christo Church* in Ghana for instance, follows the pattern described by Bacta. It has the General Head Prophet or Akohaba as its spiritual and temporal power and its final authority. He works through councils established by the church. The organizational structure is hierarchical. Writing on the church's organization, Opoku observed that the pattern is the traditional Akan state structure based on war organization. Below the General Head and Prophet of the church there are prophets and pastors in various cadres (7). Similarly, the *Celestial Church of Christ* based in Nigeria has a Supreme Evangelist as its head or prophet (4, p.25-28). He too works through the church council, and the structure is hierarchical. The *Maria Legio of Africa* in Kenya has Baba Mtakalifu or Holy Father and Founder as its head, below him there is the Pope, followed by cardinals, then archbishops, then bishops (8).

3. Some of them have introduced their own liturgy and creeds, for instance the *MusamaDiscoChristo Church* (7, p.113).

4. They believe in and practice spiritual healing through prayers, prophecy and attach great importance to dreams and visions. Speaking in tongues is a common characteristic of many of them, for instance, the *Cherubim and Seraphim Church* in Nigeria and the *African Israel Church* in Kisumu, Kenya. Some of them see the cause of sickness as spiritual - a test of one's faith, and the only solution is through divine or faith healing. In the case of the *Musama Disco Christo Church,* the founder instructed his followers "not to use any medicine for any treatment, for the Lord is Thy Healer" (7, p.113). Similarly, the *African Holy Ghost Christian Church* of Kenya strongly believes in faith healing (8, p.141).

5. The independent churches also adhere to the Bible in general worship and administration. According to Okite "they see in the Bible a world-view that is very close to their own and in the Biblical characters they see faith in its most simplified form, uncomplicated by theology" (9, p.122). Many of them, however, are oriented to the Old Testament rather than the New Testament. For instance, the oldest of Kenya's independent churches, the *Nomiya Luo Church,* strictly follows the teachings in the Old Testament, especially the first five Books of Moses (8, p.136).

6. There are church buildings where members congregate to worship.

7. Administratively, the independent churches are increasingly borrowing many elements of the 'older churches'. The vestments of dresses of church leaders are like those of the 'older churches'. For instance, the vestment of the Supreme Head of the *Eternal Order of the Cherubim and Seraphim* appears like that of an archbishop of the 'older churches'. They are also characterized by having a constitution similar to the traditional churches (7, p.112). According to Grimley and Robinson, "they (the Aladura) followed the basic pattern of organization of African communities. This included less hard-and-fast application of principles and rules, great dependence upon and adherence to the strong personality of their

leaders; group decision is made through general consensus of opinion (10).

8. They were mostly established by concerned laymen (rather than by theologians and clerics) who were concerned about establishing the "true" African Christian Church where African Christians will "feel at home" (11).

9. They are also characterized by a strong community life. According to Okite, in the face of the general breakdown of the extended family system everywhere, the new church communities have provided the new social units, where hospitality is extended without the slightest reluctance, where marriage contracts are arranged, where business advise is freely given, where the individual in every way finds his roots again (9, p.122).

10. Worship services can be organized any time, anywhere as long as there is a congregation. The worship services, according to Okite "are lifely, theologically sound verses are put to traditional African tunes, and the full participation of the congregation is encouraged (9, p.122). McVeigh also observed that "Most worship services are not monopolized by any single individual. In fact, one often gets the impression that the services are leaderless, with a succession of persons rising to speak followed by the active participation of all in dancing and drumming. A visitor sometimes has great difficulty in identifying the pastor" (8, p.139).

Based on the aforementioned characteristics, several independent African churches meet the criteria for a Christian church. The influence of African culture makes them different from Western-oriented churches, but they should be regarded as a further extension of Christianity in Africa based on the conviction that a Christian society can be built on the foundations of African culture. Their mode of worship is the true African expression of the Christian religion.

5. Terminology

Having provided some characteristics of indigenous churches in Africa, an attempt is made here to determine the commonly used terminology for Africa's indigenous Christian sects. To determine this, the titles and contents of the sources listed in the references were examined in terms of coincidence in the use of terminology among authors. It was found that the term 'African independent churches' or 'independent churches' were used by all authors. It is therefore valid to refer to the various indigenous Christian sects in Africa as 'African independent churches'. There are, however, two categories of independent churches in Africa: The first category consists of those that began as indigenous churches, founded by indigenous persons and managed under indigenous leadership. The second category comprises those that broke away from the traditional or mission-oriented churches, were founded by indigenous persons and are managed under indigenous leadership.

