

SOME AFRICAN CONCEPTS OF GOD*

Dr. F.A. GAWAD·M. SHEWIKÄ.

Key Words : GOD, African, Negro.

Abstract in Arabic

((الله ؛ بعض المفاهيم الأفريقية))

تزايد الاهتمام حالياً بدراسة الأديان الأفريقية ، إذ إنها لم تكن من قبل بالعناية الواجبة ، ومع التقدم السريع الذي شهده الإنسان الأفريقي من خلال الأحداث المتلاحقة على قارته ، بدأت تطراً تغييرات على كافة المظاهر الثقافية الأفريقية ، ومنها المعتقدات والتفكير الديني . ويدرس هذا البحث بعض المفاهيم التقليدية والمفطرية عن « الله » ، عند بعض الجماعات غير الإبراهيمية الديانة في أفريقيا الزنجية جنوب الصحراء .

ولقد اتضح أن معظم هذه الجماعات تعتقد بوجود صفات غلبت في الله ، تلك الصفات تظهر في : العلم بكل شيء ، omniscience ، والتواجد في كل مكان ، omnipresence ، والقدرة على كل أمر ، omnipotence ، والسماوى المتغال ، transcendence ، والقوى بذاته ، immanence (أو كما تقول « صفاته في أسائه : العليم ، الموجود ، اللقنادر ، رفيع الدرجات ، المتين . . . الخ ») .

ورغم صدور بعض الدراسات في الموضوع ، إلا أنه مازال في حاجة إلى ندوة الباحثين في الدراسات الأفريقية في الشرق العربي للعناية به ، وولوجه المزيد عمقا وتحليلا ، وما دراستنا هذه إلا مدخلا لمزيد من الاهتمام الذي يحزم وعزم كبيرين ، لما فيه من تحقيق أهداف علمية وعملية ، دينية ودينيوية .

ويمكن أن نصل إلى نتيجة واضحة — بالإضافة إلى النتائج الأكاديمية — أنه يمكن ، بل ومن السهل ، الدعوة إلى دين الله الحنيف بين هذه الجماعات الأفريقية ، إذا ما أحسن التخطيط والتنفيذ ، وخلصت النيات والأعمال .

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INTRODUCTION

African peoples are not religiously well illiterate. Africa was, as it long continues to be, a mysterious projective screen for certain ideas. The traditional religions of Africa reveal fragments of truth, much more than many missionaries have supposed. We have been led by the spirit of Truth into all truth, and seeking to understand the part of religion in society is a leading of the Spirit of Truth.

More than ever before, the present-day religions of Africa are an exercise in cultural encounter and mutual influence. In this regard, many scholars simply gloss the similarities in contemporary Afro-American and African religions. When we look at Africa with reference to beliefs, our first impression is of certain objective phenomena which appear to be made up of systems of beliefs and practices which are unrelated except in so far as they are loosely held together by the factors of common localities and languages. But a careful look, through actual observation and comparative discussion with African from various parts of the continent, will show, first and foremost, that there is a common factor which the coined word "négritude" will express aptly. There is a common Africanness about the total culture and religious beliefs and practices of Africa. This common factor may be due either to the fact of diffusion or to the fact that most Africans share common origins with regard to race and customs and religious practices [1].

The science which has this subject for its province came into existence as such towards the end of the last century. We are to deal here with the comparative social-religion studies. Two dimensions must be defined in our subject; religion and the form in which we handle this subject, comparative sociology.

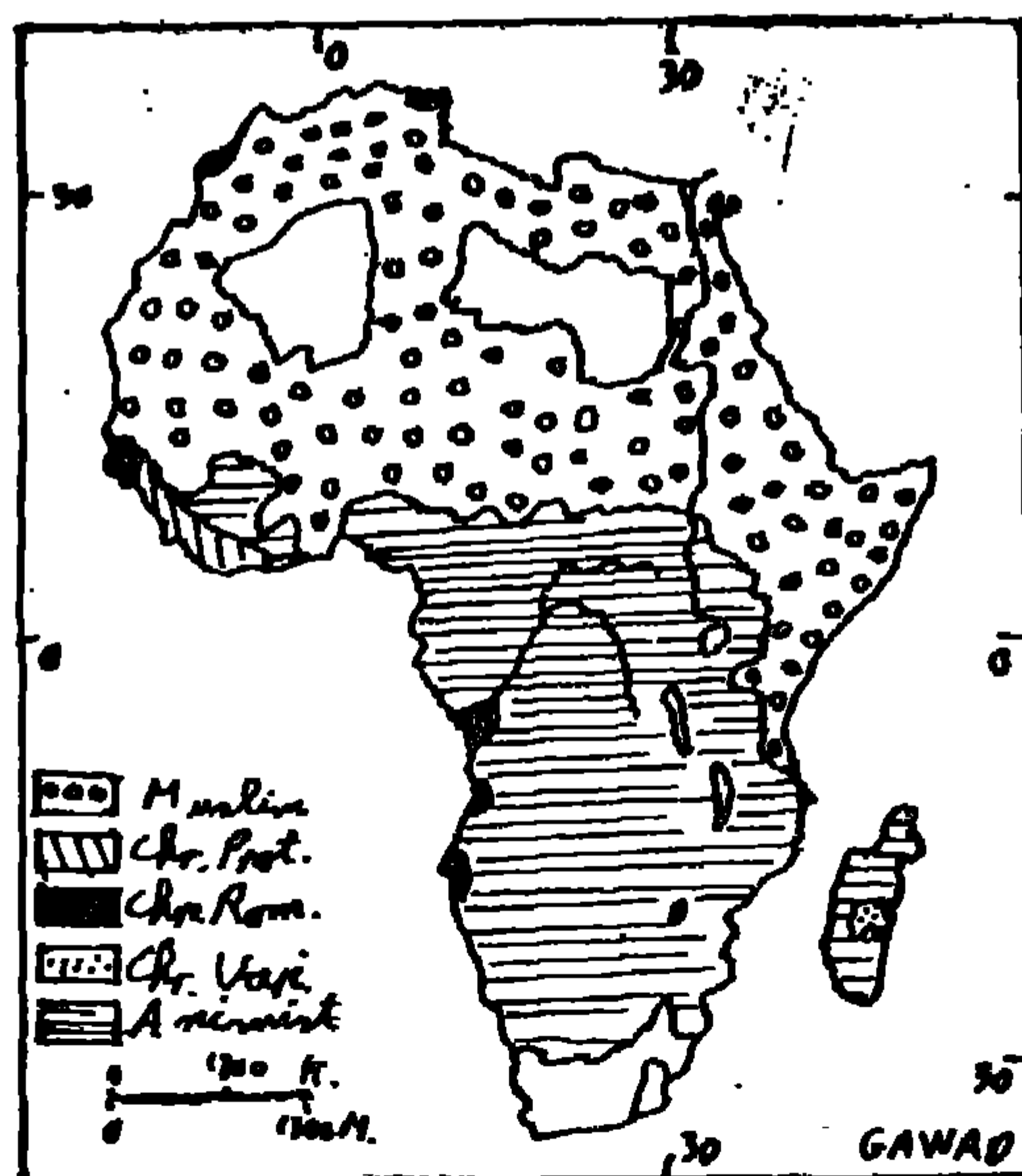
There has indeed been a prodigious growth and spread of religious movements in Africa. Present conservative estimates place membership in the diverse types of contemporary religious groups at well over over ten million, and ten thousand different movements. Numbers only command our attention.

(1) Idowu, E. Bolaji : African Traditional Religion; a definition. 9th. impr. London, Redwood Burn, 1978, p. 103.

There is an immens literature on spirit mediumship, spirit possession, shamanism, and related phenomena. Almost all of it relates to societies outside Africa, particularly to Asia and North America. The most comprehensive account is probably that by Eliade, M. (1951) [*] however it contains relatively littel African material, and it is not written from an anthropological or sociological point of view but rather from that of the historian of religion concerned with symbolic interpretation and the diffusion of items of culture.

