

AFRICA INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY

RELIGIOUS IDENTITY AND MOBILITY AMONG ALUR  
CHRISTIANS IN NORTHEASTERN CONGO


BY  
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of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of  
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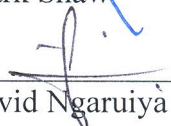


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## ABSTRACT

This study explores a case of religious mobility in northeastern Congo expressed by a good number of Alur Christians deserting the *Communauté Évangélique au Centre de l'Afrique* (CECA 20), an historic mission church and joining Africa Inland Church Congo (ICC), an indigenous evangelical church, *Fraternité Évangélique de Pentecôte en Afrique au Congo* (FEPACO), a Congolese initiated church and *Lam te Kwaru* (meaning worship to ancestors), a neo Alur indigenous religion.

The study follows pastoral circle research design that functions with four major steps, namely: insertion, where the researcher looks at what is happening; social analysis, where the researcher gets to understand why is it happening; theological reflection, where the researcher reflects theologically on what is happening; and pastoral action, where the researcher provides response to address the situation he has analyzed.

Findings from an ethnographical research conducted among CECA 20 Alur Christian defectors suggested that CECA 20 failure to engage spiritual and cultural dynamics according to the Alur expectations was at the center of the defectors desiderata. An interpretation of this mobility based on Rodney Stark's "rational choice theory", Antony Wallace's "revitalization theory" and Paul Hiebert's "critical contextualization" saw the Alur religious mobility as a movement triggered by the Alur's philosophy of religion based on the Alur's indigenous perception of God, their concept of religious reward, their view of community as an important social capital, the pressure from revitalization that was taking place in social and religious sphere in Congo and lack of proper critical contextualization.

This called for a theological reflection on the relationship between culture and Christian faith. Andrew Walls' incarnational model suggested indigenization principle (rooting the gospel in the culture) and pilgrim principle (conforming the culture to biblical principles) as important process that may lead to a the formation of an authentic incarnated Christianity.

Adopting the formation of an Alur authentic ekklesia as strategy that would help to revert the trend of mobility among Alur Christians, this study proposed that CECA 20 need to embark on practical incarnational theology that engage cultural issues such as witchcraft. In addition, it was observed that appropriate incarnational ministries will also necessitate research on Alur oral theology and the publication of Alur church history. CECA 20 also needs to indigenize the church's liturgy to encourage local music and the priesthood of all believers irrespective of age or gender. The third important action CECA 20 would need to undertake is a contextualization of the gospel following the Alur's concept of wellbeing (*bedo ber*) which is calling the church to be involved in spiritual, physical, social and economic needs of the Alurs. Lastly, The church is encouraged to promote continual renewal of spiritual life among Christians. This will require leading the Alur to confess the sin of apostasy, finalizing contentious issues between CECA 20 and AICC, fighting the fear of supernatural forces affecting Alur Christians, correcting the Alur theology of suffering and teaching Alur Christians to depend on the Holy Spirit.