6. Provision for African Independent Churches in Three Classification Schemes
6.1 Library of Congress Classification

The Library of Congress Classification number BX 9999, which represents independent churches and parishes, is recommended for classifying books on African independent churches. The application of this number should extend beyond independent churches and parishes in the United States. The existing instruction which requires the classifier to subdivide "By city, A-Z with an example: B6 Boston. Community" should be replaced by the instruction "By name of church, A-Z". The recommendation made is stated as follows:

BX 9999 Independent churches
    By name of church, A-Z
      e.g. .C4 Celestial Church of Christ
            .H6 Holy Ghost Church of Kenya
            .M8 Musama Disco Christo Church

The above recommendation clearly shows that independent churches from any part of the world can be accommodated in this arrangement. It eliminates the need to create a new notation for independent churches in other areas that scholars are yet to write on.

6.2 Dewey Decimal Classification

In order to accommodate independent churches in Africa as well as elsewhere, it is recommended that 289.95 'Independent Fundamentalist and Evangelical Churches' be modified by simply dropping the adjective 'fundamentalist' so that it reads 'Independent and Evangelical Churches'. The dropping of 'fundamentalist' becomes necessary because its retention as well as the two examples provided, namely, 'Evangelical Free America' and 'Independent Fundamentalist Churches of America' suggest that the churches assigned 289.95 are those based in the United States. This paper therefore recommends the following:

289.95 Independent and Evangelical Churches
    Examples:
    Celestial Church of Christ
    Evangelical Free Church of America
    Independent Fundamental Churches of America
    Musama Disco Christo Church

6.3 Universal Decimal Classification

In the UDC, it is recommended that either 289.95 or 289.959 be used to accommodate African Independent Churches because both are vacant.

Individual African Independent Churches could then be specified using the alphabetical sequence. For example:

289.959 African Independent Churches
289.959 Ala   Aladura Churches
289.959 Cel   Celestial Church of Christ
289.959 Che   Cherubim and Seraphim Church
289.959 Hol   Holy Ghost Church of Kenya
289.959 Mus   Musama Disco Christo Church

7. Conclusion

There is no doubt that independent churches are increasingly emerging in different parts of the world, particularly in Africa where there has been a strong need to indigenise Christianity. Several Christian sects in Africa today can be broadly referred to as independent churches. Classification schemes such as the DDC, LCC and UDC have, however, not made provision to accommodate books on independent churches in Africa in particular and the world in general. They only made provision for independent churches in the United States. The paper recommends that provision be made for classifying books and other information media on independent churches in Africa as a solution to the problem.

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Reports and Communications

INTERCOCTA Workshop

A pre-congress workhsop on Problems of Social Science Terminology will be held on August 24, 1993 (the day preceding the TKE-Congress) in Cologne, Germany. The focus of papers and discussions will be on recent developments in the computerization of the printed draft for a pilot INTERCOCTA glossary for researchers on *Ethnicity* which was distributed in 1985. A hypertext version is now available, and the material has also been prepared in an MTX/TERMEX database. A French draft prepared by Eric de Grolier, in Paris, is also being computerized and a multi-ligual version in French and English will be produced. Concurrently, a German text is being prepared in Vienna with the expectation that a tri-lingual version can eventually be generated. In each case, the nearest conceptual equivalent for each concept can be rapidly retrieved so as to make comparisons and establish the best terminological equivalence.

The theoretical and practical advantages of different computer programs for the purposes of this exercise and of any future projects in which methods of descriptive (rather than normative) terminology are used, may also be discussed at the workshop. A tutorial explaining the hypertext approach, plus the HYPERREZ and HYPLUS programs used in the demonstration project, are now available on a diskette for interactive use with text editors in any IBM-compatible personal computer with a hard disk. It is expected that the data will also soon be available free of charge online from a bulletin board, using a LISTSERV system.

Consultations have been launched with UNESCO and the International Commission for Social Science Information and Documentation (ICSSD) with a view to linking computerized conceptual knowledge bases for the social sciences with parallel modules containing current bibliographic data and information about ongoing research, in selected subject fields. The pilot project for "Ethnicity Research" provides a basis for experimentation which may, subsequently, be embraced by organized groups of specialists working on any other selected theme of subject area.

The INTERCOCTA project, which is sponsored by the International Social Science Council at UNESCO, as agent for all the global disciplinary associations in the social sciences, has been able with support from UNESCO, to experiment with the methodology required to produce modules containing terminological and bibliographic information about the basic works and theoretical frameworks in which the key concepts of a given subject field have evolved. When users are ultimately able to load this data into their personal computers for interactive use with information about recent publications and ongoing research, they will acquire a powerful and low-cost know-