We are going to study some examples of God believes in the thought of Negros African peoples of non Ibrahimian [*] religions, mainly in Africa south of the sahara. (Map 1).

I think that this paper will stimulate scholars, students and writers in Africa to do research and more writing, so that our written knowledge of African concepts may be bettered. It needs to be borne in mind that Africa is going through a tremendous and rapoid change in every aspect of human life.



Map 1. Religions.

(*) *Le Chamanisme et les technique archaiques de l'extase.* Paris, 1951; Translation into English : *Shamanism.* London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1964.

(*) I mean here by Ibrahimian religions : the Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

M E T H O D S

Between the necessity of observing facts in order to form a theory and having a theory in order to observe facts, the human mind would have been entangled in a vicious circle, but for the natural opening afforded by Theological conceptions. This is the fundamental reason for the theological character of the primitive philosophy [1]. Herbert Spenser by whom the science of sociology was developed, especially when he founded it on a more comprehensive set of ethnological data, and whose theory of religion is even more sociological in its nature than Comte's (Auguste Comte who founded the science of sociology) fetishism had been. Herbert Spenser-in fact who made an important sociological element.

Anthropologists have long pressed the advantage of using small-scale models about which the relevant facts can be encompassed in one lifetime, but to be useful the model must be one that "moves". I shall use some of the small societies of Africa as they move from isolation to wider interaction to demonstrate the part played by religion in society, and how that part changed.

Systems of belief and values and the celebration of rituals are but the wrapping of personal religion-of a man's inner life-his relations with God and his neighbour, but the expression in dogma, action, and ritual are all that anthropologist can analyse. The line between biological and social necessity is not sharp, for animal groups have many of the same basic needs as human group [2].

To achieve the end of finding out how the African belief, have inspired their world-views and moulded cultures in general, the scholar must guard against "reading in" what is not there, and "reading out", what is there, with regard to African believes and practices. This involves the matter of critical judgment and interpretation, which are a great responsibility, especially where one is dealing with a culture that is no one's own or where one is in danger of feeling too much at home [3].

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- (1) Comte, Auguste : "The Progressive course of the Human Mind". In : Birnbaum, N. et al (eds) : *Sociology and Religions*. New Jersey, Prentice-Hall, 1969, p. 231.
 - (2) Wilson, Monica : *Religion and the Transformation of Society, a study in social change in Africa*. Cambridge, At the Univ. Press, 1971, p. 3.
 - (3) Idowu, E. Bolaji : *African Traditional Religion: a definition*. 9th. imp. London, Redwood Burn, 1978, p. 107.

Anthropologists watching many and diverse societies cannot escape the conclusion that there are regularities. Our chief tool is comparison; like the zoologists from whom we sprang, we find it useful to compare related sorts and to inquire into the reasons for the detailed variations. The second assumption is that if there are regularities these are discoverable.

There are some pioneer studies in this field of African religions as : "John S. MBiti's" : concepts of God in Africa "(London, 1970)", which contains a systematic study of practically all the information he could find in writing and otherwise.

The African peoples are placing God, I mean the concept of God; in the highest possible position, in their view, wisdom commands the the greatest respect of everyone. A person who is considered wise is in a special class of his own.

The highest position of God concept is due to his omniscience, omnipresence, omnipotence, transcendence and immanence.

There is an important assumption, that different aspects of a society are interdependent but have a relative autonomy, is particularly pertinent to a study of religion. A series of African societies which have been described by anthropologist : the Nuer, the Dinkea, the Lugbara, the Bemba, the Nyakyusa and many others others - show a clear connection between religious form and the whole society. Such a connection is generally accepted by anthropologists [1].

In this paper, I try to look at societies in two dimensions ; to analyse functional relations in space and in time. This is very difficult. E.M. Forster warned long ago of the danger of referring "improperly" to time [2]. The historians concentrate on "what happened" - the succession of events - and the best of them demonstrate "Why" things happened, analysing connections in time. The anthropologists have concentrated on "What is", and the interaction of existing institutions. Both approaches meet in direct observation. We anthropologists are good on boots : we have been walking about Africa and other places for some

(1) Geertz, C. : "Religion as a Cultural System." *In* : Benton, M. (ed.) : *Anthropological Approaches to the study of Religion*. London, 1966, p. 1-2.

(2) Forster, E.M. : *Aspects of the Novel*. London, 1927, p. 45.

time. So there is hope of a fruitful marriage between studies in time and in space.

M A T E R I A L S

Since science first seriously directed its attention to the study of social phenomena, the interest of workers has been arrested by the striking resemblances between the life of society and that of organic growths in general. In the relation of the function of religious beliefs in the evolution of society, we can say that, it is evident that if we are ever to lay broadly and firmly the foundations of a science of human society, that there is one point above others at which attention must be concentrated.

The pregnant question which we found ourselves confronted was, therefore : what has then become of human reason ? . From other hand, it is evident, that our definition of religion in the sense in which alone science is concerned with religion as social phenomenon, must run somewhat as follows as Kidd said in his papers [1]: a religion is a form of belief, providing an ultrarational sanction for that large class of conduct in the individual where his interests and the interests of the social organism are antagonistic, and by which the former are rendered subordinate to the latter in the general interests of the evolution which the race is undergoing”.

The Nature of GOD :

As early as the second half of the eighteenth century, Bergier, N.S. had developed in “*Les dieux du pagonisme. Paris, 1767*”, the idea that both fetishism and star-worship were the products of childish mentality, which filled natural objects with genii or ghosts, and so made them alive and human. Edward Burnett Tylor who was not a philosopher nor a sociologist, entering the world of savagery to find therein facts of his theory, this world was his own chosen field of activity. It was he who for the first time collected the enormous mass of facts relating to animism and, on inquiring into its origin, discovered them with the

(1) Kidd, Benjamin : Social Evolution. London, Macmillan, 1894, p. 103.

ultimate source of religion. After that Tylor, E.B. built up his animistic theory of the origin of religion (×).

Before Jewdism, Christianity and Islam ; (1) there were many famous religions thus as : A Natural Religions :

1. spontaneous knowledge (magic).
2. Consciousness : a) religion of measure (China).
b) religion of imagination (Brahmanism).
c) Religion of being in itself (Buddhism).
3. Religions of transition to the sphere of free subjectivity :
a) R. of the Good and of Light (Parseeism).
b) R. of pain (Syria).
c) R. of the Enigma (Egypt).

B. Religions of the spiritual Individuality (Free subjectivity) :

1. R. of the Exalted (Judaism) (2) R. of Beauty (Greece)
3. R. of Finality or Fate (Rome).

Totemism was first made known to more extended scientific circles by M'Lenan, J.F. the discoverer of exogamy (×), and at the same time was brought by him into connexion with religion, in his essay "On the worship of Animals and Plants" (*).

The term "fetish" comes from the Portuguese feitico (Lat. facticius) and is defined to mean, in short, magic or an amulet. It was used by the Portuguese in their dealings with the negroes of west Africa to denote certain inanimate objects, as teeth, claws, tails, feathers, horns, shell and many other such to which the negroes preferred to have in the period of discovery of Africa.

(×) Tylor, E.B. developed his view in a two-volumed work : "Primitive Culture : Researches, into development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Art and Custom. London, First ed. 1872, 5th. ed. 1913. and : "Anthropology; an introduction to the study of Man and civilization. London, 1882". Both works were speedily translated.

(1) Schmidt, w. and Rose, H.J. : The Origin and Growth of Religion; Facts and Theories. 2nd. ed. London, Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1930, p. 33.

(×) See his : "Primitive Marriage" (London, 1866) ; second issue, with additions, under the title "Studies in Ancient History" (London, 1876).

(*) Fortnightly Review, Oct.—Nov. 1869, Feb. 1870.

Sir Frazer, J.G., was the most noteworthy service in collecting data about totemism, his little book "Totemism (Edinburgh, 1887)" was the first general collection of the facts ever made.

Robertson Smith work of "The Idea of God in early Religions", (Cambridge, 1910) is mostly a speculative discussion of the facts of ethnology and of the history of religion. In it he says that only among "some peoples do we find that the (sacrificial) feast is not an occasion of eating with God but what has been crudely called: "eating the God" (p. 77).

