LIBRARY OF CONGRESS- BASED SCHEDULE FOR AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

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ABSTRACT

This article is yet another contribution to the nagging issue of the treatment of Africa in the major classification schemes, especially the Library of Congress.

The author recognizes that it is not enough to complain and criticize without offering ideas on the solution to the problem. Hence the article is mainly a structure of classification of African traditional religion which though tailored on the LC pattern, can fit into any scheme-international or in-house.

Its breakdown gives extensive details on the subject as well as accommodates all the groups and nationalities of Africa based roughly on the national geographical boundaries. It is made sufficiently flexible to include every known and unknown ethnic groups in Africa, Its tables also facilitate expansion where necessary.

Because the author has in mind the LC the suggested sub-class in schedule "B" which comes under the assigned range for Religions in the Scheme.

INTRODUCTION

The argument that the library of Congress Scheme is meant for American use can no longer hold since they (the Americans) are happy to make it one of its prized "exports" to the rest of the world. That argument is actually intended to counter complaints from many countries, especially the developing ones, about the scheme's glaring biases and obvious inadequacies in its treatment of the second and third world This view was amply stressed by Ndakotsu (1999) when he said "librarians have accused African libraries of preferring to remain the royal slave to their imperial masters by not

opting to break away from a classification system that shows so much disregard for their home continent"

Its criticism even from big libraries means that the complaints cannot simply be wished away. But action from Washington is rather slow — much slower than African librarians would wish to see. It is therefore appropriate that some degree of initiative has to come from the affected countries

One of such initiatives is the creation of sub-classes within the main LC scheme which would be detailed and elaborate enough to accommodate those perceived areas of inadequate treatment. This paper is an example of such.

Religion is treated in BL — BX in the scheme comprising Judaism (BM), Islam (BP), Christianity (BR); Bible (BS) Theology (BT, BV) Denominations and sects (BX). "African religions" is ranged between BL 2400 and 2490, out of which 2428 to 2460 is allotted to Egypt. Religions of all other races and ethnic groups of Africa have one number(2480 A — Z)

This illustrates the almost total disregard for traditional African religion. The study of any African society in full cannot exclude its religion around which its very existence revolves.

Within tie structure of LC, this paper suggests a framework that can help in addressing this problem. A schedule is proposed using the subclass BY, which at present is unutilized in LC. The arrangement of the schedule is on broad country basis under which the major ethnic groups are arranged. Considering the sheer number of such groups, it is advisable to consider the larger ones for allocation of numbers with the small ones accommodated by the use of cutter numbers. However, such decision should be

taken on the basis of broader knowledge of each country as it may turn out that a small group is actually a sub- tribe of a bigger one already adequately provided for.

Though the broad arrangement is by country, the main organization is based on ethnic/linguistic consideration. As our colonial legacy has shown, geographical or political boundary lines mean very little in the examination of traditional Africa. In several cases, ethnic groups straddle political boundaries. Cultural affinity takes primacy.

The Schedule proposed for African Religions

1.0	*Synopsis*
1	*— 99 General*
10.0	*— 999 Northern Africa*
	(Individual countries arranged within 110— 999)
1000	*— 4999 Western Africa*
	(Individual countries arranged within 1100—4999)
5000	*— 7999 Eastern Africa*
	(Individual countries arranged within 5100 —7999)
80 00	*— 8999 Central Africa*
	(Individual countries arranged within 8100 —8999)
9000	*— 9999 Southern Africa*
	(Individual countries arranged within 9100 —9999)

1.1 THE SCHEDULE

Sub-arrangement under the general, regional, and country number ranges.

General

Provision is made for subdivisions under an ethnic group/tribe which has one number and an ethnic group/tribe accommodated through a cutter number. For the sake of convenience, this subdivision should be by tables. Table 1, for instance, would be used to

subdivide the individual group assigned one number, while Table 2 caters for those with cutter numbers.

Table 1 (one number)

Subdivision of each ethnic group

.1	*Belief systems*
.1.1	*Cosmology*
.1.2	*Pantheons*
.1.3	*Mythology*
.1.4	*Origin of the religion*
.2	*Supreme God*
2.1	*Gods. Deities*
2.2.	*Spirits*
2.3	*Ancestors*
.3	*Worship*
.3.1	*Rites. Rituals*
.3.2	*Prayers. Invocations*
.3.3	*Sacrifices*
.4.4	*Ceremonies, festivals*
.5	*Symbols*
.5.1	*Shrines*
.5.2	*Idols*
.6	*Priesthood*
.7	*Cults. Societies*
.8	*Magic. Witchcraft*
.9	*Divination*

Table 2

(To subdivide ethnic groups with cutter nos. A — Z)

.xl	*Belief systems*
.x12	*Cosmology*
.x13	*Pantheons*
.x14	*Mythology*

.x15 Origin of the religion
.x2 Supreme God
.x3 Gods, A—Z
.x31 Spirits
.x3 2 Ancestors
.x4 Worship
.x41 Rites. Rituals
.x42 Prayers. Invocations .x43 Sacrifices
.x44 Ceremonies. Festivals .x5 Symbols
.x51 Shrines .x52 Idols
.x6 Priesthood
.x7 Cults. Societies
.x8 Magic. Witchcraft
.x9 Divination

The application of the tables follows the normal LC pattern. For example: the suggested subclass for African Traditional Religion is BY. In the more detailed breakdown Igbo (ethnic group/tribe) is given 1046 (one number). With Table 1 applied 'sacrifice' is 43. Thus the book *Sacrifice in Ibo religion*" by Francis Arinze would have the class number: ***BY 104643*** for his book.

Similarly, a small sub-tribe in Zambia, Bizhi, with a population of 2,000 would be considered with its parent group. The Ila,, Tiyogo, a southern Sudan sub tribe has a population of 200 but cannot be identified with any bigger group. This is the kind of case that requires cuttering. With the provision made under Sudan, Tiyogo would have the number BY 8770. T5 and a book on say, Tiyogo would bear the number BY 8770. T531.

In spite of the wide range of numbers given to most of the countries, it would be preferable to make a distinction between a large tribe and a smaller one especially as most of the latter are in reality sub-groups of the former. But where a small tribe is

known not to have any affinity with another, it should be treated as an entity on its own, the size notwithstanding.

An example is a tribe called Rubu said to number some 75 as recorded by (Wenter-Lukas, 1985:307). They inhabit an area around Abuja but cannot be identified with any of the neighbouring tribes or any other. In spite of their number, they cannot be ignored. Hence the only option would be to apply cutter number. Cuttering is quite handy for such very small and yet-to-be identified tribes or sub-groups.

Conclusion

It is believed that this is a small contribution to the increasing research on Africa in the LC scheme. More and more writers continue to press for more detailed treatment of the neglected continent in a scheme that has become widely accepted outside the borders of its own country of origin. African studies is rising to higher levels, hence the need for the scheme to be more accommodating.

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