Visions of a better life occur and religious movements arise to "set things right" and to restore confidence and a sense of the centre.

But religious movements, as we know, respond to a particular set of circumstances: the forceful expansion of dynamic self-confident societies into contact with more settled cultures.

What term to use for the African traditional religion: In fact it is rather difficult to find a name that is precisely descriptive of the real nature of the religion. P.A. Talbot is faced with the problem with reference to the religion of Southern Nigeria but, wisely, he does not force a solution. Rather, he leaves it at stating the fact as he sees it and no more(1). E. Geoffrey Parrinder also recognizes the problem in his study of religion in Ibadan and is wise enough to leave it at: "It would be useful to devise a term which would denote religions that have a supreme God and also worship other gods (1).

The Nuer word we translate "God" is "kwoth" (pl. kuth); spirit, they also speak of him more definitely as "kwoth nhial" or "kwoth a:nhial", spirit of the sky- or spirit who is in the sky. There are other and lesser spirits which they class as kuth nhial, spirits of the sky or of the above, and kuth piny, spirits of the earth or of the below. Evans-Pritchard discussed the conception of God first because the other

(1) Talbot, P.A. : The peoples of Southern Nigeria. Vol. II, p. 15ff.

(2) Cantwell, S.W. : Proceedings of the XIth International Congress of the International Association for the History of Religions (1965); Vol. 1; Leiden; Brill, 1968, p. 63 ff.

spiritual conceptions are dependent on it and can only be understood in relation to it (1).

The African peoples (Sudanic and Negroes) believe in some main concepts about God. At first they believe in his self-existence, as Bacongo (*) (of Angola) describe almighty when they say that "He is made by no other, no one beyond him is. (2) Many of the attributes of God which we have already considered give him a high, indeed, a unique status, so that he is preeminent in all things. The Akan (**) (Ghana) speak of him as "Grandfather God who alone is the Great One". (3) The African concept of God particularly describes God as the first in terms of existence, the cause of all things and as the one who has the final power and authority over all things. The Zulu speak of God as "the one who sprang up first", saying that he "was older than all of us...made all things, but we do not know whence he sprang"(4). In thinking and talking about God, African peoples often use anthropomorphic images. But they also consider him to be a spiritual being, a concept which they try to express in various ways. As far as it is known, there are no images or physical representations of God by African peoples. This is one clear indication that they do not consider him to be physical even if they may use physical metaphors to describe him, and may take certain physical phenomena and objects as his manifestations. According to the Ashanti(x) (Ghana, Ivory coast), the universe is "full of spirits", but God is "the Great Spirit" who made them all (5). One of the most explicit descriptions of the concept of God as spirit is in traditional Pygmy (**) hymn. It says :

(1) Evans. Pritchard, E.E.I. : Nuer Religion. Oxford, Blackwell, 1974, p. 1 ff.

(*) Their God named "Nzambi" (John Mbiti, p. 328).

(2) Claridge, G.C. : Wild Bush Tribes of Tropical Africa. London, Blackwell, 1922, p. 269.

(**) They have about twelve gods.(John Mbiti, p. 327).

(3) Danquah, J.B. : The Akan Doctrine of God. London, Blackwell, 1944, p. 22.

(4) Callaway, H. : The Religions System of the Amazulu. London, 1870, p. 62 ff.

(x) They have about seven Gods (John Mbiti, p. 328).

(5) Fordse, D. and Johnes, G.I. : The Ibo and Ibibio-speaking peoples of South-Eastern Nigeria. London, Inter. African Instit., 1950, p. 191.

(**) The most God of them is "Kmvoum" (John Mbiti, p. 334)..

In the beginning was God,
Tomorrow will be God.
Who can make an image of God ?
He has no body.
He is as a word which comes out of your mouth.
It is past, and still it lives!
So is God (1)

Many peoples in Africa acknowledge that nobody has ever seen God. Some like the Shilluk, Ga, Lango, and others, say that, like the wind, God is invisible, but his effects are physically felt. Among the Yoruba (Nigeria) he is known as “the king invisible”, and “the King who cannot be found out by searching”.(2) The Lugbara (**) (Congo, Uganda) believe that God is invisible, but in his immanent aspect he “may become visible to a man who is about to die. “They hold that should a healthy person see him, he would know that soon he is to die, for Go “is very terrible to see”(3). The Vugusu (***) (Kenya) say that nobody has ever seen God, “but who sees God must die (4).

We can notice the pity, mercy and kindness of God in the African beliefs. The Ila (+) (Zambia) consider God to be “the compassionate One”; (5) the Banyarwanda (+ +) (Rwanda) call him “the God of pity”(6). From the lips of elderly people among the Akamba (') (Kenya), it is often exclaimed, “Oh, the God of mercy”.(x) Among the many attributes that the Bacongo give to God, two describe his kindness. The people say, “God is kind” and “God looks after the case of the poor

(1) Young, T.C. : *Contemporary Ancestors*. London, 1940, p. 146.

(2) Idowu, E.B. : *Olodumare; God in Yoruba Belief*. New York, 1962, p. 45.

(**) They have three Gods (John Mbiti, p. 336).

(3) Middleton, J. : *Lugbara Religion*. Oxford, 1960, p. 254.

(***) Their God is ‘Wele’ (John Mbiti, p. 336).

(4) Wagner, G. : *The Bantu of North Kavirondo*. Vol. 1. London, 1949, p. 172.

(+) They have 21 Gods (John Mbiti, p. 330—331).

(5) Juod, H.A. : *The Life of a South African Tribe*. 2nd. ed. London., Bought, 1927, p.133.

(+ +) They have eight Gods (John Mbiti, p. 328).

(6) Mbanzabigwi A. : “The Banyarwanda.” *In: Kampala*, 1965.

(') Their Gods are three (John Mbiti, p. 328).

(x) The Akamba term is Ngai (or Mulungu) Wa Tei (John Mbiti, p. 381).

man”(1). According to these sayings, the people assert that God is the main hope of the poor, and that his kindness is shown even to the most destitute members of society.

In their daily lives, Africans do not talk much about love, a person shows his love for another more through action than words. In the same way, it is rare to hear or find people talking about the love of God. They, however, assume that God loves them and shows his love through concrete acts and blessings. The Abaluyia (×) (Kenya) suppose God to have said : “It is I who made the people; whom I love, he will thrive, and whom I refuse, he will die”(2).

On the concept of the goodness of God we have many examples. The Herero (Namebia) believe that God “does only good, therefore we do not make offerings to him”(3). The Akamba say in identical words that “God does us no evil”. With jubilation, the Nbacongo say “Rejoice, God never wrongs one” and attribute nothing evil to him(4). Among the Jie(*) (Uganda), God’s goodness is felt or noticed in his acts of averting calamities, punishing those who contravene rituals, supplying sufficient rain, and providing health and fertility to the people(5). The people of Lango (Uganda) take a punishment of God by means of sickness, failure in hunting and painful death to be ultimately for their good and to be caused by themselves. They believe that when he begins diseases, he also tells the person concerned to do in order to get cured (6). A similar belief is reported among the Urhobo(7) Isoko of Nigeria(×).

(1) Claridge, G.C. : *Wild Bush Tribes of Tropical Africa*. London, 1922, p. 274.

(×) They have three names for Gods (John Mbiti, p. 327).

(2) Forde, D. (ed.) : *African Worlds*. Oxford, Blackwell, 1954, p. 43.

(3) Westermann, D. : *The African Today and Tomorrow*. London, 1939, p. 197.

(4) Claridge, G.C. : *op. cit.* p. 272—273.

(*) Their God names : Akuj (John Mbiti, p. 331).

(5) Gulliver, P. and P.H. : *The Central Nile—Hamites*. London, Inter. African Instit., 1953, p. 47.

(6) Driberg, J.H. : *The Lango*. London, 1923 p. 223—224.

(7) *Loc. cit.*

(×) Bradbury, R.E. : *The Berin Kingdom and the Edo-speaking Peoples of South-Western Nigeria*. London, Inter. African Instit., 1957, p. 159.

It is customary, among some African peoples, to invoke the name of God when taking oaths or making solemn affirmations. For example the Bikuyu (Kenya) say : "If I do not say the truth, may God thunders-trike me" (1). In such cases, people are invoking the justice and impartiality of God. The Chagga (2) (Tanzania) say that God is the ultimate arbiter.

Anthropomorphic and Active Attributes of GOD :

It is generally in societies which traditionally have had kings and rulers where we find the concept of God as King and Ruler. Although this concept thus reflects the political structure of the peoples concerned, it is also found among others who do not have traditional rules. The Banyarwanda (Rwanda), who had a strong central monarch ruling through chiefs and sub-chiefs under him, conceive of God according to their image of the king. They call him by names that mean "the Ruler, and " God only rules" (2).

The Edo of Nigeria are reported to have a strongly anthropomorphic image of God" as a king, living in splendour with many wives and children". Among the Yoruba, God is regarded as a king with a unique and incomparable majesty. They speak of him as "the king who dwells in the heavens, and" the king whose behests never return void [*].

The Ashanti consider God to be the head and lord of all their pantheon of spirits and divinities (3). The Bambuti believe that God is lord of all men, who observes all their doings, and is also "the Lord of magic power" (4). This means that his power is stronger than that of magic which otherwise is a constant source of fear and suspicion in African societies. The Banyarwanda give God the title of "the Mater of all", in addition to many other titles and appellations (5).

(1) Cagnolo Fr. C. : *The Akikuyu*. Nyeri (Kenya), The Mission Printing School, 1933, p. 27.

(2) Their God's name is : "Ruwa (Sun)" (John Mbiti, p. 329).

(2) Guillebaud, R. : "The Idea of God in Ruanda Urundi", *In* : Smith, E.W. (ed.) : *African Ideas of God*. 2nd. ed. rev. by E.G. Parrinder, London, Edinburgh House Press, 1961, p. 180—200.

(*) His will is absolute.

(3) Rattray, R.S. : *Religion and Art in Ashanti*. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1927, p. 395.

(4) Schebesta, P. : *Revisiting my Pygmy Hosts*, London, Hutchinson, 1936, p. 172ff.

(5) Mbanzabigwi, A. : ("Banyarwanda". *In* : Kampala, 1965.)

The concept of God as judge includes associations with justice, punishment, and retribution. The Abaluyia believe that God established the order of their society the breach of which causes him to punish the offender. The spirits are the police and judges of tribal law and custom, helping God in punishing those who break or deviate from them. As the ultimate dispenser and judge, God is known as "the Distributor", since he gives to each person his own portion of talents, fortune, and estate of life (1).

In many societies, it is believed that God punishes individuals through illness, mis-fortune, barrenness, or death. The Bachwa (.) (Zair) think that God punishes through these means as well as through accidents like falling off the trees when one is collecting fruit.

African peoples are aware of God's providence, and many of them acknowledge it. The Akan consider God to have sanctioned their laws and customs, by means of which their society is protected and prospered. He also provides life, for which reason they call him "the Ever-ready Shooter". (2) Thus, he "shoots" or "injects" life into the individual, so that society does not wither away physically: "He opens for man an appetite for life, makes life worth living for him" (3).

The Ankore (x) (Uganda) hold that God causes the sun to shine by day and the moon by night. One of their names for God (+) means "Sun", the same thing is in Chagga of Tanzania. The Ankore believe that his presence in the universe is symbolized by the moving of the sun across the whole earth (4). The Igbira (..) (Nigeria) consider it to be an indication of God's benevolence (5).

(1) Forde, D. (ed.) : African Worlds. Oxford, Blackwell, 1954, p. 43.

(.) Their God have two names : Djakomba, Djabi (John Mbiti, p. 328).

(2) Meyerowitz, E.L.R. : The Akan of Ghana; their Ancient Beliefs. London, 1958, p. 24.

(3) Danquah, J.B. : The Akan Doctrine of God. London, Blackwell, 1944, p. 40.

(x) They have seven names for God (John Mbiti, p. 328).

(+) "Kazooba" (John Mbiti, p. 328).

(4) Welbourn, F.B. : Conference paper on the Ankore (and others). Ibadan, 1964, p. 31.

(..) Their God have two names : Hinegba, Ihinegba (John Mbiti, p. 330).

(5) Brown, J.T. : Among the Bantu Nomads. London, 1926, p. 70.

The Ila (×) (Zambia) associate sunshine with God so intimately that when the weather becomes very hot, they say that “God is much too hot, let it be overclouded”(1). Sunshine, light, and heat are all manifestations of God’s presence and providence. One of the titles by which the Kiga [+] (Uganda) praise God, means “the One who makes the sun set (*)” (2).

To African peoples [*], rain is always a blessing and its supply is one of the most important activities of God.(!) The Hottentots consider God to be “the Rain Giver” who looks like rain and comes from rain to cover the earth with green colour. The Bavenda’s (‰) (South Africa) God is “the Water Giver, the Master of Rain” (3). A similar set of names is used by the Ila, who speak of God as, “the Rain Giver” and “the Water Giver”. They associate the rain with God so intimately that when it rains the people say that “God rains”, or “God falls” (4.)

The Tswana of Botswana (South Africa) are speaking for many other peoples, when they say that “We look to God to give us rain,” and in some times says that, “God has helped us with rain”. Petitioning God for rain is the main cause and objective for many prayers and sacrifices of African peoples.

(×) Their God have 21 different names (John Mbiti, p. 330—331).

(1) Smith, E.W. and Dale, A.M. : The Ila-speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia. Vol. 1, London, Macmillan & Co. 1920, p. 200.

(+) Their God have five names (John Mbiti, p. 331).

(*) His name is : “Kazoba (Loc. cit).

(2) Edel, M.M. : The Chiga of Western Uganda. Oxford, 1957, p. 160.

(!) Not only for the African peoples but also to everyone even the British peoples as Mrs. Chetham (Cambridge) says.

(‰) The two names of their God are : Raluvhimba, Mwari (John M.p. 329).

(3) Junod, H.A. : The life of a South African Tribe. 2nd. ed. London, Brought, 1927, p. 134.

(4) The names are “Shakemba (or Kemba) & Namesi. (Smith, E.W. & Dale, A. M. : The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia. Vol. 1, London, 1920, p. 199—200, 202.).

African peoples do not consider God to be a man, but in order to express certain concepts, they employ anthropomorphic language and images about him as an aid to their conceptualization to him whom they have not seen and about whom they confess to know little or nothing.

In a riddle game, the Akamba pose the question, "What are the two equal-sized "bowls" of the Father?, to which the answer is, "They are heaven and earth". The peoples do not normally speak of God as Father, but here they visualize him as the one who "fathered", the universe, owns it, and cares for it. The Lunda and others around them speak of God as "the Father Creator who created all countries".

Only a few examples of God as Mother are available, the southern Nuba in the west of Sudan, who have a matrilineal system of descent, refer to God as "the Great Mother", and speak of him (her) in feminine pronouns.

In traditional societies, the person of the "grandfather" and the "elder" is respected for his age, experience, and wisdom. The Ashanti say that "of the wide, wide earth, the Supreme Being is the Elder", in the sense that God is superior since he is the Creator of the earth and all things, and is above all things.(1)

The Bachwa (Zair), who believe that they were the first people on earth consider themselves as "the Children of God" (2). When in danger, the Bambuti appeal to God saying, "Father, the children are afraid" (3) This concept of people as the children of God is not expressed widely. Even if people do not speak verbally about it, they make prayers, offerings, and sacrifices in an attitude of "Children-Father" relationship.

One name of the Tonga (Malawi - Zambia) for God is Tilo a word which also means "the blue sky", "a power which acts and manifests itself in various ways ...regulates and presides over great cosmic phenomena to which must submit". People trace events of a sudden or unexpected nature to the influence and direction of Tilo, such as

(1) Forde, D. : African Worlds, Oxford, Blackwell, 1954, p. 196.

(2) Schebesta, P. : My Pymgy and Negro Hosts. London, Blackwell 1936, p. 235.

(3) Schebesta, P. : Les Pygmées Paris, Gallimard, 1940, p. 174.

thunder, lightning, death, convulsions, and the birth of twins. The twins are in some sense a manifestation on earth of the power of Tilo (1).

Some societies see divinities, spirits, or personifications of God's manifestation as being responsible for various types of disease. The Chagga believe that God has a spirit which he sends to men to bring them sickness and smallpox though a person is killed only when God permits it. The Swazi (×) (Swaziland) have two divinities who send sickness (2).

One of the two main concerns of Nuer religion, is "deliverance from evil", and the people many prayers directed towards that goal. In one common phrase they ask God to "remove all evil from our path" (3). Thus, they look towards God as their deliver from evil, whatever may be the metaphysical or other cause. The Zulu say firmly that "God was unable to create what is evil" (4).

The Banyarwanda, Barundi, Chagga, Lunda, and no doubt others believe that God helps and protects the poor and weak, as we say before. When a Gikuyu person is poor, he says that "God does not love me" On the other hand, it is God who saves a person from poverty as exemplified in the following "typical" Gikuyu prayer :

O God my father, give me goats,
Give me sheep, give me children,
That I may be rich, O God my father (5).

The three related items : Fertility, Health and Plenty are another avenue of God's providence which African peoples recognize and value highly. This concept is expressed by the chagga, through an act of sacrifice and prayer. When someone falls sick, people come together

(1) Junod, H.A. : *The Life of a South African Tribe*. 2nd. ed. London, 1927, p. 135—136.

(×) Their God have four names. (John Mbiti, p. 335).

(2) Petterson, O. : *Chiefs and Gods*. Lund, 1953, p. 191.

(3) Evans-Pritchard, E.E. : *Nuer Religion*. Oxford, Blackwell, 1956, p. 22ff.

(4) Callaway, H. : *The Religious System of the Amazulu*. London, The Folk-Lore Society, 1884, p. 26.

(5) Routledge, W.S. et al. : *The Akikugu of British East Africa*. London, Blackwell 1910, p. 227.

on a market day and make a sacrifice, reciting a prayer part of which says : Chief, receive this bull of your name,

Heal him to whom you gave it and his children.

Sow the seed of offspring with us,

That we may be got like bees (1).

When there is drought, the Meru (×) (Kenya) religious leader (the Mugwe) prays to God for the fertility of women, for the ohealth of all, and for plentifulness of goats, cattle, food, and honey.

The Nandi of Kenya have two ceremonial prayers in which they invoke God, saying :

God, guard for me the children and cattle,

God, guard for us the cattle

God, give us health(2).

Believing that prosperity comes from God, the Vugusu(*) (Kenya) say of a person who becomes prosperous, "This person has his God". At the dawn of day, they pray for a rich bestowal of God's providence, saying :

Po! God, may the day dawn well;

May you spit upon us the medicine.

So that we may walk well!(3).

This "medicine" includes good health, protection, fertility, and increase of life and possessions.

The Ankore have a divinity of plenty and fertility, supplying them with an increase and sustenance of humans, cattle, sheep, goats and crops(4). Among the Baroga(+) (Uganda) pantheon of divinities, are

(1) Dundas, C. : Kilimanjaro and its people. London, 1924, p. 146.

(×) Their God have three different names. (John Mbiti, p. 333).

(2) Mercier, P. : "The fon of Dahomey". In : Forde, D. (ed.) : African Worlds. London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1954, p. 210—234.

(*) Their God name is "Wele" (John Mbiti, p. 336).

(3) Wagner, G. : The Bantu of North Kavirondo. Vol. 1. Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1949, p. 170ff.

(4) Taylor, B.K. : The Western Locustrine Bantu. London., Bought, 1962, p. 111.

(+) They have five names for thier God., (John Mbiti, p. 328).

those associated with the birth of children, help in childbirth, and healing of sickness(1).

One of the many Shona (Rhodesia) names of God describes him as “the One with power to destroy completely” both persons and things(2). The Bavenda regard locust invasion, floods, and other calamities as punishment from God when he is angry with their chief. According to their belief, the locusts live in an enormous cage in the sky which God opens, thereby letting loose these voracious pests.

With reference to life, the Akan speak of God as “the Ever-ready Shooter” but in connection with death, he is known as “the Killer Mother”, who rules among the dead, just as he rules among the living.(3) Some societies have divinities of death, who are considered responsible for it. The divinity of death the Ganda, is believed to keep a rope representing the life of each person, and only he knows how long that rope is.

GOD and Man :

Almost every African people has one or more creation stories. The concepts contained in these myths cover a wide range, and it is helpful to group and consider them under different headings. According to many stories, the creation of man is placed at, or towards, the end of the creation of all things. These stories point also that man was created as husband and wife, and a number of them give the names of the first human beings.

The Kaonde(*) (Zambia) believe that God placed one man and one woman upon the earth, in the beginning(4). In the Abaluyia story, it is told that God created man so that the sun would have someone

(1) The God who controls birth is ‘Gasani’, “Kintu” the name of childbirth and “Lubanga” (associated with healing) ; Roscoe, J. : *The Northern Bantu*. new imper. London, 1966, p. 249; Roscoe, J. : *The Bakitara or Banyoro*. London, (Blackwell, 1923, p. 104.

(2) Merwe, W.J. : *The Shona Idea of God*. Fort Victoria, 1957, p. 8.

(3) Meyerowitz, E.L.R. : *The Akan of Ghana : their Ancient Beliefs*. London, Faber and Faber, 1958, p. 24)

(*) Their God names “Ieasa, (John Mbiti, p. 331).

(4) Smith, E.W. and Dale, A.M. : *The Ila-speaking peoples of Northern Rhodesia* Vol. 1. London, 1920, p. 201.

for whom to shine. Afterwards he created plants, animals and birds to provide food for man. The first man was called "Mwambu"; and his wife "Sela" whom God created so that man would have someone with whom to talk. In the Vugusu (Kenya) version, the man is known as "Umngoma", and the woman as "Malava"(1).

The Bambuti narrate that God created the earth and heaven (his throne, which was below), then water, trees, man, and animals. The men were a young man called "Mupe" and his wife "Uti". In another version, these two originated or came from God, and peopled the world, starting with the Pygmies themselves(2). In the Banyarwanda story, the first man is known as *kazikamuntu* a name which means the "Root-of-men". He begat three sons (Gatutsi, Gahutu and Gatwa), who now represent the three racial social classes in the country(3).

According to the Meru of Kenya, God made first a boy, but since he had nobody else with whom to play, he told God that he was not satisfied. "So a girl came out. They played together"(4). We can notice here that story is essentially biblical and neary Islamic one. A similar story is told among the Nandi (Kenya), that God made a small man-child and sought someone with whom this man-child would live.

According to the Lodagaa(*) (Ghana; Upper Volta), God evidently created all mankind as a potter does his pots. But having created the first-humans, God showed them how to re-create themselves, this being the only "Art" that man learnt directly from his creator, since the other arts he learnt from the beings of the wilderness(5). The Skilluk of the Nileotic Sudan also tell that God made man out of clay of different colours, which explains the difference in skin pigmentation(6).

Many other examples could be cited Baumann(7) who has made a study of more than two thousand creation myths summarizes this

(1) Forde, D. : *African Worlds*. Oxford, 1954, p. 29.

(2) Schebesta, P. : *Revisiting my Pymy Hosts*. London, 1936, p. 169, 179—180.

(3) Forde, D. : *African Worlds*. Oxford, 1954, p. 173—174.

(4) Bernardi, B. : *The Mugwe, a failing prophet*. London, Boncut, 1959, p. 52ff.

(*) Their God's name is "Na 'angmin'". (John Mbiti, p. 332)

(5) Goody, J.R. : *Death, Property, & the Ancestors*. London, 1962, p. 209.

(6) Young, T.C. : *Contemporary Ancestors*. London, 1940, p. 146.

(7) Baumann, H. : *Schopfung und Urzeit des Menschen in Mythos der afrikanischen volker*. 2nd. ed. Berlin, 1964, p. 203 ff. After : Mbiti, J. : *op. cit.*, p. 163.

when he says : "We must content ourselves by stating that the idea of creation [of man] from clay is very wide spread in Africa".

In considerable number of African myths it is narrated that man came from heaven or another world. The general idea behind this is that God created man elsewhere and only lowered him afterwards to this world on man descended here and for various reasons began to inhabit the earth. The Akamba who emphasize that it is God who created man(1) that God also lowered the first pair of mankind from the clouds of the earth.

According to the Fon of Benin (Later : Dahumey) the man's creation is presented as a process or an evolution. On the first day God set the world in order and then formed man out of clay and water. The third day God gave man right speech and knowledge of the external world. On the fourth day, man was given technical skills, which evidently equipped him to live on this earth(2).

In Tiv society of central Nigeria our attention is concentrated on an accult power called "tsav" the motive force of life, which can in its turn be influenced in ritual action for the good of man.

In the late nineteenth century, the Dyula community in Bobo-Dioulasso Upper-Volta, numbered between five hundred and a thousand inhabitants. Sia, as the town was then called consisted of a cluster of five small villages. The Dyula lived in one of them. Nearby villages contained colonies of Dyula related to those in Sia. An extensive network of trade routes connected Sia with communities to the south, northwest, north and northeast. The Dyula had come to Bobo-Dioulasso from King, where they had over-thrown the rulers and established their own dynasty near the beginning of the eighteenth century(3).

In the nineteenth century, Dyula partrilineages were of two occupationally specialized and historically distinct kinds, the "sonangui"

(1) Lindblom, G. : *The Akamba in British East Africa*. Uppsala, Appelbergs, 1920 p. 252.

(2) Ford, D. : *op. cit.*, p. 223—224.

(3) Quimby, L.G. : *Transformations of beliefs: Islam among the Dyula of Kongbougou from 1880—1970*. Doctoral dissertation. Univ. of Wisconsin, 1972, p. 11—12.

and the “Karamogho”. Sonangui males were a warrior elite who based their military power on horses imported from the north(1). They lived in a symbiotic relationship with their “Karamoghou”, male Muslim clerics who eschewed political or military and devoted themselves to Muslim scholarship. This type of complementary alliance between a ruling group whose interests were mainly politico-military. They defined their identity in terms of Muslim scholarship and an avoidance of worldly politics was common to many parts of west Africa(2).

According to the Ashanti, the first man enjoyed a privileged position in creation. God made things for man’s use and protection. “He ordered animals to eat the plants and he ordered man to do the same, and to drink from the waters ; he also ordered man to use the animals as meat (3). The Bacongo summarize the original state of man in their common saying that “Man is God’s man” (4). Thus, man is specially connected with God as his property, linking him with God in a way that other creatures are not so intimately linked.

The Zulu believe that the first man came into being already “perfected” as adults. The husband and wife found themselves crouching in a bed of needs, but did not see the One who had created them. But that good God gave them the following order : “Let men circumcise, that they may not be boys” (5).

The Acholi say that God taught the first men all the essentials of living, including cultivation, beermaking, and cooking. According to the Akamba, God gave a cow, a goat, and a sheep to the first human beings. In order to provide marriage partners without the dangers of incest, one myth says that God made two pairs of the first human beings.

(1) Bennetta, Jules-Rosette (ed.) : *The New Religions of Africa*. Norwood New, Jersey, Ablex Publishing Co., 1979, p. 204.

(2) Curtin, P.D. : *Jihad in West Africa*. *Journal of African History*, Vol. 21, No. 1, 1971, p. 11—24.

(3) Lystad, R.A. : *The Ashanti*. New Brunswick, N.J., 1958, p. 164.

(4) Claridge, G.C. : *Wild Bush Tribes of Tropical Africa*. London, 1922, p. 270.

(5) Callaway, H. : *The Religious System of the Amazulu*. London, 1870, p. 34, 48.

The Tswana believe that the original man lived in a state of immortality. But when they made God angry, death came upon them. God, however, provided them with the gift of resurrection which, unfortunately, they also lost(1). Among the Moru tell that God sent the mole with the gift of resurrection, but this did not reach man, because the hyena threatened to kill the mole if the latter did not alter the message from God(2). The Nupe (Nigeria) say that, when God had created men, he gave them "access to certain mystical forces", one of which is "the compelling power of rutual (Kuti)", which men can harness and utilize. God also put the power of witch craft into the world(3).

A long, long time ago, say the Ashanti, God lived in the sky but close to man. The Bambuti say that God actually lived with the first men (two sons and a daughter), but he was alone, without either a wife or a brother. He communicated with the men, but never showed himself to them. The Shilluk tell a myth the similarity of which we can have not encountered from other peoples. They say that originally the people lived with God in his land. Then they ate a fruit which made them rich. Consequently God sent them away, evidently to this earth(4).

There are many African peoples whose worship(*) of God is reported to be neither formal nor regular. These include the Amba, Ashanti, Bacongo, Bamileke, Lala, Tonga, Zulu and many others. In some cases the sacrifice is made to God alone ; in others it is to both God the spirits and the departed who in other cases are considered intermediaries between God and man.

There are four popularized theories about the function and meaning of sacrifice : the gift theory the propitiation theory the munion theory and the thankoffering theory. No doubt some of these ideas are

(1) Dornan, S.S. : *Pygmies and Bushmen of Kalakari*. London, Seeley Service, 1925, p. 288—289.

(2) Baxter, P.T.W. and Butt, A. : *The Aznde and Related Peoples*. London, Inter. Afric. Inst., 1953, p. 111.

(3) Forde, D. : *Peoples of the Niger-Benue Confluence*. London, Blackwell, 1955 p. 45.

(4) Forde, D. (ed.) : *African Worlds*. Oxford, Blackwell, 1954, p. 145.

(*) I use the word "worship" to mean man's act or acts of turning to God.

present but it is not our main concern to discuss them here. One may add however that sacrifices and offerings are acts of restoring the ontological balance between God and man : the spirits and man, and the departed and the living. Sacrifices and offerings help at least psychologically, to restore this balance. They are also acts and occasions of making and renewing contact between God and man, the spirits and man. The departed who are still remembered personally by someone in their family(!), are chiefly the recipients of sacrifices and offerings from the family group. These go back four or five generations, and we may call them the living-dead.

If we take some examples of sacrifices and offerings among some different African peoples we can take some examples as, Akamba who consider God to be so good that he does them no evil, they make sacrifices only on important occasions including planting time. The Abaluyia sacrifice to God for which reason they refer to him as “the One to whom sacred rites and sacrifices are made”. At harvest time, they are an expression of joy and gratitude to God. (1)

The Bari make sacrifices to God, and ask him to cure their diseases. The Chagga sacrifice to God only in times of great distress, at rare intervals. But they make many sacrifices to their living-dead and the spirits.(2)

The Gofa of Ethiopia, sacrifice a white cock to the spirit of the Omo river. The fowl is thrown alive into the river. The Hadya of Ethiopia also sacrifice animals to God, but make food and drink offerings to the tree spirits. The Ingassana of the Sudan make to the sun(°), placing them on altars and making prayers, in times of crisis, such as drought, sickness, and barrenness. (3)

As a rule, there are no sacrifices without prayers. Every morning Ababyia old men rise up early, kneel facing east and pray to Godspitting

(!) As my dearest daughter “AMAL F. GAWAD” the heavenly bride, whom sol, was pure, and who was left earth in a peaceful end at 9.40 a m, on Monday. December 1977, in Cairo.

(1) Okwembe, F. : “Abaluyia”. *In* : Kampala, 1965.

(2) Dundas, C. : Kilimanjaro and its people. London, 1924, p. 107, 134ff.

(°) The sun is regarded as a divinity.

(3) Seligman, C.G. and B.Z. : Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan. London, 1932, p. 436.

tting and asking him “ to the day down well and spit his medicine upon the people, so that they may walk well”. The Akamba do not pray often except in times of great need, particularly for rain, and on special occasions. Here is a prayer by one of them, on the occasion of the birth of his child : O Creator, who dost all human beings create.

Thou hast on us a great worth conferred
By bringing us this little child. (1)

The Anuak pray directly to God, for various needs. Here is one of their prayers offered by someone whose child is sick :

O God, thou art great,
Thou art the One who created me,
I have no other.
God, thou art in the heavens,
Thou art the only One :
Now my child is sick,
And thou wilt grant me my desire (2).

The Bavenda (South Africa) pray for rain, felicity, and peace. When the Tswana [*] (Botswana) pray, they address God as “God of our fathers ...” or “Father of my fathers ...” (3). Anyone among the Edo (Nigeria) may pray to God for the health, children, and other benefits. One common prayer among the Dorobo says : “God, fill us with meat”(4)

Little information is available on the different positions taken by African Peoples while praying. Those who kneel include the Barundi, Barotse, Koma, Losi, and Yuroba. Those who stand include the Galla, Jie, Lozi (alternating with kneeling) and the Nuer. The Chagga fall down before God (5). The Ila and Nandi remain sitting, the Nandi

(1) Lindblom, G.: *The Akamba British East Africa*. Uppsala, Appelberges 1920, p. 245—246.

(2) Seligman, C.G. and B.Z. : *Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan*. London 1932, p. 111.

(*) The name of their God is “Modimo” (John Mbiti, p. 336).

(3) Dornan, S.S. : *Pygmies and Bushmen of the Kalahari*. London, Blackwell, 1953, p. 68.

(4) Huntingford, G.W.B. : *The southern Nilo-Hemites*. London, Blackwell, 1953, p. 68.

(5) Dundas, C. : *Kilimmanjaro and its people*. London, H.F. & G. Witherby, 1924 p. 146.

rhaving thier arms crossed. It would seem that is the position used by most peoples, though those conducting the prayers on public occasions, may stand up. Some, like the Ila, Lozi and Shona, clap their hands in prayer.

It is customary among a number of African peoples to include the name of God in their greetings and farewells. When so used, the name serves as an unuttered pronouncement of a blessing and as a symbol of friendliness, good will, and peaceful relationship.

The Banyardwanda include God's name in their congratulations, of which there are many occasions. Among them and Barundi, when two people are parting, one says : "Go with God", and the other responds, "Stay with God", or "May you meet with the Kindly-disposed One" (1). The Shilluk say in their salutations, "May God guard you" and a sick person might pine "Why, O God ?" (2) When they did farewell to one another, the Tswana say, "Remain with God", that is, "May God be with you remain behind" (3).

The African peoples turn to God in acts of worship such as prayer, sacrifice, offerings, and the like in many times such as : the observation of the rites of passage, the harvest ceremony, at planting time, in time of were or raid, in time of drought or when rain is needed, the time of distress illness or calamity, before or during an undertaking, more over the daily and annally or monthly prayers.

As for the places of worship, people do not feel bound to any "official spots", for they turn to God at any place just as they do so at any time. There are, however, shrines, temples, altars, and other sacred places which are used particularly for public sacrifices and prayers.

We do not seem to get away from the subject of death, specially in connection with what happens in the hereafter. Bachwa believe that the soul of man is a visible object as small as the pupil of the eye where it can be seen. At death the eye breaks the soul departs, and the body

(1) Ibid, p. 144.

(2) Seligman, C.G. : et al. : Pagan Tribes of the Nilotic Sudan. London, George Routledge, 1932, p. 75.

(3) Pauw, B.A. : Religion in a Tswana Chiefdom. Oxford, Oxford Univ. Press, 1960, p. 32.

ceases to function (1). According to one view, Bambuti hold that the soul leaves the body through the nose, "and is carried to God by bees or flies" (2).

The Akamba say death like a "call" which must be answered with a "yes", and to which nobody can say "no" (3). According to the Lozi (*) (Zambia) a person has four parts one of which is the soul, it is which, at death, goes to God (4).

Among the Luo (,) (Kenya) it is very unfortunate when a girl dies a girl dies before she is married. People bury her outside the homestead, since she has no place within her home. If at death she is still a virgin, the virginity must be broken by an elderly woman before she is buried, otherwise her spirit would return to cause trouble in her home (5).

Some African peoples make preparations for the journey to the land of the departed. This is done mainly in form of funeral rites. According to Chagga beliefs, the journey to the next world is long, dangerous and terrifying. The soul must travel through a desert region where the sun is very hot. It takes eight days to cross this desert, arriving on the ninth day. There are guards at the entrance to the spirit chief's residence, and these bar the soul from entering to the spirit chief's residence, and these bar the soul from entering until its grand-father has paid a bull of admission. To equip the soul for this demanding journey, people anoint the corpse with fat, pour milk and fat into the mouth, and wrap the corpse in a hide believed to protect the soul from the hot sun on the way. They sacrifice a bull to the grandfather of the deceased, and petition him to help the new-cosmer (6).

(1) Schebesta, P. : *My Pygmy and Negro Hosts*. London, Blackwell 1936, p.236—237.

(2) Schebesta, P. : *Revisiting my Pygmy Hosts*. London, Hutchinson, 1936, p. 174—175.

(3) Smith, E.W. and Dale, A.M. : *op. cit.*, p. 204.

(*) The name of their God is "Nyambe" (John Mbiti, p. 332).

(4) Turner, V.W. : *The Lozi peoples of North-Western Rhodesia*. London, *Intr. Afric. Inst.*, 1952, p. 51.

(,) Tjeir God has 26 different names (John Mbiti, p. 332—333).

(5) Muango, M. : "The Luo" In : *Kampaa*, 1965.

(6) Dundes, C. : *Op. cit.*, p. 124—125.

The Herero (Namebia) bury their dead facing north, where they believe the land of the departed to be situated (1). Among many African peoples, food, drink, weapons, tools, and other objects may be buried with the corpse, to equip the dead for the journey and provide him with some means of establishing at least the start of his new life in the next world. Elaborate rites are also carried out by various societies, some of them covering a period of several months or even years (2).

Concerning the location of the land of the departed, there are many views, as well as :

- a) Underground (underworld) as in : Chagga, Gisu, Lela, Ngoni and Teita societies ;
- b) The woods (bush, forest, wilderness) as in : Chagga, Gisu, Lela, Ngoni and Teita societies ;
- c) Around the home, this concept is held by the: Bamileke, Barundi, Ga, Kuku, Mene and many others ;
- d) On special mountains, as in : Akamba, Tongwe, Limba and Turkana societies ;
- e) With rivers, lakes, waterfalls and pools, as in : Bavenda, Igbo, Itsekiri and Kona societies ; and some other views. But the important view is that of the societies which thought that the dead go where God is, which is may not be located, these societies include the : Bachwa, Indem, Kadara, Lozi, Shilluk and Yoruba(3)

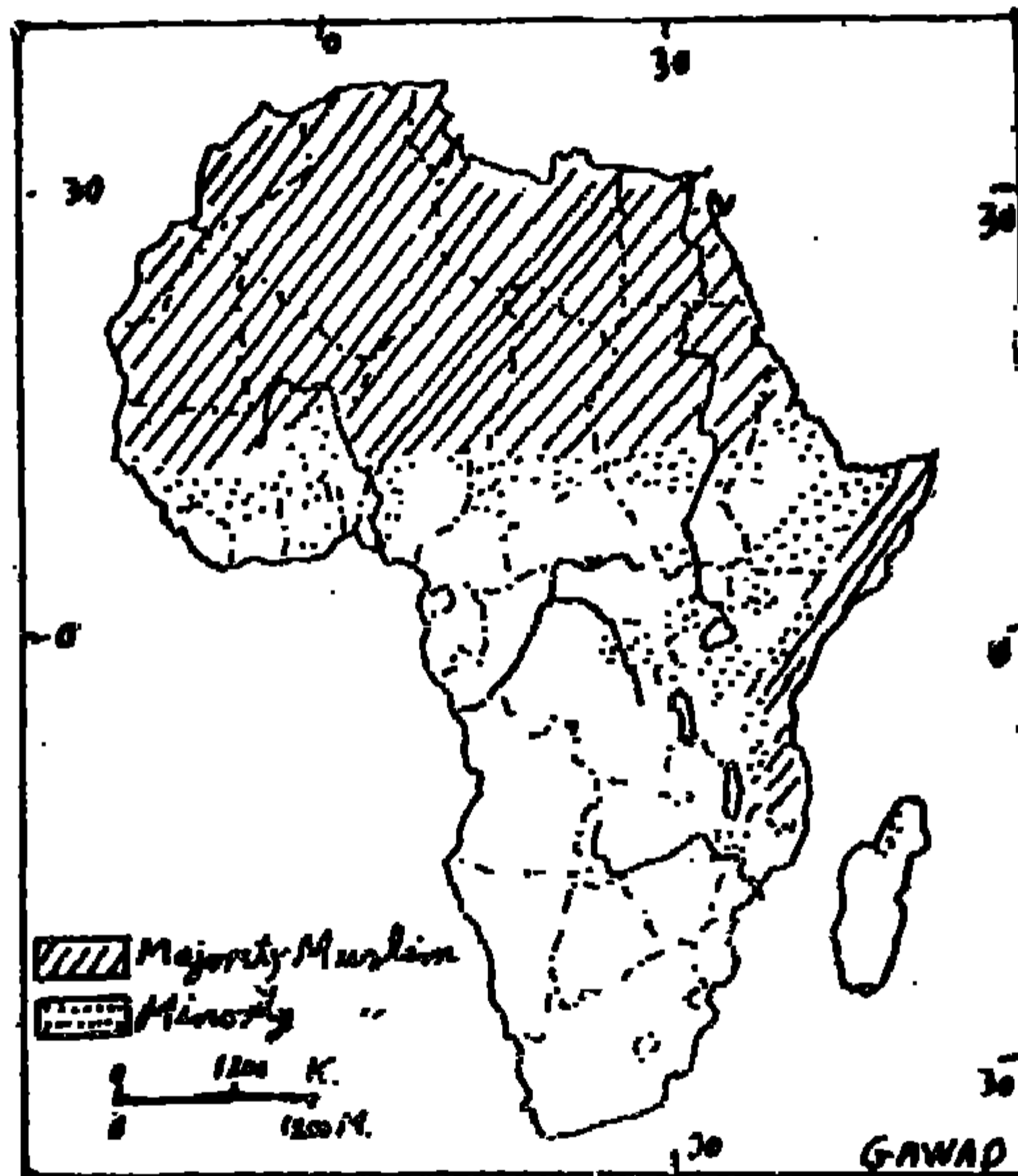
A few of African societies hold the notion that after death a person goes to heaven, There are also other peoples who say that at death the spirit goes to God. Of these, the Gisu, Kadara and Tswana. Here is an important point that without exception, African peoples believe that death does not annihilate life, and that the departed continue to exist in the hereafter.

(1) Lutting, G. H. : *The Religious System and Social Organization of the Herero.* Utrecht, 1933, p. 13.

(2) Wilson, M. : *Rituals of Kinship among the Nyakyusa.* Oxford, 1957, p. 215.

(3) Idowu, E.B. : *Olodumare; God in Yoruba Belief.* London, 1962, p. 189, 197 ff.

There are many myths, legends and stories which speak about reincarnation (*), and there are number of peoples who believe in it. The reincarnation means that certain of character, personality, or somatical (physical) marks of the departed are reproduced in a child generally born in his immediate family. When a child is noticed to have traits of the departed, it is a common practice to name that child after the person who is thus reincarnated, unless that person was reputed to be bad. Examples of this belief of reincarnation are reported among the Akamba, Dungi, Luo, Shona and Yoruba (1). This concept of arptial reincarnation is certainly held more firmly by some than by others.



Map 2. The present distribution of Islam in Africa.

C O N C L U S I O N

Much research on African religion makes too radical a dichotomy between traditional religions in rural areas and new religious movements on the urban scene, and there certain authors, however (Long,

(*) It must be important point to exceplane that African peoples do not expect any form of individual or collective resurrection after death. (John Mbiti, p. 265).

(1) Lindblom, G. : op. cit., p. 211.

N. and Murphee, M.W.) (2) have dealt with the influence of syncretic churches in the rural environment. Thus, the carryover between the two types, as well as the importance of religion as a transitional form of life, has not been stressed except in a small number of studies.

To an important degree, spiritual and physical healing is a central theme of African religious movements. This point was noticed by many of scholars of African religion, so some of them have felt it appropriate to refer to these movements primarily as "healing institutes". In fact the Western concept of the "Church" in Africa misses this important commitment (3).

Secularization is partly specialization, but for some people it has also implied that religion will be replaced by science. This is not possible, since science does not make choices, and choice does not disappear but increases with increase in scale.

In spite of piles of mission reports and anthropological books which discuss religion, we have few detailed accounts of how religions beliefs and practices have actually changed in a given community. It is only through comparative studies of this sort that we can define how far the autonomy of the religions aspect has extended.

The response is not always female emancipation as it is understood in the west and it is often mainly symbolic, but the consequence, whether the new relations are complementary or egalitarian, is greater conviviality.

Religious movements are, generally, among the strong societies. They are strong responses, because in their attempts at lasting healing, they seek basic transformations in world view : symbolic transformations of experience.

In religious terms the development is clear. In small pagan societies, such as existed in Africa, rituals were primarily directed towards the well-being of the group ; towards health and fertility for the community ; and the emphasis was on the fact that kinsfolk and neighbours were members one of another.

(2) Long, N. : *Social change and the individual*. Manchester, Manchester Univ. Press, 1968, and; Barrett, David Brian : *Schism and renewal in Africa; an analysis of six thousand contemporary religious movements*. Nairobi, Oxford Univ. Press, 1968.

(3) Fernandez, J.W. : as Foreword In : Bennetta Jules-Rosette : *The New Religions of Africa*. New Jersey, Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1979, p. XVII.

All of the contributors have approached these problems in an exploratory spirit. This synthesis of their work is meant to offer an emerging perspective rather a conclusive analysis of religion and cultural transformation in Africa.

It out to be said that this is very much a tension of the modern world, where religious convictions and religious communions exist side by side with a powerful scientific positivism and its fruits.

Africa's new religions contain ideals which, while they stress a crucial link to the past, are not synonymous with a return to it, for an uncalculated return is impossible.

The religions leave its influences on the African materials : male female relations, for example, filtering, the dynamics of religious movements in the native societies in the new countries.

A brief handy definition of religion is considerably more difficult than a definition of evolution. So, for limited purposes only, let me define religion as a set of symbolic forms and acts which relate man to the ultimate conditions of his existence. Everythings already exists in some sense in the religions symbol system of the most primitive man, it would be hard to find anything later that is not "foreshadowed" there, as for example, the monotheistic God is foreshadowed in the high gods of some primitive peoples yet just as obviously the two cannot be equated. Not only in their idea of God but in many other ways, the monotheistic religions of Judaism, christianity and Islam involve a much more differentiated symbolization of, and produce a much more complex relation to the ultimate conditions of human existence than do primitive religions.

There is a good field in Africa south the sahara for the motives for God to work there. As it noticed that the Catholic priest is a social type well defined by his clothes, his daily pursuits and occupations, his manners and relationships, he is caught up in a close net of customs and obligations, and knows what he must do and say every hour of the day. The Islamic missions and Universities as Al-Azhar can do something like that in Africa.

It seems to me that the studies of African religions will help us in our study of African social change.

I truly think that the beleiveness in God and Man's trying to know his way to God, this is the main point for the alleviation of human severy.

So, we must trust - as the African peoples, the Muslims and the Christians of all the world do - in the words of God in the Holy Quoran and Bible.

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F.A. Gawad
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